

# Finger Painting as a "Self-Healing" Method for Overcoming Anxiety in Early Childhood

I Gusti Agung Ayu Yunita Utami\*

## Abstract

Childhood is a developmental phase that greatly determines success in the next developmental phase. This golden period is the most effective period for stimulating cognitive, emotional, affective, and motor functions. Many important problems occur in the early childhood development phase which give rise to anxiety and even trauma. The research method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. Descriptive qualitative research is in the form of research using a case study method or approach. The research results explain that to overcome this, appropriate therapy methods are needed to suit the child's developmental age. "Finger painting" is a choice of "self-healing" method that can be done independently by children by activating fine motor sensors, imagination, and cognitive functions to stimulate memory. This method fosters feelings of security, comfort, and can overcome the anxiety experienced by children. An additional benefit of finger painting as a self-healing method is that children can develop better "self-development" abilities in the future.

**Keywords:** Finger Painting, Self-Healing, Anxiety, Early Childhood

## I. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is very vulnerable to anxiety. Anxious attitudes in children often occur when children experience fear or worry about certain situations that threaten the child's life. This can happen when the child is in a new place, or when the child is in a new environment, with people they have just met, and when they hear sounds or see images that are very scary for them. Anxiety is a normal and common thing felt by children. In most cases, anxiety in children is temporary and can be triggered by certain stressful events. Anxiety or anxiety disorders in psychology include a broad definition. Anxiety is different from fear. Fear is an emotional reaction to a real or imminent threat. Anxiety in early childhood is characterized by the child's physical characteristics such as body trembling, dizziness, nausea, shortness of breath or a shaking chest, even children who experience anxiety disorders usually often cry or scream. Anxiety in children greatly influences their mood and all their daily activities. Even anxiety can disrupt a child's mental health.

The causes of anxiety in children vary, such as hereditary factors or child abuse. Insecure parental attachment is also one of the reasons children feel anxious (Brumariu, Kerns, & Seibert, 2012). These varied causes will have an impact on the forms of anxiety experienced by children, such as social phobia, school phobia, and anxiety about being separated from an attached figure. Anxiety like this is a form of emotional disturbance experienced by children, so appropriate treatment is needed to prevent the implications of more serious developmental disorders.

In early childhood, anxiety is common when separating from an attached figure. Attachment begins when a baby has a strong emotional bond with the mother. According to Freud, babies begin to become attached to the mother's breasts as a source of oral pleasure and then become attached to the mother herself (Nurhidayah, 2011). The mother is an important figure for the baby as a source that fulfills its basic needs such as oral needs, affection and contact comfort. Thus, it can be said that contact comfort (comfort due to touch) is one of the factors that causes a baby or child to be attached to its mother. As in Harlow and Zimmermann's (1959) experimental research conducted on monkeys, the monkeys spent more time close to dolls wrapped in soft cloth compared to dolls that were just wire, even though they provided food. Touching activities can cause a reaction in the body, namely the release of endorphins which produce feelings of pleasure (Wade & Tavris, 2007). In this case, separation from the mother can be a threat to the baby because the figure who provides a sense of security and comfort is far from his reach.

Bowlby (in Main & Solomon, 1986) states that there are three forms of attachment between children and their attachment figures, namely secure attachment, insecure avoidant attachment and insecure ambivalent attachment. According to Ainsworth (Santrock, 2007) children have a secure attachment pattern when the caregiver accepts, is sensitive and responsive to a baby's signals and can express affection towards the baby. Babies who have a secure attachment from the start of life will be happier individuals and experience less frustration at the age of 2 years compared to babies who have an insecure attachment (insecure avoidant and insecure ambivalent). This type of attachment will influence the child's readiness to interact with a wider environment in the future. Children who have a secure attachment can move much more freely even when separated from their mother. The child believes that the mother or caregiver will still be there when needed (Nasution, 2016).

---

**Corresponding Author:** I Gusti Agung Ayu Yunita Utami  
Psychology Lecturer, Bali Dwipa University  
Email: ugekbangget@gmail.com

This type of early childhood attachment is thus also related to the socio-emotional development initiated by Erikson. According to Erikson's theory, children up to the age of 6 years or preschool age have gone through three stages of social-emotional development (Slavin, 2017). These stages include trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame, and initiative vs. guilt. The child's achievements in these stages of development become the basis for the next stages of development.

Trusts vs. Mistrust (trust versus distrust), is formed from birth to 18 months. At this stage children develop trust in the world and their environment. Generally, the figure who has the most important role in building a child's trust is the mother. A mother who is able to provide love, consistently and without rejection towards her child will build the child's trust. On the other hand, mothers who do not like the presence of children, are inconsistent and neglect the child's basic needs, both physical and psychological, will create a sense of distrust in their world (Santrock, 2007) Autonomy vs. Shame (autonomy versus feeling embarrassed) is a stage that children under three years go through in the form of a process of learning to be independent. At this stage, children learn to carry out activities with their own abilities, which means that children have autonomy over themselves. The opposite of autonomy is shame or doubt where children feel embarrassed or hesitate to try to carry out activities (Wade & Tavis, 2007).

Initiative vs Guilt (initiative versus guilt) at preschool age children develop new physical and mental skills. Children find activities they like and enjoy doing these activities. Parents who support and facilitate activities that children like will give rise to freedom in expressing their creativity (Papalia, 2014). Feelings of guilt will arise when activities that children like are not supported and facilitated by parents. This is related to the moral development of children under five years old who are still doing things to get the label good boy or good girl (Zizek & Garz, 2015). Where this label will be obtained when children behave according to social norms or in accordance with the wishes of the adults around them.

Children who already have the concepts of trust, autonomy, and initiative within themselves tend to be better prepared to interact with a larger social environment such as peers or the school environment (Nasution, 2016). Success in going beyond the trust stage will give rise to hope. Children feel that there will always be a figure who will provide support or help through times of crisis or difficult times. Meanwhile, children who have the concept of mistrust towards their attachment figures will also develop distrust in other relationships. This causes children to feel afraid, anxious, insecure, and always suspicious of their environment (McLeod, 2008). Children who successfully develop the concept of autonomy will also be more confident in interacting with new environments. Early age is the golden age to optimize children's growth and development. According to the law of the sensitive period, at this age children easily accept learning by receiving stimulus from their environment (Suhada, 2017). One form of providing optimal stimulus for children is that currently many educational institutions, both formal and non-formal, have developed for early childhood. Children's social, motor, affective and cognitive skills are expected to develop optimally in this environment with various activities that have been designed according to the child's age and developmental tasks.

Anxiety arises due to many factors. Santrock (2007) revealed that some anxiety can occur without any previous negative experience. Research conducted by Tamisa (2016) shows that anxiety about harsh treatment and lack of parental love for children can cause anxiety in early childhood. Parents who often put pressure on their children create feelings of fear. In this case, it is related to parenting patterns and the type of attachment between parents and children. As stated by Baumrind (1966), children with democratic parenting are freer to explore than children with authoritarian parenting. Genetic factors can also influence children's anxiety. As research by Glover (2014) found that mothers who were anxious when pregnant passed on their genes to their children. Genetic factors are the reason why anxiety sometimes occurs without any previous event. The factors that cause anxiety are one of the considerations when determining treatment or recovery therapy.

The COVID-19 corona pandemic has brought drastic changes for many children. Studying from home may make children feel bored, especially if they don't meet their friends. Online learning, which has been determined by the government, is aimed at all levels of education from kindergarten to university. This alternative was chosen due to the development of the industrial revolution 4.0. The development of the industrial revolution really supports the implementation of online learning from home, because online learning is learning that eliminates time and distance with the help of internet-based digital platforms that are able to support learning to be carried out without any physical interaction between educators and students (Putra & Irwansyah, 2020), so that today's technological sophistication is expected to be able to support these online activities. However, at the kindergarten education level, online learning requires direct parental involvement in its implementation.

With the government's policy to study at home online, the role usually carried out by the education unit has now changed its function in the family unit. This means that now the house is the center of activity for all family members. This could have a positive impact because the center of activity returns to its origin, namely the home. However, if all activities are only carried out at home, this can also cause psychosomatic disorders, namely physical disorders caused by psychological factors and a pile of emotions that can cause shocks in a person in society, such as anxiety, stress, the social environment which influences many negative thoughts, such as because of hoax news and so on (Sari et al., 2021)

Current conditions in the field show that online learning, or learning carried out at home with parental guidance for early childhood, has several obstacles, so that quite a few parents are asking schools to immediately implement face-to-face learning. Obstacles experienced by parents in accompanying their children to study at home include parents' lack of understanding of the material, parents' difficulties in cultivating their children's interest in learning, not having enough

time to accompany their children because they have to work, parents being impatient in accompanying their children while studying at home. , parents' difficulties in operating gadgets, and problems related to internet service coverage. Therefore, in this online implementation it turns out that parents have many obstacles in accompanying their children to study at home. The condition of parents who often feel worried plus the loss of their usual play activities makes children vulnerable to anxiety attacks. Unfortunately, children are not yet able to express their feelings well, is an image-making activity carried out by smearing color mixture (color porridge) directly with the fingers of the hand freely on the image area (Pamadi and Sukardi, 2010: 35). Learning to use finger painting does not only involve the hands but also all parts of the body are involved.

Finger painting is an alternative "self-healing" activity to overcome anxiety in children that can be done at home when interacting with parents. Finger painting was chosen by researchers as an approach to overcome anxiety in children because learning finger painting has the advantage that it can be used to help children express their emotions. Apart from that, in the process of learning finger painting there is a connection between the physical action and touching the paint with something inside them. Finger painting also has potential for spiritual and psychological health. Through learning finger painting, it is hoped that students can explore their feelings, gain insight into values, attitudes and perceptions, and develop skills in solving the problems they face. This is important considering that through the process of learning finger painting, it can increase self-confidence and can be used optimally to express the child's self, both to help manage emotions and as a "self-healing" method to overcome self-anxiety. The formulation of the problem in this research is how "Finger Painting" is a "self-healing" method for dealing with anxiety in early childhood.

## II. METHODS

The research method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. Descriptive qualitative research is in the form of research using a case study method or approach. This research focuses intensively on one particular object and studies it as a case. Data from case studies can be obtained from all parties concerned, in other words in this study data is collected from various sources (Nawawi, 2003). Case studies are very suitable for answering "how" questions because this type of question is able to dig deeper into the data (Yin, 2003).

In this case, researchers analysed the obstacles experienced by parents in accompanying their children at home during the Covid-19 pandemic. The subjects in this study were parents who had 10 young children (10 mothers). The reason for selecting subjects in this research was based on the necessity of the subjects to accompany children studying at home during the pandemic. The selected subjects had been accompanying children studying at home for at least 2 months during the Covid19 pandemic. The data collection techniques used were interviews, observation and "finger painting", namely a method of painting with fingers by stimulating fine motor sensations, cognitive sensations and "self-healing" abilities in overcoming anxiety.

## III. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Sanggar Pusara (2010: 2) that finger painting is a painting technique using the fingers and hands with watercolour without using a brush. Finger painting means finger painting, so called because it is painted with the fingers using liquid paint or ink. In short, it can be understood that finger painting activities are more directed at developing children's motoric aspects. Ayung Candra P (2009: 1) explains that finger painting is a comprehensive motor movement for children where the whole body seems to be involved in carrying out the movement, but in the process of the activity, it is not only the motor aspect that can be developed through finger painting activities.

According to Ma'had Al-Hanif, the benefits of finger painting are:

1. Training fine motor skills in children which involves small muscles and nerve maturity because at the tip of the child's fingertips there are sensors that are connected to the brain. With finger painting, the child's fingertips will move a lot and rub against the paint and painting medium.
2. As a medium for emotional expression, children will express their souls with colors that suit their emotional condition
3. Introducing children to the concept of primary colors, furthermore giving children the opportunity to experiment with mixing colors to produce secondary colors.
4. Develop and introduce children's aesthetics regarding the beauty of colors and shapes.
5. Develop children's imagination and creativity.
6. Reduce hyperactivity in children with autism and hyperactivity.
7. Develop eye and hand coordination.
8. Help children to relax more between busy activities.

Based on this opinion, it can be concluded that the benefits of finger painting are that it provides opportunities for children to come up with drawing ideas for children, trains thinking/cognitive skills, stimulates emotions and motor skills, which can then be translated by children into a work that suits their wishes. children, unique and original so that children's creativity can develop. Self Healing is a recovery process that generally occurs due to psychological disorders, trauma, and the like, due to past emotional wounds caused by oneself or others. The goal of self-healing is to understand yourself, accept imperfections, and form positive thoughts from what has happened. Self Healing is a phase applied to the recovery

process (generally from psychological disorders, trauma, etc.), driven by and directed by oneself, and requires internal motivation to strengthen. This process can be helped and accelerated by introspection techniques such as meditation. Self-healing can refer to automatic, homeostatic processes of the body that are controlled by physiological mechanisms inherent in the organism.

Self-healing can also be achieved through deliberately implemented psychological mechanisms. This approach can improve a person's psychological and physical condition. Research confirms that this can be achieved through many mechanisms, including relaxation, breathing exercises, fitness exercises, imagery, meditation. Some emotional wounds can be healed by yourself, but others require expert help. Self-healing can also be interpreted as an internal recovery system that is carried out consciously or unconsciously. Then this system can help heal from physical illness or emotional imbalance. Self-healing will be a very comfortable and healing thing if done with the right method. A person who carries out "self-healing" will become a more mature person and be able to carry out "self-development" wisely. Success will be easier to achieve and a mentally healthy person will be formed. Self-healing is needed when there are thoughts or feelings that interfere with daily activities and functions. From the form of activity, self-healing can be done in various ways. Such as relaxation through breathing, contemplation through meditation or yoga, and creating positive emotions which will have an impact on the emergence of endorphins or happy hormones.

Apart from that, art-therapy can also be tried. Individuals can use art to release and express their emotions. Humans actually have the ability to carry out a natural healing process. However, there are people who find it difficult to carry out the healing process themselves. Self-healing can be assisted by professionals such as psychologists. Clients will be accompanied to find their personal strength in order to "heal". These types of people need direct help because they will feel comfortable if there is clear advice or instructions about what to do, without having to carry out a reflection process. Reflection is very important during self-healing. It is a process of making sense of the experiences that occur. Through the reflection process, a person can recognize their negative thoughts and feelings. Then accept these things as something that really exists without trying to reject or avoid them.

Regarding healing, this condition can be achieved when oneself understands and accepts thoughts and feelings that are considered "disturbing". And feel comfortable to return to carrying out daily functions and activities. Although there may be changes in several aspects as a consequence of the adaptation process from previous conditions. "Every individual has internal potential to find ways to fulfill their personal needs. In essence, the one who knows best about ourselves is ourselves," Children have many opportunities to overcome perceived anxiety or trauma. There are several fun methods that children can and comfortably use in the "self-healing" process. Playing packaged with art activities not only stimulates children's creativity but is also an effective self-healing method.

Finger painting activities carried out for 3 months had a significant influence on the development of children's ability to deal with anxiety. The subjects in this research were young children who frequently had tantrums in their daily lives, had difficulty sleeping, expressed their anxiety by biting their fingers, tugging at their clothes repeatedly, and moving erratically without a purpose (such as lack of focus and concentration). Finger painting is done in an open area (home yard) using A4 hvs paper, and natural paint materials made from tapioca flour and food coloring. Children are free to paint using their fingers to create shapes according to their imagination without any intervention. They are free to paint as they please and as much as they want. The implementation time per session is approximately 30 minutes.

In the initial stages of finger painting, some children looked confused and were reluctant to dip their fingers into the paint mixture, so that emotional reactions and anxiety emerged. Researchers provide support and understanding so that subjects want to do it. Finger drawing activities can be used to train mental processes, thinking skills, the ability to remember, imagine, express emotions and express emotions thereby improving thinking abilities. With a drawing approach, children can express their thoughts and feelings, thereby helping children to understand themselves and others (Wilson, 1982: 35). Drawing with your fingers apart from training fine motor sensors and sensation, also trains cognitive functions through memory. We use short-range memory when we draw what we saw before. The images in our brains are not just the images we see now. The mind has the unique ability to repeat time and place. This ability can move us to another place and present past images that we have seen, now shown again by memory.

If we can call up and create these images, we can draw from reflections on past experiences. When we draw from memory, we are guided not by our eyes, but by the quality of the image we remember. Long-term memory has a tendency to cover up the images we remember if we don't need those images at the moment. Drawing from long-term memory requires emphasizing the objects and what we know about them rather than seeing them just once.

The mind has vision that is not limited to place and time. He can form, manipulate and change images far from normal forms that are not bound by time and place. The resulting image is usually unclear and difficult to explain. From the images we imagine, we utilize our ability to think visually and give shape to our thoughts and ideas. The image provides a response to the mind, stimulates our imagination to go further and opens a dialogue between ourselves and the image for further exploration and development of ideas. Thus drawing from imagination is a thinking tool that enhances the creative process (Ching, 1990: 55). Drawing imagination is a very good activity for the brain. This technique is a good technique for increasing children's intelligence and attention. This technique can help children's education process in the future (Bartel, 2006: 45). From the results of the literature obtained by the researcher, it was found that children under

eight years old drew according to what they thought (Zulkifli, 2005: 78), so the researcher gave imagination techniques to the subjects.

Imagination (imagining) is a good basic technique/way for "self-healing". Children imagine before starting to draw with their fingers (finger painting), so that an emotional reaction process occurs in their minds which makes them train themselves to overcome anxiety which occurs gradually. This can be seen in the development of drawing skills and the results at each stage of the finger painting process. The development of independence in solving problems is increasingly improving. Anxiety gradually decreases and children appear more able to manage their emotions and overcome their problems. The obstacle in carrying out this research is that it is quite difficult to control the "mood" and motivation of the subjects, so they are focused and willing to try doing it. However, after several stages of finger painting were carried out, the children seemed to enjoy it more and were calmer in controlling themselves both through fine motor sensory processes, imagination as well as emotions and anxiety.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Finger painting as a "Self-Healing" method for dealing with anxiety in early childhood has a significant influence so it can be used as a reference method that can be carried out in the family. The task of a child's development period is play. Through play, children can develop cognitive functions related to imagination which involves memory and emotions. This plays a role in overcoming various problems, one of which is anxiety. Anxiety in children will become a trauma in itself that will appear in their behavior and personality development in the future. Through finger painting as a self-healing method, it will help children overcome the trauma of anxiety and is beneficial for "self-development" abilities, the development of emotional intelligence and cognitive function.

#### V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to the Bali Dwipa University institution for the support and motivation given to the author so that this research article can be completed.

#### VI. REFERENCES

1. Alfiah. (2014). Upaya meningkatkan kemampuan motorik halus dalam memegang alat tulis melalui kegiatan menggambar dengan media kapur tulis dan arang pada siswa. Semarang: *Jurnal Ilmiah PGPAUD IKIP Veteran*, 2, (2), 1-9.
2. A.M. Riethmuller., R.A. Jones., and A. D. Okely. (2009). Efficacy of interventions to improve motor development in young children: A systematic review. *Pediatrics*, 124, (4), 782–792.
3. Arikunto, S. (2006). *Prosedur Penelitian Suatu Pendekatan Praktik*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
4. Astria, N., Sulastri, M., Magta, M. (2015). Penerapan metode bermain melalui kegiatan finger painting untuk meningkatkan kemampuan motorik halus. Singaraja: *e-Journal PG PAUD universitas Pendidikan Ganesha Jurusan Pendidikan Guru Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 3, (1), 11. Diakses dari <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/JJPAUD/article/viewFile/6204/4356>.
5. Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
6. Beilei, L., Lei, L. Qi. D., & Hofsten, V.C. (2002). The development of fine motor and their relations to children's academic achievement. *Psychologica Sinica*, 34, 494 – 499.
7. Brown, C. G. (2010). Improving fine motor skills in young children: An Intervention Study. *Journal of Association Educational Psychology in Practise, Theory, Research, and Practise in Educational Psychology*, 3, (26), 269-278. doi.org: 10.1080/02667363.2010.495213.
8. Cahyati, A., Sulastri, M., Magta, M. (2015). Penerapan metode pemberian tugas melalui kegiatan finger painting untuk meningkatkan kreativitas. Singaraja: *e-Journal PG PAUD Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha Jurusan Pendidikan Guru Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 3, (1), 1-11. Diakses dari: <http://download.portalgaruda>.
9. Dehghan, L., Mirzakhani, L.N., Rezaee, M., Tabatabaee, M. (2017). Research Paper: The relationship between fine motor skills and social development and maturation. Iran: *Iranian Rehabilitation Journal*, 15, (4), 407 – 414. doi:10.29252/NRIP.IRJ.15.4.407.
10. Desmita. (2010). *Psikologi perkembangan*. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
11. Eyslerck, M.W., & Keane, M.T. (2005). *Cognitive psychology*. 4th ed. Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis Inc.
12. Geertsen, S.S., Thomas, R., Larsen, M.N., Dahn, I.M., Andersen, J.N., Jensen, M.K., Korup, V., Nielsen, C.M., Wienecke, J., Ritz, C., Christian., Krustrup, P., Jensen, J.L. (2016). Motor skills and exercise capacity are associated with objective measures of cognitive functions and academic performance in preadolescent children. *Plos One*, 11, (8). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0161960>.
13. Hadi, S. (2015). *Statistik Jilid 2*, Yogyakarta: Andi Offset
14. Hurlock, E.B. (2013). *Psikologi perkembangan anak*. Jakarta: Erlangga. M. J, Van der Fels., S. C. M, Te Wierike., E, Hartman., M. T, Elferink-Gemser., J, Smith., and C, Visscher. (2015). The relationship between motor skills and cognitive skills in 4-6 years old typically developing children: A systematic review. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, 18, (6), 697–703.
15. Kurnia, S.D. (2015). Pengaruh kegiatan painting dan keterampilan motorik halus terhadap kreativitas anak usia dini dalam seni lukis. Jakarta: *Jurnal Pendidikan Usia Dini*, 9, (2). 285 – 302. doi: <https://doi.org/10.21009/JPUD.092>

16. Oktari, V.M. (2017). Penggunaan media bahan alam dalam pembelajaran di taman kanak-kanak kartika i-63. Padang: *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 1, (1), 49 –57.