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Psychological impact of hospitalization on child and family and the role of nursing care

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Abstract

Hospitalization is a condition that needs someone to remain within to receive therapy and treatment for a reason that's arranged or a crisis condition, as a result of being admitted to the hospital, where they are exposed to difficult, frequently annoying procedures that can be uncomfortable on both children and their families. Thus, it is common to see in these children signs and symptoms such as anxiety, losing weight, mood swings, and challenges with psychosocial adaptation.

Method: This study is a review article, aims to guide how results were obtained in research on the topic in a systematic and orderly manner following guiding question was formulated: "What is the role of nursing in caring for hospitalized children, in order to contribute to reducing the impact of hospitalization.

Discussion: In this article review the author address the issue of the impact of hospitalization on children and families, the strength point of reviewed article were the importance and spread of the topic at the present time. While the weakness points were the challenge of finding scholarly literature that met the inclusion criteria.

Conclusion: It was noticed that this impact generates marked transformations in both family dynamics and their routine, causing emotional and physical consequences for children and families. Symptoms can be diverse, such as pain, suffering and changes in family routines. It also indicated to the importance of nursing role to help the child and family adapt to the new atmosphere to reduce psychological problems caused by hospitalization.

Keywords: Psychological impact, hospitalized child, nursing care

1. Introduction

When a child is born, parents, relatives, and even health professional staff hope for a healthy child. Nevertheless, illness will always occur during childhood so it is common for children to get sick and unwell and these illnesses can be acute (like the common cold) or persistent (like cystic fibrosis and children with disabilities) (Cahayag, 2020) ^[2].

A child's normal routine is change when they are admitted to the hospital, they may experience painful treatments while staying in a foreign location with unknown medical personnel and equipment. For a child, this is very traumatizing and children who have been hospitalized are more likely than non-hospitalized children and hospitalized adults to exhibit signs of mental health disorders (Hibbard, 2020) ^[11].

Hospitalization is an important process for sick and unwell child and that will have a significant impact on the family and child balance. as a result of being admitted to the hospital, where they are exposed to of difficult, frequently annoying procedures that can be uncomfortable on both a mental and a physical basis (Barros *et al.*, 2021) ^[1]. Thus, it is common to see in these children signs and symptoms such as anxiety, losing weight, mood swings, diminished cognitive function, loss of self-confidence, developing phobias, insecurities, and challenges with psychosocial adaptation (Pontes *et al.*, 2022) ^[21].

During a child's hospital stay, both the child and their parent receive care. The parents consider as an essential member of the therapy team who should attend in the ward of the child during his/her hospitalization, parents' presence helps to assure the child's safety and relieves anxiety and through interactions and partnerships with the child, the nurse helps the kid's adaptation to the unfamiliar environment. (Witanowska *et al.*, 2019) ^[26].

In relation to the family of the hospitalized child, the companions also experience a number of changes that disrupt their family dynamics since they must relocate away from their

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relatives, which causes their anxiety and worries about what they have to do (Cahayag, 2020) [2].

In addition to this, the frequent hospitalization of the child in the hospital makes the family spend less time at work and devote most of their time to the sick child, which increase feelings of insecurity and this has a significant negative impact on family finances (Pontes *et al.*, 2022) [21].

Understanding the negative impact of disease and hospitalization and the use of strategies that make the hospital environment supportive of well-being are facilitators of adaptation for the children and their families. Consequently, they can turn this experience into an opportunity for learning and development (Barros *et al.*, 2021) [1].

Based on what was mentioned above, the leading question for this study was: What is the role of nursing in caring for hospitalized children, in order to contribute to reducing the impact of hospitalization? In order to answer this question, the objective of this study is to understand the impact of hospitalization on the family/child dynamic and demonstrate how nursing care should be carried out in this context, aiming to improve the quality of care and minimize the negative effect of this hospitalization.

2. Methods

2.1 Search strategy

This study is a review article, providing the most comprehensive methodological approach among literature reviews, all searched database listed in Google Scholar in English language, with timeframe started from 10th of November - 10th of December 2023.

The methodology aims to guide how results were obtained in research on the topic in a systematic and orderly manner, providing clear information. Showed that the integrative review is formulated through six fundamental steps, as follows:

1. Creation of the guiding question, which will define the articles included in the research.
2. Sampling in the literature through database searches.

3. Data collection to obtain selected articles.
4. Analysis of the included studies, formulating a rigorous strategy to evaluate the characteristics of each study.
5. Discussion of results and comparison of the data evidenced.
6. Presentation of results, which must be clear so that the reader can critically evaluate the results (Lubbe *et al.*, 2020) [16].

With this in mind, the following guiding question was formulated: “What is the role of nursing in caring for hospitalized children, in order to contribute to reducing the impact of hospitalization.

2.2 Inclusion criteria

Through the descriptors “Hospitalized Child”, “Nursing Care”. The inclusion criteria were articles that were available in English, available in full, published in the last five years and that included the relationship between the impact of hospitalization on the child and the family.

2.3 Exclusion criteria

Exclusion criteria were articles that did not follow the target line of this study and duplicate works in the search databases. Furthermore, works that were incomplete old articles were excluded.

2.4 Limitation

The majority of the limitations of the current study's preparation was the challenge of finding scholarly literature that met the inclusion criteria. The greater number of articles included in order to compose the sample would help to increase the credibility and validity of the results obtained.

The final sample of this review consisted of 20 scientific articles (Table 1), using the inclusion criteria, those that were available in English, dated in the last five years and that addressed the relationship between the impact of hospitalization on the child and the family.

Table 1: Articles collected related to study topic

No.	Autores	Title	Design	Year
1.	Janula RAJU, Asirvatham R and Madani AH	Assess the Level of Stress among Mothers of Hospitalized Children: A Challenge for Quality Nursing Care.	A Descriptive Study	2019
2.	Witanowska J, Warmuz-Wancisiewicz AI and Ullman	Hospitalization as a Difficult Situation for Children in The Opinion of Parents and Nursery Personnel.	A Descriptive Study	2019
3.	Delvecchio E, Salcuni S, Lis A, Germani A and Di Riso D	Hospitalized Children: Anxiety, Coping Strategies, and Pretend Play.	A Comparative Study	2019
4.	Öztürk Şahin, Ö and Topan A	Investigation of the Fear of 7–18-Year-Old Hospitalized Children for Illness and Hospital	Descriptive And Sectional Study	2019
5.	Church K, Campbell D and Halliday V	Impact of Hospitalization of Children on Parental Dietary Habits.	A Qualitative Study	2019
6.	Suparto TA, Somantri BS and Sari AT	Parents' Roles in Overcoming the Impact of Hospitalization on Preschool Children.	Quantitative Research Design And Descriptive Approach	2020
7.	Claridge A, Hajec L, Montgomery L and Knapp B	Child and Parent Psychosocial Experiences of Hospitalization: an Examination of the Role of Child Life Specialists.	A Descriptive Study	2020
8.	Cahayag V	Hospitalization and Child Development: Effects on Sleep, Developmental Stages, and Separation Anxiety.	A Scoping Review	2020
9.	Christian BJ	Translational Research - Parental Stress Associated with Hospitalization of Children with Critical Life-Threatening Conditions and the Long-term Impact	A Descriptive Study	2020
10.	Lima LN, Carvalho EDO, Silva VBD and Melo MC	Self-Reported Experience of Hospitalized Children:	An Integrative Review	2020
11.	McBride-Henry K, Miller C, Trenholm A and Officer TN	Occupying 'in-hospitable' Spaces: Parental/Primary-Caregiver Perceptions of the Impact of Repeated Hospitalisation in Children under Two Years of Age	A Qualitative Perspective	2020
No.	Autores	Title	Design	Year
12.	Hibbard SE	Impact of Hospitalization on Pediatric Patient's Mental Health.	A Scoping Review	2020
13.	Barros I, Lourenço M, Nunes E and	Nursing Interventions Promoting Child/Youth/Family Adaptation to	A Scoping Review.	2021

	Charepe	Hospitalization.		
14.	Zdun-Ryżewska A, Nadrowska N, Błażek M, Białek K, Zach E and Krywda-Rybska D	Parent's Stress Predictors during a Child's Hospitalization.	A Descriptive Study	2021
15.	Çamur Z and Sarıkaya Karabudak S	The effect of parental participation in the care of hospitalized children on parent satisfaction and parent and child anxiety.	Randomized Controlled Trial	2021
16.	Meentken MG, van der Ende J, del Canho R, van Beynum	Psychological Outcomes after Pediatric Hospitalization: The Role of Trauma Type.	A Descriptive Study	2021
17.	Pontes AF, Barros NH de C, Rodrigues NA Ângela RL	The impact of hospitalization on the child and family	An Integrative Literature Review	2022
18.	Traoré F, Diall HG, Sacko K, Maiga B and Konaté D.	Psychological Impact of the Hospital Stay: The Experience of Mothers of Newborns Hospitalized In Neonatology at Gabriel Toure Hospital.	A Prospective Study	2023
19.	Schneuer FJ, Demetriou E, Bond D, Lain SJ, Guastella AJ and Nassar N.	Child Characteristics and Health Conditions Associated with Paediatric Hospitalizations and Length of Stay.	Population-Based Cross-Sectional Study	2023
20.	Fardell JE, Hu N, Wakefield Nassar N	Impact of Hospitalizations due to Chronic Health Conditions on Early Child Development	A Longitudinal Cohort Study	2023

3. Hospitalization of Children

Hospitalization is a condition that needs someone to remain within to receive therapy and treatment for a reason that's arranged or a crisis condition (Suparto *et al.*, 2020) ^[23].

Hospitalization will always be accompanied by stress, anxiety, and tension. Regardless of gender, the hospitalization procedure is an extremely unpleasant event (Janula *et al.*, 2019) ^[13]. A major source of sickness that has an impact on people's lives and the health care system both financially and non-financially is linked to hospital admission (Schneuer *et al.*, 2023) ^[22].

Children will continue to experience the signs of mental health disorders if they do not receive adequate care during their stay in the hospital such as Irritability, hostility, tension, self-doubt, restlessness, insomnia, and other symptoms are among them. (Hockenberry, 2019) ^[12].

Additionally, it is necessary to create a welcoming atmosphere for children in order to enhance patient comfort and decrease the negative effects of being in the hospital. Examples of this include multicolored pediatrics rooms and kid-friendly cartoon pictures (Suparto *et al.*, 2020) ^[23].

In order to prevent the negative effects of hospitalization on children, a variety of measures must be taken, one of which is to involve parents in all nursing interventions and to establish efficient routes of communication between patients, parents, and nurses. It is important to provide details or medical facts regarding a child's condition or state in order to address questions from the child and relieve worry in the parents (Suparto *et al.*, 2020) ^[23].

Having a parent present during the hospitalization process can help the child accept the changes in their surroundings and feel more secure. Additionally, communication between the parent and the nursing staff can have a big impact on how the child receives treatment going forward (Witanowska *et al.*, 2019) ^[26].

Parents of children with illnesses experience phenomenal psychological discomfort throughout their stay in the hospital, especially in countries with poor infrastructure where hospital facilities are still limited. There is not enough skilled medical and nursing staff, and there are also insufficient facilities for the mothers to stay in, which is essential to ensuring their comfort and privacy (Traoré *et al.*, 2023) ^[24].

Psychosocial support is necessary for families to manage their hospital stays. Many of the treatments applied by pediatric specialists in children's hospitals have empirical basis, and they are trained to address this need (Claridge *et al.*, 2020) ^[6].

Researchers have made attempts to find out the ways in which children hospitalization affects patients' mental health. Children obtain abilities allowing them to function in the world as they grow through each developmental stage. Stressors turn into traumatic experiences as soon as they happen before a child has developed the coping mechanisms needed to deal with them. Results show that stressors may obstruct someone's ability to comply with the predicted developmental path (Malik & Marwaha, 2020) ^[17]. Failure to meet developmental milestones at the appropriate age might lead to emotional and psychological disorders. (Malik & Marwaha, 2020) ^[17]. The causes and methods by which stressors cause harm to children at various stages of development and over a range of ages are explained below. The most frequent stressors linked to hospitalization include pain, loss of control, separation, and physical damage; some stressors are more age-dependent than others:

Reaction of newborn babies: A long stay in the hospital and illness for a long period of time can affect the healthy relationship between the child and the mother. It can affect the emotional bond between them, the inability of the mother and father to care and love the child, and the will child's lack of response to the parents and will lack of interaction with them (Fan *et al.*, 2020) ^[10].

Nursing care in this age group is carried out by increasing communication between the parents and the child, in addition to activating sensory-motor communication between them (Fan *et al.*, 2020) ^[10].

Reactions of infants: Separation anxiety is one of the most common problems among infants hospitalized, providing the infant's basic needs becomes less common after the mother is separated from his/her, depression and emotional withdrawal are common problems among infants between the ages of 8 and 12 months (Lakatos *et al.*, 2019) ^[14].

Nursing care in this age group is carried out by encouraging the mother to care for the child in a balanced way to reduce separation from him, in addition to providing the basic needs and reducing the number of people who carry him, the mother must be present during procedures (Lubbe *et al.*, 2020) ^[16].

Reactions of toddlers: The most common problems at this age that occur due to long stays in hospitals are rejection, social withdrawal, and feelings of denial. The child often cries and expresses his desire to see his mother with outbursts of anger and sucking his thumb (Wahab and Najamuddin, 2019) ^[25].

Nursing care in this age group is provided by providing a private room with no appointment for visits, in addition to maintaining the child's usual routine such as sleeping, eating, and showering (Hibbard, 2020) ^[11].

Preschool children's reaction: At this age, the child uses various defense methods to adapt to hospitalization, such as denial, violence, withdrawal, and the use of imagination. They may show emotions similar to toddlers' children, such as sadness (Suparto *et al.*, 2020) ^[23].

Nursing care in this age group is done by reducing stress by having the parents with the child continuously and participating in his care, in addition to talking to the child in a clear way and sharing his current feeling (Suparto *et al.*, 2020) ^[23].

School age children's reaction: School-age children show emotions such as fear, anxiety, fantasy, and the search for privacy as a result of being in the hospital for long periods. They may show signs such as depression, phobia, separation anxiety, and denial, or they may try to act like adults (Barros *et al.*, 2021) ^[1].

Nursing care in this age group is carried out by respecting the privacy and needs of the child during examinations, in addition to making the child recognize the problem and answering his/her questions (Hibbard, 2020) ^[11].

Adolescents' reactions: This age group often suffers from physical disorders, separation from family and friends, loss of privacy, and lack of independence. They may have bouts of anger or behave uncooperatively with their family and nurses (Czyz *et al.*, 2019) ^[7].

Nursing care in this age group is carried out by respecting the child's privacy and needs, participating in his/her decisions, providing his/her own room, in addition to explaining all the health procedures that will be carried out and answering all his/her questions (Hibbard, 2020) ^[11].

3.1 Impact of hospitalization on child

Öztürk Şahin, and Topan, (2019) ^[20] observed in their study that more than half of the children had anxieties related to illness and hospitalization. Additionally, it was found that the first things that made the family afraid were having surgical procedures. This view disagree with a triangulation study done by Delvecchio *et al.*, (2019) ^[8] this study done on school-age Italian children admitted to the hospital, and compared them with a control group of youngsters in the same range of ages who were never hospitalized. Children's trait anxiety did not show a significant difference between those who were hospitalized and those who were not.

A study by Claridge *et al.*, (2020) ^[6] showed that children with exposure to child life services had lower anxiety levels than children without and those who had previous admission to hospital and stay for long time. Results also indicated that a more comprehensive approach to child life intervention would be helpful in lowering children's anxiety and distress. Also Lima *et al.*, (2020) ^[15] found that childhood hospitalization experiences can have lasting effects.

Cahayag, (2020) ^[2] indicated that children who were in the hospital for longer than a week was suffering from separation anxiety, which showed itself in the form of behavioral changes with family members, increased crying, and difficulty being left alone. This results agree with a literature was reviewed by Hibbard (2020) ^[11] and

concluded that major hospitalization cause increased anxiety, sadness, anger, and irritability are separation, loss of control, physical damage, pain and sleep disturbances.

Hospitalizes children experienced regression to lower developmental levels, or "taking a step back," in terms of their developmental stage and interactions with peers and friends. As reported by Cahayag, (2020) ^[2] study and this point of view agree with Hibbard (2020) ^[11] study who indicated that hospital stresses that interfere with child development.

The viewpoints were similar between Lima *et al.*, (2020) ^[15] and Hibbard (2020) ^[11] studies which they both indicated that it is important for nurses to pay attention to their children patents' perceptions in order to increase satisfaction and reduce negative effects and healthcare professionals should be able to adapt in light of this information to guarantee that hospitalization has the least negative effects on children.

Zdun-Ryżewska *et al.*, (2021) ^[27] indicated in their study that personal characteristics like IQ and temperament affect coping mechanisms with the immediate and long-term consequences of hospitalization. Also, The results of Meentken *et al.*, (2021) ^[19] study showed that Children who have been hospitalized one or more times have significant levels of symptoms related to anxiety, despair, and post-traumatic stress disorder. To decrease the emotional and psychological effects of procedures, early symptom detection and the application of a trauma-informed healthcare approach may be essential

There is agreement in the results between Zdun-Ryżewska *et al.*, (2021) ^[27] and Pones *et al.*, (2022) studes which showed that children who use positive strategies for coping have reduced emotional difficulties during and after hospital stays and work more cooperatively with medical staff. This highlights the importance of suggestions to encourage well-being and the need for strategies that reduce the negative impact of hospitalization on children.

The results of Meentken *et al.*, (2021) ^[19] study showed that Children who have been hospitalized one or more times have significant levels of symptoms related to anxiety, despair, and post-traumatic stress disorder and this agree with Fardel *et al.*, (2023) ^[9] indicated that hospitalizations that occur more frequently and for longer periods of time associated with chronic health conditions and that will effect on child's mental health specially if it occur during the first five years of life

Also, the viewpoints were similar between Fardel *et al.*, (2023) ^[9] and Pones *et al.*, (2022).

Which they indicated that children with the most severe and serious chronic health conditions have a higher risk of being unprepared for school.

3.2 Impact of Hospitalization on Family

There are a number of reasons why family stress might arise from hospitalization, including inadequate financial resources, a shortage of caregivers time to stay with the child, and another aspects such as ward atmosphere as reported by Janula *et al.*, (2019) ^[13], also findings from Church *et al.*, (2019) ^[5] study suggest that a parent's emotional health is greatly impacted by having a child in the hospital, which has an additional effect on their eating patterns and this may affect their ability to care for the unwell child in time as a result of their physical and mental health problems.

Janula *et al.*, (2019) ^[13] and Church *et al.*, (2019) ^[5] studies both indicated that the mothers of children in the hospital were dealing with a range of pressures and families in these situation need to be more supported inside the hospital setting such as accessing food in hospital and receiving healthy food choices. Add to that.

Based on the results of Suparto *et al.*, (2020) ^[23] research concluded that a significant number of respondents have negative experiences with hospitalization. Add to that, Christian, (2020) ^[4] reported that parents can experience changes in their responsibilities as parents and an overall decrease in their abilities to care for their child. Hospitalized children, their parents, and their families are also more susceptible to the stressful events that are associated with staying at a hospital.

Suparto *et al.*, (2020) ^[23] indicated that the parent's involvement in their children's care during hospitalization, their offerings of psychological support, social support, and stress management, as well as their facilitation of their children, all impact the parents' ability to cope with the effects of hospitalization. And this results agree with Çamur and Karabudak, (2021) ^[3] study which concluded that the involvement of parents in their children's hospital care reduces anxiety levels in both parents and children and increases the satisfaction of parents with healthcare.

Pones *et al.*, (2022) concluded in their literature review that the impact of hospitalization causes clear changes in the routine and dynamics of the family, with emotional and physical impacts on both the child and his or her family. Also Traoré *et al.*, (2023) ^[24] reported in their study that a pattern of stressful events that were caused by recurrent hospital stays affected social interactions and relationships with family members.

In a study done by Traoré *et al.*, (2023) ^[24] the results showed that every mother had given her permission for her infant to be admitted to the hospital experienced emotion such as sadness, despair, worry, and anxiety. Also, the findings of single site study done by McBride-Henry *et al.*, (2020) ^[18] revealed that the experiences of these parents/caregivers were marked by a sense of helplessness, and they described hospitals as harsh, tough places to live that are not "hospitable."

There was agreement between Traoré *et al.*, (2023) ^[24] and McBride-Henry *et al.*, (2020) ^[18] studies which they indicated that the majority of mothers gave the department's organization a low rating, and many of them were unable to explain the role of the medical staff when they were at the hospital and mothers reported having sleep difficulties and most of them had negative thoughts about their hospital stay.

4. Conclusion

In this article review the author address the issue of the impact of hospitalization on children and families. It was noticed that this impact generates marked transformations in both family dynamics and their routine, causing emotional and physical consequences for children and families. Symptoms can be diverse, such as pain, suffering, tiredness, anguish, guilt and changes in family routines. Nursing care today shows the need for more and more research aimed at approaching comprehensive patient care. Given this, more in-depth studies on the impacts that hospitalization causes on children and families should be continued, with a focus on holistic attention and care aimed at joint needs.

This review was essential for understanding the impacts suffered by hospitalized children and their families, since having better knowledge about the topic allows nursing staff to develop better coping strategies, as well as the strategy of establishing a standardization of individualized care for hospitalized children. Furthermore, the nurse, when planning assistance, guarantees his responsibility towards the assisted child, since planning allows diagnosing the patient's needs, guarantees the appropriate prescription of care, guides the supervision of performance, the evaluation of results and the quality of assistance.

In this way, the importance of strategies for overcoming the negative effects of hospitalization in children and the importance of recommendations for promoting well-being are clear, such as carrying out hospital humanization strategies in caring for the child's family, transforming the hospitalization process into a positive experience for the child, encouraging them to take an active stance within the situation they experience. Furthermore, it is essential that there is active communication between health professionals-family members-patients in the pediatric unit to improve the quality of care, as well as the inclusion of more trained professionals working in the area in question, based on the notion of a team multi-professional.

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