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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

PARENTAL STRESS DURING PEDIATRIC HOSPITALIZATION IN INDONESIA: ASSOCIATIONS WITH KNOWLEDGE, SOCIAL SUPPORT, AND LENGTH OF STAY

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ABSTRACT

Parental stress during a child's hospitalization can negatively affect parents' psychological well-being and the quality of care they provide. This study aimed to examine the associations of knowledge, social support, and length of stay (LOS) with parental stress during a child's hospitalization. A cross-sectional study was conducted at two private hospitals in Surabaya, Indonesia, from December 2024 to February 2025. A total of 254 parents were recruited using purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), the Parenting Stress Index (PSI), and medical records. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed on the pooled sample to examine the associations between the study variables. In the unadjusted pooled analysis, knowledge was significantly and negatively associated with parental stress (B = –0.450; 95% CI: –0.544 to –0.356; p < .001). Social support also showed a significant negative association (B = –0.310; 95% CI: –0.412 to –0.208; p < .001). In contrast, LOS was positively associated with parental stress (B = 0.620; 95% CI: 0.365 to 0.875; p < .001). These correlations remained consistent when examined separately by hospital. Nursing interventions may therefore include structured parental health education and strategies to strengthen family and peer support to promote parental well-being.

Keywords: *child, length of stay; health knowledge; hospitalized; Parents; psychological; social support; stress,*

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BACKGROUND

Caring for a hospitalized child is a major challenge for parents, affecting not only the child but also causing significant psychological stress among parents (Sufatmiaty et al., 2022). Studies have shown that parents of children with health conditions are more likely to experience depressive symptoms, anxiety, and poorer health than parents of healthy children (Canga et al., 2020; Koch et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022). In addition to managing their child's illness, parents may also face complex caregiving responsibilities at home, which can be emotionally demanding and increase the risk of poor health, psychological stress, fatigue, and sleep deprivation (McCann et al., 2015; Mussatto et al., 2021).

Longer hospital stays may further increase parental stress, as parents must adapt to the hospital environment and cope with uncertainty regarding their child's condition (Cheng & Lai, 2023). Anxiety experienced during a child's hospitalization may persist for months or even years after discharge. Approximately 10-14% of parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions experience symptoms consistent with post-hospitalization anxiety (Rohana et al., 2020). Similarly, a previous study found that half of the parents of children hospitalized with potentially life-