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Jl. Prof. Dr. Hamka Air Tawar Barat, Kota Padang, Sumatera Barat, 25130, Indonesia.

☎ +62 (0754) 41650; Website: <http://pps.fip.unp.ac.id/>; ✉ jk@konselor.org / info@konselor.org

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Group Counseling of Cognitive Restructuring and Murattal Al-Qur'an Relaxation Techniques to Alleviate Indonesian Muslim University Students' Academic Anxiety: Does it Work Effectively?

Julianne Kamelia Riza¹, Bambang Budi Wiyono¹, IM Hambali¹, M Muslihati¹, & Noer Illahyat Adhli Al Karni²
¹Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
²University of Fez, Morocco

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Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to:

Julianne Kamelia Riza. Department of Guidance and Counseling. Faculty of Education. Universitas Negeri Malang. Jl. Semarang 5 Malang, 65145 Tel. (0341) 551312 Malang, Indonesia. Email: mila_faruq@yahoo.com

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Group Counseling of Cognitive Restructuring and Murattal Al-Qur'an Relaxation Techniques to Alleviate Indonesian Muslim University Students' Academic Anxiety: Does it Work Effectively?



Julianne Kamelia Riza¹♦, Bambang Budi Wiyono¹, IM Hambali¹, M Muslihati¹, & Noer Illahyat Adhli Al Karni²

¹Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

²University of Fez, Morocco

Abstract: The objective of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring with murattal al-Qur'an relaxation technique in reducing Indonesian Muslim university students' academic anxiety. The research was conducted on Indonesian Muslim university students at Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Al Urwatul Wutsqo (STIT-UW) Jombang. A Quasi Experimental with Nonequivalent Control Group Design was employed to assess the effectiveness of group counseling using cognitive restructuring and Murattal Al-Qur'an relaxation techniques in reducing students' academic anxiety during thesis writing. The participants included 22 students with high levels of academic anxiety, divided into experimental and control groups. The instruments utilized were academic anxiety scales, worksheets, reflection journals, and a group counseling module. Statistical analysis using the Mann–Whitney U Test was applied to identify differences in scores between the two groups. The results indicated that group counseling incorporating Cognitive Restructuring and Murattal Al-Qur'an relaxation techniques effectively alleviated the level of students' academic anxiety. Having a positive way of thinking and a better physical and psychological condition, the university students have succeeded in reducing their academic anxiety level, and will assume the thesis as a challenge instead of threat, and also will motivate them to work on it immediately and accomplish their study in time. In conclusion, this group counseling approach may be recommended for college counselors to assist STIT-UW Jombang students experiencing academic anxiety while working on their theses, and it can be used as a conceptual and empirical reference for the development of counseling in the future.

Key Words: Group counseling; Cognitive restructuring; Murattal Al-Qur'an; Relaxation techniques; Academic anxiety

INTRODUCTION

Undergraduate thesis is a scientific work compiled by Indonesian senior university students as one of the prerequisites for graduating from college. According to Dede et al., (2022) an undergraduate thesis is written based on research, development of an issue, or literature review. Thesis writing is an individual learning process and requires students' independence. According to several studies, the characteristics of students who experience anxiety in writing thesis include being evaluation-frightened,

♦ **Corresponding Author:** Julianne Kamelia Riza. Department of Guidance and Counseling. Faculty of Education. Universitas Negeri Malang. Jl. Semarang 5 Malang, 65145 Tel. (0341) 551312 Malang, Indonesia. Email: mila_faruq@yahoo.com

lacking ideas, and assuming incapability in writing (Lakuana & Anisa, 2022; Majdi & Mulyana, 2023; W. L. Sari & Fakhruddiana, 2019; Wakhyudin & Putri, 2020).

A preliminary study conducted on senior university students majoring Islamic Religious Education and Islamic Education Management at STIT-UW Jombang during the second semester of the 2022/2023 academic year showed that only 25 senior university students (26.9%) have completed their theses, while 69 other (73.1%) have not done yet. Supported by the interview, the students stated that they faced a various obstacles, including feelings of anxiety and fear when meeting and consulting with advisors, difficulty in understanding them, repeated rejection of the research topic, the inadequate comprehension of the research methodology, multiple revisions, and the anxiety of facing the proposal seminar and thesis examination. This aligns with previous studies (Diasti & Mbato, 2020; Dwihandini et al., 2013; Fatsah et al., 2020; Karjono, 2020; Lestari, 2020; Maharani et al., 2022).

According to Khesht-Masjedi et al., (2019) and Weda & Sakti, (2018), if not treated properly or if overreacted, academic anxiety can interfere with daily activities. Wathelet et al., (2020) stated in the long term, academic anxiety may lead to stress, depression, and other mental health problems that can affect mental well-being and academic achievement. Other studies also found that academic anxiety causes negative self-image and triggers suicidal behavior (Nguyen et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2019; Yi et al., 2022a); Rahman et al., 2022). In December 2018, two Padjadjaran University students were found dead in their room, they were students of the Faculty of Cultural Sciences and the Faculty of Fisheries and Maritime Sciences who were already in the final semester and were working on their thesis (Martiyanti, 2018). A similar case happened on a student of public college in Palembang in November 2022 (Hutahean, 2022), and also in March 2023, a senior university student in Jambi was found hanging himself due to depression related to his thesis (Hidayat, 2023).

Previous Indonesian studies concerning university students' academic anxiety during thesis writing applied a correlational method as the basis for further research in providing appropriate counseling interventions, such as Budiyanti & Raihana (2022); Fauzia (2022); Liu et al. (2019); Maharani et al. (2022); Ompusunggu (2022). Situmorang, (2017) indicated that students' academic anxiety in writing the thesis can be addressed by cognitive behavioral counseling with music. However, the study is still theoretical and requires empirical research to determine the impact. Based on the benefit and weaknesses of previous researchs, an empirical test is necessary. In order to be more effective, previous studies (Ponterotto et al., 2000; Sue & Sue, 1981; Yusuf, 2016) suggest that counseling should take into account the cultural aspects of counselee.

According to Cognitive Behavioral approach students with high level academic anxiety have cognitive distortions or negative thoughts related to their academic helplessness or inability. Cognitive distortions are formed by core beliefs that are deeply ingrained, such as the belief in academic incompetence based on individual experiences or events (Beck et al., 2015; Corey, 2017; Jacobs et al., 2016; Situmorang, 2017), so when an individual experiences academic anxiety, what needs to be done is to help him restructure the negative thoughts towards the more adaptive thoughts, because a healthy way of thinking will support positive behavior. Referring to previous studies (Budiyanti & Raihana, 2022; Maharani et al., 2022; Situngkir et al., 2022; Yi et al., 2022b), students with high level of academic anxiety have cognitive distortions or negative thoughts related to their academic inadequacy. Based on these considerations, we decide that CBT is the most appropriate approach to reduce university students' academic anxiety during thesis writing.

This research employ two CBT techniques; Cognitive Restructuring and Relaxation Techniques combined with Murattal Al-Qur'an audio. Cognitive restructuring technique involves the process of identifying and evaluating an individual's cognition, understanding the behavioral impact of certain negative thoughts, and learning to replace them with more realistic, accurate, and adaptive ones (Beck et al., 2015; Corey, 2017). Cognitive Restructuring Techniques are appropriate for application to individuals with depression, exhibit destructive behavior, use absolute terms such as: always, must, never, and have such a belief system that hinders their progress (Corcoran, 2006). Previous studies have shown that cognitive restructuring technique can alleviate academic stress (Aminullah et al., 2018; Anisanti, 2020; Nurnalasarani et al., 2016; W. K. Rahmawati, 2016), promote students' self-esteem (Apriatama et al., 2022; Kognitif & Diri, 2017), academic performance self-efficiency (Fatimah et al., 2021; Manuardi, 2018; Septian & Manuardi, 2021), students' endurance (Jannah et al., 2019), and overcome learning fatigue (Utami & Islam, 2017).

The second CBT technique applied in this research is relaxation. This technique is useful for reducing tension and anxiety. Relaxation is a technique used to help individuals learn to reduce or control the level of physiological arousal and bring them to a calmer state, both physically and psychologically (Rout & Rout, 2007). According to Cormier et al., (2009), feelings changing from tense to relax will affect blood pressure, heart rate, breathing, and influence other physiological processes. So, when individuals are in a calm and comfortable condition, it will be easier to achieve positive, normal and controlled thought patterns and behavior (Suyono et al., 2016). Relaxation technique has also been effectively proven to reduce academic stress (Arizona et al., 2019; Anuar et al., 2019; Karneli et al., 2019; Manansingh et al., 2019; Rahmawati, 2021; Suyono, 2016), increase emotional regulation (Fitriani & Alsa, 2015), and overcome learning fatigue (Ningsih, 2016). This is in line with the efficacy of Holy Qur'an in reducing stress and excessive anxiety levels, and increasing life satisfaction (Desnahayati et al., 2021; D. R. Sari & Asiva, 2019; Sutrisno, 2018). In conclusion, combining relaxation technique with Murattal Al-Qur'an is predicted to be effective in addressing students' academic anxiety during thesis writing, especially those with Islamic educational background.

How does Cognitive Restructuring technique work with Murattal Al-Qur'an relaxation to reduce the academic anxiety in this research? Cognitive Restructuring, as the first technique, works to alter the students' negative core beliefs about their theses, and cultivate new positive thinking and behavior. Murattal Al-Qur'an Relaxation Technique is given as the second technique with the assumption that the subject experienced tension while modifying thoughts using the Cognitive Restructuring technique. In this condition, relaxation techniques are provided to help the subject become more calm, and to control anxiety symptoms, maximizing the results. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of Cognitive Restructuring and Murattal Al-Quran relaxation techniques can reduce academic anxiety related to thesis writing among Muslim university students.

METHOD

This study used Quasi Experimental design with Nonequivalent Control Group (Campbell & Riecken, 1968) involving two groups: experimental group received counseling of Cognitive Restructuring and Murattal Al-Qur'an Relaxation Technique as the treatment, and control group with counseling as usual.

Participants

The participants in this study were 125 senior university students in the second semester of 2022/2023 academic year from Islamic Religious Education and Islamic Education Management program at STIT-UW Jombang, who are working on their undergraduate theses. Following screening using Academic Anxiety Scale, 26 students with a high level of academic anxiety (pretest) were identified. These students were subsequently divided into two groups, the experimental and the control group. The experimental group consist students who (1) had not previously received the Cognitive Restructuring and Murattal Al-Qur'an Relaxation Techniques group counseling services; (2) were willing to fully participate in the counseling activities, and signed the informed consent sheet.

Instrumentations

The research instruments included: (1) academic anxiety scale; (2) worksheets; (3) reflection journal; and (4) group counseling module. The academic anxiety scale was developed following the procedure of Azwar (2016), as described in table 1; which includes (1) identifying the objective of the measurement; (2) operational aspects; (3) expert judgement; (4) field test; (5) analyzing items; and (6) compiling the final format.

Table 1. Development Procedure of Academic Anxiety Scale

Steps of Azwar (2016)	Steps of Development Procedure of Academic Anxiety Scale
Identifying the objective of the measurement	Refers to Ottens's (1991) academic anxiety theory
Operational Aspects	Operating academic anxiety dimensions into blueprints with scale specifications and assessment methods
Expert Judgement	Validating to three experts
Field Test	<i>Conducting empirical test to evaluate the items function quantitatively. The parameters tested are the validity and reliability of items</i>
Analysing Items	<i>Selecting items that do not meet validity and reliability</i>
Compiling The Final Format.	<i>Combining the grids, items, the scoring method, and the interpretation of the academic scale of anxiety into one ready-to-use assessment device.</i>

The internal validity test of the scale was carried out by three guidance and counseling experts, then analyzed using the Aiken's V Formula (1985). The result showed an average validity index is 0.89, means that the academic anxiety scale has a high validity. The external validity test was conducted on 76 senior university students of Universitas Pesantren Tinggi Darul 'Ulum (UNIPDU) Jombang, which share similar characteristics with the research subjects at STIT-UW Jombang. The results of the field test showed that the reliability and validity were tested with Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7 and Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3. The instrument test result showed that out of the 48 items tested, 23 items were valid with Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.885 and a corrected item-total correlation value above 0.3. Items consisted of favorable and unfavorable statements.

In addition to quantitative data, qualitative data were collected using a worksheet designed to document the problems and problem-solving activities performed by subjects during intervention. This worksheet was distributed during the group counseling work stage in the first, second, third, and fourth meetings. The contents of the worksheet were designed to address the patterns of anxiety (Ottens, 1991) at each stages. The reflection journal was developed by the researchers to discern and assess the student's experience and anxiety conditions during treatment.

The group counseling module of Cognitive Restructuring and Murattal Al-Qur'an Relaxation Techniques served as a manual for delivering the treatment. The module was developed using Gall et al. (2007) model's; (1) identifying needs, i.e. the university students' level of academic anxiety as the basis of product design preparation; (2) developing prototypes of product; and (3) expert validation. The expert validation was carried out by three guidance and counseling experts who have the competence to evaluate the level of acceptability of the modul, taking into account the aspects of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and attractiveness.

The internal validity test of the module carried out by three guidance and counseling experts and analyzed using the Aiken's V Formula (1985) showed an average validity index of 0.81. This suggests that the modul has a high validity, affirming its worthiness for counselors to use in helping students with academic anxiety during thesis writing. The evaluated aspects and components, along with the score assigned by the experts, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Result of Experts Validation

Aspects	The Experts			Validity Index Score	Interpretation
	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3		
Relevance	26	31	22	0,763889	Moderate
Efficiency	17	20	18	0,888889	High
Effectiveness	13	15	13	0,805556	High
Impact	12	16	11	0,75	Moderate
Attractiveness	24	22	18	0,851852	High
Total	92	104	82	0,812037	High

In order to obtain the most suitable verses and rhyme of Murattal, the researcher received the best recommendation from an expert of Murattal Al-Quran, shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Suggestions from Murattal Al-Qur'an Expert

Reciter	Surah	Reasons
Syaikh Mishari al-Afasy	Faathir	Using Jiharkah Nagham, characterized by solemnity and khusyu'/full of concentration
Syaikh Mishari al-Afasy	Maryam	Recited with several Naghams; Bayyati, Nahawand, and Hijaz, with moderate rhythm, and various tone, as well as with whispering voices that arise various sensation for the listeners
Syekh Balilah	Bandar Ali Imran	Recited with a soft and naturally vivid Bayyati Nagham, combine with a slow to moderate tempo, with a soft volume that calms the soul
Syekh Balilah	Bandar An-Nisa'	Using Jiharkah Nagham which character is calming, serene, and peaceful

Procedures

The research procedure consisted of three phases: (1) preparing the experiment; (2) conducting the design experiment, and (3) conducting the analysis (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006). The experiment preparation began with providing training for the counselor, who held Master's degree in Guidance and Counseling and have more than 10 years of experience in counseling. The training was conducted for three days from 4 to 6 March, 2023. Following this, the preparation involved assesment using the Academic Anxiety Scale administered to 125 senior university students at STIT-UW working on their thesis. The assesment identified 26 students with high academic anxiety, who then recruited as research participants.

The second phase was delivering the treatment, conducted at the STIT-UW Jombang over 7 sessions from 13 to 23 March 2023, with each meeting lasting between 60 to 20 minutes. The treatment applied the modul of group counseling with Cognitive Restructuring and Murattal Al-Qur'an Relaxation Techniques to the experimental group (13 sudents), while the control group (13 students) received conseling as usual. The timetable of the activities is shown in Table 4. On day 3, one of the subjects from experimental group was absent, another one resigned on the day 5 due to illness. With two participants withdrew their participation from experimental group, only 11 remained. The flow of participants in each stage is described in Figure 1. As the final phase of the research procedure, the analysis was conducted by comparing pretest and post test scores, and evaluating counseling dynamics during the sessions.

Table 4. Group Counseling Time table

DAY	TIME	MATERIAL	VENUE
Monday/March 13rd 2023	10.00 – 12.00	Pre Counseling	Microteaching Room
Tuesday/March 14th 023	13. 00 – 15.00	Session 1	Microteaching Room
Thursday/March 16th 023	13.00 – 15.00	Session 2	Microteaching Room
Saturday/March 18th 023	13.00 – 15.00	Session 3	Microteaching Room
Monday/March 20th 2023	13.00 – 15.00	Session 4	Microteaching Room
Wednesday/March 22nd 2023	13.00 – 15.00	Session 5	Microteaching Room
Thursday/March 23rd 2023	10.00 – 11.00	Post Counseling	Microteaching Room

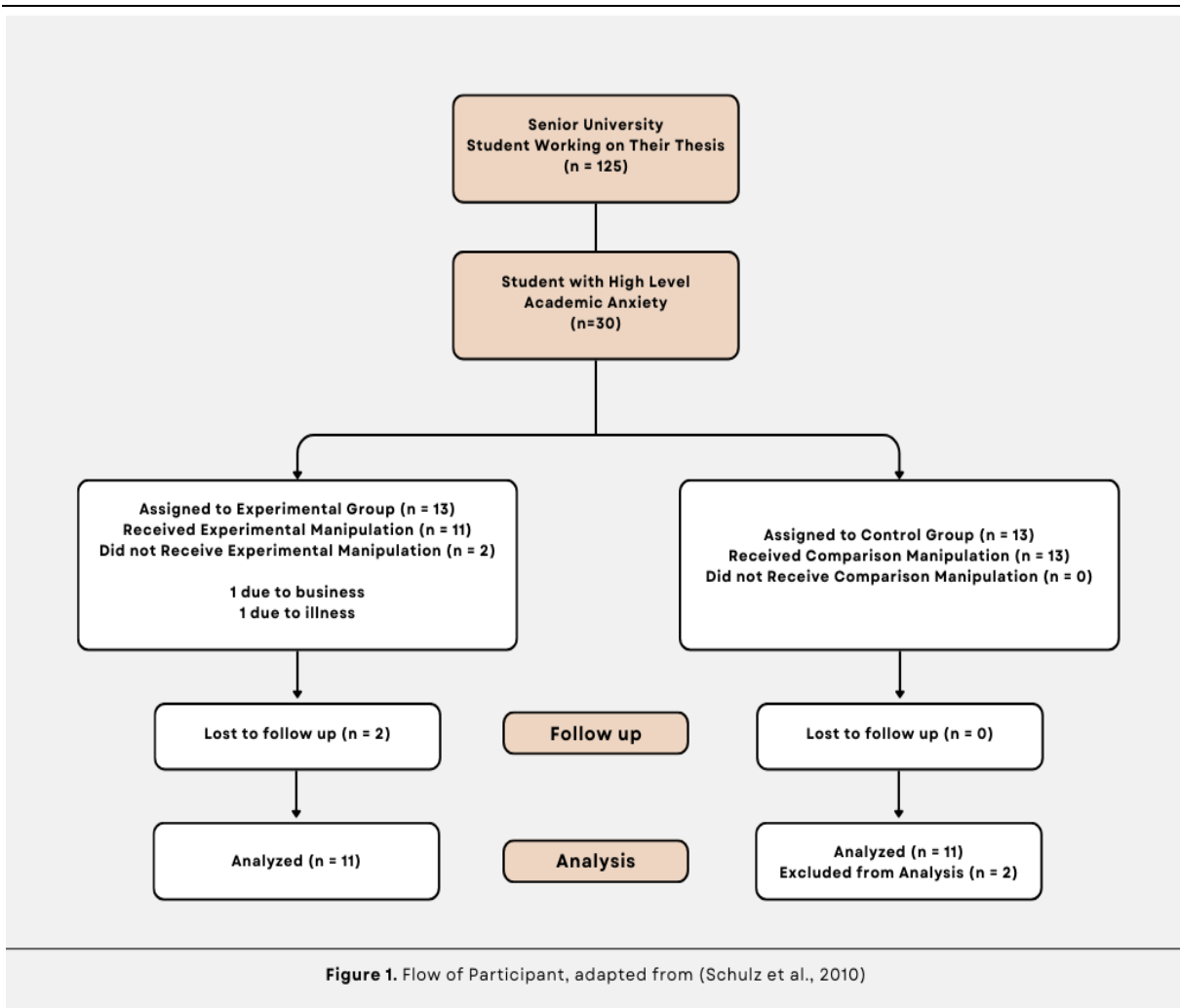


Figure 1. Flow of Participant, adapted from (Schulz et al., 2010)

Figure 1 Flow of Participant, adapted from (Schulz et. Al., 2010)

Data Analysis

Data analysis used non-parametric statistical test, specifically the Mann Whitney U Test, to observe changes in pre-test, post-test and results supported by the follow-up of each meeting. Non-parametric statistical tests were performed due to relatively small number of research subjects (below 30), assuming that the data is not normally distributed (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The hypothesis test used the standard significance value (sig.) $\alpha = 0.05$, meaning that sig value < 0.05 indicates that the intervention given reduces academic anxiety in the research subject, otherwise, the case is the opposite. Data analysis was assisted with SPSS for windows version 25.0.

RESULTS

The data collected from a series of stages of group counseling with Cognitive Restructuring and Murattal Al-Qur'an Relaxation Techniques were analyzed using SPSS for Windows version 25.0. Descriptive data, taken from pretest and post test scores, and follow-up, are presented in Tables 5 and Table 6.

Table 5. Description of Experimental and Control Group's Academic Anxiety Before Treatment

Experimental group			Control group		
Name	Pretest	Level	Name	Pretest	Level
DRS	65	High	SAF	63	High
KM	63	High	SZ	62	High
PAB	69	High	VO	61	High
RFS	65	High	MK	61	High
NS	66	High	EPK	66	High
HM	69	High	RWM	64	High
MAZ	62	High	MUS	64	High
SB	65	High	NKN	75	High
AZL	61	High	MUA	69	High
AS	67	High	SM	63	High
IS	61	High	NM	69	High
Mean		65	Mean		65
Median		65	Median		64
Standard Deviation		3	Standard Deviation		4

Table 6. Description of Experimental and Control Group's Academic Anxiety After Treatment

Experimental Group			Control Group		
Name	Post test	Level	Name	Post test	Level
DRS	40	Moderate	SAF	55	Moderate
KM	29	Low	SZ	50	Moderate
PAB	40	Moderate	VO	47	Moderate
RFS	28	Low	MK	51	Moderate
NS	42	Moderate	EPK	62	High
HM	44	Moderate	RWM	50	Moderate
MAZ	42	Moderate	MUS	50	Moderate
SB	40	Moderate	NKN	40	Moderate
AZL	45	Moderate	MUA	62	Low
AS	40	Moderate	SM	51	Moderate
IS	47	Moderate	NM	48	Moderate
Mean		40	Mean		51
Median		40	Median		50
Standard Deviation		6	Standard Deviation		6

As shown in Table 5, the academic anxiety level of students from both experimental and control groups before treatment were 65 points (high level), suggesting that the condition of both groups were equal. Students with high academic anxiety have disturbing patterns of anxiety-engendering mental activity (including anxiousness, negative self-dialogue, and misunderstandings of important issues related to anxiety), misdirected attention, physiological distress, and inappropriate behaviors that may lead to concerns about poor academic performances, including procrastination and excessive thoroughness during thesis writing (Ottens, 1991).

In Table 6, the average post test scores for experimental and control groups are 40 and 51, respectively, both falling within the moderate level. This suggests that after receiving treatment, both groups were able to control their pattern of academic anxiety. In addition, two students from the experimental group achieved lower post-test scores, indicating low level of academic anxiety. A comparison of students' academic anxiety before and after receiving intervention for both experimental and control groups is presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

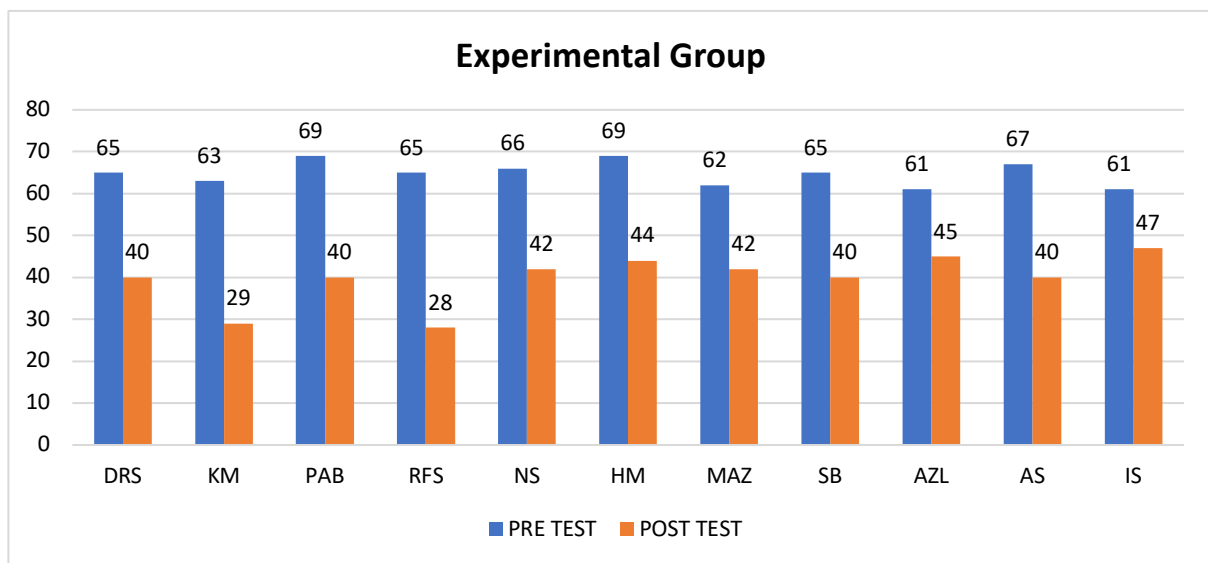


Figure 2 The Profile of Experimental Group's Academic Anxiety Before and After Intervention

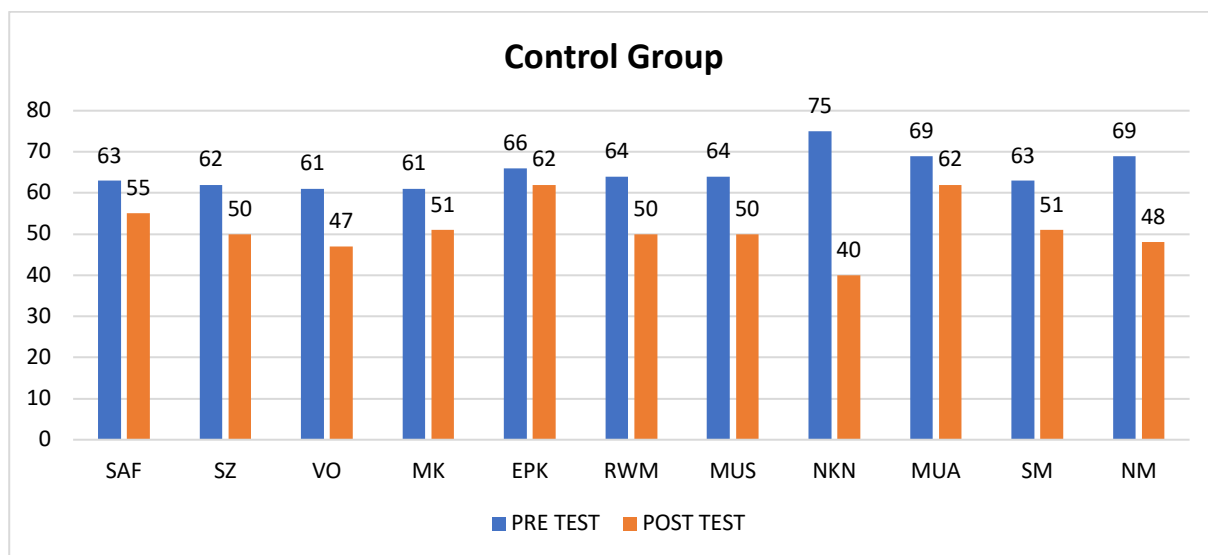


Figure 3 The Profile of Control Group's Academic Anxiety Before and After Intervention

Tabel 7. The Different Test of Experimental and Control Group Post Test

Groups	N	Mean	U	W	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental	11	6.68	7.5	73.5	-3.508	0.000
Control	11	16.32				

Table 7 shown the mean score of each group, with the experimental group's score at 6.68 and the control group's at 16.32. It suggests that the treatment received by the experimental group is more effective than that received by the control group. Supported by Mann Whitney U Test result, the U value is 7.5 and the W value is 73.5, which, when converted to Z value, yields -3.508. The asymp.sig. (2-tailed) value of 0,000 is smaller than <0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted, indicating a difference in the academic anxiety level between the students in the experimental group and the control group. In other words, providing group counseling with Cognitive Restructuring and Murattal Al-Qur'an

Relaxation has significant effect in alleviating senior university students' academic anxiety during thesis writing.

DISCUSSION

The research findings reveal that, before receiving the treatment, all students in both experimental and control groups were in high anxiety level. During the counseling process, it was revealed that academic anxiety arose due to various obstacles encountered by students while working on their thesis. According to (Alam, 2017), several factors can trigger the academic anxiety, including personal, family, social, and institutional factors. Some of students expressed worry and fear of failing to accomplish the thesis on time, individuals with fear of failure experience tend to set high standards for themselves, and are prone to anxiety when they fail to meet their goals. Another personal factor is health (Abdollahi et al., 2018; Dobos et al., 2021; Jia et al., 2020; Nakhla, 2019), some students complained of their poor physical condition during working on thesis. Another problem is related to computers. Some students could not afford to buy their own laptops, so they had to borrow or rent. According to (Alam, 2017) poor family socio-economic conditions may also contribute to academic anxiety. Another family matters comes from students who are married or working. Then, several students were disturbed by other's questions about their theses. High expectations from significant others also may result in the pressure that may provoke academic anxiety (Puspitaningrum, 2018; Safitri, 2018).

Another factor comes from the institution, in STIT-UW Jombang, senior students had to fulfil up to 20 course credits in 8th semester, including thesis writing, so they had to take at least 7 classes in a week while working on their theses. This becomes a burden for them because they had manage their time doing the class assignments and the thesis. Some students are santri, and the others are teachers or advisor (ustadz/ustadzah). As they live in Pesantren, these students also have limited access to internet, this also limit their chances to collect the references. These numerous tasks and the lack of rest time complicated their engagement in thesis-supported activities, such as reading books, journals, studying research methods, resulting in them being less prepared when consulting with the advisor. It supports the opinion of (Situmorang, 2017) that the less-prepared students meeting the advisor lead to anxiety. Other challenges come from the advisors, who are very busy, and set a high standard for students to meet. The next challenge is the examination, both the proposal seminar and the the thesis exam, most students perceive exams as a frightening event, which also triggers the academic anxiety.

During the counseling process, most students frequently experienced panic, anxiety, moodiness, anger, worry, and had negative thoughts about the thesis, advisors, or about themselves. Most students lacked confidence in their ability to finish the thesis well and on time. While working on thesis, some students also complained physical changes such as becoming get sick easily, dizzy, stomachache, and exhausted. They also mentioned feelings of muscle tension, sweating, and trembling during thesis consultations with advisors. Students with a high level of academic anxiety also tended to engage in inappropriate behaviors, such as delaying revisions and avoiding consultation sessions. Some spent excessive time browsing the internet on social media and online shopping platforms. These findings align with previous research (Manuardi, 2018; Ompusunggu, 2022; Situmorang, 2017; Syafri et al., 2021).

According to CBT perspective, university students' academic anxiety while working on their theses is considered a cognitive distortion triggered by negative thoughts towards the thesis itself (Beck et al., 2015). According to the students, the thesis is viewed as a difficult, confusing, intimidating, and burdensome task that hinders the completion of their studies. Students hold negative perceptions about advisors, considering them as "killers," complicating matters, and setting too high standards. These anxieties result in negative behaviors; for instance, instead of attending consultation sessions, anxious students avoid meeting with advisors, causing delays in the thesis writing process. After the counseling, there was a significant reduction in the level of academic anxiety among the members of the experimental group who received group counseling with Cognitive Restructuring and Murattal Al-Qur'an Relaxation. According to Ottens (1991), the lower an individual's level of academic anxiety, the higher their academic achievement tends to be. Individuals operating at a moderate level of anxiety often demonstrate better academic performances. Members of the experimental group, with average post-test

scores in the moderate range, have the potential for higher academic achievement, increasing their chances of successfully completing their theses.

Numerous previous studies recommend the use of Cognitive Restructuring techniques to assist students in identifying and challenging negative thoughts about their theses (Aminullah et al., 2018; Jannah et al., 2019; Septian & Manuardi, 2021; Utami & Islam, 2017). Through this technique, students learn to challenge negative beliefs by examining evidence that supports or contradicts them, ultimately fostering a more realistic and balanced perspective. In addition to modify thinking patterns, Ottens (1991) emphasizes the importance of addressing underlying factors that trigger academic anxiety, such as perfectionism, negative self-talk, and unrealistic expectations. These factors can be addressed by developing coping skills. Relaxation is a well-known technique for managing academic stress and anxiety, believed to promote a more positive thought pattern (D. Suyono, 2016). Students with high levels of academic anxiety typically experience both physical and psychological stress, and relaxation is considered the optimal choice to relieve tension and induce a sense of peace (Anuar et al., 2019; Ariyanto, 2015; Sari & Subandi, 2015).

The implementation of relaxation techniques in this counseling is modified with Qur'an recitation. Listening to the Qur'an has physical, psychological, and spiritual benefits. Physically, this may lower blood pressure and trigger the heart to release hormones that control heart function, impacting psychological comfort by increasing relaxation and reducing stress (Nayef & Wahab, 2018). Other studies have found that listening to the Qur'an also reduces the production of the Cortisol hormone, responsible for anxiety and stress, and is useful for improving mood and reducing symptoms of depression (Manullang et al., 2021). In addition to physical and psychological benefits, listening to the Qur'an can also serve as a spiritual exercise for Muslims, providing a connection to God. This is advantageous for individuals with anxiety as a source of comfort and guidance (Idham & Ridha, 2017). According to physicists, the sound of Murattal Al-Qur'an emits alpha waves that can optimize the work of the central nervous system and provide a relaxing effect, as well as stabilize behavior (Al-Galal & Fakhri Taha Alshakhli, 2017; Razafindrasata et al., 2019; and Tumiran et al., 2013).

Based on this discussion, the combination of cognitive restructuring and Murattal Al-Qur'an relaxation techniques has been shown to be effective in reducing students' academic anxiety during thesis work. The Cognitive Restructuring technique challenges negative thoughts about the thesis and replaces them with new, realistic, positive, and productive thoughts. Murattal Al-Qur'an relaxation contributes to reducing physical and emotional tension by increasing the sense of calm and relaxation. This finding is supported by Haikal (2022) and Safithry (2022).

CONCLUSION

The study's results indicate a significant impact of group counseling with Cognitive Restructuring and Murattal Al-Qur'an Relaxation Techniques in reducing academic anxiety among university students. Therefore, university counselors can adopt this approach to support students dealing with academic anxiety during thesis writing. Several recommendations are proposed for future studies, including the utilization of Quranic content as materials for cognitive restructuring and relaxation techniques, as well as the inclusion of a larger number of participants and sessions.

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