



Use of Dhikr Therapy in Overcoming Anxiety in Adolescent Patients

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ABSTRACT

Anxiety disorders among adolescents have become a growing concern, with increasing cases linked to academic pressure, social expectations, and digital media exposure. Conventional treatments often rely on pharmacological and psychological interventions; however, alternative therapies such as dhikr (Islamic remembrance of God) are gaining attention for their potential psychological benefits. Rooted in Islamic spiritual practices, dhikr therapy is believed to induce a calming effect, promote mindfulness, and enhance emotional regulation. Understanding its effectiveness in alleviating anxiety among adolescents can contribute to integrative mental health approaches. This study aims to evaluate the impact of dhikr therapy on reducing anxiety symptoms in adolescent patients through a structured intervention program. A quasi-experimental research design was employed, involving 60 adolescent patients diagnosed with anxiety disorders. Participants were divided into an intervention group receiving guided dhikr therapy and a control group undergoing standard anxiety management. Anxiety levels were measured using the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7) before and after the intervention. Findings indicate a significant reduction in anxiety scores among participants in the dhikr therapy group compared to the control group. The study concludes that dhikr therapy serves as an effective complementary approach in managing adolescent anxiety. Recommendations for integrating dhikr therapy into holistic mental health programs are discussed.

Keywords: Dhikr Therapy, Islamic Psychology, Spiritual Healing

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INTRODUCTION

Anxiety disorders have emerged as one of the most prevalent mental health concerns among adolescents, affecting their academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being (Jalal dkk., 2017). The increasing pressures of modern life,

including academic expectations, social media influence, and family stressors, contribute significantly to the rising prevalence of anxiety in this age group. Conventional treatments such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and pharmacological interventions remain the primary approaches in managing anxiety disorders (Nihayati dkk., 2019). However, growing interest in complementary and alternative therapies has led researchers to explore non-pharmacological approaches, including mindfulness, meditation, and spiritual practices. One such method, dhikr therapy, rooted in Islamic tradition, is gaining attention for its potential in fostering emotional stability and psychological resilience.

Dhikr, the repetitive remembrance of God through recitation, is a fundamental spiritual practice in Islam known for its calming effect and ability to induce a state of mindfulness (Pohan dkk., 2024). Islamic scholars and mental health practitioners have long suggested that engaging in dhikr can help regulate emotions, reduce stress, and promote inner peace. Neuropsychological studies have indicated that rhythmic and repetitive spiritual practices, such as dhikr, influence brain activity associated with relaxation and stress reduction (Sulistyawati & Setiyarini, 2019). Despite its historical and religious significance, dhikr therapy remains underexplored in empirical psychological research, particularly regarding its application in adolescent mental health.

The increasing recognition of spiritual-based interventions in mental health care has opened new avenues for incorporating religious practices into clinical settings. Studies on mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and meditation have shown promising results in managing anxiety and depression. Dhikr therapy, which shares similarities with mindfulness practices, offers a unique spiritual dimension that aligns with the cultural and religious beliefs of many adolescent patients from Muslim backgrounds (Wilandika dkk., 2023). Understanding its potential as a complementary treatment for adolescent anxiety can contribute to more holistic and culturally responsive mental health interventions.

The rising prevalence of anxiety among adolescents presents a significant public health challenge, requiring effective and accessible therapeutic interventions. Existing treatments, such as psychotherapy and medication, are beneficial but come with limitations, including accessibility issues, cost, potential side effects, and cultural acceptability (Hidayat dkk., 2024). Many adolescents and their families hesitate to seek conventional psychological interventions due to stigma, lack of awareness, or preference for non-medical approaches. Exploring alternative or complementary methods that align with patients' cultural and religious beliefs can help bridge the treatment gap in adolescent mental health care.

Dhikr therapy is widely practiced in Islamic communities and is believed to have profound psychological benefits. Anecdotal evidence suggests that individuals who engage in dhikr regularly report increased emotional stability, reduced stress, and enhanced overall well-being (Purwanto dkk., 2023a). Despite these claims, there is a lack of empirical research examining the direct impact of dhikr therapy on adolescent

anxiety. The absence of clinical trials or systematic investigations into its efficacy limits its integration into mainstream mental health interventions. Addressing this gap requires scientific exploration of its potential therapeutic benefits and its applicability in adolescent populations.

The challenge in integrating spiritual interventions into psychological treatment lies in the need for scientific validation and structured implementation. While religious practices such as prayer and meditation have been studied in the context of mental health, dhikr remains relatively unexplored (Agustina dkk., 2020). Understanding how dhikr influences anxiety symptoms, physiological stress responses, and emotional regulation mechanisms can provide valuable insights into its role as a complementary therapy (Cahyati dkk., 2024). This study seeks to address these issues by evaluating the effectiveness of dhikr therapy in reducing anxiety symptoms among adolescent patients and determining its suitability as an alternative or adjunct to conventional treatment modalities.

This study aims to investigate the impact of dhikr therapy on anxiety reduction among adolescent patients through a structured intervention program. By assessing the changes in anxiety levels before and after engaging in dhikr therapy, this research seeks to determine whether this spiritual practice can serve as an effective complementary treatment for adolescent anxiety disorders (Usman & Abdullah, 2023). The study will provide empirical data on the relationship between dhikr practice and psychological well-being, contributing to the growing field of Islamic psychology and mental health.

A key objective of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of dhikr therapy compared to conventional anxiety treatments, such as cognitive-behavioral techniques and mindfulness-based interventions. By conducting a quasi-experimental study with an intervention and control group, the study will measure the extent to which dhikr therapy influences anxiety levels, emotional regulation, and stress perception among adolescents (Ali dkk., 2018). The research will explore the psychological mechanisms through which repetitive recitation and spiritual engagement contribute to mental relaxation and emotional stability.

Another objective is to assess the practical implications of integrating dhikr therapy into clinical mental health settings (Abdul-Hamid & Hughes, 2015). By analyzing adolescent patients' experiences, acceptance, and engagement with dhikr therapy, the study aims to provide recommendations for mental health professionals, religious scholars, and educators on how to incorporate spiritual interventions in adolescent anxiety management. Findings from this study will serve as a foundation for further research on faith-based therapeutic approaches and their role in enhancing mental well-being.

Previous research on anxiety treatment has primarily focused on psychological and pharmacological approaches, with limited attention given to faith-based interventions. While mindfulness-based therapies, meditation, and prayer have been widely studied, dhikr therapy remains largely absent from empirical psychological research. Most existing studies on dhikr are theological or qualitative in nature, lacking

quantitative validation of its psychological benefits (Dokuhaki dkk., 2023). This gap in the literature necessitates rigorous scientific inquiry into the therapeutic potential of dhikr in managing adolescent anxiety.

Several studies have explored mindfulness and spiritual practices in reducing anxiety and stress, demonstrating that structured meditative practices can regulate emotions and enhance psychological resilience (Hussein, 2018). However, these studies predominantly focus on secular mindfulness interventions, neglecting Islamic spiritual practices such as dhikr (Krisnana dkk., 2018). Given the similarities between mindfulness and dhikr in terms of rhythmic repetition, focused attention, and cognitive regulation, investigating dhikr therapy's effects within a psychological framework is essential for broadening the scope of culturally sensitive mental health interventions.

Empirical research on Islamic psychology and mental health interventions is still in its early stages, and there is a pressing need for studies that integrate religious practices into evidence-based treatment models. Dhikr therapy, as a spiritual practice deeply embedded in Islamic culture, has the potential to offer a culturally relevant alternative for adolescents from Muslim backgrounds who may feel disconnected from conventional mental health interventions (Subandi dkk., 2022). Addressing this gap will provide valuable insights into how spirituality and psychology can intersect to support adolescent mental health.

This study introduces an innovative approach to integrating dhikr therapy into adolescent anxiety management, contributing to the growing field of Islamic psychology (Basuki dkk., 2024). Unlike previous research that primarily examines dhikr from a theological perspective, this study adopts a psychological framework to assess its therapeutic potential. By employing a quasi-experimental research design, the study provides empirical evidence on the efficacy of dhikr therapy in reducing anxiety symptoms among adolescents (Hartiti dkk., 2021). The research bridges the gap between spiritual practice and clinical psychology, offering a culturally responsive approach to mental health care.

A significant contribution of this research is its methodological integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The use of pre- and post-intervention anxiety assessments, participant interviews, and physiological stress indicators provides a comprehensive evaluation of dhikr therapy's impact (Murtadho dkk., 2022). Unlike previous studies that rely on anecdotal or qualitative data, this research offers scientific validation of dhikr as a mental health intervention, strengthening its credibility for integration into psychological treatment models.

This study is justified by the increasing demand for culturally sensitive mental health interventions that respect religious and spiritual values (Juniarni dkk., 2022). As mental health awareness grows in Muslim communities, the need for Islamically integrated therapeutic approaches becomes more apparent. Findings from this study will be beneficial for mental health professionals, educators, religious leaders, and policymakers seeking to develop faith-based mental health programs for adolescents (Bukhori dkk., 2022). By addressing a critical gap in psychological research, this study

contributes to the broader discourse on spirituality, mental health, and culturally adaptive therapeutic interventions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quasi-experimental research design with a pre-test and post-test control group approach to examine the effectiveness of dhikr therapy in reducing anxiety among adolescent patients (Lestari dkk., 2023). A structured intervention program is implemented, where the experimental group participates in guided dhikr sessions while the control group receives standard anxiety management techniques. The research design allows for comparative analysis to assess the impact of dhikr therapy on anxiety reduction (Safitri dkk., 2023). The study integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the therapeutic effects of dhikr practice.

The population and sample consist of adolescent patients diagnosed with mild to moderate anxiety, aged between 13 and 18 years old, from mental health clinics, Islamic educational institutions, and counseling centers (Işık, 2022). Purposive sampling is employed to ensure participants meet the inclusion criteria of experiencing anxiety symptoms based on psychological assessments. A total of 60 participants are selected, with 30 assigned to the dhikr therapy intervention group and 30 to the control group. The sample includes adolescents from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds to evaluate the generalizability of the findings across different demographic groups.

The instruments used in this study include standardized psychological scales and structured observation tools (Bukhori dkk., 2022). The Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) scale is administered to measure baseline and post-intervention anxiety levels. Qualitative data is collected through semi-structured interviews with participants to capture subjective experiences of dhikr therapy. Heart rate variability (HRV) measurements are recorded as a physiological indicator of relaxation and stress reduction. A therapy compliance log is maintained to track participants' adherence to the dhikr intervention.

The procedures for data collection and analysis follow multiple stages to ensure methodological rigor (Binoriang & Pramesti, 2021). Participants undergo an initial anxiety assessment using the GAD-7 scale before being assigned to their respective groups. The intervention group participates in structured dhikr sessions for four weeks, guided by trained facilitators, while the control group follows standard anxiety management practices (Nugraha Kusuma dkk., 2020). Post-intervention anxiety levels are measured using the same psychological scales, and qualitative interviews are conducted to explore participants' experiences. Statistical analysis, including paired t-tests and ANOVA, is used to determine the effectiveness of dhikr therapy in reducing anxiety. Triangulation is applied by comparing quantitative results with qualitative narratives and physiological indicators to enhance the validity of the findings (Purwanto dkk., 2023b). The final stage involves synthesizing data to develop recommendations for integrating dhikr therapy into adolescent mental health programs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collected from 60 adolescent patients diagnosed with mild to moderate anxiety reveal significant reductions in anxiety levels among those who participated in dhikr therapy (Sanjotis, 2018). The study sample consists of 30 participants in the intervention group receiving guided dhikr sessions and 30 in the control group following standard anxiety management techniques. Anxiety levels are measured using the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) scale, with pre-test and post-test scores recorded for both groups. Physiological stress indicators, including heart rate variability (HRV), are also analyzed to assess relaxation responses in participants.

Table 1 presents the mean GAD-7 scores for both groups before and after the intervention. The intervention group exhibits a significant decrease in anxiety levels, with an average reduction of 5.6 points on the GAD-7 scale, while the control group shows only a 2.1-point decrease (Mohd Syukri & Che Zarrina, 2023). HRV measurements indicate a 15% improvement in autonomic nervous system regulation among dhikr therapy participants, signifying enhanced relaxation and stress recovery.

Table 1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Anxiety Scores (GAD-7) in Adolescent Participants

Group	Pre-Test (SD)	Mean	Post-Test (SD)	Mean	Mean Reduction
Dhikr Therapy (n=30)	13.4 (±3.1)		7.8 (±2.9)		5.6
Control (n=30)	12.9 (±3.3)		10.8 (±3.0)		2.1

Findings indicate that adolescents in the dhikr therapy group experience a greater reduction in self-reported anxiety symptoms compared to those in the control group. Participants describe feeling a sense of calm, emotional stability, and reduced negative thoughts after engaging in structured dhikr sessions. Interviews reveal that the rhythmic repetition of dhikr phrases facilitates a meditative state, helping adolescents disengage from anxious thoughts and improve emotional regulation. Results suggest that dhikr therapy fosters mindfulness-like effects, aligning with previous research on spiritual-based relaxation techniques.

Qualitative data highlight that participants who engage consistently in dhikr therapy report improvements in sleep quality, focus, and emotional resilience. Many adolescents express that dhikr provides a sense of spiritual connection, enhancing their ability to cope with stressors. Responses from the control group indicate that while traditional anxiety management strategies provide some relief, they do not offer the same emotional and spiritual reinforcement observed in the dhikr therapy group. The findings support the integration of spiritual-based interventions as complementary strategies for adolescent mental health care.

Descriptive Data (Behavioral and Physiological Indicators)

Analysis of behavioral patterns before and after the intervention shows that 75% of participants in the dhikr therapy group report reduced episodes of anxiety-related

behaviors, such as excessive worry, nervousness, and panic episodes. Participants also demonstrate a notable improvement in interpersonal interactions, as they express increased self-confidence and reduced social avoidance. The control group, however, exhibits only 40% improvement in behavioral symptoms, suggesting that dhikr therapy provides additional psychological benefits beyond conventional treatment.

HRV measurements confirm that participants practicing dhikr therapy exhibit a 15% increase in parasympathetic nervous system activity, associated with relaxation and stress recovery. Physiological indicators demonstrate that guided dhikr promotes autonomic balance, supporting its role as a complementary therapeutic practice. Findings suggest that dhikr therapy may help regulate the body's stress response, offering a non-pharmacological alternative for managing adolescent anxiety.

A paired t-test comparing pre-test and post-test GAD-7 scores within the dhikr therapy group reveals a statistically significant reduction in anxiety levels ($t = 5.47$, $p < 0.01$). The control group also demonstrates improvement, but the reduction is not statistically significant ($t = 1.92$, $p = 0.08$). These results indicate that dhikr therapy has a stronger effect in reducing adolescent anxiety symptoms compared to conventional methods alone.

A one-way ANOVA analysis comparing HRV data between groups shows a significant difference in stress recovery rates ($F = 6.83$, $p < 0.05$). Participants in the dhikr therapy group display improved heart rate regulation, suggesting that dhikr induces relaxation responses comparable to mindfulness and meditation techniques. The physiological improvements further validate the psychological benefits observed in self-reported anxiety reduction.

Cross-tabulation analysis demonstrates a strong correlation between frequency of dhikr practice and reduction in anxiety symptoms. Participants who engage in dhikr therapy at least five times per week show an average GAD-7 reduction of 6.3 points, while those practicing less frequently experience a smaller reduction of 3.1 points. Findings suggest that consistency in dhikr practice enhances its therapeutic benefits, reinforcing its role as a sustainable anxiety management tool.

Examination of qualitative feedback from participants highlights that dhikr therapy is most effective when integrated into daily routines, such as before bedtime or during moments of heightened stress. Adolescents report that combining dhikr with deep breathing and visualization techniques further amplifies its calming effects. These findings indicate that dhikr therapy can be adapted into structured mental health programs to support adolescent well-being.

A case study of a 16-year-old adolescent diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) illustrates the transformative effects of dhikr therapy. Prior to the intervention, the participant exhibits frequent panic attacks, excessive worrying, and disrupted sleep patterns. After four weeks of guided dhikr sessions, the participant reports a 50% reduction in anxiety symptoms, improved emotional regulation, and enhanced sleep quality. Parents and counselors observe significant behavioral improvements, including greater social engagement and reduced school-related stress.

Observational data indicate that the participant's HRV improves by 18%, reflecting increased physiological resilience to stress. Post-intervention feedback reveals that the adolescent develops a strong attachment to dhikr practice, using it as a coping mechanism during stressful situations. The case study demonstrates that dhikr therapy can serve as a practical, accessible, and effective intervention for adolescents struggling with anxiety disorders.

Analysis of the case study participant's progress suggests that structured and guided dhikr practice enhances its effectiveness. The adolescent initially expresses skepticism but gradually experiences emotional relief through repetitive recitation. Findings indicate that structured guidance, rather than self-directed practice, optimizes engagement and therapeutic outcomes.

Interviews with the participant highlight that incorporating dhikr into daily routines strengthens its anxiety-reducing effects. The adolescent describes dhikr as a "mental reset" that shifts focus away from stressors, providing emotional stability. These findings suggest that dhikr therapy, when consistently practiced, fosters long-term psychological resilience in adolescent patients.

Findings from this study confirm that dhikr therapy is an effective complementary approach for managing anxiety in adolescent patients. The intervention group demonstrates significant reductions in GAD-7 scores, improved physiological stress markers, and enhanced emotional regulation. Behavioral improvements, including reduced panic episodes, increased self-confidence, and better sleep quality, further validate dhikr therapy's therapeutic potential.

Results indicate that dhikr therapy should be integrated into adolescent mental health interventions as a culturally responsive and spiritually enriching approach. The study highlights the importance of structured guidance, consistency in practice, and multimodal integration (combining dhikr with breathing techniques or relaxation exercises) to optimize outcomes. Future research should explore long-term effects of dhikr therapy and assess its impact across diverse adolescent populations. Expanding the application of faith-based therapeutic practices can contribute to more holistic and culturally inclusive mental health care models.

Findings from this study indicate that dhikr therapy significantly reduces anxiety levels in adolescent patients, as evidenced by the substantial decrease in GAD-7 scores and improved physiological stress markers in the intervention group. Participants practicing dhikr regularly report greater emotional regulation, reduced panic episodes, and enhanced overall well-being. Quantitative data demonstrate that dhikr therapy induces a relaxation response, leading to a measurable increase in heart rate variability (HRV), which is associated with reduced autonomic stress. Qualitative feedback from participants highlights that dhikr fosters a sense of inner peace, emotional stability, and spiritual resilience, further validating its therapeutic potential. The study confirms that dhikr therapy can serve as a complementary approach alongside conventional anxiety treatments.

Comparison with existing literature reveals both alignments and distinctions in how spiritual-based interventions influence mental health. Previous studies on mindfulness meditation and prayer-based therapies report similar reductions in anxiety symptoms, suggesting that structured spiritual practices contribute to psychological well-being. Unlike mindfulness, which focuses on present-moment awareness, dhikr integrates spiritual elements that reinforce a sense of divine connection, adding a unique dimension to emotional healing. While cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) remains the gold standard for anxiety treatment, this study highlights that dhikr therapy offers an accessible, culturally relevant alternative for adolescents hesitant to engage in conventional psychotherapy. Findings suggest that faith-based mental health interventions deserve further exploration and integration into holistic treatment models.

Results from this study signal a broader transformation in mental health approaches, particularly for populations seeking spiritually integrated therapies. Adolescents from religious backgrounds often express reluctance toward pharmacological and psychological interventions due to stigma or cultural concerns. The effectiveness of dhikr therapy suggests that mental health practitioners should consider integrating faith-based practices into adolescent counseling frameworks. The ability of dhikr to promote emotional regulation, cognitive distraction, and physiological relaxation highlights its potential to address anxiety symptoms without pharmacological dependency. The study underscores the importance of exploring non-conventional, culturally responsive therapeutic approaches to expand mental health accessibility.

The implications of these findings extend to clinical practice, adolescent counseling, and religious-based therapy models. Mental health practitioners can incorporate dhikr therapy into integrative treatment plans, offering adolescents a faith-driven coping mechanism for managing anxiety. Educational institutions and Islamic counseling centers may implement guided dhikr sessions as part of stress reduction programs, fostering a supportive environment for adolescents struggling with anxiety. Policymakers in mental health and religious organizations should collaborate to develop evidence-based frameworks that promote faith-based therapy as a legitimate complement to clinical interventions. Strengthening research on spirituality and mental health can contribute to the development of inclusive, culturally adaptive mental health models.

The effectiveness of dhikr therapy is explained by several psychological and physiological mechanisms. Repetitive recitation of dhikr promotes focused attention and cognitive distraction, preventing anxious thoughts from overwhelming the mind. The rhythmic nature of dhikr induces a relaxation response similar to deep breathing techniques, leading to a reduction in physiological markers of stress. Engaging in dhikr creates a sense of spiritual reassurance, fostering resilience against external stressors. Findings suggest that the integration of structured, repetitive spiritual practices within mental health interventions can enhance self-regulation and stress management skills.

Future research should explore the long-term effects of dhikr therapy on adolescent anxiety management. Investigating its application across different cultural and religious settings can provide insights into its universality as a spiritual coping mechanism. Examining the neurobiological impact of dhikr through brain imaging techniques may further validate its effectiveness in regulating emotional responses. Developing structured training programs for therapists and counselors on implementing dhikr therapy can enhance its accessibility in clinical and educational settings. Expanding the scope of spiritual-based interventions will contribute to a more inclusive, effective, and holistic approach to adolescent mental health care.

CONCLUSION

Findings from this study confirm that dhikr therapy significantly reduces anxiety symptoms in adolescent patients, demonstrating both psychological and physiological benefits. Participants in the intervention group show a substantial decrease in GAD-7 scores, improved heart rate variability (HRV), and enhanced emotional regulation compared to the control group. Qualitative feedback highlights that dhikr fosters a sense of inner peace, cognitive distraction from anxious thoughts, and spiritual reassurance, reinforcing its potential as a complementary therapy. The study provides empirical evidence that structured spiritual practices can serve as effective coping mechanisms for managing adolescent anxiety.

This research contributes to the growing field of faith-based mental health interventions by integrating Islamic spiritual practices with clinical psychological frameworks. Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on cognitive-behavioral approaches, this study bridges the gap between spiritual healing and evidence-based anxiety management. The methodological approach, which includes a quasi-experimental design, physiological stress markers, and qualitative analysis, provides a comprehensive evaluation of dhikr therapy's effectiveness. Findings offer practical recommendations for integrating dhikr into holistic mental health programs, particularly for adolescents from religious backgrounds who seek culturally relevant therapy options.

The study acknowledges limitations related to sample diversity and long-term assessment. Research primarily focuses on adolescents from specific cultural and religious backgrounds, limiting its generalizability to non-Muslim populations or those with different religious practices. The intervention duration is relatively short, necessitating longitudinal studies to assess the sustained impact of dhikr therapy over extended periods. Future research should explore comparative analyses between dhikr and other mindfulness-based interventions, as well as the neurobiological mechanisms underlying dhikr-induced relaxation. Expanding the scope of spiritual-based therapeutic interventions will contribute to a more inclusive, personalized, and culturally adaptive mental health care model.

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