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Rachmawati, S.Kep., Ns.,

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Corresponding Author

Alfiah Baituzzahro

 alfiahtbn12@gmail.com

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SPIRITUAL EMOTIONAL FREEDOM TECHNIQUE THERAPY ON ACADEMIC STRESS OF FEMALE ADOLESCENT IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

Hanim Nur Faizah¹, Alfiah Baituzzahro¹, Karyo¹, Lukman Hakim¹

¹Bachelor of Nursing Study Program, Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, Institut Ilmu Kesehatan Nahdhlatal Ulama, Tuban

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Academic stress refers to mental and emotional pressure experienced by a person related to various demands in the world of education, such as assignments, exams, deadlines, or even expectations from oneself or others. One of the treatments to relieve academic stress is Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) therapy. This study aimed to determine the effect of laughter therapy on the level of academic stress in adolescent girls aged 16–18 years at the Tuban Islamic Boarding School. **Method:** This study used a quantitative pre-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest method. The participants were 30 out of 50 adolescent girls aged 16–18 years at an Islamic Boarding School in Tuban, selected using purposive sampling. The independent variable was SEFT therapy, and the dependent variable was academic stress. Instruments used included observation sheets, the SEFT Procedure, and the ESSA questionnaire. Data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon test ($\alpha < 0.05$) with SPSS version 23. **Results:** The research results were analyzed using the Wilcoxon test with a significance level of $\alpha < 0.05$, with Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000. This indicates a significant reduction in academic stress levels ($\rho = 0.000 < 0.05$), meaning that H1 is accepted. Therefore, Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) therapy was proven to have an effect on reducing academic stress in adolescents aged 16–18 years. **Conclusion:** This study demonstrated that Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) therapy effectively reduced academic stress levels in adolescent girls aged 16–18 years at the Tuban Islamic Boarding School. Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse populations to strengthen the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, further studies could compare SEFT therapy with other stress-reduction techniques to determine the most effective methods for reducing academic stress in different educational settings.

Keyword: Academic Stress, Adolescent Girls, SEFT Therapy

INTRODUCTION

Adolescents in their developmental phase are vulnerable to various issues that can trigger stress, including family problems,

social life, environment, and academic demands. Academic demands become a unique stressor for adolescents as they can negatively impact mental health. Stress is defined as a response to general events and

occurs when the brain perceives threats. Adolescents often experience stress when their responsibilities as students exceed their perceived abilities. Therefore, academic stress among adolescents is a serious issue that requires attention (Purwiantomo & Rusmawati, 2021). Stress in adolescents can stem from both academic and non-academic factors (Merdekasari & Rajianti, 2019). Academic stress refers to an individual's perception of academic stressors and their physical, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive responses to those stressors (Gadzella & Masten, 2005, as cited in Salma, 2021).

The prevalence of academic stress is high globally. In the United States in 2021, it was reported that 77% of students experienced academic stress (Clabaugh et al., 2021). In Indonesia, a report cited by Ikhsan Darmawan from the UGM Geography Library in 2022 revealed that 80–90% of suicide cases were initially caused by stress, depression, and anxiety. Furthermore, 90% of students were reported to experience academic stress due to exams, poor grades, procrastination, homework, school climate, lack of support (from parents, teachers, and peers), low self-confidence, and strict school regulations (Kompasiana.com, 2022). A study conducted by Rifqi & Diana Rusmawati (2021) at SMA Islam Al Azhar 14 Semarang found that 82.45% of students experienced high levels of academic stress, 15.78% experienced very high levels, and only 1.75% had low levels. Similarly, research by Andini & Retno (2021) in Sidoarjo reported that 68.2% of high school students experienced moderate academic stress levels.

Based on field findings through interviews with the leader of the Manbail Futuh Islamic Boarding School and four student representatives in January 2024, it was found that adolescents at the boarding school often experienced stress due to memorization demands. Initial surveys with four students showed that they frequently complained of headaches, learning difficulties, insomnia, and decreased concentration, attributed to their many responsibilities across diniyah institutions, boarding activities, and formal schooling. At Manbail Futuh, students must

balance both formal and non-formal education while managing heavy academic demands, including completing assignments, achieving high grades, and preparing for final exams at both their school and the boarding school. These pressures often cause them to feel tired, overwhelmed, bored, and stressed. During final exams, including hadith memorization, reading classic Islamic texts, and memorizing selected surahs, students frequently felt anxious, dizzy, struggled to concentrate, and became upset if they failed to memorize well. This can cause academic stress.

Several therapies can help reduce academic stress, including Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), music therapy, and Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT). SEFT combines spiritual strength with body energy systems to improve mental, emotional, and behavioral conditions using positive affirmations and gentle tapping on specific body points (Nasution et al., 2020). SEFT involves tapping 18 meridian points to address energy imbalances that cause negative emotions (Zainuddin, 2010, as cited in Samsugito, 2019). This therapy is effective for adolescents experiencing academic stress due to study fatigue, heavy assignments, and academic difficulties. It is easy to perform, requires about 30 minutes, and promotes relaxation, logical thinking, and acceptance. The goal of SEFT is to reduce anxiety and stress, induce feelings of calm and comfort, and stimulate the release of endorphins which is the body's natural "happiness" hormones. That is why this study aimed to determine the effect of laughter therapy on the level of academic stress among adolescent girls aged 16–18 years at the Tuban Islamic Boarding School.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative pre-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest method. Data collection for this study was conducted at Manbail Futuh Islamic Boarding School, Jenu, Tuban, from September 28, 2024, to October 4, 2024. The population in this study included 50 adolescents girls aged 16–18 years. The

sample consisted of adolescent girls aged 16–18 years who experienced academic stress, met the established inclusion criteria, and resided at the Tuban Islamic boarding school, totaling 30 participants. The sampling method used was non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling technique. The instruments used for the independent variable were observation sheets, the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for

Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) therapy, and documentation. Meanwhile, for the dependent variable, the instrument used was the ESSA (Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents) questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test with a significance level of $\alpha = < 0.05$, utilizing SPSS Statistics version 23 for Windows.

RESULT

Table 1. The Characteristics of Respondents

No	Characteristics	f	%
1	Sex		
	Male	0	00,0
	Female	30	100,0
	Total	30	100,0
2	Age		
	16 Years	20	66,7
	17 Years	9	30,0
	18 Years	1	3,3
	Total	30	100,0

Source: (Primary Data, 2024).

The characteristics of the respondents based on gender showed that all 30 respondents (100%) were female, as presented in Table 1, which details the distribution of respondents aged 16–18 years at Pondok Pesantren

Manbail Futuh Tuban in September 2024 (Primary Data, 2024). Furthermore, based on Table 1 regarding age, it was found that the majority of the 30 respondents, specifically 20 individuals (66.7%), were 16 years old.

Table 2. The Academic Stress Level Pre and Post-experimental Results

No	Academic Stress Level	Pre-experimental		Post-experimental	
		f	%	f	%
1	Mild	5	16,7	14	46,7
2	Moderate	21	70,0	13	43,3
3	Severe	4	13,3	3	10,0
	Total	30	100,0	30	100,0

Source: (Primary Data, 2024).

Table 2 shows the distribution of academic stress levels among 30 respondents before and after the experimental intervention. Before the intervention (pre-experimental), 5 respondents (16.7%) experienced mild academic stress, 21 respondents (70.0%) experienced moderate stress, and 4 respondents (13.3%) experienced severe stress. After the intervention (post-experimental), there was a noticeable

improvement: the number of respondents with mild stress increased to 14 (46.7%), those with moderate stress decreased to 13 (43.3%), and those with severe stress also decreased to 3 (10.0%). This indicates a shift toward lower levels of academic stress following the intervention.

DISCUSSION

Severe academic stress among adolescent girls was predominantly found in those aged 16–17 years. At this age, adolescents tend to have highly sensitive thoughts toward environmental responses and greater anxiety about their activities. The differences in the levels of academic stress align with the theory that states individuals' responses to stressors vary due to different stressor factors and the coping abilities possessed by each individual (Hidayat and Uliyah, 2014, in Liliana and Lestiawati, 2019). The results of this study are supported by previous research conducted by Samsugito and Putri (2019) titled "Overview of Stress Levels Before and After SEFT Therapy in Adolescents at SMAN 14 Samarinda." Their findings showed that SEFT therapy effectively reduced stress levels among adolescents at SMAN 14 Samarinda and was efficient for students experiencing academic stress. Another supporting study was conducted by Hidayah et al. (2024) titled "Effectiveness of the SEFT Modality and Complementary Therapy Model in Reducing Post-Disaster Stress Levels Among Adolescent Survivors of the Earthquake Disaster at Minhajul Karomah Islamic Boarding School, Cianjur." The results demonstrated that SEFT therapy effectively reduced stress and aimed to help individuals and groups alleviate psychological and physical suffering. The consistent effectiveness of SEFT therapy across different settings, such as schools and post-disaster environments, highlights its flexibility and broad applicability.

Another study by Kurniawan (2024) titled "The Effect of Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) in Reducing Stress Among Patients with Type II Diabetes Mellitus" found that SEFT intervention was the most influential variable in reducing stress levels in patients with type II diabetes mellitus. The change observed, indicating that SEFT therapy reduced academic stress among adolescent girls aged 16–18 years at the Tuban Islamic Boarding School, was attributed to the communicative nature of the therapy, its inward approach that encouraged enthusiasm in facing problems, and its

spiritual elements, which were well-received by the respondents. Initially, several respondents mentioned that they were already accustomed to praying; however, they willingly participated as this was a new technique for them. During the study, the respondents were active and followed the researchers' directions well, allowing the process to run smoothly. This was also supported by brief interviews with several adolescent girls, who shared that during SEFT therapy sessions, they felt calm, peaceful, and happy to have learned a new prayer technique through this research. SEFT therapy can be used by people from all walks of life to address psychological issues, being both effective and easy to perform. Several advantages of SEFT therapy include promoting inner peace, being accessible to everyone, providing immediate healing effects, and carrying no harmful risks (Zainuddin, 2018). In this study, adolescent girls aged 16–18 years experienced the effects of SEFT therapy after three sessions, showing differences in their academic stress levels. Thus, it can be concluded that SEFT therapy significantly reduces academic stress levels and has a positive impact on lowering academic stress among adolescent girls aged 16–18 years at the Tuban Islamic Boarding School.

The success of the therapy was also due to the application of SEFT therapy according to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). Success was further supported by the cooperative attitudes and focus of the respondents who followed the researchers' directions well. The successful implementation of SEFT therapy had a positive effect on reducing academic stress levels among adolescent girls aged 16–18 years at the Tuban Islamic Boarding School. However, some factors caused SEFT therapy to be less effective in reducing academic stress, such as high environmental pressures and poor adaptation, as some respondents continued to recall their previous environments. Additionally, the success of SEFT therapy also depends on several factors; sometimes, respondents overlooked key components of SEFT success, such as

belief, sincerity, acceptance, and gratitude. The study results showed varying degrees of stress reduction among respondents, with some achieving low stress scores. Factors such as differences in academic achievement levels and parental pressure also influenced the extent of academic stress reduction among individual adolescents.

CONCLUSION

Based on this study, it was concluded that most adolescent girls initially experienced moderate levels of academic stress before receiving SEFT therapy. After undergoing the therapy, the majority showed a reduction to mild stress levels. These results indicate a significant effect, demonstrating that SEFT therapy effectively reduced academic stress among adolescent girls aged 16–18 at the Tuban Islamic Boarding School. Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse populations to strengthen the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, further studies could compare SEFT therapy with other stress-reduction techniques to determine the most effective methods for reducing academic stress in different educational settings.

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