



## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF *DHIKR* THERAPY TO REDUCE ANXIETY LEVELS IN ADOLESCENTS PREPARING FOR EXAMINATIONS

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### **Article Info**

**History Articles Received:**  
17 December 2022

**Accepted:**  
03 December 2024

**Published:**  
20 December 2024

### **Abstrak**

Artikel ini dibuat untuk menjelaskan pengaruh terapi dhikr untuk menurunkan tingkat kecemasan. Kecemasan merupakan rasa khawatir yang samar menyebar dan terkait dengan perasaan ketidakpastian dan ketidakberdayaan. Kecemasan dapat disebut juga sebagai gejala dimana seseorang mengalami perasaan yang tidak nyaman, atau pengalaman yang menimbulkan perasaan tidak nyaman dari kejadian atau peristiwa yang tidak jelas. Terdapat beberapa jenis kecemasan yang biasanya dialami remaja yaitu kecemasan situasional seperti saat maju kedepan untuk presentasi ataupun kecemasan saat menghadapi ujian. Terdapat karakteristik dari kecemasan, seperti ciri fisik, behavioral dan kognitif. Adapun cara untuk mengatasi kecemasan yaitu dengan menggunakan terapi dhikr sebagai penenangnya. Jenis penelitian artikel ini adalah kualitatif dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi literature. Sumber data dalam artikel ini berasal dari referensi publikasi, yang berupa artikel dan jurnal. Teknik pengumpulan data yang dilakukan dengan menelusuri sumber-sumber yang sudah dipublikasikan. Hasil dari kajian ini bahwasanya ada pengaruh dari terapi dhikr untuk menurunkan tingkat kecemasan.

**Kata Kunci:** Kecemasan, Remaja, Terapi Dhikr.

### **Abstract**

This article examines the influence of *dhikr* therapy in alleviating anxiety levels. Anxiety is characterized as a diffuse and pervasive sense of worry, often accompanied by feelings of uncertainty and helplessness. It manifests as an uncomfortable emotional state, frequently triggered by ambiguous or distressing experiences. Students, in particular, may encounter various forms of anxiety, such as situational anxiety during public presentations or generalized

anxiety associated with academic evaluations. Anxiety is commonly identified through physical, behavioral, and cognitive symptoms. This study highlights the application of *dhikr* therapy as a calming intervention to mitigate anxiety. Employing a qualitative research method, the study adopts a literature review approach, drawing data from published sources, including academic articles and journals. Data collection involved systematic tracing of relevant literature. The findings indicate that *dhikr* therapy has a measurable effect in reducing anxiety levels, underscoring its potential as an effective therapeutic strategy.

**Key Words:** Anxiety, Teenagers, Dhikr Therapy

## Introduction

Mental health disorders encompass conditions that impact an individual's emotions, behaviors, and mood. Mental health, however, extends beyond severe psychiatric illnesses; it also pertains to a holistic state in which individuals can thrive physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially. Such a state enables individuals to effectively address challenges, manage societal pressures, maintain productivity, and contribute to their communities. Data from the 2013 Basic Health Research revealed that the prevalence of severe mental disorders in Indonesia was 1.7 per 1,000 individuals, equating to approximately 1 to 2 cases per 1,000 people (Viora, cited in Ika, 2015). By 2018, the prevalence had escalated to 7 per 1,000 individuals, indicating a significant increase of 312% within five years (Depkes, 2018).

Anxiety is among the most prevalent mental health disorders, often emerging during adolescence or early adulthood. Adolescence, defined as the developmental stage between 10 and 18 years of age, is characterized by significant physical, psychological, and intellectual growth. Adolescents frequently exhibit heightened curiosity, a propensity for adventurous behavior, and a tendency to make decisions without fully considering potential risks. The psychological transition from childhood to adulthood presents unique challenges as adolescents navigate various changes to adapt to their evolving environments. This transitional phase underscores the critical role of parental support in safeguarding adolescents from potential psychological difficulties. In Indonesia, approximately one in 20 adolescents is reported to experience mental health disorders. (Association, 2013). Anxiety disorders are prevalent mental health conditions commonly observed among adolescents aged 10–17 years (Association, 2013). A study by Erskine et al (Erskine et al., 2023) identified two primary categories of anxiety experienced by adolescents in Indonesia. The first category pertains to anxiety arising from social interactions, such as delivering presentations in front of peers, while the second involves anxiety associated with specific events or activities, such as preparing for examinations.

School exams are a universal experience for students, designed to assess their knowledge and determine their academic performance. Adolescents' anxiety regarding exams can stem from various factors, including fear of failure, lack of self-confidence, and concerns about receiving poor grades. Many adolescents experience a loss of confidence during national exams due to the fear of not passing or the potential inability to continue their education (Walgito, 2004). Research by Solehah (Solehah, 2012) identified several key factors contributing to students' anxiety during

national exams, including concerns about not meeting graduation standards, the possibility of failure, and the potential consequences of such failure.

Anxiety is an unpleasant emotional state that serves as a warning of impending danger, as described by Sigmund Freud (in Corey, 2005). In the context of upcoming exams, anxiety can act as a signal to encourage improved performance. However, it often produces negative effects by impairing concentration and attention, both essential for academic success. Anxiety may manifest in symptoms such as restlessness, nervousness, and tension. These negative emotional responses can hinder students' ability to answer exam questions effectively and diminish their confidence in their capacity to perform well.

When experiencing anxiety, individuals often seek one thing above all: "peace of mind." Attaining inner peace is not beyond reach. In essence, Allah (SWT) has already guided His servants toward tranquility through the remembrance of and closeness to Him, which brings peace to the heart. However, if one neglects to remember Allah (SWT), the heart may feel empty, barren, and devoid of solace. As creations of Allah (SWT), we must recognize that everything in the heavens and on Earth is a manifestation of His divine creation. Numerous verses and hadiths encourage us to maintain our health, encompassing physical well-being, mental health, social harmony, and spirituality.

This concept is further elucidated in Surah Ar-Rad, verse 28, where Allah (SWT) says: "*Those who have believed and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allah. Indeed, by the remembrance of Allah, hearts are assured.*" This verse emphasizes that *dhikr* (the remembrance of Allah) is a method directly taught by Allah (SWT) to bring peace and tranquility. *Dhikr* serves as a calming practice for the emotional turmoil that individuals may experience (Aisyatin Kamila, 2022).

The term *dhikr* is derived from the Arabic root "dzakara-yadzakuru-dhikran," meaning to mention, remember, or pronounce. *dhikr* refers to the act of remembering Allah by repeatedly mentioning His name. Subandi asserts that *dhikr* is a form of worship that is integral to various rituals in Islam. Furthermore, Michon regards *dhikr* as an expression of a servant's consciousness and awareness of their Creator. From this perspective, it can be concluded that *dhikr* encompasses all acts of worship performed by humans in devotion to Allah (SWT), including prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and pilgrimage (Hal, Nurhuda, and Ayasha, 2023).

*dhikr* holds significant importance in the lives of Muslims worldwide, serving as a spiritual practice passed down through generations within Islamic traditions. When a person engages in acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, almsgiving, or pilgrimage, they are inherently reciting *dhikr*, as it is a simple yet powerful act that can also serve as a form of meditation. Generally, *dhikr* involves the repetition of phrases or the name of Allah (SWT) with the intention of drawing closer to Him, strengthening one's faith, and calming the soul. The practice of *dhikr* follows specific etiquette; it is performed with focus, humility, a soft voice, clean clothes and space, and with a sincere intention directed solely toward Allah (SWT).

*dhikr* can be performed by reciting phrases such as *tasbeeh* (praise), *tahmid* (praising), *takebir* (proclamation of Allah's greatness), and *tablil* (declaration of Allah's oneness). It can also involve the recitation of the *Asmaul Husna* (the beautiful names of Allah), reflecting on Allah's laws, recalling His words, or praying for His forgiveness. By engaging in these practices with sincere and pure intentions directed solely toward Allah (SWT), one can be said to be performing *dhikr* (Aini, Santosa, and Kunci, 2023).

In addition to its spiritual significance, *dhikr* has emerged as an effective tool for managing stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. As a subject of increasing interest in

psychological and mental health research, numerous studies suggest that *dhikr* is a spiritual practice that can positively influence psychological well-being, fostering peace of mind. In Islam, *dhikr* goes beyond the mere repetition of words, it encompasses a deep spiritual and psychological dimension. Often associated with *tasbeeh* (glorification), *tahmid* (praise), and *takbir* (acknowledging Allah's greatness), *dhikr* expresses gratitude, reverence, and devotion to Allah (SWT). Psychologically, *dhikr* is linked to several benefits, including the reduction of stress, anxiety, and depression. The repetitive nature of *dhikr*, coupled with the remembrance of Allah (SWT), is believed to help redirect attention from negative thoughts and cultivate a sense of calm and peace in the heart (Siti Romadoni, 2015).

Given these insights, several studies have investigated the effectiveness of *dhikr* therapy in alleviating anxiety. A study by Syahdiah et al. (Syahdiah et al., 2022) on the impact of *dhikr* therapy in reducing anxiety levels among students before exams revealed that *dhikr* therapy helps students feel calmer during exam periods. This form of therapy offers significant benefits, particularly in addressing mental health concerns among adolescents. Building on this background, the current research focuses on the implementation of *dhikr* therapy to reduce anxiety levels in adolescents before exams.

## Methods

This article employs the literature review method, which is a systematic, explicit, and reproducible approach for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing research works and ideas previously produced by scholars and practitioners. The aim is to explore the implementation of *dhikr* therapy as a means of reducing anxiety among students prior to school exams. The data sources for this review include articles, journals, and studies relevant to the research topic. Several references related to this study were utilized as secondary sources, including verses from the Qur'an. The focus of this review is a specific case: how *dhikr* can be employed to alleviate anxiety. The data collection method involves the examination of existing published sources directly related to the research topic.

## Results

1. Utami S, Mursyidatul F, Nurhidayah, Ahmad S.S., Winona L (2022), "*Effectiveness of Dhikr Therapy in Reducing Anxiety in Adolescents Before School Exams*" concluded that adolescents or students who experience anxiety when facing exams become calm by practicing heart-based dhikr therapy, allowing them to stay focused and perform smoothly during the exam (Syahdiah et al., 2022).
2. Cikal BT, Wulan N, and Eko S (2024), "*Effectiveness of Dhikr Therapy and Deep Breathing Relaxation Techniques in Reducing Anxiety in Adolescent Appendectomy Patients*" found that dhikr therapy and deep breathing relaxation techniques can be an effective method for managing anxiety in adolescents undergoing appendectomy. The implementation of dhikr therapy involves the repetition of calming words, which impacts the activation of the nervous system, reducing heart rate and stress hormone levels, leading to a calmer body (Bulan Tisna et al., 2024).

3. Reza J, Dadang AF, and Bahrudin (2024), "*Dhikr Therapy in Reducing Anxiety Levels in Santri*" reported that santri practicing dhikr experience a sense of calm and gradually reduce anxiety symptoms, including improved ability to carry out daily activities. Dhikr significantly contributes to the healing of anxiety in santri (Jaelani & Fajar, 2024).
4. Tria Widyastuti, M. A. (2019). "*Dhikr Therapy as an Intervention to Reduce Anxiety in the Elderly*" found that there is a positive impact of dhikr on reducing anxiety (Widyastuti et al., 2019).

Based on several journals found by the researchers, it can be concluded that dhikr therapy is very effective in addressing anxiety in adolescents. Overall, the implementation of dhikr therapy not only calms the heart but also increases focus during exams. Repeated dhikr practice also helps lower stress levels in patients, contributes to positive behavior changes, and serves as a preventive measure against anxiety in both adolescents and the elderly. Dhikr therapy is an effective way to reduce anxiety in adolescents before exams by combining spiritual, mental, and physical aspects, helping adolescents feel more calm, focused, and confident during exams. The practice of dhikr has been found to be quite effective in reducing anxiety in adolescents before exams, making it an easily accessible intervention that supports the mental well-being of adolescents facing academic pressures, especially those experiencing high levels of anxiety before exams. This therapy also provides a safe, simple approach that can be done independently by adolescents. Therefore, dhikr therapy can be a beneficial alternative to help adolescents overcome anxiety before exams.

## Discussions

### A. Concept of Anxiety

Anxiety is a distressing and unpleasant experience that often originates from tension within the body. Individuals experiencing anxiety typically exhibit symptoms such as tension, restlessness, fear, unease, and physical manifestations like sweaty palms. Those who are anxious often feel trapped or restricted, unable to move freely or think clearly. To regain a sense of freedom and control, it is essential for individuals to break free from the anxiety-inducing situation. Anxiety, as a psychological issue, is a common and familiar experience in people's lives.

Anxiety can arise suddenly and unpredictably, and it is generally classified into two types: normal anxiety and abnormal anxiety. Normal anxiety tends to be transient and alleviates once the trigger is removed. For example, a student may feel anxious before giving a presentation but usually calms down after it is completed. In contrast, abnormal anxiety is characterized by excessive, persistent anxiety, often without any clear or identifiable cause. This type of anxiety can develop into an anxiety disorder, particularly if it contributes to a broader mental health issue (Hayat, 2017).

Anxiety, derived from the Latin word *angustus* meaning "tight" or "narrow," and *ango*, which means "to choke" (Trismiati, in Yuke Wahyu Widosari, 2010:16), is often associated with feelings of restriction and suffocation. Steven Schwartz (2000:139) notes that the term "anxiety" comes from the word "anxious," implying a sense of narrowness or choking. Anxiety shares similarities with fear but is less specific, whereas fear is typically a response to an immediate and perceived threat. Anxiety is often marked by concerns about potential future events, and it may be accompanied by physical symptoms such as a racing heart, sweating, and difficulty breathing.

Jeffrey S. Nevid et al. describe anxiety as an emotional response characterized by physiological changes, discomfort, and a sense of impending danger. Gail W. Stuart adds that

anxiety is a vague and uncertain worry, often associated with a sense of helplessness. It can be seen as a symptom of a state in which an individual feels uneasy about social interactions, experiences ambiguous emotions, and is uncertain about events that have not yet transpired (Nihayah et al., 2021). Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that anxiety is an emotional condition in which an individual feels discomfort, unease, and a fear of the future, even when the source or object of that fear is unclear.

Anxiety can be identified through various physical, behavioral, and cognitive signs. According to Jeffrey S. Nevid et al. (2005:164), physical signs include restlessness, nervousness, trembling hands or body, sweating, fainting, dry mouth, difficulty breathing, rapid heartbeat, shaky voice, cold palms, dizziness, weakness, stomach pain or nausea, hot and cold sensations, frequent urination, irritability, and a flushed face. Behavioral signs involve a tendency to withdraw, feeling pressured, and being overly dependent on others. Cognitive symptoms include persistent anxiety, fear of future events, a sense of being threatened by others, fear of losing control, worrying about handling problems, catastrophic thinking (e.g., believing the world will end), excessive concern over trivial matters, recurrent disturbing thoughts, difficulty concentrating, fear of being left alone, and confusion.

Additionally, Dadang Hawari (2006:65-66) highlights emotional and psychological signs of anxiety, such as feelings of uncertainty, restlessness, constant worry, lack of self-confidence (especially in public speaking), superiority complex or thinking others are always wrong, selfishness, stubbornness, excessive complaining, emotional outbursts, dramatizing issues, doubt when facing problems, asking repetitive questions, and becoming hysterical in emotional situations. In conclusion, anxiety is characterized by discomfort, fear, rapid heartbeats, difficulty concentrating, negative thoughts, self-doubt, and a lack of self-confidence, along with a range of other physical and emotional symptoms. These signs collectively contribute to the overwhelming experience of anxiety.

## ***B. Dhikr***

Dhikr serves as a spiritual practice designed to remember and connect with Allah SWT, allowing individuals to express their innermost thoughts, feelings, and intentions. The term "dhikr" translates to remembrance, specifically the remembrance of Allah SWT (Saleh, 2010). This practice provides a profound sense of inner peace and spiritual comfort, as it reminds individuals of Allah's presence and blessings. Dhikr encompasses the act of recalling the Creator, reciting specific phrases of remembrance, acknowledging divine blessings, and cultivating both fear and hope directed solely to Allah SWT (Ash-Shiddieqy, 2001). While the phrases of dhikr are simple, they hold deep meanings and are believed to have a tangible impact on both the soul and the body (Davis et al., 1995). The repetitive nature of dhikr is said to possess healing qualities, not just for the soul but also for other ailments (Subandi, 2009). Regular engagement in dhikr fosters a closer connection to Allah SWT, instilling feelings of protection, confidence, security, and happiness (Najati, 2005).

The benefits of practicing dhikr are vast, ranging from achieving peace of mind to obtaining divine rewards. It is also a means of seeking forgiveness, receiving assistance from Allah SWT, and purifying the heart of negative emotions. Research by Akbar & Rahayu (Akbar & Rahayu, 2021) highlights the therapeutic role of dhikr, demonstrating its effectiveness in helping individuals manage auditory hallucinations, experience comfort during the practice, and express

their emotions more freely. This underscores the significant role *dhikr* plays in enhancing spiritual and psychological well-being.

### C. Adolescence

Adolescence marks a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood, yet individuals in this stage cannot be fully considered adults. According to the WHO, adolescence spans from ages 10 to 19, a period characterized by significant changes and challenges. Adolescence is closely tied to puberty, encompassing both physical and cognitive development. Yudrik Jahja, as cited by Ramadhanti (Ramadhanti, 2021), identifies several traits of adolescence: heightened stress during early adolescence, increased emotional sensitivity due to hormonal fluctuations, and emotional turbulence stemming from the shift from childhood to adolescence. Adolescents often face societal expectations to behave less like children while navigating rapid physical changes and sexual maturity, which can undermine their self-confidence. This stage may also bring social withdrawal, as adolescents become more private and selective in their interactions. However, it also marks the emergence of critical thinking about important matters.

In the context of anxiety, adolescents frequently encounter feelings of unease, especially during preparations for final school examinations (UAS). Various factors contribute to this anxiety, such as insufficient study preparation, fear of being unable to answer exam questions, pressure to achieve high grades or maintain a top student status, and struggles with mastering the material. Poor time management during exams is another significant stressor, often resulting in panic and heightened anxiety when questions remain unanswered. To address these challenges, effective strategies are essential for helping adolescents reduce anxiety, regain composure, and maintain focus during exams. These measures can enable them to perform optimally and achieve their academic goals.

### D. Implementation of *Dhikr* to Reduce Anxiety in Adolescence

The implementation of *dhikr* therapy to reduce anxiety in adolescents involves the repeated practice of *dhikr*, or the remembrance of Allah, as a form of spiritual therapy and relaxation. This method is designed to help adolescents manage daily pressures by promoting spiritual awareness and calming the mind. The process requires faith, trust, and sincere surrender to Allah. It begins with reciting simple *dhikr* phrases, such as *Subhanallah*, *Alhamdulillah*, or *Allahu Akbar*, which are easy to remember and can be repeated until a sense of tranquility is achieved. Adolescents can perform this therapy routinely, for example, in the morning or evening for 10–15 minutes, or whenever feelings of anxiety arise. Consistency in practice is crucial to achieving effective results.

This approach offers several advantages, including mental calmness, as *dhikr* slows heart rates and induces relaxation, thereby mitigating stress responses. It also fosters gratitude by emphasizing positive aspects of life through phrases like *Alhamdulillah*, which indirectly alleviates anxiety. Furthermore, *dhikr* helps enhance focus by redirecting attention to constructive thoughts, allowing adolescents to move away from excessive worries. It also strengthens the spiritual bond with Allah, providing a sense of security and comfort that reduces feelings of fear and unease. With proper guidance and consistent practice, *dhikr* therapy can become a powerful tool for adolescents to manage anxiety effectively and achieve greater emotional well-being (Syahdiah et al., 2022).

## Conclusion

Anxiety is a psychological issue that affects people of all ages, from children to adolescents, adults, and the elderly. Life's challenges often act as triggers for anxiety or fear, and when these feelings are continuously suppressed, they can lead to harmful consequences. Anxiety may also stem from various physical and mental health issues. Adolescence, a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood, is particularly marked by significant changes and challenges. During this period, anxiety becomes a common experience, especially when adolescents are faced with school exams. One key factor contributing to this anxiety is the fear of not being able to answer exam questions.

One effective way to address adolescent anxiety is through the practice of *dhiker*. This spiritual method provides several benefits, including a sense of peace and calmness. When adolescents practice *dhiker* with sincerity and focus, it fosters tranquility, enabling them to concentrate better and perform more effectively during exams.

From the analysis presented in this article, it can be concluded that *dhiker* therapy is a practical and beneficial approach to managing students' anxiety levels. This therapy works by calming the mind through the repeated recitation of *dhiker* phrases, which help to focus thoughts, stabilize emotions, and promote inner peace. The findings suggest that consistent application of *dhiker* not only reduces anxiety but also enhances students' readiness and confidence in facing school exams.

## Recommendations

Research findings indicate that *dhiker* therapy can effectively reduce anxiety levels in adolescents preparing for exams. While this study highlights positive outcomes, it is important to recognize that the effectiveness of *dhiker* therapy may vary depending on internal factors such as the students' level of faith, their attitudes toward the therapy, and the support they receive from their environment. Therefore, when combined with other approaches, *dhiker* therapy can serve as a valuable alternative for providing holistic support to students' mental well-being.

*dhiker* therapy can be a useful method to calm the mind, and several recommendations for its implementation arise from this study. However, it is crucial to note that this research only addresses a small aspect of *dhiker* therapy's role in adolescents. Future research should explore this topic on a broader scale, targeting larger populations. Additionally, integrating complementary techniques, such as time management strategies or relaxation exercises, could further enhance the effectiveness of *dhiker* therapy. Furthermore, examining the specific mechanisms of *dhiker* therapy in the context of exam-related anxiety and developing more structured programs for its use in schools could help optimize its impact. By doing so, *dhiker* therapy could become an essential tool for supporting students' mental health in educational settings.

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