No. 23 Vol. 02 (Oktober 2023)
e-ISSN: 2785-9169
https://ejournal.unipsas.edu.my

CALM IN CALAMITY: *TAFAKUR* AS PSYCHOSPIRITUAL INTERVENTION FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS DEALING WITH EMOTIONAL STRESS

Nur Yani binti Che Hussin[1] &
Muhammad Nubli bin Abdul Wahab[2]
[1]Fakulti Pengajian Islam Universiti Islam Pahang Sultan Ahmad Shah, Kuantan Pahang Malaysia
[2]Pusat Sains Kemanusiaan Universiti Malaysia Pahang, Kuantan Pahang Malaysia

Perkembangan Artikel

Diterima: 16 Ogos 2023
Disemak: 3 Oktober 2023
Diterbitkan: 31 Oktober 2023

*Corresponding Author:
Nur Yani Che Hussin, Universiti Islam Pahang Sultan Ahmad Shah, Kuantan, Pahang.

Email:nuryani@unipsas.edu.my

Abstract

Emotional wellbeing is the most crucial factor figuring out the student's success. The impact of stress that can affect a student's mental health has appeared as a major issue and is reaching alarming proportions. This study examines the use of tafakur technique as a psychospiritual intervention in coping with emotional stress among university students. The treatment and control group were made up of thirty university students. Tafakur intervention programme was linked to lower stress, anxiety, and depression after four weeks. Therefore, the tafakur technique is the best alternative mechanism used as a psychospiritual intervention in dealing with emotional stress among university students.

Keywords: *Tafakur, mental health, stress, university students*.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is described as a condition of well-being in which people realise their own potential, can cope with everyday challenges, work efficiently, and give back to their communities (WHO, 2020). In Malaysia, according to the National Policy on Mental Health is defined as the ability of individuals, groups, and environments to interact with one another to promote subjective well-being, best functioning, and the application of cognitive, effective, and relational abilities toward the achievement of individual and group goals following justice (Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia, 2016). Mental health has become a major concern in the contemporary era of technology. Individuals, families, and society will be directly affected by mental health issues (WHO, 2020). However, nowadays stress may be treated using a range of current therapy treatments (Ramler, Tennison, Lynch, & Murphy, 2016). However, intervention strategies based on Islamic principles, on the other hand, are still underutilised (Salasiah, Shakirah, Zainab, Adawiyah, and Nadhirah, 2015).

The Effects of Prolonged Stress on University Students

Mental health consequences of the pandemic should be a top priority (Holmes et al., 2020). As said in Lim et al., (2018), when compared to the overall population prevalence of 12.9 percent, the prevalence of depression is greater in student groups. In university's students, prolonged stress has been linked to health issues such as sleep disturbances, exhaustion and worries (Sheldon et al., 2021). In addition, stress also has been linked to negative impacts on students' performance, physiological and psychological health issues. During pandemic, students who had trouble early in life reported increased exposure to pandemic-related events and more severe stress reactions. Furthermore, early life adversity may not only raise the chance of anxiety and depression in early adulthood, but it may also contribute to more severe acute stress reactions during the pandemic (Li et al., 2021).

According to Lee, Ju, & Sujin (2021), female, rural, low-income, and academically failing students were more likely to have mental health concerns. Because of the stigma involved with seeking counselling or therapy, they had not accessed mental health resources on or off campus. Due to mental health issues, they would be at a substantial risk of dropping out of university. Moreover, negative rumination, parent separation, sexual harassment experiences, and parental distress were all found to be significant predictors of depressive outcomes in those who presented with a current mental health condition. Suicide-related outcomes were strongly predicted by childhood adversity, baseline mental health concerns, and financial challenges (Sheldon et al., 2021). As reported by Guo, Crum, and Fowler (2021), the most stressful factor for third-year medical students was the delay or lack of provision of standardised exams. Furthermore, social isolation because of physical distancing may add to emotions of loneliness, which may have resulted in higher anxiety and stress levels.

Earlier Studies on Islamic Stress Management Techniques

As reported by Uyun, Kurniawan, & Jaufalaily (2019), repentance and seeking forgiveness in Islamic spiritual therapy might enhance mental well-being, reduce stress, and even improve physical health. In line with Isgandarova (2018) which also looked at the *muraqaba* approach for treating emotional stress symptoms. The practise can alleviate mental and emotional issues such as severe depression, anxiety, bipolar illness, personality disorders, and attention deficit disorder, in addition to supplying spiritual well-being. This approach may also be used to manage one's bodily state, such as blood pressure and physiological control. Furthermore, Kadafi, Alfaiz, Ramli, & Asri (2021) performed a study on the use of Islamic treatment practises in counselling. The method approach, according to the study, can help study participants feel less anxious. Following Mat Nor, Ibrahim, Ramly, and Abdullah (2019) which looked at the impact of recitation of Quranic verses, such readings can help critically sick patients feel less stressed and anxious. Recitation of the Quran can also help these patients cope with their physiological stress. The impact of zikr on patients' physical and emotional relaxation was investigated by Soliman and Mohamed (2013). The zikr method has been shown to alleviate pain, anxiety, and enhance physiological responses in patients.

Moreover, as said in Sabki, Zarrina, Basirah, and Muhsin, (2019), which looked at cognitive behavioural therapy approaches combined with Islamic practises. The technique has

helped Muslim clients to deal with depression by building proper thoughts and behaviours. In a study on existential cognitive treatment procedures done by Abas and Sahad, (2021), it was discovered that Islamic approach helped clients in overcoming depression, particularly those suffering from existential depression. Moreover, Arifuddin, Yanuar, and Pamungkas (2018) discovered that *rukyah syariyyah* can help students cope with stress, anxiety, and depression. Furthermore, the findings of Siti Zafrina et al., (2020) that an Islamic psychospiritual treatment method can help cure emotional problems among UITM (Universiti Teknologi MARA) students are supported by this study. Furthermore, this research is consistent with the literature of Ahmad (2019), which investigates student stress and finds that it may be managed with an Islamic approach, which can provide individuals with peace of mind body and heart.

Tafakur Technique as Psychospiritual Intervention

According to Rahim, Saifullah and Khairulnazrin Nasir (2019), tafakur is an Islamic practise for contemplation. The approach is believed to have a holistic and balanced function and has various aspects of freedom and limitation compared to other meditation technique. As reported by Ibrahim bin Engku Wok Zin, Hadzrullatfi bin Syed Omar, Safri Bin Ali, and Bahari bin Abdullah (2020), tafakur is a rigorous practise that might be seen as essential to all spiritual activities, whether outer or inner. This is because a practise will not be able to be carried out perfectly unless the goodness of the practise can be perceived clearly in the heart first. Furthermore, through tafakur the individual heart will directed to understand the phenomena that exist in the cosmos or in the life of every human being in the form of discovering the wisdom behind the occurrence of misfortune (Zuhby and Dahlan, 2021). In Islamic psychology, tafakur is a psychological construct made up of a range of feelings, beliefs, imaginations, and thoughts capable of generating and influencing behaviour, habits, and beliefs (Badri, 2000).

In addition, combining tafakur with other emotion regulation practises can help to achieve greater emotional well-being. Emotion regulation training and tafakur are two aspects that can have a major impact on adolescent subjective well-being because the ability to harmonise thoughts, feelings, and behaviour is enhanced by individual emotion control. Similarly, if tafakur is used, the individual will develop an ability that will guide him down the straight path and recognise that he is Allah's servant who will return to Him (Khaldun, Dwi, and Lita, 2021). In the opinion of Magfiroh (2020), Teenagers' horizons will be broadened through a learning approach that is interwoven with nature. As a result, natural tafakur is seen as a critical practise for adolescents to take part in. In the opinion of Rahim & Saifullah & Khairulnazrin Nasir (2019), faith, worship, and tafakur method are the three fundamental factors that complement each other in the solution to the problem of mental and physical diseases.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study aimed to address one research question. Is there any difference in the effect of tafakur technique between the treatment and control groups?

METHODOLOGY

A quasi-experimental study was conducted on 30 participants (n= 30) from university students of the state of Pahang, Malaysia. This study was also conducted by divided participants into two groups, experimental group and control group. Experimental group was received *tafakur* intervention while control group did not receive *tafakur* intervention. Depression, Stress, and Anxiety Scale (DASS-21) form was used as an instrument for data collection. In other to evaluate depression, anxiety, and stress level among respondents, the data was categorized into five levels, normal, low, medium, and severe and very severe. For descriptive analysis, the data was computed by looking at mean and standard deviation. Meanwhile, for inferential analysis, independent sample t test was used to explore significant levels between these aspects by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.

RESULTS

The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) scores for the treatment and control groups are shown in Table 1. 30 persons from both groups had their data examined. Data from the post-test was collected and compared between the treatment and control groups.

Table 1: Mean Difference of Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) Scores of Treatment Group and Control Group

Variables	**Treatment Group**			**Control Group**		
	N	M	SP	N	M	SP
Stress	15	1.0	0.6	15	2.9	0.7
Anxiety	15	1.2	0.4	15	2.9	1.0
Depression	15	1.2	0.4	15	2.6	1.2

The analysis of mean and standard deviations of stress levels for the treatment and control groups is presented in Table 1. First, for the treatment group the mean of stress was 1.0 while the standard deviation was 0.6. Then, the mean of anxiety was 1.2 and the mean of standard deviation was 0.4. After that, for depression the mean was 1.2 and the standard deviation was 0.4. Second, for control group the mean of stress was 2.9 while the standard deviation was 0.7. Then, the mean for anxiety was 2.9 and the standard deviation was 1.0. For depression, the mean was 2.6 and the standard deviation was 1.2. Following that, the table supplies the analysis of the mean and standard deviation of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) for both the treatment and control groups.

Table 2: Independent sample t test Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) of Treatment and Control Groups

DASS	Control Group			Treatment Group					
	N	M	SP	N	M	SP	DK	t	P
Stress	15	1.0	0.6	15	2.9	0.7	28	-9.6	0.01
Anxiety	15	1.2	0.4	15	2.9	1.0	28	-6.0	0.02
Depression	15	1.2	0.4	15	2.6	1.2	28	-4.1	0.00

Table 2 shows the results of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) of independent sample t test for treatment and control groups. The purpose of this independent sample t test was to see if there were any changes between the control and treatment groups in terms of stress, anxiety, and depression after tafakur training. In terms of stress levels, there was a significant difference between the control group (M: 1.0, SP: 0.6) and the treatment group (M: 1.0, SP: 0.6), with the treatment group experiencing reduced stress (M: 1.0, SP: 0.6), t (28) = -9.6, P: 0.01. There was a significant difference in anxiety levels between the control group (M: 1.2, SP: 0.4) and the treatment group (M: 1.2, SP: 0.4), with the treatment group experiencing decreased anxiety after followed the tafakur session.

DISCUSSION

The results from the preceding chapter proved that tafakur can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. The treatment group was taught this tafakur approach to help them learn how to regulate their stress levels. As a result, this tafakur practise can lessen anxiety symptoms. Anxiety symptoms include a dry mouth, fast breathing, trembling hands, and being easily panicked (Rozanizam, 2021). Participants have been helped to regulate anxious symptoms by using the tafakur skills they have learnt. These findings are consistent with prior research that has found Islamic therapy to be effective in reducing emotional stress. This spiritual technique can overcome the psychological disorders of the individual such as stress, anxiety and depression because it has a deep element of psychospiritual therapy.

These findings also support by Salasiah et al., (2015) told that Islamic psychospiritual approaches are well-suited for usage by Muslims because they include spiritual power that inspires self-assurance and hope. This tafakur approach is also recognised as a strategy that can help students improve their emotional intelligence, psychological well-being, and physiological relaxation. Students who practise tafakur will be more upbeat, productive, and open-minded. Zikr as one of the kinds of physiological serenity in which zikr waves may affect the brain and mind, as well as one of the types of energy replenishment in an individual (Iskandara and Sarkun, 2015). The importance placed on remembering and mental imagery because of the students' tafakur

practises adds value to their capacity to adjust to stresses they confront.

In the context of tafakur technique activities such as appreciating nature and listening to the sounds of nature combined with remembrance of Allah is a calming activity. Furthermore, enjoying the view of natural environment, as well as listening to the singing of birds, among other things, may help to relieve mental and physical stress. Moreover, remembering Allah may give peace of mind and physical health by allowing the mind and self to focus on what is seen, heard, and spoken. This research supports Hansen, Jones, and Tocchini (2017) results on the traditional Japanese practise of 'forest bathing,' in which people connect with nature and employ all their senses to increase emotional and self-control. Such exercises can have a favourable impact on both the mind and the body.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that tafakur techniques can be an effective intervention for reducing emotional stress among university students. However, it should be noted that this study had limitations, such as a small sample size and a focus on only private university college students in a specific geographic region. Therefore, future research should aim to replicate these findings with larger and more diverse samples, as well as explore other aspects of tafakur. Nonetheless, this study provides valuable insights into the potential benefits of tafakur as a psychospiritual intervention for university students.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author has no conflicts of interest, whether financial or otherwise, in conducting this research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We sincerely thank everyone for their support of this study.

REFERENCES

Abas, N. A., & Sahad, M. N. (2021). Guiding Aspects Of Islamic Existential-Cognitive Behaviour Therapy For Existential Depression. *Malaysian Journal for Islamic Studies*, *5*(1), 57–77.

Ahmad, S. (2019). Stress Management Among Students : Conventional and Islamic Perspectives. *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies*, *10*(October), 50–63.

Arifuddin, Y. W., Yanuar, A., & Pamungkas, F. (2018). The Effect of Ruqyah Syar ’ iyyah Therapy o n Anxiety , Stress and Depression Among Health Science Students. *Journal of Holistic Nursing and Health Sience*, *1*.

Badri, M. (2000). *Contemplation An Islamic Psychospiritual Study* (second). Kuala Lumpur: Medeena Books.

Guo, A. A., Crum, M. A., & Fowler, L. A. (2021). Assessing the psychological impacts of covid-

19 in undergraduate medical students. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(6), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18062952

Hansen, M. M., Jones, R., & Tocchini, K. (2017). Shinrin-yoku (Forest bathing) and nature therapy: A state-of-the-art review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *14*(8). https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14080851

Holmes, E. A., O'Connor, R. C., Perry, V. H., Tracey, I., Wessely, S., Arseneault, L., … Bullmore, E. (2020). Multidisciplinary research priorities for the COVID-19 pandemic: a call for action for mental health science. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, *7*(6), 547–560. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(20)30168-1

Ibrahim bin Engku Wok Zin, E., Hadzrullatfi bin Syed Omar, S., Safri Bin Ali, M., & Bahari bin Abdullah, S. (2020). *Terapi Jiwa Menurut Al Ghazali: Tumpuan Kepada Amalan Dan Kepentingan Tafakur*. Retrieved from http://journal.umg.ac.id/index.php/tamaddun

Isgandarova, N. (2018). Muraqaba as a Mindfulness-Based Therapy in Islamic. *Journal of Religion and Health*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-018-0695-y

Iskandara, & Sarkun, M. R. N. (2015). Pengaruh Zikrullah Pada Manusia Menurut Perspektif Sains. *Sains Humanika*, *4*(2), 41–46.

Kadafi, A., Alfaiz, A., Ramli, M., & Asri, D. N. (2021). The Impact of Islamic Counseling Intervention towards Students ' Mindfulness and Anxiety during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Islamic Guidance and Counseling Journal*, *4*.

Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia. (2016). Masalah Kesihatan Mental Di Malaysia, pp. 1–2.

Khaldun, R., Dwi, D. A. N., & Lita, W. (2021). Trauma Healing Dengan Pelatihan Regulasi Emosi dan Tafakur Untuk Meningkatkan Kesejahteraan Subjektif. *Al Tazkirah*, *10*(1).

Lee, J., Ju, H., & Sujin, J. (2021). Stress , Anxiety , and Depression Among Undergraduate Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic and their Use of Mental Health Services. *Innovative Higher Education*, 519–538. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-021-09552-y

Li, X., Lv, Q., Tang, W., Deng, W., Zhao, L., Meng, Y., … Li, T. (2021). Psychological stresses among Chinese university students during the COVID-19 epidemic: The effect of early life adversity on emotional distress. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *282*(28), 33–38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2020.12.126

Lim, G.Y., Tam, W.W., Lu, Y., Ho, C.S., Zhang, M.W., Ho, R. . (2018). Prevalence of Depression in the Community from 30 Countries between 1994 and 2014. */692/699/ 476/1414 /692/499 Article. Sci.*, 1–10.

Magfiroh, N. L. (2020). The Role Natural Tafakur Activities in Improving The Faith of Student Islamic Boarding School Jagad ' Alimussirry. *Journal Intelectual Sufism Research*, *2*(2), 29–33.

Mat Nor, M. B., Ibrahim, N. A., Ramly, N. F., & Abdullah, F. (2019). Physiological and psychological effects of listening to Holy Quran Recitation in the intensive care unit patients: A systematic review. *International Medical Journal Malaysia*, *18*(1), 145–155.

Rahim, & Saifullah & Khairulnazrin Nasir. (2019). Dimensi Kebebasan Dan Limitasi Al-Tafakkur Dalam Proses Psikoterapi Menurut Al-Sunnah: Perbandingan Terhadap Meditasi Komplimentari Bukan Islam. *E-Journal of Islamic Thought and Understanding*, *2*(October), 15–37.

Ramler, T. R., Tennison, L. R., Lynch, J., & Murphy, P. (2016). Mindfulness and the College Transition: The Efficacy of an Adapted Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Intervention in

Fostering Adjustment among First-Year Students. *Mindfulness*, *7*(1), 179–188. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-015-0398-3

Sabki, Z. A., Zarrina, C., Basirah, S., & Muhsin, S. (2019). Islamic Integrated Cognitive Behavior Therapy : A Shari ' ah- Compliant Intervention for Muslims with Depression. *Malaysian Journal of Psychatry*.

Salasiah, Shakirah, N., Zainab, Adawiyah, & Nadhirah. (2015). The Application of Ibadah (Worship) in Counseling: Its Importance and Implications to Muslim Clients. *Journal of Religion and Health*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-015-0122-6

Sheldon, E., Simmonds-buckley, M., Bone, C., Mascarenhas, T., Chan, N., Wincott, M., … Barkham, M. (2021). Prevalence and risk factors for mental health problems in university undergraduate students : A systematic review with meta-analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *287*(December 2020), 282–292. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2021.03.054

Siti Zafrina Mohd Zahari, Othman@Seman, M. M., Malkan@Molkan, siti N. A., & Hassan, N. H. C. (2020). Pendekatan Terapi Psikospiritual Islam Di Kalangan Pelajar Wanita: Suatu Tinjauan Umum Di Uitm Pahang, Kampus Jengka. *Jurnal Islam Dan Masyarakat Kontemporari*, *21*(2), 216–228.

Soliman, H., & Mohamed, S. (2013). Effects of Zikr Meditation and Jaw Relaxation on Postoperative Pain, Anxiety and Physiologic Response of Patients Undergoing Abdominal Surgery. *Journal of Biology*, *3*(2), 23–38.

Uyun, Q., Kurniawan, I. N., & Jaufalaily, N. (2019). Repentance and seeking forgiveness : the effects of spiritual therapy based on Islamic tenets to improve mental health. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, *0*(0), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2018.1514593

WHO. (2020). *International Health Regulations*.

Zuhby, N. El, & Dahlan, U. A. (2021). Tafakur Pandemi COVID 19 Perspektif Pendidikan SIlam. *Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan ISlam*, 13–27.