

## ISLAMIC SELF-HEALING TO OVERCOME STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ANXIETY

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**ABSTRACT** Academic anxiety is one of the psychological problems commonly experienced by santri due to high academic demands, intensive learning activities, and environmental pressures in Islamic boarding schools. From the perspective of Islamic Psychology, psychological calmness is closely related to an individual's spiritual closeness to Allah SWT, which is manifested through the practices of prayer (doa) and remembrance (dhikr). This community service activity aimed to examine the effectiveness of Islamic self-healing through prayer and dhikr in reducing the level of academic anxiety among santri. The study employed a quantitative approach with a one-group pretest–posttest design, involving an Islamic self healing intervention through the practice of prayer and dhikr. Data were collected from 25 santri who participated in the entire series of Islamic self-healing interventions. The results of the analysis showed a decrease in the mean academic anxiety score from 75.20 at the pretest stage (high category) to 61.80 at the posttest stage (moderate category). These findings indicate that Islamic self-healing interventions through prayer and dhikr contribute to a reduction in academic anxiety among santri. Therefore, the practices of prayer and dhikr have the potential to serve as effective, contextual, and value-congruent psychological interventions within the setting of Islamic boarding schools.

**KEYWORDS:** *Academic Anxiety, Islamic Self-Healing, Prayer and Dzikir, Santri.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Academic anxiety is one of the psychological problems commonly experienced by adolescents, particularly within the contexts of formal education and Islamic boarding school–based education (pesantren). This condition arises as a response to high academic demands, such as the obligation to understand learning materials, adhere to intensive study schedules, face academic

evaluations, and meet the expectations of teachers and parents. Academic anxiety affects not only emotional aspects but also influences cognitive functioning, behavior, and students' learning performance. Individuals experiencing academic anxiety tend to have difficulty concentrating, excessive fear of failure, and a tendency to avoid academic tasks (Valiante & Pajares, 1990; Ottens, 1991).

In the pesantren environment, students (santri) face distinctive and complex academic challenges. In addition to following the formal education curriculum, santri are also required to participate intensively in religious activities, such as memorization, Qur'anic recitation, and adherence to strict boarding school discipline. The combination of academic and religious demands has the potential to increase psychological pressure if santri do not possess adequate coping strategies. If academic anxiety is not properly addressed, it can lead to decreased learning motivation, psychological well-being, and long-term emotional development among santri (Pekrun, 2006).

From the perspective of Islamic Psychology, humans are viewed as an integrated unity of the physical body, intellect, and soul. Mental health is not solely determined by psychological factors but is also influenced by the quality of an individual's spiritual relationship with Allah SWT. When the spiritual dimension is neglected, individuals become more vulnerable to restlessness, anxiety, and emotional instability. Conversely, spiritual closeness is believed to foster inner peace (sakīnah) and a sense of security in facing various life pressures, including academic stress. The Qur'an explicitly affirms that tranquility of the heart can be attained through remembrance of Allah (QS. Ar-Ra'd: 28).

In Islamic Psychology, supplication (du'a) and remembrance (dhikr) are understood not only as ritual worship but also as forms of psychological therapy that are both preventive and curative. The practices of du'a and dhikr can help individuals focus their attention, calm the mind, and shift their focus away from anxiety toward surrender and trust in Allah SWT. Quraish Shihab (2002) explains that dhikr encompasses verbal, heartfelt, and behavioral activities that cultivate full awareness of Allah's presence, thereby providing comprehensive psychological and spiritual tranquility.

In line with this, the concept of self-healing represents a relevant approach to helping individuals independently manage psychological stress. Self-healing is defined as a process of self-recovery that involves awareness, acceptance, and emotional regulation through an individual's internal resources, which can be strengthened by external and spiritual factors (Crane & Ward, 2016). Within the context of Islamic Psychology, self-healing is inseparable from acts of worship

such as du‘a, dhikr, and self-reflection, which function as media for both intrapersonal and spiritual communication.

Based on the phenomenon of academic anxiety experienced by santri and the relevance of spiritual approaches in Islamic Psychology, there is a need for an intervention program that is simple, contextual, and easily implemented in the pesantren environment. The program “Islamic Self-Healing to Overcome Students’ Academic Anxiety” is designed as a form of psychologically supportive assistance grounded in Islamic values through self-reflection, du‘a, and dhikr. This program is expected not only to help santri reduce academic anxiety but also to enhance spiritual awareness and independent emotional regulation skills.

Thus, this activity holds high urgency as a form of community service in the field of Islamic Psychology. The Islamic self-healing approach is expected to serve as an alternative psychological intervention aligned with pesantren culture and capable of providing positive impacts on the mental well-being of santri.

## **2. METHOD**

This community service activity was conducted using a psychoeducational approach grounded in Islamic Psychology with a descriptive design. This approach aimed to provide psychological intervention while also describing changes in the academic anxiety levels of santri before and after participating in the Islamic self-healing program. A descriptive approach was chosen because community service activities have limitations in controlling variables and place greater emphasis on the implementation process, participants’ subjective experiences, and the practical impact of the intervention provided (Creswell, 2014).

The community service activity was carried out at Jabal Nur Islamic Boarding School (Pesantren Jabal Nur) on November 22, 2025, as part of a community engagement program in the field of Islamic Psychology. The participants consisted of 25 santri selected using purposive sampling. Participant selection was based on specific criteria, namely adolescent santri who were actively engaged in academic activities and exhibited moderate to high levels of academic anxiety (as measured by an academic anxiety scale). This technique was used to ensure that the intervention program was delivered to santri who required appropriate psychological and spiritual support.

The implementation of the program began with an initial assessment (pre-test) to determine the level of academic anxiety among santri before the intervention. The measurement was conducted using the Santri Academic Anxiety Scale, which had been adapted to the characteristics of participants in the pesantren environment. The pre-test results served as a basis for identifying intervention needs and as a comparison for evaluating the program’s effectiveness.

Following the pre-test, the activity continued with psychoeducation sessions and Islamic self-healing interventions. The initial stage of the intervention involved a self-reflection session aimed at helping santri recognize the academic pressures they experienced and express their emotions openly and adaptively. Self-reflection was considered the first step in the self-healing process, emphasizing self-awareness and acceptance of one's psychological condition.

The next stage involved structured and collective practices of supplication (du'a) and remembrance (dhikr), guided by facilitators. Du'a and dhikr were positioned as forms of spiritual therapy that play a role in fostering inner peace (sakīnah), strengthening surrender to Allah SWT, and supporting emotional regulation by redirecting focus away from anxiety toward more positive spiritual meaning (Crane & Ward, 2016). These practices were reinforced with brief explanations of the meaning of du'a and dhikr in the daily lives of santri to facilitate internalization.

After the intervention activities were completed, participants were given a final assessment (post-test) using the same instrument as the pre-test. The post-test aimed to determine changes in the level of academic anxiety among santri after participating in the Islamic self-healing psychoeducational program. The pre-test and post-test data were then analyzed descriptively to illustrate changes in academic anxiety scores as a form of evaluating the success of the community service activity.

### **3. RESULT**

The implementation of the Islamic self-healing program through du'a and dhikr began with the administration of a pre-test to measure the students' levels of academic anxiety prior to the intervention. The activity then proceeded with a self-reflection session aimed at helping santri recognize and become aware of the academic pressures they had been experiencing. At this stage, santri were guided to reflect on their learning experiences, academic demands, and the emotional responses that emerged during their educational activities in the pesantren.

Based on observational findings during the self-reflection session, most santri demonstrated fairly intense emotional responses, such as crying, remaining silent for certain periods, and lowering their heads. These responses indicated processes of awareness and emotional expression related to previously suppressed feelings associated with the academic anxiety experienced by the santri.

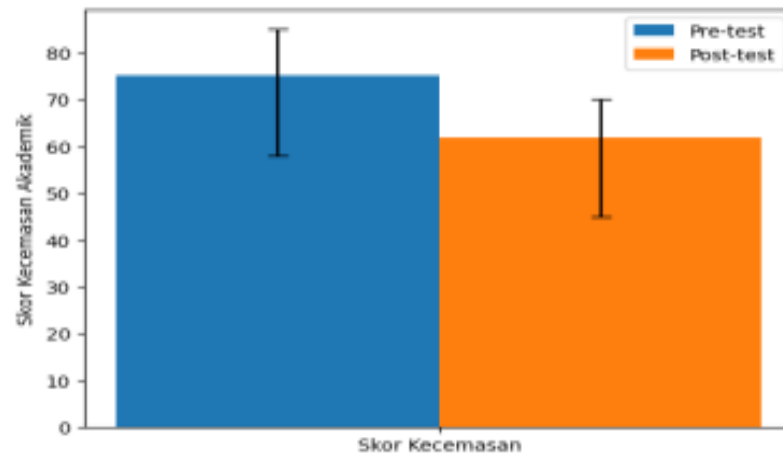


Figure 1. Pretest and Post-test

Descriptive analysis results indicated a difference in the average academic anxiety scores of santri before and after receiving the Islamic self-healing intervention. Data were obtained from 25 santri who participated in the entire series of community service activities. The average academic anxiety score at the pre-test stage was 75.20, which fell into the high category, while at the post-test stage it decreased to 61.80, which was categorized as moderate.

In addition, the range of academic anxiety scores also showed a decline. In the pre-test, the minimum and maximum scores ranged from 58 to 85, whereas in the post-test the range decreased to 45 to 70. The reduction in both the average score and the score range indicates that the Islamic self-healing psychoeducational program through du'a and dhikr had a positive impact on the psychological condition of santri, particularly in reducing levels of academic anxiety.

### 3.1 Observational Findings During the Dhikr and Du'a Sessions

After the self-reflection session, santri were guided to participate in collective dhikr and du'a practices using printed dhikr sheets prepared by the implementation team. During the dhikr session, santri appeared to follow the activity in an orderly and focused manner. Observationally, changes were noted in the students' facial expressions, which became more relaxed, their breathing patterns more regular, and their body posture calmer compared to before the dhikr session began. These conditions indicated a reduction in emotional tension during the activity.

Observations following the dhikr and du'a sessions showed that santri were in a more emotionally stable condition. They appeared calmer, did not display excessive restlessness, and were able to interact with their surroundings in a more positive manner. Several santri voluntarily shared testimonials stating that they felt more comfortable, calmer, and emotionally lighter after

participating in the dhikr and du'a practices. They expressed that dhikr helped calm their minds and reduce the anxiety that had frequently arisen due to academic demands in the pesantren.

### **3.2 Discussion**

The results of the program implementation indicate that Islamic self-healing through a series of self-reflection, du'a, and dhikr activities was able to facilitate santri in recognizing, expressing, and managing emotions related to academic anxiety. Emotional responses such as crying that emerged during the self-reflection session can be understood as a form of catharsis, namely the release of suppressed emotions after individuals engage in deep reflection on the problems they are experiencing. In psychological studies, the cathartic process plays an important role in helping individuals reduce emotional burdens and achieve a more stable psychological condition (Ottens, 1991).

The practice of dhikr and du'a following the reflection session served as a means of inner calming as well as spiritual strengthening for the santri. From the perspective of Islamic Psychology, dhikr is understood as a spiritual activity involving the awareness of the heart, speech, and mind in remembering Allah SWT, thereby fostering tranquility and a sense of security within the individual (Shihab, 2002). This aligns with the verse in QS. Ar-Ra'd (13:28), which affirms that hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah. The more relaxed and calm condition of the santri after the dhikr practice suggests that spiritual approaches contribute to the observational reduction of emotional tension.

The santri testimonials expressing feelings of greater comfort and calm after participating in dhikr further reinforce the observational findings during the activity. These subjective experiences are consistent with the concept of self-healing, which emphasizes the active role of individuals in the self-recovery process through awareness, acceptance, and independent emotional regulation (Crane & Ward, 2016). In this context, dhikr functions as a medium for emotional regulation, helping santri shift their focus away from anxiety-triggering thoughts toward a more stable inner state characterized by surrender and spiritual meaning.



**Figure 2.** Documentation of Activity

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the program implementation, it can be concluded that Islamic self-healing through self-reflection, du'a, and dhikr has the potential to help reduce academic anxiety among santri both emotionally and spiritually. Based on the pre-test and post-test measurements, the results indicated positive changes in the form of greater calmness, emotional stability, and increased feelings of comfort following the intervention.

Thus, the Islamic self-healing approach may serve as a contextual and relevant alternative form of psychological assistance within the pesantren environment. Further investigation through studies employing more rigorous research designs is recommended to strengthen the evidence base for this intervention.

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