



# The Effect of Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness on Students' Mental Health at Pot Covid-19 Pandemic: A Case Study in Indonesia

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**Abstract.** *Purpose:* The aim of this study is to apply the Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness intervention towards the final year students with post-covid-19 pandemic anxiety.

*Methodology:* Quasi Experiment pretest-posttest without control. The sample is 30 respondents of undergraduate students in nursing program. The instrument used was an observation sheet and an anxiety measurement questionnaire using the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS). The instrument stage of Islamic spiritual mindfulness implementation is carried out through interactive audio media. The intervention stage consists of 8 steps such as intention, muhasabah, repentance, body scan, prayer, tawakal, relaxation, and evaluation. The duration of the audio instrument is 30 min that each stage is an average of 3–4 min. The analysis technique uses paired samples t-test.

*Results:* There is a significant effect on pre and post anxiety levels after being given the Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness intervention for final year students.

*Applications/Originality/Value:* The novelty of this study is that Islamic spiritual mindfulness intervention has an effect on reducing anxiety in final year nursing students at post Covid-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** anxiety · final year students · Islamic spiritual mindfulness

## 1 Introduction

At the end of 2019, the Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak is first discovered in Wuhan, China, then spread to all parts of the world. The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic makes the education system policy change, from face-to-face learning to online learning as a efforts to prevent the spread of the virus[1]. Changes for 2 years in the learning system are felt to have advantages and disadvantages. Most students who do not have good internet access can experience problems. Internet access has not been reached properly so school students are not able to receive a good education. The end of the pandemic in 2021 is appointed as the New Normal Era. In particular, students get the opportunity to meet face-to-face gradually according to regional zones [2, 3].

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B. Ichsan et al. (Eds.): ICHWB 2022, AHSR 61, pp. 211–222, 2023.

[https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6463-184-5\\_20](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6463-184-5_20)

The discussion above is interesting to study for final year students who experience changes in learning from face-to-face to online systems. For final year students in 2021, one of the graduation requirements is that they must complete the final project [4, 5]. Final year students when completing their final project will get more pressure than other students in general. Pressure can be grouped into 2 kinds, namely internal and external factors. Internal factor is including laziness, low motivation, and worry about meeting supervisors. External factor is including lack of time when meeting with supervisors, difficulty in finding topics and themes, titles, and literature references. Thus, students who cannot adapt to these difficulties will face anxiety, stress, frustration, loss of self-motivation [6]. At the beginning of the increase in Covid cases, students for 2 years must study in online. Learning in Indonesia is felt to be less effective, especially nursing students who need a lot of skill learning. With very diverse variations for the location of the house and some of the facilities owned are very limited. Adaptation like this is not easy and slightly imposes results for students. This condition affects students' graduates. Bad adaptations make serious problems for them. Students feel that they do not have the enthusiasm to complete their final project well. This thing can trigger anxiety for them.

WHO data related to health problems shows that 450 million people experiencing health problems in the form of anxiety. 65 millions of young people in Asia have anxiety disorders related to learning, and the majority of them are final year students [7]. Based on data from the Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia in 2019, the level of anxiety in young adults has reached 6 million people with moderate to severe levels of anxiety, and the main triggers are difficulty adjusting, academic skills (internal), regional barriers such as socio-economic issues (external) [8].

Students with feelings of fear and lack of motivation will have a tendency to delay work or complete final assignments [9]. Regarding to this situation, management is needed to overcome anxiety by distributing pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions [10]. There are many types of non-pharmacological treatments that used to treat psychological disorders such as anxiety. One of them is by using Mindfulness interventions.

Mindfulness is an exercise that makes individuals able to be aware of their situation so they can focus on solving the problems through changing attitudes to increase their capacity when experiencing problems. There are various types of Mindfulness Interventions, namely Mindfulness Based on Breathing Exercise and Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness. Mindfulness Based on Breathing Exercise was carried out for 15 min and 3 times each day before starting activities in the morning, during a break during the day, and at night before going to bed for 4 weeks showing a decrease in the average value of anxiety after the intervention is given Mindfulness Based on Breathing Exercise and  $p$  value = 0,010 [11]. That study just applied Mindfulness techniques with combining breathing exercises. The time required was relatively long so that it was very inefficient in dealing with anxiety. The procedure in the intervention stage had not been explained. While, [4] study showed that a method of reducing anxiety with the Islamic spiritual mindfulness method. It developed a method of reducing anxiety with the Islamic spiritual mindfulness method. The intervention was carried out with 3 exercises for a week. The results of the study can be interpreted that Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness is effective in reducing stress levels in nursing students in dealing with final assignments. Both studies

use Islamic spiritual mindfulness interventions in overcoming anxiety in an effort to improve health status, especially mental health. In both studies, it does not provide an overview of the procedures for the stages or steps in the data collection process and does not explain the retrieval instruments taken in primary or secondary.

The phenomenon above illustrates the urgent need for efforts to promote interventions that are able to reduce anxiety in final year students in completing final assignments for easy and efficient results and no side effects. This statement is the reason for the importance of this study being carried out as an effort to handle non-pharmacological interventions that can be used in overcoming the anxiety of final year students. The intervention is developed with the aim of providing awareness based on belief in oneself as a weak human being and in need of help from God. Mindfulness Spiritual Islam in this study offers an intervention method that developed by an audio instrument containing eight steps by communicative language so that it is easily understood for students. The use of audio media provides great advantages in data collection especially when managing time in stages as expected.

This study needs to be developed to obtain a model for handling anxiety in final year students in order to be able to manage the learning experience process well. The Mindfulness approach based on Spiritual Islam is able to be one of the cheap, easy and efficient interventions. This method has the power to manage the mind so that every activity is carried out with full awareness. The advantage of this method compared to other methods is on mindfulness with Islamic spirituality. Awareness based on religion can make individuals calmer. This calmness makes a feeling of patience and trust (work done in earnest with prayer for surrender is given the best). This condition will increase hormone levels such as endorphin, oxytocin and dopamine. These hormones can make individuals more relaxed. The mechanism obtained in the presence of the above conditions is an acceleration of cell regeneration, an increase in humoral immunity, an increase in cellular immunity, an acceleration of repair of damage at the cellular level so as to improve the body's metabolic rate. Biomolecular changes that occur in the body have an impact on accelerating the healing process in individuals who experience physiological disorders of the body. It can be assumed that if the body's metabolic regulation can be maintained properly, the body is able to increase immunity in maintaining the body's physiological balance. These hormones are able to make individuals become more relaxed. The mechanism obtained in the presence of the conditions is the acceleration of cell regeneration, increased humoral immunity, increased cellular immunity, accelerated repair of damage at the cellular level so as to improve the body's metabolic rate. Biomolecular changes that occur in the body have an impact on accelerating the healing process in individuals who experience physiological disorders.

## **2 Methods**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This study is a quasi experiment research type. It is designed with pre and post test without control which it indicates pretest before being given treatment and a post test after being given treatment.

## 2.2 Research Subject

The research subject is the final year undergraduate nursing students, totally 30 people. Selected students in this population are all students who are in the stage of completing their final project. The research sample taken is the final year students with mild to severe anxiety, Muslim and always praying.

## 2.3 Variable Dan Research Instrument

This study examines two variables, namely Islamic spiritual mindfulness therapy and anxiety. The independent variable is Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness therapy, while the dependent variable is anxiety. Islamic spiritual mindfulness is one of the non-pharmacological nursing interventions using an Islamic spiritual approach as a goal that is expected to be able to deal with psychological problems and mental problems, such as anxiety, stress, and depression. The research instrument applies the HARS questionnaire sheet to determine the level of anxiety in students. The research instrument of Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness is in the form of an audio that explains eight stages namely intention, muhasabah, repentance, body scan, prayer, tawakal, relaxation, and evaluation. The duration of the audio instrument is 30 min, each stage is an average of 3–4 min. The data collection method for anxiety variables uses the HARS (Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale) questionnaire which consists of 14 symptom groups, each group getting a weighted score of 0–4 from the symptoms felt by the respondents. Furthermore, the scores from each group of symptoms are added up and from the total results, then it can be seen a person's level of anxiety by using the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS) measurement of anxiety level as following: – 20 is mild anxiety, score 21–27 is moderate anxiety, score 28–41 is severe anxiety (Niarti et al. 2021).

## 2.4 Research Procedure Dan Data Analysis

This study is conducted in three stages, namely pre-therapy stage, therapeutic process and post-therapy. At pre-therapy stage, the researchers determine the criteria for the research subject, namely final year nursing students with anxiety problems. Collecting data is done to determine anxiety by using a questionnaire instrument HARS (Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale). Students who experience anxiety will provide informed consent for involvement in the research process carried out. Researchers just apply Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness therapy as a solution to the problems faced by students. This study involves an enumerator of 1 lecturer and 4 students who have been previously trained.

The second stage is the process of implementing the Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness intervention which is carried out in small groups of 7–8 students. This implementation takes from April – July 2022. The intervention requires a quiet place and atmosphere to maximize the use of audio sound instruments so that they can be heard properly. Each group will be given the opportunity 6 times for 2 weeks with duration about 30 min.

The third stage is the evaluation stage of the Spiritual Islamic Mindfulness intervention carried out. This stage provides the HARS questionnaire instrument again after being given the Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness intervention. Its questionnaire is to determine whether there are differences in anxiety after the intervention.

## 2.5 Research Ethics

Ethical clearance on this study has been approved by No. 018/VII/AUEC/2022.

## 3 Results

This study is conducted to determine the effect of Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness towards anxiety in improving the mental health status of final year students at post COVID-19 pandemic: a case study in Indonesia (Table 1).

### 3.1 Univariate Analysis

Based on the table above, it shows that before being given Islamic spiritual mindfulness therapy, the final year undergraduate nursing students experience mild anxiety totally 7 respondents (23.3%) and moderate anxiety totally 23 respondents (76.7%) (Table 2).

Based on the table above, it shows that after being given Islamic spiritual mindfulness therapy, the final year undergraduate nursing students experience mild anxiety totally 3 respondents (10%) and moderate anxiety totally 27 respondents (90%).

**Table 1.** Distribution based on The Level of The Students Anxiety before Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness Therapy Applied (n = 30).

No	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Without Anxiety	–	–
2	Mild Anxiety	7	23.3
3	Moderate Anxiety	23	76.7
Total		30	100%

Source: Primary Data (2022)

**Table 2.** Distribution based on The Level of The Students Anxiety after Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness Therapy Applied (n = 30).

No	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Without Anxiety	3	10
2	Mild Anxiety	27	90
3	Moderate Anxiety	–	–
4	Severe Anxiety	–	–
Total		30	100%

Source: Primary Data (2022)

**Table 3.** Differences in Student Anxiety Levels Before and After Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness Therapy Applied.

Data		N	Mean	t	P-Value
Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness Therapy	<i>Pre Test</i>	30	22.3	10.8	0.0001
Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness Therapy	<i>Post Test</i>	30	15.7		

Source: Primary data is processed in 2022

### 3.2 Bivariate Analysis

Based on the result of statistical test of Paired Samples t-test, it shows that the significance value (P Value) is 0.0001. These data shows that the P Value < 0.05 so it can be concluded that there is a difference in the level of anxiety of final-level nursing students before and after being given Islamic spiritual mindfulness therapy (Table 3).

## 4 Discussion

The results of the study on the level of anxiety shows that from 30 students before receiving Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness therapy, 23 students (76.7%) experience moderate anxiety and 7 students (23.3%) experience mild anxiety. This study does not use respondents with severe anxiety levels because someone with severe anxiety does not only require non-pharmacological interventions, but he also requires pharmacological interventions for treatment. Reference studies explain that when individuals experience increased stress to cause anxiety, the body will react to release the release of epinephrine, cortisol and reduce nitric oxide. Decreased nitric oxide will affect blood circulation or blood vessel vascularization. The role of nitric oxide is very beneficial in the circulation of the heart. If the body experiences a decrease in nitric oxide, it will be able to affect the work of the heart in the circulation function to be not optimal. Increased epinephrine and cortisol can affect the body's physiological changes, the body will respond to carry out mechanisms as defense and adaptation of the body. Physiological changes are such as increased heart rate, blood pressure, breathing, increased blood flow to various organs and increase of body metabolism [13].

Anxiety faced by an individual is a response as a form of feeling afraid without being accompanied by a direct object, this condition causes a worry. If anxiety does not immediately get a positive response, it can cause excessive signals as a form of danger or threat. Individuals who perceive competition, threats, demands and life experiences as unpleasant can have a psychological impact on physical and mental health. When an unpleasant experience is perceived negatively, it can cause anxiety [1]. Anxiety in individuals can be in the form of subjective feelings such as worry or anxiety. This condition is a physiological response caused by the brain and gives the effect of increasing heart rate and increasing muscle stiffness. Research conducted by Fachrozic explained that symptoms of anxiety in final year students include several physiological reactions in the form of increased heart rate, excessive sweating of the palms, loss of appetite, insomnia, and fatigue [14]. Individuals who experience emotional tension due to excessive anxiety will have a risk of mental health decline. The evidence shows that individuals who

experience psychosocial and emotional disorders can give negative perceptions. These conditions affect brain function and have a debilitating impact on the immune system. Individuals who experience decreased immunity will indirectly be more susceptible to disease. The above symptoms are often felt by students who are completing their final project [15].

Effective strategies are needed for individuals to maintain mental health so they are more stable. Positive thinking and being able to be calm can have a positive impact in dealing with stress. They who have a positive attitude towards anxiety are the strongest personal protective equipment against stress. Some reference studies indicate that the higher the individual has positive attitudes and thoughts, so the lower the individual will experience stress levels [16]. Nursing students who experience anxiety with their final project require an effort to manage solutions that can improve mental health. Islamic spiritual mindfulness intervention is an effective solution to reduce anxiety for students. In the spiritual mindfulness stage, Islam provides awareness to individuals to do self-reflection and foster positive motivation in thinking and behavior. Individuals who experience stress will show decreased concentration of attention and memory decline. This condition causes errors in problem solving and can reduce the ability to plan appropriate actions. If someone considers stress is a big obstacle, it can cause more demands on people who experience stress. This situation causes the individual's inability to establish relationships with other people.

Individuals who experience stress make them more sensitive and irritable, difficult relaxing, feeling helpless, tend to be hypochondria and experiencing depression [17, 18]. The influence on cognitive and emotional causes behavioral changes in individuals who experience prolonged stress. These changes include a decrease in interest and activity, a decrease in energy, a decrease in motivation to work, a tendency to express cynical views to others and weakening self-responsibility. Final year students more often experience fatigue as a phase of completing multiple tasks and an inability to cope with perceived environmental demands [19]. The fatigue phase will appear in the individual as a response to an imbalance in physical and psychological functions as a result of the resistance phase of the onset of stress. If this reaction continues without recovery, it will trigger several hormonal changes that cause illness [20].

The results of the study after the Spiritual Islamic Mindfulness intervention on respondents show that the highest frequency of the final year students with mild anxiety is totally 27 respondents (90%) and the lowest frequency of the final year students with no anxiety is 3 respondents (10%). Thus, it shows that Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness therapy is able to provide a relaxed and calm effect so that it reduces anxiety levels, as described from 23 respondents with moderate anxiety and 7 respondents with mild anxiety, 27 respondents experienced mild anxiety and 3 respondents without anxiety. This result is supported by Hakim's research which focused on anxiety reduction by the Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness intervention.

This current study explains the purpose of the Spiritual Islamic Mindfulness intervention is that a therapy addresses psychological health problems, mental imbalance, feeling overthinking (excessive thinking), experiencing anxiety conditions, the emergence of stress due to mental stress. The method used is more of a spiritual approach by involving God as the creator. Individuals are directed to interpret each event is already a

provision. So, the best step is to invite the soul for always approaching with prayer and patience. Individuals will have a positive perception of the case that they experience, a good perception can think positively of God, humans, and the environment is the things that take care of each other and need. The individuals who always think positively about Allah want to create a sense of calm in their hearts, they really need that calm when in difficult situations which sometimes they naturally experience [21]. It seems as written in Q.S At-Thalaq: 3 which means “And He gave them sustenance from a direction he does not expect. And whoever puts their trust in Allah, Allah will suffice them (needs). Verily, Allah does His business. Indeed, Allah has made provisions for everything.”

The decrease in anxiety levels of the final year students in this study proves that Islamic spiritual mindfulness therapy is useful in reducing anxiety levels for final year students. This result is accordance with the theory put forward by Dwidiyanti in 2019 which shows if Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness interventions can reduce anxiety because Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness is as an intervention that has been carried out, so the patient can focus, calm, sincerely and always be grateful to Allah for the problems that are being experienced, then they can be calm and happy in carrying out daily activities so that a person is able to withstand emotions, always steadfast in experiencing trials, sincere and surrender to Allah’s provisions [22]. Mindfulness is done to make a person aware of a person’s situation aiming to solve the problems he faces and be able to focus on these problems, problem solving is done through changing attitudes, being aware of the situation he feels is always calm, has compassion, and respects himself.

One of the stages in Islamic spiritual mindfulness is that inviting students to be content with their current experiences. Experience as a final student must be passed with a happy feeling because to continue the process of the next experience. Individuals who have a happy attitude towards the provisions of the creator will give peace of mind and become patient [23]. The feeling of gratitude and patience can increase happiness hormones such as endorphins, oxytocin and dopamine. This hormone makes a person more relaxed. The mechanism obtained in the presence of the conditions is an increase in cellular immunity, an acceleration of cell regeneration, an increase in humoral immunity, an accelerated repair of cellular damage so that the body’s metabolism can be improved [4].

Research conducted by the department of clinical psychology explains that patience has an effect on higher levels of mental health and individual calm. This result provides the facts consistent with previous research which states that individuals who have a patient attitude function or act as coping. The role of self-coping as a form of defense is the way in which external or internal stress is managed and able to adapt and be able to follow up on problems or obstacles in individuals that cause anxiety or depression [24, 25]. From the statement of the result of the research above, it is proven that patience greatly affects physics, mental health, good habits, positive mental attitude, emotional control and calmness. These conditions have an impact on hormone regulation, the central nervous system, the cardiovascular system, the stability of the body’s metabolic rate and an increase in the immune system. The regulatory function of the body’s metabolism can be maintained properly and it has an impact on physiological and psychological balance, so this condition is considered as a form of individuals with good mental health.



Then, the result of this current study is in line with Rohmawati's research that the Spiritual Islamic Mindfulness intervention can reduce anxiety in final year students because its intervention can limit sympathetic nerve activity which reduces oxygen consumption by the body and then relaxing the body muscles to create a sense of calm and security. Feeling relaxed is transmitted to the hypothalamus to produce Corticotropin Releasing Factor (CRF) which can activate the anterior pituitary to release enkephalins and endorphins which play role as neurotransmitters that affect the mood or mood to be relaxed and happy. In addition, the anterior pituitary secretion of Adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) decreases, after which Adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) controls the adrenal cortex to regulate cortisol secretion. The decreased content of Adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) and cortisol cause feelings of anxiety, stress and decreased tension [26, 27].

Based on the Spiritual Islamic Mindfulness intervention stage at the 3<sup>rd</sup>, it is repentance. At this stage, someone is expected to make istighfar in order to make changes in the body to the cellular level and can affect 6 organ systems, namely, cardiovascular (heart and blood vessel system), the endocrine system (hormones), the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, the lymphatic system, the cellular and humoral immune systems and the central nervous system. When istighfar is done with sincerity, it can affect the disease treatment process [28, 29].

The implementation of the Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness intervention is carried out for 6 meetings with 30 min duration to reduce anxiety. The literature on spiritual mindfulness research provides an explanation of the benefits of Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness interventions that dealing with various psychological and mental problems such as anxiety, stress and mental stress and to strengthen self-acceptance by approaching Allah SWT [22]. The result of the Munif's research provides data on the decrease in anxiety with Islamic spiritual mindfulness interventions for nursing students [30]. The Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness intervention is one of the interventions to reduce anxiety levels and other psychological obstacles. This therapy aims to build a sense of self-acceptance so that a person does not feel depressed anymore, self-acceptance will pressure a person to get closer to God and accept all things that happen as trials from God.

## 5 Conclusion

This study shows that most students experience moderate anxiety. There is a difference in the level of anxiety in final year students before and after giving the Islamic Spiritual Mindfulness intervention. The implementation of its approach has proven that it is able to reduce the anxiety of final year nursing students in reducing anxiety in an effort to improve mental health degrees. Application based on Islamic spirituality can be considered as an easy and effective method in overcoming anxiety without negative side effects.

## 6 Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this research. This research is expected to contribute to students with anxiety problems, especially final year nursing students.

**Acknowledgments.** Thank you to the research and community service center for funding support in this research.

**Author's Contribution.** 1. Maryatun: Conceptualization of research and article writing.

2. Rifka Aprilia Nur Ekawati: Formal analysis of research data and coordination of data collection

3. Endang Sri Wahyuni: Investigation and setting research methodology.

4. Inderwati: Research project administration and implementation resources.

5. Furqon Muwardi: Responsibility for the content of Islamic mindfulness spiritual instruments

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