

Effectiveness of Zikr Relaxation Therapy to Reduce Academic Stress in Freshmen FY 2023

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ABSTRACT

This study is motivated by the researcher's attention to new students (second semester) class of 2023 who are prone to experiencing academic stress. This is due to changes in learning patterns from school to college, ranging from different levels of difficulty of assignments from lecturers, new environments, and speaking in front of the class when presenting. Thus, this study aims to determine the effectiveness of dhikr relaxation therapy in an effort to reduce the academic stress of new students. The Application of Dhikr relaxation therapy can be an effective way to overcome academic stress at university, especially for new students who experience adaptation to new learning patterns and environments. The research approach used in this study is a qualitative approach. Data collection in the study was carried out by interview and observation methods. Then, the research location took the subject at one of the universities in Palembang City, majoring in business administration, Sriwijaya Polytechnic. The research subject with the initials GA is a new Student and admits to experiencing academic stress.

Keywords: Therapy, Dhikr Relaxation, Academic Stress, New Students

Introduction

In human life, various problems are always faced by every individual as long as they are alive. Some people are resilient and strong in the face of life's problems. They believe that every problem always has a solution, and they develop into people who are sincere, always try to think positively, and have stable emotions. However, there are also people who are not confident, easily discouraged and stressed when facing problems. They often feel nervous, anxious, irritable, restless, very tired, reluctant to do activities, decreased performance, fearful, too self-focused, lose spontaneity, and even isolate themselves from the group. According to Schrafer (Dewi 2009), stress is the inability to deal with extraordinary demands that are perceived to threaten well-being, both from within and outside the individual. These demands are perceived as threats, dangers, or challenges to well-being, resulting in feelings of tension. Events or conditions that are perceived as stressful are called stressors. Stressors are events or circumstances that are perceived as dangerous or challenging, causing stress. Stress can be experienced by anyone, including students. Stress in students can be caused by the inability to carry out their obligations, especially for new students who have to adapt from high school to college with different learning styles, higher levels of difficulty of tasks, achievement of grades, academic achievement, and development of better thinking skills.

According to Beehr and Newman (in Luthans, 2007), there are three classifications of aspects of stress that can be identified:

a. Physical Aspects

Stress can lead to changes in metabolism which in turn affects a person's physical condition. Common physical symptoms include headaches, back pain, neck and throat pressure, difficulty swallowing, muscle tension, sleep disturbances, decreased libido, sensation of cold feet and hands, fatigue, high blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, loss of appetite, indigestion, and respiratory problems.

b. Psychological Aspects

Stress related to job dissatisfaction can have significant psychological impacts, such as loss of focus, confusion, difficulty concentrating, anxiety, obsessive thoughts, difficulty making decisions, irrational beliefs, frequent nightmares, and self-talk. Emotional symptoms can also include irritability, irritability, impaired concentration, restlessness, panic, fear, sadness, depression, high dependence on others, feelings of hopelessness, despair, feelings of inferiority, loneliness, self-abuse, and frustration.

c. Behavioural Aspects

Symptoms of stress can be reflected in everyday behaviour, such as difficulty in social interaction, lack of assertiveness, fear of risk, withdrawn behaviour, loss of self-control, unrealistic goal setting, low self-esteem, lack of motivation, tendency to create chaos, ease in arguing, feelings of alienation, difficulty in expressing emotions, as well as in the work context, such as lack of response to challenges, loss of creativity, low performance, frequent absenteeism, low aspirations, low motivation, lack of initiative, poor communication, identity crisis, tendency to overwork, tendency to control, and difficulty in collaborating with colleagues.

From the above, it can be concluded that the aspects of stress include: physical aspects, which are related to metabolic changes that affect the individual's physical condition; psychological aspects, which involve satisfaction in work and its impact on the individual's emotional state; and behavioural aspects, which involve changes in daily behaviour and in the context of work. Academic stress in university students adversely affects themselves and others. The researcher observed that second semester students, who were the subjects of the study, showed symptoms of stress such as sleep disturbances, looking sleepy and unfocused when attending lectures, irritability or high voice when reprimanded or asked by friends, and preferring to be alone rather than interacting or gathering with their friends. This is the researcher's concern so as to examine the effectiveness of dhikr relaxation therapy on new students.

Dhikr relaxation therapy is a method that combines religious practices with relaxation techniques to achieve mental and spiritual calm. In a modern society that often faces various pressures and stress, the need for effective relaxation methods is increasing. Zikr, which is an integral part of Islamic religious practice, not only has spiritual value but also therapeutic potential to help individuals cope with stress and achieve inner calm. This study focuses on the effectiveness of dhikr relaxation therapy in reducing academic stress levels in freshmen. The problem faced in this study is the high level of academic stress in freshmen which can

negatively impact their mental health and academic performance. New students often face various challenges, including adjustment to a new environment, academic load, and social pressure. Therefore, effective interventions are needed to help them cope with this stress.

This study proposes the application of dhikr relaxation therapy as a solution to reduce academic stress levels in new university students. This therapy involves the regular practice of dhikr after the five daily prayers, accompanied by breathing relaxation techniques. The programme will be implemented for one week with a duration of 10-15 minutes each session. The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of dhikr relaxation therapy in reducing academic stress levels in freshmen. In addition, this study aims to identify changes in participants' level of calmness and mental well-being after attending the therapy programme, as well as provide empirical evidence regarding the benefits of dhikr relaxation therapy as an intervention to reduce stress. Zikr in Islam is recognised as a form of worship that can enhance inner calm and closeness to Allah SWT. Several previous studies have shown that spiritual practices such as dhikr can have a relaxing effect, lower blood pressure, and reduce anxiety levels. Respiratory relaxation is also known to be an effective technique to reduce stress by slowing the breathing rate and lowering the physiological response to stress. The combination of these two methods is expected to provide greater benefits in reducing academic stress.

The subject of this study was a new student with the initials GA from the Business Administration department, Sriwijaya Polytechnic. GA was chosen because he admitted to experiencing academic stress and fulfilled the criteria relevant to the research objectives. The hypotheses proposed in this study are that zikir relaxation therapy significantly reduces the level of academic stress in freshmen, and participants who undergo zikir relaxation therapy will show a significant improvement in mental well-being and inner calmness compared to before taking the therapy.

Method

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method of narrative approach. Data collection in the study was carried out by interview and observation methods, as well as documentation. The data analysis used was the Miles and Huberman data analysis model, namely data reduction. The population in this study were all new students (second semester) batch 2023 at one of the universities in Palembang city, especially in the Business Administration department, Sriwijaya Polytechnic, who were prone to experiencing academic stress. This population consists of students who are adjusting to new learning patterns, campus environments, and various academic demands that are different from their previous school days.

Meanwhile, the sample of this research is a new student with the initials GA from the Business Administration Department, Sriwijaya Polytechnic. GA was chosen because he admitted to experiencing academic stress and fulfilled the criteria relevant to the research objectives. The selection of this sample is purposive, focusing on individuals who can provide in-depth insights through qualitative methods such as interviews and observations.

Results

The results of the study on the effectiveness of dhikr therapy on new students showed significant changes in reducing academic stress levels. For 7 days or one week, every time after the five daily prayers, clients reported positive experiences in the form of feeling calmer and more patient. In addition, clients are also able to control their emotions better when facing situations that cause anger, sadness, or annoyance. The changes that occur are not only temporary, but also have a long-term positive impact on the client's mental wellbeing. Although the changes are not always permanent, the regular practice of dhikr therapy is able to provide a relaxing effect and increased inner calmness that can help in coping with academic stress. These results indicate that dhikr therapy has the potential to be an effective method in improving mental well-being and reducing stress levels in new university students.

Discussion

The current study showed that regular dhikr therapy for one week after the five daily prayers successfully reduced academic stress levels and improved the mental well-being of freshmen students. GA subjects reported feeling calmer, more patient, and a better ability to control negative emotions such as anger, sadness, or upset. In previous research conducted at the Islamic Counselling Guidance Study Program, Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences, Mataram State Islamic University, namely 'The Effectiveness of Zikir Relaxation Therapy in Reducing Academic Stress of First Semester Students of the Islamic Counselling Guidance Study Program FY 2019' by Ahmad Munjirin using a quantitative approach with questionnaire and documentation methods. This study involved 159 students, with a sample of 80 people (50% of the population). The results showed that dhikr therapy has a very strong and positive relationship with students' academic stress levels, with a correlation value of r of 0.799.

The coefficient of determination (R Square) of 75.8% shows that dhikr therapy contributes significantly to the reduction of academic stress. The F test using SPSS shows that dhikr therapy has a significant effect in reducing academic stress with a value of $F_{hitung} = 43.540$ greater than $F_{table} = 3.96$, and a significance probability of 0.00 smaller than $\alpha = 0.05$, which means the alternative hypothesis is accepted. And in the second previous study by Ridha Sucinindyasputeri et al. In a scientific journal of psychology with the title 'The Effect of Zikir Therapy on Stress Reduction in Psychology Professional Master Students'. This study aims to identify the effects or benefits of dhikr therapy in overcoming stress in psychology professional master students. Students at this level are vulnerable to stress due to the various roles and tasks they face. Several studies and experts' opinions have elaborated on stress, and dhikr therapy is proposed as an effective alternative method to overcome it, based on the Islamic psychology approach. This study used a quasi-experimental method with a group control design involving pre-test and post-test, in which two groups (control group and experimental group) were used. The research instrument was a stress scale. Respondents consisted of eight first-semester master of professional psychology students who were undergoing master's and practicum assignments. The pre-test and post-test

results showed a p value of 0.066 ($p > 0.05$) and a t value of 2.242. This indicates that there is no significant difference in stress reduction between the control group and the experimental group in doing their academic assignments.

The conclusion of the three studies on dhikr therapy shows that it has the potential to reduce academic stress and improve the mental well-being of university students. The current study shows that dhikr therapy conducted routinely for one week after the five daily prayers is effective in reducing stress levels and improving the mental well-being of freshmen students. Research by Ahmad Munjirin also supports the effectiveness of dhikr therapy by showing a very strong and positive relationship between dhikr therapy and the reduction of academic stress in first semester students of the Islamic Counselling Guidance Study Programme, with significant contributions indicated by correlation values and statistical tests. However, a study by Ridha Sucinindyasputeri et al. with a quasi-experimental method did not find a significant difference in stress reduction between the control group and the experimental group, although it still noted the benefits of dhikr therapy as an alternative approach in overcoming the stress of psychology professional master students.

The uniqueness of this 1-week or 7-day remembrance therapy lies in several important aspects. The duration of one week is a measurable and structured period, allowing subjects to experience the benefits of the therapy without requiring a long-term commitment, making it easier to integrate into students' daily routines. The practice of dhikr after the five daily prayers creates a consistent and regular pattern, helping to reinforce positive habits and providing continuous emotional support. This therapy combines spiritual and psychological aspects, providing a holistic approach to stress management by taking into account the mental and emotional well-being of the subject. In addition, the practice of dhikr promotes increased self-awareness, inner calmness, and serenity, which helps subjects control negative emotions such as anger, sadness, or upset, directly impacting on the reduction of stress levels. The intensity of emotional and spiritual engagement over the course of one week also allowed subjects to experience psychological and emotional benefits quickly.

This 7-day period allows observation of changes in a short period of time, providing quick feedback on the effectiveness of the therapy, which may increase the subject's motivation to continue this practice in the future. Overall, the uniqueness of this 1-week remembrance therapy lies in its structured, consistent and holistic approach, which allows subjects to experience tangible benefits in a short period of time and make it part of their daily routine.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study shows that dhikr relaxation therapy is effective in reducing academic stress levels in freshmen students. This study not only aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of dhikr therapy but also to identify changes in the participants' level of calmness and mental well-being. The results revealed that over the course of one week, with the practice of dhikr therapy performed after every five daily prayers, freshmen subject GA reported a significant reduction in academic stress levels. GA subjects experienced feelings

of greater calmness and patience, as well as an improved ability to control their emotions when faced with situations that elicited anger, sadness, or annoyance.

Although the changes that occurred were not always permanent, the regular practice of dhikr therapy had a significant relaxing effect and increased inner calm. These findings support the research objectives by providing empirical evidence that dhikr therapy can serve as an effective intervention to reduce stress and improve mental well-being. Thus, dhikr therapy has great potential as a method to help freshmen students cope with academic stress and improve the quality of their mental well-being. Overall, dhikr therapy can be a beneficial method in managing academic stress, although results may vary depending on the research design and context.

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