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Efficacy Of Hypnotherapy as An Intervention to Reduce Stress: Literature Review

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Abstract. Every human being has experienced a depressed condition commonly referred to as stress. Stress is a problem that arises due to an imbalance between demands and abilities so both physical and psychological disorders occur. This stress will appear when there is a burden on people that exceeds the existing conditions. One type of complementary therapy that can be used as an intervention in handling stress is hypnotherapy. Hypnotherapy is one of the proven and very effective methods to overcome stress. The purpose of this literature review is to determine the effectiveness of hypnotherapy as an intervention in reducing stress. The literature review method used is narrative review. The article search used PubMed databases. The article criteria used were articles about hypnotherapy to handle stress, the published year 2020-2025, English language, and full-text articles. Articles that have been sorted, analyzed, and presented in tabular form. The results of the review obtained 19 articles that fit the criteria. The results of the literature review showed that hypnotherapy is effective as an intervention to reduce stress. It is significant based on the statistical test results of each article, with p-values: 0.000; < 001; < 01; and < 0.02. In 19 of these articles using hypnotherapy techniques. Conclusion: Hypnotherapy is proven to be effective as an intervention to reduce stress.

Keywords: Hypnotherapy, Hypnosis, Reduce Stress

INTRODUCTION

Every human being has experienced a distressing condition commonly referred to as stress. In psychology, stress is considered a psychological symptom that affects all professions. Stress is a problem that arises due to an imbalance between demands and abilities resulting in both physical and psychological disorders [1]. Stress is a state of mental or emotional tension or strain that affects individuals regardless of stage of development. This stress will appear when there is a burden on people that exceeds existing conditions [2, 3]. Based on multivariate analysis, stress is positively and significantly correlated with behavioral, negative affect, and cognitive problems/lack of attention, sleep problems, and excessive vigilance [4].

The prevalence of stress in the world is quite high, according to data from the World Health Organization (WHO) the incidence of stress occurs to 350 million people in the world and ranks 4th as the world's worst disease. Whereas in Indonesia according to basic health research data

(RISKESDAS) in 2018, the prevalence of emotional disorders such as stress at the age of more than 15 years is increasing every year, from 6% or 37,728 people in 2013 to 9.8% or 706,668 people in 2018 [5, 6].

The psychological impact of stress is depression. Depression is a psychological response to stress experienced by the individual himself. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2019), depression is a feeling disorder such as from happy to sad for a long time so it disrupts activities because it has lost motivation. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) states that depression is included in emotional disorders due to experiencing a bad mood or bad mood for a long time such as losing loved ones, losing jobs, etc [7, 8].

If individuals perceive stress as a negative thing or distress, then the individual cannot handle the stress. Thus, distress can also lead to negative things that are very undesirable such as suicide. Suicide cases are increasing every year. According to research conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Health Estimate in 2016, the death rate due to suicide worldwide amounted to 793,000 deaths, or one death every 40 seconds and suicide became the 18th leading cause of death worldwide. Suicide death rates are highest in Europe (15.4%) and Southeast Asia (13.2%), while the lowest in the Eastern Mediterranean (3.9%). Indonesia belongs to Southeast Asia with a suicide rate of 3.4/100,000 population [8, 9].

Data on suicides in Indonesia in 2019 showed that 875 cases in 2016 and 789 cases in 2017 were reported to the police. The Sample Registration System (SRS) civil registration method records that the number of deaths due to suicide in Indonesia is 1,800 people/year, three times more men than women, and 75% occur in the age group 15-64 years [11].

Sources of stress in life can change along with human development, environmental conditions, and sources of life, stress can also occur at any time in life. Under certain conditions, stress can be constructive and have a positive effect, encouraging, stimulating, and challenging us to be active and productive. However, too much stress will have a negative effect, such as disharmony, unwillingness, low productivity and so on. Some sources of stress are (1) excessive self-esteem, (2) abilities and needs, (3) personality traits. Steps to overcome individual stress are (1) increasing self-awareness, (2) physical exercise, (3) developing interests, hobbies and friendships, (4) developing a relaxed attitude and meditation, (5) time management and conflict resolution, (6) changing attitudes and behavior, and (7) resignation [12].

Several figures have explained the process of stress; and most of them have the same concept. The first stage is the primary appraisal. The initial stage is when the individual receives a stimulus in the form of a threatening demand or situation. The initial stage consists of 3 processes, namely the irrelevant process, the benign-positive process, and the stressful process [13].

Based on physiology in the body, stress will be responded to by activating the hypothalamus which in turn the neuroendocrine system, namely the sympathetic system and the adrenal cortex system and associated with the activity of the HPA axis (Hypothalamic Pituitary Adrenal) will be controlled by the hypothalamus. Nerve impulses from the hypothalamus will be responded to by sympathetic nerves in the form of activation of various organs and smooth muscles that are under sympathetic nerve control. In the adrenal medulla, there are signals given by sympathetic nerves to release epinephrine and norepinephrine into the bloodstream [14].

The activation of the HPA axis will cause stimulation of the LHPA (Limbic Hypothalamus Pituitary Adrenal) axis groove which will stimulate the hypothalamus and cause the secretion process of the CRH hormone (Corticotrophin Relesing Hormone). Then the CRH hormone will stimulate the hypothalamus to secrete the ACTH hormone (Adrenocorticotropic Hormone) which will then be carried to the adrenal cortex through the bloodstream. Increased secretion of the hormone ACTH in the adrenal cortex results in an increase in the secretion of cortisol (Usui, et al., 2012). The occurrence of secretion of ACTH is caused by the activation of the adrenal cortex system when the hypothalamus secretes CRF (Corticotropin Releasing Factor), a chemical substance in the pituitary gland. Furthermore, CRF will stimulate the release of cortisol where this cortisol serves to regulate blood sugar levels [15].

The HPA (Hypothalamus Pituitary Adrenal) will send signals to the adrenal glands so that they can produce more cortisol and adrenaline hormones. The HPA axis will also increase the production and release of glucocorticoid which is the main hormone of cortisol, the stress hormone. Then, the cortisol hormone will direct almost all activities of the homeostasis system to prepare for a flight or fight reaction. Catecholamine hormones are released by the HPA axis where they have a role as neurotransmitters, namely adrenaline (A), noradrenaline (NA), and dopamine (DA). Catecholamines will activate the amygdala nucleus (the cause of fear) which causes an emotional response to stressors, for example anger at enemies or fear of flooding. The brain will release neuropeptide S, a micro-protein that modulates stress by increasing alertness, feelings of worry or anxiety, and suppressing the desire to sleep. As a result, the desire to run or fight (flight or fight) arises from the body [16].

It is known that several factors can affect a person's stress level, namely sociodemographic factors such as gender affect stress where there are differences in stress levels in women higher than men [17]. Men and women may show stress differently, women show higher levels of stress and better quality of social support, where one's social network can be an important source of support (coping mechanism), but in some cases can also serve as a stressor [18]. Women were found to use emotion-focused dimensions of coping and endorsed the use of four coping strategies more frequently than men, these included self-interference, emotional support, instrumental support, and ventilation [19].

One type of complementary therapy that can be used as an intervention to cope with stress is hypnotherapy [20]. Hypnosis which is part of hypnotherapy in recent years has become popular and become the world's attention. Hypnotherapy is one part of the science of psychology that uses the benefits of suggestion to solve problems of feelings, thoughts, and attitudes [21].

Hypnotherapy consists of two words, hypnosis and therapy. Hypnosis, in simple terms, is defined as a special state of consciousness that is generally described in three depths, shallow, medium, and deep. To be able to move from a normal conscious state to a hypnotic state requires a method or effort called induction. [22].

Hypnotherapy is one of the proven and very effective methods to overcome stress. There are several methods other than hypnotherapy that are used to overcome stress but they are less effective and take a long time to be able to feel a significant change. It is less effective because other methods do not touch the root of the problem and only play at the level of the conscious mind. Whereas the source of stress in a person is stored in the subconscious mind [23].

Based on the explanation above, the researcher decided to conduct a literature review on the effectiveness of hypnotherapy as an intervention in reducing stress. In addition, many articles that

examine hypnotherapy have been published, but no literature study has been found that specifically aims to see the effectiveness of hypnotherapy as an intervention in reducing stress. The purpose of this literature study is to find out the effectiveness of hypnotherapy as an intervention in reducing stress.

METHODS

The literature review method applied in this study is a narrative review because the purpose of this literature study is to examine the effectiveness of hypnotherapy as an intervention in reducing stress. Narrative review is a literature review method that aims to identify and summarize several studies that describe a problem or topic under study [24].

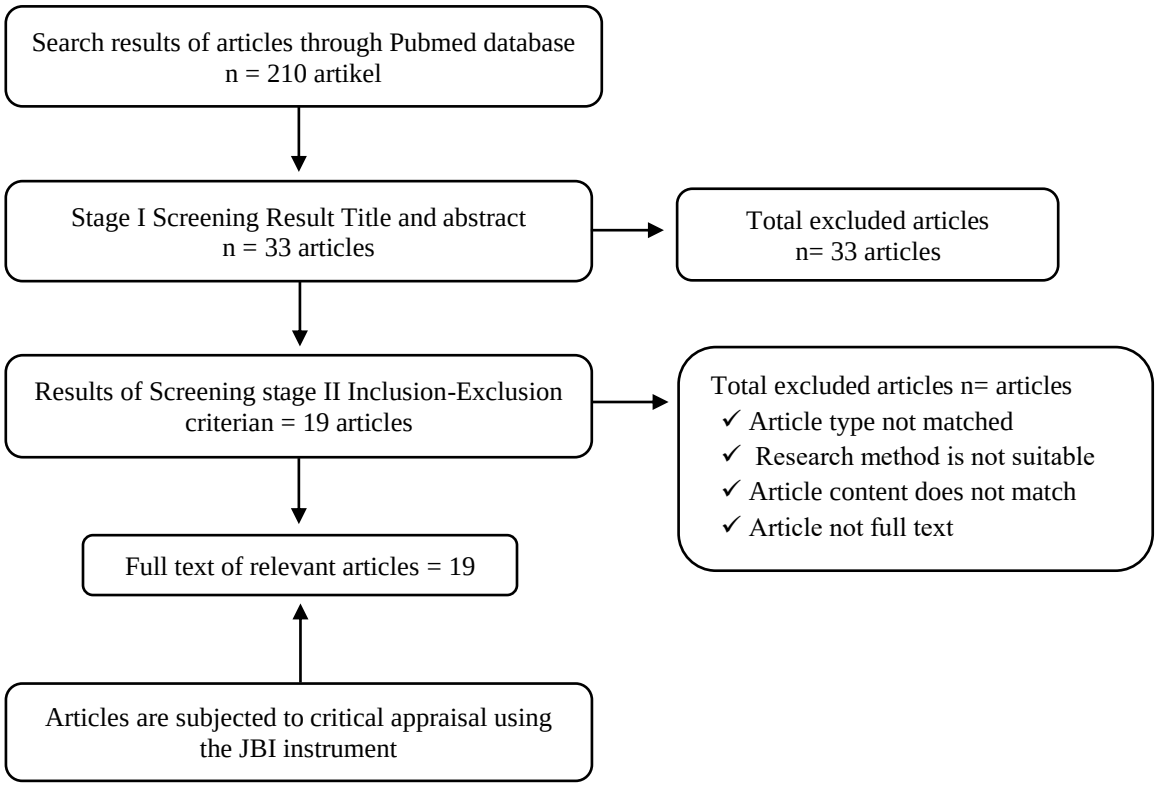
The literature search is the first stage of the narrative review, which aims to determine the bias of the article in the research [25]. In searching the literature, it is necessary to design a strategic search or appropriate keywords, so that the results obtained follow the research question [24]. Thus, the literature that will be used in this literature review is articles that discuss the effectiveness of hypnotherapy as a treatment intervention for stress. In this research, the literature search will use secondary data from databases such as PubMed. Search terms or keywords are a way to determine the limitations in the literature search [25]. When determining keywords, it is recommended to use the PICO method [26]. PICO is a method used in evidence-based practice (EBP) to find literature relevant to the problem being studied [27].

PICO is a term for Patient, population, or problem. Intervention is what intervention will be taken or researched, namely hypnotherapy or hypnotherapy; Comparison is a comparison intervention, in this case no comparison intervention is used; Outcome is what results will be achieved or desired from the intervention, namely a decrease in stress levels. In addition to PICO, when determining keywords or keywords, you can also use boolean operators. Boolean operators consist of AND, OR, and NOT [28]. Formulating keywords or keywords using PICO and boolean operators can further maximize the article search process, so that the articles obtained are relevant to the problem or research objectives.

Keywords or keywords used for literature searches in this study in English are “Hypnosis” or “Hypnoses” or “Hypnotism” or “Hypnotherapy” or “Hypnotherapies” and “Stress Reduction” or “Reduce stress”. While the keywords in Indonesian are “Hypnotherapy” or “Hypnosis” or “Hypnotherapist” and “Reduce stress”.

The number of articles obtained using several search databases such as PubMed, is 210 articles. Furthermore, the selection was carried out under the predetermined inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria are English articles, full-text articles, reputable journals, articles with RCT and quasi-experimental research methods, and articles that discuss hypnotherapy or hypnosis to reduce stress. The exclusion criteria in this study are articles without publisher name, volume, and number. So, 19 articles were obtained.

Nineteen articles that have been obtained are then critically appraised using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Tools. The results of the critical appraisal got a final score above 50% so it was suitable for use in this study which was analyzed. The results of the analysis are presented in the chart below.



Flowchart 1. The article selection process

The following is a scheme of the article search and sorting process that will be carried out to obtain articles that match the topic of the literature study. The total number of articles obtained is 210 articles (PubMed), with the selection results to be analyzed as many as 19 articles.

Stress often occurs to everyone in everyday life, ranging from adults, children, and adolescents. Stress comes from stressors such as traffic, problems with friends or family, individuals who will face exams, and many other things. Stress can have both positive and negative impacts, it all depends on how we handle and respond to the stress. The positive impact of stress is that it can make us more energized and increase motivation, while the negative impact of stress is that it can make our health suffer, depression, and even do dangerous things such as suicide. Therefore, interventions are needed

to prevent and handle stress so that it does not have a negative impact. One of the interventions that can handle stress is hypnotherapy which is a non-pharmacological intervention or complementary therapy that uses suggestion and hypnosis as its healing method. The suggestion is given with hypnosis through the subconscious mind, so that it can reach the root point of a person's problem. Therefore, hypnotherapy includes a cheap and easy intervention in reducing a person's stress level [29].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of the 19 research results reviewed, it shows that most of them say hypnotherapy is effective for reducing stress levels as evidenced by the significant statistical test value with a p-value ranging from 0.000 - <0.02. From 19 research results, there is 1 research that doubts hypnotherapy in handling stress.

One of the studies that doubted the effectiveness of hypnotherapy is a study conducted by Sarah, et al in 2023 about An exploratory study of hypnosis-induced blood count changes in chronically stressed individuals, Sarah, et al wrote that the results of hematological research provide evidence of changes in blood components through hypnosis. However, this hematological effect has rarely been studied. Therefore, we exploratively investigated the effects of single relaxation hypnosis on the hemogram in stressed individuals, assuming a decrease in leukocytes, platelets, and erythrocytes (main result). In addition, a decrease in erythrocyte-related parameters (hemoglobin, hematocrit), and an increase in plasma volume were also hypothesized (secondary outcome). Forty-four individuals (89% female) with chronic stress and moderate to high hypnotic suggestibility were randomized into either a hypnosis condition (20-min relaxation hypnosis; n=20) or a control condition (20-min documentary; n=24). Venous blood was drawn before and after the intervention and used to generate differential hemograms and determine plasma volume. Relaxation hypnosis caused a significant decrease in erythrocytes (Cohen's d=0.23) and consequently led to a decrease in erythrocyte-related parameters (hemoglobin, d=0.27; hematocrit, d=0.37) as well as a decrease in platelets (d=0.15) in hypnosis compared to the control condition. Presumably, this may be a consequence of the increased plasma volume (d=0.10), which was estimated based on hematocrit concentration and body weight. The change in leukocyte count caused by hypnosis could not be confirmed. Thus, a single session of relaxation hypnosis already changes certain blood count parameters. Although relaxation-induced vasodilation might explain these changes, it is still not entirely clear how these changes affect our stress response system.

Meanwhile, other research results agree that hypnotherapy is effective in dealing with stress. One of them is research on Stress and nursing education: hypnosis to improve student's quality of life conducted in 2023 by Stéphane Pasquet, stating that Hypnosis, practiced by a trained health professional, is a vector of change and a source of learning. Hypnosis can help students reduce stress and regulate their emotions by activating their resources.

Other research is also about The effect of hypnosis on perceived stress in women with preeclampsia, by Sedighe Vahdat, et.al in 2022, This randomized clinical trial was performed on 80 (40 people in each group) pregnant women 28-32 weeks with preeclampsia and hospitalized in two public hospitals in Mashhad in 2020. The Cohen Perceived Stress Questionnaire was first completed

in two groups. Then, in the intervention group, three half-hour sessions of hypnosis were performed with an interval of 3 days (hypnosis consists of three sessions: each session is held for three consecutive nights). After each session, the intervention package, which included recording the dialogs of each session for posthypnotic suggestion, was delivered to the mothers on a CD to listen to every night before bed. The control group received routine care. Then, 2 weeks after the intervention, the Perceived Stress Questionnaire was completed by both groups. The results were analyzed by independent t-test, paired t-test, Mann-Whitney, Chi-square, Friedman and covariance tests, and by SPSS 16. At the beginning of the study, there was no statistically significant difference between demographic characteristics and the perceived stress score before the intervention between the two groups ($P > 0.05$). However, after the intervention, the mean perceived stress score was a statistically significant difference between the intervention and control groups ($P = 0.005$). Perceived stress after the intervention was significantly reduced in the intervention group, which was significant between the two groups. Conclusion: Perceived stress in mothers with preeclampsia is reduced by hypnosis.

Silvia Fisch et.al also in their research Group Hypnosis for Stress Reduction - A Feasibility Study tahun 2020 In this prospective, single-arm feasibility study, healthy adult participants with self-assessed increased stress levels received 5 weekly group hypnosis sessions plus audio recordings. Twelve persons (10 females, mean (SD) age 48.9 (11.8) years participated. The mean (SD) intensity of perceived stress on a 0-to-100 mm VAS was reduced from 75.5 (11.5) mm at baseline to 33.9 (18.8) mm after 5 weeks. Cohen's perceived stress scale was reduced from 20.8 (5.7) to 13.8 (5.4). Focus group interviews showed that the study intervention was feasible and well accepted.

The research on Mindful Hypnotherapy to Reduce Stress and Increase Mindfulness: A Randomized Controlled Pilot Study, in 2020 conducted by Nicholas Olendzki et.al, The feasibility of mindful hypnotherapy (MH) intervention for stress reduction was investigated in a randomized trial. Forty-two college-age participants with elevated stress were randomized into MH intervention or wait-list control condition. MH participants completed an 8-week intervention with 1-hour individual sessions and self-hypnosis audio recordings for daily mindfulness. Results indicated excellent feasibility, determined by participant satisfaction, treatment adherence (84% compliance rate), and low rate of adverse events (4.5%). There were significant differences between the MH and control groups postintervention, with the mindful hypnotherapy intervention resulting in a significant and large decrease in perceived distress, $p < .001$, 15.35 (1.54), Hedge's g = - 1.14, and an increase in mindfulness, $p < .001$, 50.07 (2.04), Hedge's g = 1.36. This study indicates that MH is a feasible intervention for stress reduction and increasing mindfulness.

Danielle Reynaud and Léa Bruneau 2022 researched the Feasibility and acceptance of self-hypnosis to reduce chronic stress levels on family in-home caregivers of elderly people: protocol for the POSSAID pilot, randomized, wait-list controlled trial. This study is a prospective, monocentric, non-blinded, parallel, pilot, randomized waitlist-controlled trial that will be conducted at the University Hospital of Reunion Island. Sixty participants will be randomly allocated to one of two groups: a self-hypnosis group (intervention) or a waitlist control group. After an 8-week training program, intervention participants will practice self-hypnosis for ten minutes/day over 8 weeks and subsequently be followed up for 16 weeks thereafter. The primary outcome is to assess the feasibility of a 16-week self-hypnosis protocol for in-family caregivers. Secondary outcomes include the

evaluation of the effects of practicing self-hypnosis among in-family caregivers of elderly people concerning their stress levels, sleep disorders, levels of fatigue, and QoL at 2, 4 and 8 months on an exploratory basis.

Barbara Schmidt et.al in 2024 conducted research on Post-hypnotic safety suggestions to improve stress coping with long-lasting effects. Interventions improving stress coping usually require long training periods. In this study, we present a hypnosis-based intervention that produces long-term effects after a single hypnosis session. In that session, we established a post-hypnotic safety suggestion that participants can activate afterward with a cue, the Jena Safety Anchor. We tested 60 participants in our study who all received the hypnosis session and a stress task. The safety group used the Jena Safety Anchor during acute stress (Trier Social Stress Test, TSST). The control group used a neutral anchor. We measured subjective stress responses via self-reports and physiological stress responses via saliva and blood samples as well as heart rate. One week later, all participants filled in an online survey to measure the long-term effects of the post-hypnotic safety suggestion. We found that participants using the Jena Safety Anchor during the TSST reported significantly lower stress compared to the control group. The safety group also reported significantly fewer negative thoughts concerning their TSST performance than the control group during the stress recovery phase and 1 week later. All participants indicated that the Jena Safety Anchor still worked 1 week after its establishment. Suggestibility did not affect the efficacy of the Jena Safety Anchor. Our findings demonstrate that post-hypnotic safety suggestions improve stress coping with long-lasting effects, which makes it a promising intervention to promote mental health and establish stress resilience in just one hypnosis session.

Effects of a Brief Mindful Hypnosis Intervention on Stress Reactivity: A Randomized Active Control Study, is a study conducted by Elizabeth E Slonena and Gary R Elkins in 2021. A novel, audio-based brief mindful hypnosis (BMH) intervention for reducing stress reactivity during the Trier Social Stress Test (TSST) was investigated. Fifty-five college-aged participants with elevated stress were randomized to BMH or cognitive training (CT) active-control condition. Participants received a BMH or CT session and downloaded the audio-recorded intervention for daily home practice. Approximately 1 week later, participants received their second BMH or CT session and then completed the TSST. Results indicated BMH produced significant and medium effects in reducing stress reactivity and weekly stress and increasing mindfulness, with large increases in immediate relaxation compared to the CT active control. BMH demonstrated excellent adherence and was rated highly regarding satisfaction, ease of practice, perceived benefit, and likelihood of future use. This study provides the first empirical support that BMH is superior to an active-control intervention for reducing stress reactivity while significantly increasing mindfulness and relaxation. Based on the results of the literature review, most of the articles reviewed show that hypnotherapy is effective as a stress treatment, both stress in adolescents, and preeclamptic mothers, and stress in other conditions.

CONCLUSIONS

The effectiveness of hypnotherapy as an intervention for managing stress has been proven effective in various studies. This is supported by significant statistical test results, including ANOVA and t-tests, with p-values of 0.000, <.001, <.01, and <0.02. Different hypnotherapy techniques can be used to reduce stress, such as basic hypnotherapy, group hypnotherapy, self-hypnotherapy, and combined

hypnotherapy approaches, including hypnotherapy with augmented reality technology (AR) and mindful hypnotherapy (MH). Hypnotherapy can be applied to manage stress in various conditions, including stress in adolescents, preeclamptic mothers, and other stressful situations. Additionally, hypnotherapy has been found to enhance learning motivation and reduce anxiety, fatigue, and depression.

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