

Relaxation Techniques Alleviate Anxiety in Long-Term Childless Marriages

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Abstract. This study explores the psychological impact of childlessness in long-term marriages, focusing on Mrs. WK, who has been married for over ten years without children. Using the DASS 42 questionnaire and follow-up interviews, the study assessed her anxiety levels and tested interventions such as Benson's relaxation technique and child adoption. Findings showed that societal pressures and lack of children increased her anxiety, but family support, effective communication, and the relaxation method significantly reduced it. Adoption also notably improved her psychological well-being. The study highlights the need for comprehensive support from healthcare professionals to help individuals in similar situations manage anxiety effectively.

Highlights:

1. **Assessment Methods:** DASS 42 questionnaire and follow-up interviews evaluated anxiety levels.
2. **Interventions:** Benson's relaxation and child adoption reduced anxiety, improved well-being.
3. **Support Systems:** Family support, communication, and professional counseling are crucial.

Keywords: childlessness, long-term marriage, anxiety, psychological well-being, interventions

Introduction

When marriage is held, it is a form where both individuals hold a commitment to live life together by considering the partner as part of themselves. Marriage is a condition where they decide to live as a couple and start their own family [1]. Happiness during marriage can be influenced by many things, such as couple romance, caring, and understanding each other. In addition to a harmonious relationship with a partner, the presence of a child is also one part of the happiness of married life, which eventually forms a family.

The presence of a child is highly anticipated because it is the love of a mother, the pride of a father, and also the favorite of other family members. Many say that a perfect woman is when she becomes a mother. In addition, a woman's gender

role identity will be strengthened when she becomes a mother [2]. A woman who enters the early adult stage has one of the developmental tasks of becoming a parent and caring for children, or referred to as motherhood. Since the 19th century, parenting has been considered the main identity for adult women, which then makes the terms 'motherhood' and 'womanhood' considered into the same category [2].

Although motherhood is highly regarded in many societies, not all mature or married women are able to have children. This could be because they delay having children, do not want to have children, or want children but still do not get children such as infertility cases. [2]. Marriage is one of the processes of building a happy family and is closely related to genetic problems. Without children, families can lose their fundamental functions, such as reproducing, providing education, as well as support, as a result, parents are no longer able to care for, educate, and raise children [3].

What if the couple has not been given offspring during marriage. This will certainly affect the conditions in the marriage both slightly and severely. Wismanto found factors or causes that can affect/empower a sense of satisfaction in marriage including the presence of children in it [3]. The situation of not having children will result in consideration in the separation between the couple because it cannot produce a new generation. The findings of the study validate that the inability / inability of a person to produce a successor will be a disruptor in the relationship of married couples and can reduce / minimize the sense of satisfaction in marriage [3]. In addition to being able to disrupt the marriage relationship, the inability or not yet given offspring will be able to disrupt the mindset or level of anxiety, stress and also depression in the couple and generally this level of anxiety will be felt more for a person who is identified as infertile both husband and wife. The results of other findings in the study also reveal that a person who is declared unable to produce offspring / infertile will show deep sadness and consider life with suffering as well as a sense of not / lack of happiness, feeling stressed and feeling self useless and also a sense of guilt by one's own circumstances. This feeling is what ultimately causes a person to choose to separate [3].

Some studies show that women who experience infertility tend to be more stressed than men [2]. This is because many cultures consider infertility to be a serious failure of a woman to fulfill her role as a 'woman' [2]. Another study revealed that most infertile women have higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression [4].

One factor that has a strong influence on the anxiety felt by women experiencing infertility is social problems. The relationship between social problems and anxiety can be strengthened by cultural factors. Women's motivation to have children can be influenced by the desire to conform to social norms and expectations as well as social pressure to become mothers [5].

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Many couples are also strong in facing this condition, they will jointly find a way out of this very heavy problem. When a couple cannot get offspring they will definitely feel eager to care for a child, that's why many couples who do not have offspring will adopt a child. Adoption is a form of relationship between children and parents regulated by law, usually done to obtain heirs as well as obtain offspring from couples who do not have children. In order to adopt the child, the child will become an adopted child who has the status of being the child of the legal couple with all the rights and responsibilities [6].

Adopting a child will also have an impact on the psychological condition of the couple, because those who have not had the opportunity to experience being a parent for years can finally feel being a parent and do what other couples usually do. Authenticity in that situation is a source of family happiness because it is a place where parents express affection [7]. therefore the importance of communication and decision making by both partners is very important in dealing with these undesirable circumstances.

Method

The method of data collection is done by contacting the respondent via WA and then giving a questionnaire about the level of anxiety, here the questionnaire used is the DASS 42 assessment. After reading the results of the questionnaire, an interview is conducted which is close to the respondent's anxiety level. Then discussed about the anxiety and the provision of intervention by the author.

Result and Discussion

A. Presentasi Kasus

Studi kasus ini menggambarkan bagaimana keadaan/kondisi Psikis seorang wanita menikah lebih dari 10th dan belum memiliki keturunan. Gambaran umum keadaan klien dalam study kasus ini bisa dilihat pada Tabel 1.

Tabel 1. Gambaran Keadaan Klien

Name (age)	General Characteristics	Obsetry History	Assessment Results
Mrs. WK (37 years old)	Mrs. WK is a private kindergarten teacher with the last education S1 PGPAUD. Her husband Mr. S (37 years old), a private employee with the last education of SMA.	Had a laboratory check (privacy) because he did not immediately have offspring in the 3rd year of marriage.	At the time of assessment November 20, 2023. The age of marriage was 11 years old. Mrs. WK no longer feels anxious and claims to be happy, has adopted a child now 3 years old.

Further assessment of the psychological condition of Mrs. WK who said she no longer felt anxious and was in a happy condition was evidenced by the DASS 42 (Depression Anxiety Stress Scales) assessment question form. An overview of the client's psychological condition in the case study can be seen in Table 2.

Tabel 2 Gambaran Keadaan Psikis Klien melalui DASS 42 (ringkasan yang mengalami)

No.	Question (shown who feels)	Value	Category
1.	Getting angry over trivial things	1	Stress
2.	Feeling dry in the mouth	2	Anxiety

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3.	Feeling like you can't do anything anymore	1	Depression
4.	Tend to overreact to situations	1	Stress
5.	Weakness in the limbs	1	Anxiety
6.	Excessive anxiety about a situation but can feel relieved when the situation is over	1	Anxiety
7.	Impatience	1	Stress
8.	fatigue	1	Anxiety
9.	Loss of interest in many things (eating, socialization and ambulation)	1	Depression
10.	Difficult to be enthusiastic about many things	1	Depression
11.	Being in a state of tension	1	Stress
12.	Trembling	2	Anxiety
13.	Difficulty in increasing initiative in doing things	1	Depression

All three categories are in a normal state or in other words, Mrs. WK's psychological condition according to the Dass 42 assessment is normal for both anxiety, depression and stress. DASS 42 is one of the psychological measurement tools or methods used in measuring anxiety levels by dividing 3 categories, namely anxiety, depression, and stress, where this assessment has 42 questions, therefore DASS 42, which means Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scales 42.

In addition to questions with the DASS 42 assessment the author also asked whether the client had experienced a downturn, and answered yes. Asked about when the downturn occurred the client answered when he found out the Lab results at the age of 3 years of marriage. The client also said that the downturn could only be said to be anxious and began to subside when the age of marriage was 5. When asked if there were factors that increased anxiety, the client replied that questions from friends and relatives that could not be answered would increase the level of anxiety. Then asked about things that can strengthen the situation, the client answered that it was family support, Mrs. WK said that the most instrumental in providing support was her husband and parents, especially her mother. Then from the assessment obtained data that Mrs. WK and her husband had adopted a child, then asked if the child was now the biggest source of happiness, Mrs. WK said that the child was the biggest source of happiness for the client and husband, and was a joint choice/decision and also they supported each other even though at the beginning when adopting the child there was a little worry/fear for fear of not being able to take care of the child or rumors outside.

When experiencing anxiety from year to year, Mrs. WK said that the handling was done by surrendering to Allah SWT. It can be said that Mrs. WK uses the basons relaxation method, which is a relaxation method by remembering the creator God and chanting words that remember God, such as dhikr, prayer or reading verses of the Qur'an.

Mrs. WK said the response given by health workers (doctors) after notification of lab results was that the doctor recommended further action, and this was done by Mrs. WK, but after 3 months of doing the program and the results did not go what was wanted so that it made Mrs. WK feel more anxious / anxiety levels increased, so Mrs. WK and her husband decided not to continue the program and return to surrender. Until the 8th year of marriage Mrs. WK and her husband agreed to adopt a child.

A. Discussion

Anxiety is very commonly experienced by ordinary people who have a certain condition. Anxiety arises influenced by many things, especially in individuals who have problems and reinforced by the mismatch between the will and the expected will [9]. Anxiety can be experienced by adolescents because of their education, adults because of their work, parents because of the condition of their family/children, pregnant people because of their pregnancy, as well as labor or postpartum. Moreover, anxiety in someone who is experiencing a big problem such as anxiety in a woman who has been married for more than 10 years but has not been blessed with children in that long marriage. Like the situation of Mrs. WK who still has not been given offspring even though the age of marriage is more than 10 years. This greatly affected Mrs. WK's psychological condition, which according to Mrs. WK was downturned and her unstable mental condition due to anxiety peaked at the age of marriage in year 3 [10]. Infertility is a condition where a man and a woman cannot have children even though they have sex two to 3 times a week for 1 year without using any contraceptives [11]. Because of this, Mrs. WK and her husband began to feel anxiety. Other studies say that the level of stress or anxiety experienced by people who do not experience offspring is much greater. Supported by findings from other studies, it was found that the psychological dynamics found in couples without offspring/children will experience changes in their emotions and feel a burden on them. However, with the passage of time and the increasing age

of marriage there will be anxiety as well as concern, and because it has been decades in marriage and still has not been given a successor / offspring [12].

Anxiety in Mrs. WK was exacerbated when external parties asked questions about children that could not be answered by Mrs. WK, this situation is supported by research from Bloom 2009 In this study, women whose fertility treatment has not been successful, are more sensitive in responsive to various questions about children addressed to them [13]. this research matches the results of research conducted by Rahmani and Abrar (1994) which shows and indicates that couples who are in infertility conditions / problems will tend to be very sensitive to questions about children who have not been present in their marriage [13]. Meanwhile, what lowers the anxiety scale in Mrs. WK is the support of family and husband. This statement is supported by the results of other studies that say the closest people will provide emotional/spiritual comfort, but the existence of children depends on the sustenance given. In fact, the husband will always encourage the clients about their situation, and the clients love each other and find their own way, the important thing is that the family is safe, happy, and prosperous [14].

But over time Mrs. WK felt her anxiety decreased this was felt by Mrs. WK in the 5th year of marriage. This condition is supported by other research which states that at the beginning of marriage, couples still do not feel the situation is a burden, but with the passage of time and increasing age in marriage if still not given a baby the couple will begin to feel anxious and worried, so that in certain conditions that have been tens of years in marriage still not given a baby, will experience a state of self-giving up and accepting the situation [13].

Handling anxiety carried out by Mrs. WK is with basons relaxation, which is a technique to relax the self and mind by relaxing breathing combined with trust. This relaxation aims and produces benefits in relaxing the body / physical as well as psychological or emotional in a way that will reduce muscle tension, which will have an effect in preventing to reduce levels of anxiety and stress [15]. Anxiety that a person feels in the form of fear, excessive worry, anxiety, lack of relaxation, and insomnia can be overcome using this benson relaxation. This basons therapy can cause the brain to stimulate the output of alpha waves, and these waves have a certain frequency. The waves are between 8 and 12 Hz, which indicates that a person is in a relaxed state. When the alpha wave occurs, it will make the vessels in the blood dilate, so that blood

flow will be in a stable condition and the brain will release endorphins and serotonin hormones that make a person feel safe, calm, comfortable and happy [15].

After going through the downturn Mrs. WK and her husband decided to adopt a child at the age of 8 marriage, this was decided by Mrs. WK and her husband together and as a form of effort to the above. The child was adopted from the womb of his biological mother, and at birth was immediately adopted and cared for by Mrs. WK and her husband and this decision had a positive impact on the couple, so that the couple could feel the parents they had been waiting for all this time, as well as positive for the child's biological parents, because it relieves or helps the economy, while for the child himself gets love from his adoptive parents as well [16]. Moreover, this decision also had a positive impact on Mrs. WK's psychological condition, saying that she was in a happy condition, and was proven by the DASS 42 assessment which showed the results that Mrs. WK's anxiety, stress and depression fell into the Normal category. Like research by Adel & Zakso 2017 that the adoption of children has a positive impact on the psychology of the couple, because they no longer feel anxious about both old age, there is joy because of children, and other positive things [6].

Conclusion

The psychological state of couples who are married for more than 10 years has not been given offspring, will experience anxiety at the age of marriage past 2 years. And after the peak of adversity will subside with the age of marriage. Factors that exacerbate anxiety are external factors in the form of questions about children, while factors that reduce anxiety are support from family and communication and support from the husband.

Handling can be done by means of Benson's relaxation, which is a relaxation method with respiratory relaxation coupled with surrender to God, this is useful to reduce anxiety in a person can be in a condition of excessive anxiety, fear, feeling not / not in a safe condition, comfortable not relaxed, and also in sleep disorders such as insomnia. In addition to doing this method to reduce anxiety, respondents also decided to adopt children, adopting children has proven to have a positive impact. During the assessment at the age of 11 years of marriage, the respondent did not feel anxious at all and could be said to be happy (as evidenced by the DASS 42 examination).

What needs to be improved is support with counseling and approaches from medical personnel is very important and must be given to respondents, both in the medical, emotional and spiritual scope. The purpose of this counseling is to motivate and support the client's psychological condition to be in good condition after knowing the lab results.

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