

Art Therapy for Students Academic Stress

Soejanto, Laily Tiarani^{1*} Bariyyah, Khairul² Pambudi,
 Parid Rilo³ Yaman, Desita Mulia⁴

¹*Guidance and Counseling, Universitas Kanjuruhan Malang, Malang, East Java, Indonesia*

²*Guidance and Counseling, Universitas Kanjuruhan Malang, Malang, East Java, Indonesia*

³*Guidance and Counseling, Universitas Kanjuruhan Malang, Malang, East Java, Indonesia*

⁴*Guidance and Counseling, Universitas Kanjuruhan Malang, Malang, East Java, Indonesia*

*Corresponding author. Email : lailytiarani@unikama.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The academic stress phenomenon which experienced by many students that they encounter in daily life, if not dealt-with immediately, will affect the students life. Art therapy techniques can be used to reduce the academic stress of school students. The purpose of this study is to measure the effectiveness of art therapy technique to reduce academic stress. The research design applied is quasi experimental with one-group experimental pretest-posttest design. Purposive sampling technique is used and obtained by 11 students who have high level of academic stress. The Wilcoxon test is used to analyze the data that obtained in this research.

Keywords: *art therapy, academic stress, students*

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period of storm and stress filled with conflicts and changes in physical, psychological and environmental development [1]. The changes that teenagers experience can cause stress [2]. One of the changes that can lead to the emergence of stress in teenagers are changes in the academic field, those are high demands on student achievement, academic burden, and higher passing-grade standard in each year [3]. Dealing with the demands of academic burden in school can cause stress, especially among junior high school students [4].

Stress among students which aroused during learning process could effects students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor development [5]. A research conducted by Sohail in 2013 found that most of the sources of stress experienced by students came from academic problems [6]. Academic stress among students might be caused by parents, teachers, and peer's expectations to one's academic achievement is showing a high trend. These expectations are oftenly not in accordance with the student's abilities [7].

If the academic stress experienced by the students is not directed and handled properly it will affect the academic achievement, resulting in the internet and smartphone addiction, also impede the satisfaction of life[8; 9]. Academic stress can also affects students' life satisfaction, which higher stress level lead to low life satisfaction [10]. To overcome this problem, it is necessary for educational practioners to promote counseling and guidance services.

Some of guidance and counseling strategies that can be used to assist students to cope with stress and anxiety that they experienced are peer helping assistency, positive coping

strategies, or DEAL-based intervention program and Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) which combines cognitive therapy and acupressure techniques [11; 12; 13; 14]

In addition to some of the techniques mentioned above, a number of scientific studies have also proven the effectiveness of art therapy in helping counselors to cope with students' stress, anxiety and depression [15; 16; 17]. In previous studies on art therapy techniques, the technique can be implemented along with music therapy, hypnosis relaxation, coloring, drawing and writing emotional expression [18]. In contrast to what has been done through those previous research in using art therapy techniques, Linnemann, Ditzen, Strahler, Doerr, & Nater use listening to music as its technique [19]. In this study, the technique that is used to reduce students' academic stress in art therapy is coloring [20; 21; 22; 23]. Through this technique in art therapy, student can release fears, anxieties, and pressures, which can't be accepted in the state of consciousness [22; 24]. The aim of this study is to determine the effectiveness of art therapy for academic stress.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Setting

This study use quasi experimental with one-group pretest-posttest design 25. One-group pretest-posttest design is done by giving pretest before treatment and posttest after treatment to all subjects [26; 27]. This experimental design can give a more accurate result, by comparing the condition before - and - after treatment [28]. The treatment that is used in this research is art therapy technique [29]. In this research, art therapy technique as the independent variable, and academic stress as its dependent variable [30]. The data in this research

was collected by measuring the academic stress level before and after been given art therapy. Instruments used in this study are academic stress scale, interview guideline, observation sheet and the scenario of art therapy technique [31]. The function of the academic stress scale is to measure the level of students' academic stress, while scenario of art therapy technique implementation procedure as the treatment material [32].

2.2 Participant

This study was conducted in SMP Negeri 2 Gurah (junior high school) that consisted of 40 students grade VII. Purposive sampling technique was used to define the participants of this study. The participant is the representative subject (that representing) that fit to the samples' criteria. Criteria referred to in this study are students who experience academic stress. Based on interviews with the Guidance and Counseling Teachers, and the results from the observations and pretest given to the students, researcher obtained 11 students as the participants in this study.

2.3 Data Analysis

In accordance with the main purpose of this study, is to know the effectiveness of art therapy techniques to reduce student academic stress, the method of data analysis used is Wilcoxon test in SPSS 16.0 for Windows program [33].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The description data of academic stress before treatment (pretest)

Pretest was given to 40 students in grade VII. Pretest was used to screened students who have high academic stress levels that will be selected as the participants in this study. The instrument were given prior to the treatment which was intended to know the initial state of students' academic stress in their everyday life. Based on the pretest result, researcher then determine subjects with low score, which means that these subjects classified as having a high level of academic stress.

Based on the pretest result, 11 students was classified in high level of academic stress. Afterward, the participants was given treatment based on art therapy technique. After the treatment was done, the data was collected once again (posttest). Posttest data was given to determine the decrease level of academic stress in students who become participants.

3.2 The description data of stress academic after treatment (posttest)

Participants who were classified as having high academic stress level received 5 sessions of treatment. The treatment was based on art therapy technique. After the treatment was done, the participants do the last test by filling the same academic stress scale as the one they had done in the pretest. Based on the pretest and posttest results, the data obtained as in figure 1:

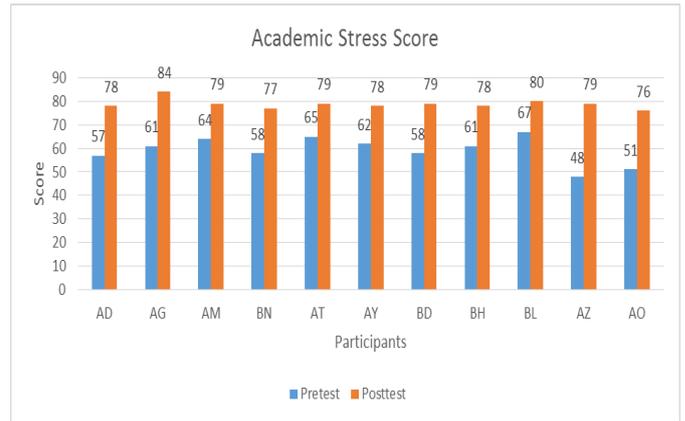


Figure 1 Academic Stress Score Charts

Figure 1. academic stress score charts shows that 11 participants that become the research subject gain higher score of academic stress scale, which mean that each subject show a low level of academic stress in their posttest. There are differences in the pretest and posttest of the participants' academic stress level.

The researcher then use all the participants' score that gathered from pre and posttest to test the effectiveness of art therapy technique to reduce students' academic stress. Based on the analysis result using wilcoxon test, we gained Z value equal to -2.936 with Asymp. Sig. (2 tailed) 0.003 <0.05, means that art therapy technique is effective in reducing students' academic stress and acceptable to the correctness at the significant level of 5%.

The results of pretest which was used to determine the participants that will be given treatment based on art therapy technique, show that there are 11 students who have high academic stress. The 11 subjects are AD, AG, AM, AO, AT, AY, AZ, BD, BH, BL and BN. Students who were classified in high level of academic stress receive 5 sessions of art therapy. Posttest was done by assessing each participants' level of academic stress after receiving art therapy treatment. The posttest results show differences level of academic stress from high (at pretest) to low (at posttest).

The academic stress experienced by students is caused by several sources, that is the amount of academic demands—school tasks—that have to be done at schools and home works that have to be completed at home. Students also have other pressures such as academic adjustment as the transition stage from elementary to junior high school which they must adapt to [34]. This statement is consistent with Deb, Strodl, & Sun, that students experience school pressures from day to day such as tests, ratings, homework, academics, and achievement expectations [35]. Based on the information given by the students as the participants in this study, they do not know a thing about the academic stress that they go through.

The analysis in this study show the difference between the scores before and after treatment for all participants. Based on the posttest result, it is known that the eleven subjects show a decreased level of academic stress, this may as the effect of several circumstances along the treatment process, where students can express their true feelings through

coloring book. The media that is used throughout the process capable of arousing students' enthusiasm and freedom to choose the colors that they want. One of the benefit of art therapy is the unconsciousness that can be released through spontaneous expression of art, where counselee could have a free association and a sublimation-media [36].

The goal of Art therapy is to improve the welfare and healing of individuals by utilizing art equipments for all ages, families, and groups [37; 18]. In accordance with that opinion, this study confirm the effectiveness of art therapy to reduce academic stress among students. The result based on Wilcoxon test analysis indicate that the value of Z amounted to -2.936 with Asymp. Sig. (2 tailed) 0.003 <0.05, means that art therapy technique is effective to reduce students' academic stress and is acceptable in significant level of 5%.

In efforts to reduce stress, according to Lazarus and Folkman [38] there are two strategies that individuals do in coping: 1) Problem-focused coping as an attempt to cope with stress by managing or changing a problem encountered and the surrounding environment that causes the pressure; and 2) Emotion-focused coping, that is an effort to cope with stress by regulating emotional responses in order to adapt to the impact that will be caused by a condition or situation that is considered full of pressure. Individuals tend to use problem focused coping for conditions that can be controlled and use emotion-focused coping in the face of problems that are difficult to control. Sometimes individuals also use coping strategies simultaneously, although not all coping strategies can also be used by individuals [39].

In the process of implementing coping strategies, including in coping with academic stress, individuals could be helped by taking advantage of various media that used in art therapy [40].

The success of art therapy in reducing student academic stress according to Jarboe because of art therapy is a form of image therapy, which can be used as a means of expressing one's expression [41]. This indicate that students can express all their emotions through the implementation of art therapy-based by coloring books, whereas the colors can represent the feelings of someone who can't be expressed orally [42].

4. CONCLUSION

Art therapy technique is effective to be used as an alternative treatment concerning students' academic stress management among junior high school. Through this study, reseacher concluded that art therapy technique is effective to reduce students' academic stress. It is a promising intervention to be adopted by higher education systems because it is simple and economical. It is not time consuming, and does not require any training or special man power.

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