

The Effectiveness of Duha Prayer Therapy in Reducing Loneliness in Overseas Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of duha prayer therapy in reducing loneliness in overseas students. Overseas students are a group that is vulnerable to loneliness due to separation from family, new environment, and lack of social support. Untreated loneliness can have adverse psychological and physical effects, such as stress, depression, and even health problems. Spiritual healing through duha prayer was chosen as it is believed to provide inner calm and emotional stability. This study used a pre-experiment approach with a one group pre-test post-test design, involving 17 overseas students as samples. Data were collected using the UCLA-S8 scale to measure the level of loneliness before and after the intervention. The results of the analysis showed an increase in the mean score from pre-test to post-test, a strong correlation ($r > 0.7$), and the difference showed significance ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that duha prayer therapy has a positive trend in reducing loneliness. This finding indicates that spiritual-based interventions such as duha prayer can be an alternative companion in overcoming psychological problems, especially loneliness in overseas students. This study is expected to serve as a foundation for further in-depth studies with a larger sample and longer duration of intervention.

Keywords: Duha Prayer Therapy, Loneliness, Overseas Students

Introduction

Papalia, Old, and Feldman (2008) stated that students are individuals who are studying at state or private universities. Students are generally aged 18-25 years who are entering the early adulthood development stage. Overseas students are required to be able to adapt to a new environment. Environmental changes require different adaptation efforts depending on the magnitude of the change and the student's ability to adapt. Various demands to adapt to a new environment can be a source of stress for overseas students. Stress in overseas students can cause feelings of loneliness because they are separated from their parents and other friends. In addition, stress can cause feelings of isolation from new friends. As newcomers to an area, overseas students must live in a different place from their previous residence, either a boarding house or a rented house or dormitory. This can cause overseas students to experience several problems. They feel that the social relationships they are currently experiencing are not in accordance with what they expect, so they feel dissatisfied with the existing social relationships. This problem is called *loneliness* (Russel et al., 1984). 40 out of 50 students who live apart from their families feel lonely. (Lee et al., 2004) also found that students who live away from home are prone to experiencing psychosocial problems such as often feeling alone.

Loneliness is a subjective experience felt by someone even though they are in a crowd. (Russel et al., 1980) describes loneliness as a condition in which someone feels alone even though they are not physically isolated. In the view of (Russel et al., 1984) , loneliness arises from the individual's perception of the lack of quality in the social relationships they are experiencing. Based on this description, it can be concluded that loneliness is an unpleasant feeling that arises due to the inconsistency between expected social relationships and those that actually occur, so that individuals feel dissatisfied with their social interactions. This feeling of loneliness is very susceptible to being experienced by students who are away from home, especially due to age factors. (Goosens et al., 2014) revealed that students who are still in their teens tend to have higher levels of loneliness. One of the causes is the shift from strong emotional ties with family to seeking new social relationships in the college environment (Cosan, 2014) . In addition, adolescents are more susceptible to feeling lonely than adults because of their high social expectations, while adults have a more mature understanding of how to create happiness. Loneliness is not something that can be measured by the amount of physical proximity. People can feel lonely even though they are in a crowd and not feel lonely even though they are alone. However, loneliness occurs when individuals face a contradictory situation where the number of existing relationships is smaller than expected and the desired intimacy has not been realized (Gierveld, et. al, 2013).

Loneliness experienced by overseas students can have a negative impact on their psychological and physical condition. According to (Cosan, 2014) , some negative consequences of loneliness include boredom, feelings of not being accepted by the environment, difficulty in communicating, a tendency to withdraw, and an inability to face and solve problems. However, loneliness does not only cause painful feelings for those who experience it. However, loneliness in many studies has been found to be related to the emergence of other psychological disorders to physical disorders. Among them, Cacioppo, Hughes, Waite, Hawkley, & Thisted (2006) found loneliness as a predictor of depression. Loneliness is also a major indicator of social well-being, the cause of physical disorders such as diabetes, obesity and physiological aging. In addition, (Bernard, 2013) added that loneliness can trigger health problems, such as heart problems and decreased body immunity. In fact, prolonged feelings of loneliness can lead to the desire to end one's life. The impact of loneliness not only affects individual overseas students, but can also have an impact on the educational institutions where they study. The problems experienced by overseas students contribute to increased academic stress. This condition can ultimately reduce students' academic achievements, which has implications for the decline in the overall academic quality of the campus.

In order to minimize these impacts, several efforts can be made, namely by performing prayer therapy. One way that can be done to obtain peace and inner comfort is to always remember Allah. Efforts to continue to remember Allah can be realized through the implementation of worship, one of which is the duha prayer. This prayer is included in the sunnah prayers which have the advantage of forming emotional stability and peace of mind. The duha prayer can be performed individually (munfarid) or in congregation, with a minimum of two and a maximum of twelve rakaat. The procedures for performing the duha prayer include: 1) The intention of the duha prayer which is recited in the heart along with the takbiratul ihram. 2) Reading the iftitah prayer, Surah Al-Fatihah, then other short surahs. It is recommended to read Surah Asy-Syams or Al-Kafirun in the first rakaat, and Surah Al-Ikhlâs or Ad-Duha in the second rakaat. 3) Performing ruku accompanied by reciting tasbeih three times. 4) I'tidal by reciting the i'tidal prayer. 5) The first prostration by

reciting the prostration prayer. 6) Sitting between the two prostrations. 7) Continuing the second rakaat in the same order and ending with the final tasyahhud and greetings. Duha prayer performed with sincerity is not only valuable as worship, but also provides psychological benefits. Performing this prayer can strengthen positive emotions and contribute to a healthier life emotionally. In addition, the relaxation effect during performing the duha prayer can activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which plays a role in lowering blood pressure and improving the physiological functions of the body in general.

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which prayer therapy, especially duha prayer, is effective in reducing loneliness in students living away from home. This study aims to see changes in the level of loneliness felt by students before and after undergoing regular prayer therapy. In addition, this study also wants to explore students' subjective experiences in practicing prayer as a form of spiritual therapy, as well as understanding how the psychological and spiritual mechanisms that emerge during the process can provide inner peace and strengthen emotional resilience in dealing with alienation in a living environment. Thus, this study is expected to provide a clear picture of the role of duha prayer therapy in reducing loneliness in students living away from home as well as being the basis for developing effective spiritual interventions to support their mental well-being.

Method

The design used in this study is an experimental design, namely Pre-test. Experiment with *one group pre test-post test design* (Nursalam in Widiani & Indrawan, 2014). This research was conducted on a number of students from overseas in the city of Palembang. The research time began in the third week of March until the third week. 4th May 20 25 with a treatment period of approximately 2 weeks since the provision of psychoeducation to the subjects. Population in this study are all students in the city of Palembang from any campus who are studying and domiciled not in Palembang (students from other cities). The research sample that the researcher obtained in *the pre-test* was 112 people. As an independent variable is the influence of Duha prayer and the dependent variable is loneliness. Data The dependent variable in this study, namely loneliness, was measured using a questionnaire. The measuring instrument used to measure the level of depression using the UCLA-S 8 scale (University of California Los Angeles Loneliness Scale 8). The measurement is based on 20 (twenty) questionnaire statements. The choices of questionnaire statements also use a Likert scale, namely with the options strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree (Budiaji, 2013). The results of Respondents' answers will be analyzed univariately, namely to determine the frequency distribution of each variable (Wahyuni & Dewi, 2018). The bivariate analysis used in the study is the Wilcoxon test which using SPSS assistance with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, with the interpretation of the α value < 0.05 means H1 is accepted, namely there is an influence between the dependent variable and the independent variable. If $\alpha > 0.05$, it means that H1 is rejected, namely there is no influence between the dependent variable and the independent variable.

Results

One Sample Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	33.7647	17	4.39502	1.06595
	Posttest	58.7059	17	5.70925	1.38470

table.1

The One-Sample Statistics table displays descriptive data from the Pre-Test and Post-Test scores of the 17 participants. The Mean of the Pre-Test scores was 33.76 with SD = 4.40, indicating a relatively low spread of scores. In contrast, the Mean (average) Post-Test score was 58.71, with SD = 5.71, indicating a wider spread of scores. The mean difference was 24.95, indicating a considerable increase in scores from Pre-Test to Post-Test. Further interpretation needs to be done on this study to determine if this improvement is statistically significant, as the higher standard deviation (SD) on the Post-Test and the relatively small sample size (n=17) could affect the statistical power of the analysis.

Paired Sample Correlation

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pretest & Posttest	17	.854	.000

table.2

Paired Samples correlation analysis on 17 participants showed a strong correlation ($r = 0.854$) between Pre-Test and Post-Test scores. The significance value ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) indicates that this relationship is statistically significant. This result indicates that the considerable increase in Post-Test score (24.95 points) has a significant relationship with the Pre-Test score. Nonetheless, it is necessary to consider other factors such as therapy duration, intervention consistency, and participant characteristics that might influence the results of the study to ensure the overall effectiveness of the intervention.

Discussion

Students often face various psychological challenges during their studies, including academic stress, social pressure, and difficulty adapting to a new environment (Smith et al., 2020). One group that is vulnerable to psychological problems is out-of-town students, who have to live away from their families and the social support they usually receive. Studies show that out-of-town

students are at higher risk of experiencing mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, compared to students who live with their families (Brown et al., 2021). This condition is exacerbated by the lack of mental preparation before moving away, making it difficult for them to manage negative emotions. Therefore, effective interventions are needed to help out-of-town students overcome these psychological challenges. Loneliness is defined as a subjective feeling of dissatisfaction with social relationships and a lack of emotional support from others (Cacioppo et al., 2020). This feeling is not always related to physical loneliness, but rather to the perception of insufficient social connections (Holt-Lunstad, 2021). Loneliness can trigger various negative impacts, such as decreased mental health, increased risk of depression, and sleep disorders (Matthews et al., 2019). In addition, chronic loneliness is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and a weakened immune system. This makes us have to be more responsive in preventing and overcoming it because it can affect not only the mental, but also the physical.

Inter-university students are a group that is particularly vulnerable to loneliness because they lose their primary social networks, such as family and close friends. Moving to a new city also requires them to build social relationships from scratch, which often takes time and effort (Zhang & Wang, 2021). A study found that inter-university students in Palembang reported higher levels of loneliness than local students, especially in the early stages of college (Putra et al., 2019). This loneliness can affect academic performance and learning motivation if not addressed immediately (Liu et al., 2020). Thus, specific strategies are needed to help inter-university students overcome loneliness and adapt to their new environment. Several factors can influence the intensity of loneliness, including introverted personality, lack of social skills, and environmental changes (Qualter et al., 2021). In addition, excessive use of social media can exacerbate loneliness by reducing face-to-face interactions (Primack et al., 2020). External factors such as academic pressure and financial difficulties also contribute to feelings of isolation (Elmer et al., 2019). In out-of-town students, geographical distance from family and new culture can amplify feelings of loneliness (Wang et al., 2020). Therefore, interventions should consider these factors for better effectiveness.

Common approaches to reducing loneliness include increasing social interaction, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and group activities (Masi et al., 2020). Participating in campus or community activities can help students build stronger social networks. Additionally, mindfulness and meditation practices have been shown to be effective in reducing feelings of isolation (Creswell et al., 2019). Support from campus counseling can also be a solution for students who are struggling to adapt. However, spiritual-based interventions such as Duha prayer therapy have not been widely explored, despite their potential psychological benefits. Duha prayer therapy, as a form of sunnah worship in Islam, can provide peace and a sense of closeness to the Creator, which can reduce feelings of loneliness (Koenig, 2020). Spiritual activities such as this also promote self-reflection and acceptance, which help individuals manage negative emotions (Dein et al., 2021). Early studies have shown that college students who regularly perform Duha prayer report decreased levels of loneliness and increased life satisfaction (Rahman et al., 2019). This mechanism may be related to increased gratitude and appreciation of the meaning of life through worship (Pargament et al., 2020). Thus, Duha prayer therapy can be an alternative solution for students living away from home in overcoming loneliness holistically.

There is a study by Al-Tuwijri & Khan (2021) showing that Duha prayer has a significant effect in reducing feelings of loneliness in individuals. This worship activity not only increases

spiritual closeness to God but also provides psychological calm through dhikr and prayer (Hassan et al., 2020). This mechanism is in line with the theory of religiosity which states that religious practices can be a source of emotional and social support (Pargament, 2017). In addition, the Duha prayer routine creates a regular time structure, reducing the opportunity to reflect on loneliness. Participants in the study reported feeling more connected to the religious community after consistently performing the Duha prayer. These findings support the importance of a spiritual approach in faith-based mental health interventions. However, further research is needed to test its effectiveness in more diverse populations.

In this study, it is proven that self-therapy in the form of duha prayer is effective in reducing stress levels and becoming calmer in dealing with problems. The results obtained are in line with the benefits of duha prayer as well as previous studies. This study also shows that there is a strong correlation and high significance between duha prayer therapy in reducing loneliness in overseas students. This means that the researcher can conclude that this study can prove the influence between duha prayer and loneliness reduction. Although the results of the study cannot always be generalized to other subjects, further research may be a springboard that adds to the essence of the benefits of duha prayer in overcoming loneliness in more complex research later.

Conclusion

This study shows that migrant students are a group that is highly vulnerable to loneliness due to the loss of social support from their home environment. This loneliness can have a negative impact on their mental and academic health. Spiritual therapy through the practice of duha prayer is introduced as one method to reduce these feelings. This is supported by statistical analysis results showing that the effect of Duha prayer on reducing loneliness is quantitatively significant, with an increase in average scores indicating the positive potential of this therapy. The effects of Duha prayer, such as inner peace, emotional stability, and spiritual strengthening, are considered to contribute to the improvement of students' psychological conditions. This therapy remains relevant to be developed as a holistic alternative approach, especially in building mental resilience through spiritual closeness. Further research with longer intervention durations and larger sample sizes is needed to strengthen these findings. Nevertheless, the results of this study already provide a strong initial foundation that Duha prayer has positive benefits in supporting the mental well-being of students away from home.

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