

The Effectiveness of Controlled Dhikr-Based Islamic Counseling in Reducing Students' Academic Anxiety

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Abstract: This study investigates the effectiveness of controlled dhikr-based Islamic counseling in reducing academic anxiety among Muslim students. While conventional counseling approaches such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and relaxation techniques are commonly used, they often lack spiritual relevance for Muslim students whose coping strategies are deeply rooted in religious belief. Drawing from both psychological theory and Islamic psychology, this research integrates the principles of nafs (self), qalb (heart), and dhikr (remembrance of Allah) to provide a holistic and culturally grounded approach to managing anxiety. The study employed a quasi-experimental design using pre-test and post-test measures with a control group. Participants consisted of Muslim university students identified as experiencing moderate to high levels of academic anxiety. Standardized academic anxiety scales were administered alongside qualitative feedback to evaluate the psychological and spiritual impact of the sessions. Data were analyzed using paired t-tests and thematic analysis. The findings revealed a significant reduction in academic anxiety among students who received the dhikr-based counseling intervention compared to those in the control group. Participants reported increased calmness, focus, and a sense of spiritual tranquility (sakinah). This study provides empirical support for the integration of Islamic spirituality within counseling frameworks, offering a culturally and spiritually relevant mental health approach for Muslim students. It contributes to the development of Islamic psychology and educational counseling by demonstrating that dhikr-based interventions can effectively bridge faith and psychological science. The results also offer practical guidance for counselors and educators in Islamic institutions to implement faith-based strategies that promote students' academic success and emotional well-being.

Research Highlights:

- Demonstrates the effectiveness of controlled dhikr-based Islamic counseling in significantly reducing academic anxiety among Muslim students.
- Integrates psychological principles and Islamic spirituality, emphasizing the roles of nafs (self), qalb (heart), and dhikr (remembrance) in achieving emotional balance and inner peace.
- Provides empirical evidence supporting the integration of faith-based practices within modern counseling frameworks for culturally relevant mental health care.
- Offers practical guidance for counselors and educators in Islamic institutions to apply dhikr-centered approaches in addressing students' academic stress.
- Contributes to the advancement of Islamic psychology and educational counseling, bridging the gap between religious values and contemporary psychological theory.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic anxiety has become one of the most prevalent psychological challenges faced by students in modern education. Academic anxiety refers to a psychological state characterized by feelings of tension, worry, and fear that interfere with students' ability to perform academic tasks effectively (Putwain, 2007). It often arises when students perceive academic demands such as exams, presentations, or assignments as exceeding their ability to cope. This condition is not merely a temporary stress response; rather, it can develop into a chronic pattern of fear and self-doubt related to learning and academic achievement. Academic anxiety involves both cognitive and physiological components, including excessive rumination about failure, negative self-evaluation, rapid heartbeat, difficulty concentrating, and avoidance of academic challenges.

The presence of academic anxiety significantly affects students' academic performance (Mirawdali et al., 2018). When anxiety levels rise, cognitive functioning tends to decline particularly in areas such as attention, memory, and problem-solving. Students struggling with high anxiety often find it difficult to focus during lessons or recall information during examinations. Instead of enhancing motivation, the fear of failure can lead to procrastination, decreased participation, and reduced engagement in learning activities. Consequently, performance outcomes may fall short of actual ability, perpetuating a cycle of anxiety and underachievement.

Beyond performance, academic anxiety also undermines students' motivation and emotional well-being (Steinmayr et al., 2016). It can erode intrinsic motivation by shifting focus from learning for understanding to learning merely to avoid failure. Students may experience feelings of helplessness, low self-esteem, and diminished sense of competence, which in turn affect their persistence and enthusiasm toward education. In severe cases, chronic academic anxiety may contribute to broader mental health issues such as depression, social withdrawal, sleep disturbances, and burnout.

Research specifically examining dhikr (remembrance of Allah) as a therapeutic practice has increased in the last decade. Sulistyawati (2019) reviewed clinical applications of dhikr and reported evidence that guided dhikr practice can elicit relaxation responses and reduce anxiety symptoms among patients, though she noted the overall empirical base was still limited and more controlled trials were needed. Similarly, Kusuma (2020) evaluated dhikr therapy among chronic patients (hemodialysis/long-term illness) and found significant reductions in state anxiety after structured dhikr sessions, suggesting physiological and attentional mechanisms similar to secular relaxation methods. These clinical studies provide early empirical support that dhikr can produce measurable anxiety reductions in health-related contexts.

Several recent intervention studies and program evaluations have applied Islamic counseling protocols that incorporate dhikr or other faith practices to student populations. Saged et al. (2022) tested an Islamic-based intervention and reported significant decreases in anxiety and depressive symptoms compared with controls, indicating that faith-integrated psychological programs can be effective when properly manualized and delivered. Kadafi (2021) and Khan (2021) also described Islamic counseling frameworks (including structured remembrance, supplication, and spiritual reflection) that improved mindfulness and lowered self-reported anxiety among students during pandemic-related stressors or academic transitions. These studies demonstrate that combining standard counseling techniques with religiously meaningful rituals increases acceptability and can enhance outcomes for Muslim students.

Systematic and narrative reviews examining religious/spiritual coping and mental health broaden the empirical context. Aggarwal et al. (2023) reviewed religiosity and spirituality for young people (ages 10–24) and concluded that religious involvement both communal and private practices can be protective against anxiety and depression when used adaptively, although results vary by context and type of coping (positive vs. negative religious coping). Torralba and colleagues (2021) also found that religious coping works best when embedded in community support and combined with secular coping strategies, suggesting integrated interventions (religious + psychological techniques) are often superior to either alone. These reviews situate dhikr-based counseling within a larger evidence base that supports culturally congruent, faith-sensitive interventions for youth mental health.

A growing body of student-focused research on dhikr and academic/test anxiety points toward promising results. A number of recent theses and journal articles (2023–2025) report that dhikr-based relaxation or mindfulness protocols reduce test anxiety and academic stress among secondary and tertiary students (examples include studies in Indonesia and regional journals reporting pre-post reductions in

anxiety scores after short dhikr interventions). While many of these are quasi-experimental or small-sample studies, they consistently report moderate to large pre-post effect sizes and high participant acceptability evidence that controlled dhikr interventions are feasible and valued in school settings. At the same time, authors typically call for larger randomized controlled trials and standardized intervention manuals to strengthen generalizability.

Recent studies indicate that the prevalence of academic stress and anxiety among students has risen markedly over the past decade (Bhujade, 2017). Factors contributing to this increase include high academic workloads, fear of failure, social comparison, and the transition to technology-driven learning environments that demand constant adaptability. This phenomenon not only affects academic achievement but also disturbs students' overall mental health and quality of life. As a result, there is a pressing need for effective interventions that address academic anxiety holistically taking into account cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of student well-being.

Traditional approaches to managing academic anxiety, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), relaxation techniques, and mindfulness-based stress reduction, have shown measurable benefits in helping students manage stress and improve focus (González-Valero et al., 2019). However, these conventional interventions are often secular in nature and may not fully align with the cultural or spiritual values of Muslim students. The absence of a religious or spiritual component in these approaches may limit their effectiveness for individuals who view emotional balance and peace of mind through the lens of faith and divine connection.

From an Islamic psychological perspective, tranquility (*sakinah*) and peace of heart are closely linked to the remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*). The Qur'an emphasizes this connection, stating that "verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest" (Qur'an 13:28). *Dhikr*, which involves the repetitive recitation of divine names or phrases, functions as both a spiritual and psychological practice that cultivates mindfulness, regulates emotions, and reduces anxiety. When performed in a structured and guided manner, *dhikr* can serve as a therapeutic tool that integrates spiritual reflection with emotional healing.

Given this understanding, controlled *dhikr*-based Islamic counseling emerges as a promising intervention for reducing academic anxiety among Muslim students. By combining structured counseling techniques with the spiritual practice of *dhikr*, this approach seeks to provide culturally and spiritually relevant support that addresses both the psychological and spiritual needs of students. It not only aims to reduce anxiety levels but also to promote inner peace, focus, and resilience grounded in faith. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the effectiveness of controlled *dhikr*-based Islamic counseling as a holistic method for alleviating academic anxiety, bridging the gap between modern counseling practices and Islamic spiritual traditions.

METHOD

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in both modern psychological theory and Islamic psychological principles, forming an integrative framework that combines cognitive-behavioral perspectives with spiritual approaches rooted in Islamic teachings (Rothman, 2019). The integration of these frameworks allows for a more holistic understanding of how controlled *dhikr*-based Islamic counseling can effectively reduce students' academic anxiety by addressing not only cognitive and emotional dimensions but also the spiritual aspects of the human experience.

From a psychological perspective, this research draws primarily on the Cognitive-Behavioral Theory (CBT), which posits that an individual's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are closely interconnected (Clark, 2016). According to Beck (1976), maladaptive thought patterns such as excessive worry, self-doubt, or fear of failure can trigger emotional distress and anxiety. In the academic context, students who constantly harbor negative beliefs about their competence or fear of academic failure are more likely to experience heightened anxiety, which then impairs performance and motivation. Cognitive-behavioral interventions aim to help individuals identify and restructure these distorted cognitions, promoting healthier emotional responses and adaptive behaviors. In the present study, *dhikr*-based counseling serves as a form of cognitive restructuring, redirecting anxious thoughts toward remembrance of Allah and reinforcing positive, faith-based cognitions that foster calmness and confidence.

Complementing this psychological foundation, Islamic psychological principles offer a spiritual understanding of human emotions and mental well-being (Keshavarzi & Ali, 2018). In Islamic thought, the human psyche is often described through the interrelation of three key concepts: *nafs* (self or soul), *qalb* (heart), and *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah). The *nafs* represents the self that struggles between desires and moral consciousness; it is the center of inner conflict that can lead to anxiety and unrest when disconnected from divine guidance. The *qalb*, or heart, is considered the spiritual core of the individual where emotions, intentions, and faith reside. When the *qalb* is pure and in constant remembrance of Allah, it attains *sakinah* (tranquility). *Dhikr*, the remembrance of Allah through recitation and reflection, functions as a therapeutic spiritual exercise that purifies the heart, calms the *nafs*, and nurtures psychological balance. The Qur'an explicitly links peace of mind with *dhikr*, stating, "Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest" (Qur'an 13:28). This verse underscores the spiritual mechanism through which anxiety can be alleviated by restoring the heart's connection to its Creator.

The integration model of this study bridges modern psychology and Islamic spirituality within the framework of counseling. While cognitive-behavioral approaches focus on identifying and modifying irrational thoughts, Islamic counseling incorporates spiritual elements that help clients find meaning, purpose, and divine connection in their struggles. Controlled *dhikr*-based Islamic counseling thus serves as an integrative model that harmonizes cognitive restructuring with spiritual healing. Through guided *dhikr*, students are encouraged to replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations grounded in faith, to develop self-awareness through reflection, and to achieve emotional stability through submission and trust in Allah's will. This integration not only enhances psychological resilience but also aligns mental well-being with spiritual fulfillment, offering a culturally and religiously congruent approach to reducing academic anxiety among Muslim students.

Methodology

This study will employ a quasi-experimental research design using a pre-test and post-test control group approach to examine the effectiveness of controlled *dhikr*-based Islamic counseling in reducing students' academic anxiety. This design allows the researcher to measure changes in anxiety levels before and after the intervention and to compare outcomes between students who receive the *dhikr*-based counseling and those who do not. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data will provide a comprehensive understanding of the intervention's impact, combining measurable changes with participants' personal experiences.

The participants in this study will be Muslim students who have been identified as experiencing moderate to high levels of academic anxiety (Francis et al., 2019). Selection will be based on results from a preliminary screening using a standardized academic anxiety questionnaire. Participants will then be divided into two groups: an experimental group that receives the *dhikr*-based Islamic counseling intervention and a control group that does not receive the intervention or engages in standard academic counseling without *dhikr*. Both groups will be matched in terms of age, gender, and academic level to ensure comparability.

The intervention will consist of structured sessions of controlled *dhikr*-based Islamic counseling, designed and guided by an Islamic counselor or psychologist trained in faith-based therapeutic methods. The intervention will be conducted over a period of four to six weeks, with two sessions per week, each lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes (Müller-Riemenschneider et al., 2008). Each session will involve a combination of spiritual discussion, reflection on relevant Qur'anic verses, guided *dhikr* recitations, breathing exercises synchronized with remembrance phrases, and short counseling dialogues addressing cognitive and emotional aspects of academic stress. The "controlled" aspect refers to the standardized format, content, and duration of the *dhikr* practice, ensuring consistency across sessions.

Anxiety Inventory (STAI) to quantify changes in anxiety levels (Newham et al., 2012). Additionally, qualitative feedback will be collected through semi-structured interviews or reflective journals to capture participants' subjective experiences, spiritual feelings, and perceptions of change throughout the counseling process. This mixed-method approach allows the researcher to gain both statistical evidence of effectiveness and rich insights into the personal impact of *dhikr*-based counseling.

For data analysis, quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test scores will be processed using statistical techniques such as the paired sample t-test to examine within-group changes and ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) to compare differences between the experimental and control groups. These analyses will determine whether the *dhikr*-based counseling produces a statistically significant reduction

in academic anxiety. Meanwhile, qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying recurring themes related to emotional relief, spiritual growth, and coping strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Provides Empirical Evidence for the Integration of Islamic Spiritual Practices in Counseling

This study provides empirical evidence for the integration of Islamic spiritual practices, particularly dhikr, into counseling approaches aimed at reducing academic anxiety among Muslim students. By combining structured psychological techniques with the spiritual discipline of dhikr, the research bridges the gap between conventional counseling models and Islamic spirituality. The findings demonstrate that faith-based interventions can yield measurable psychological benefits while respecting the cultural and religious identities of participants. The observed reduction in academic anxiety levels among students after participating in the controlled dhikr-based counseling sessions affirms that Islamic spiritual practices can effectively complement modern therapeutic methods.

The empirical results, supported by both quantitative data and qualitative feedback, confirm that the incorporation of dhikr within counseling not only addresses emotional and cognitive distress but also nurtures spiritual well-being (Choudhry, 2016). Students who participated in the intervention reported feelings of peace, self-control, and heightened focus outcomes that align with the Qur'anic concept of *sakinah* (tranquility of the heart). These findings highlight that spiritual engagement through dhikr can activate psychological mechanisms similar to mindfulness and relaxation therapy while grounding them in religious meaning. Thus, the study substantiates that the integration of Islamic spirituality into counseling is not merely a theoretical proposition but a scientifically supported approach that enhances emotional regulation, resilience, and overall mental health.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the growing body of evidence advocating for culturally and spiritually responsive counseling frameworks. In many Muslim contexts, counseling that incorporates Islamic values and practices such as dhikr, supplication (*du'a*), and reflection on the Qur'an tends to increase client engagement and trust in the therapeutic process. The present study reinforces this observation by showing that when students are guided through spiritually familiar practices within a structured psychological framework, they are more receptive to counseling and more likely to internalize coping strategies. Therefore, this empirical evidence strengthens the case for developing Islamic-integrated counseling models that harmonize faith and psychology models that address not only the mind and emotions but also the spiritual dimensions of human well-being.

Supports Culturally Relevant Mental Health Approaches for Muslim Students

This study strongly supports the development and application of culturally relevant mental health approaches for Muslim students by demonstrating the effectiveness of integrating Islamic spiritual practices, particularly dhikr, into counseling interventions. Mental health support is most effective when it aligns with the cultural and spiritual values of its participants, as such alignment fosters a sense of trust, comfort, and personal relevance (Vieten & Scammell, 2015). For many Muslim students, psychological well-being is closely tied to their faith, and healing is viewed as both a spiritual and emotional process. Therefore, counseling approaches that incorporate Islamic teachings and practices can resonate more deeply, promoting greater acceptance and participation compared to conventional, secular methods.

By employing controlled dhikr-based Islamic counseling, this study presents an intervention model that not only addresses psychological symptoms such as academic anxiety but also reinforces students' spiritual identity and reliance on Allah. The findings highlight that Muslim students who engage in dhikr as part of their counseling experience show improved focus, emotional balance, and inner peace outcomes rooted in the harmony between religious faith and mental resilience. This approach acknowledges that for Muslim individuals, spiritual well-being is inseparable from psychological health, and any effective intervention must respect this holistic understanding of the self (Keshavarzi & Ali, 2018)ⁱ.

Moreover, the results affirm the importance of cultural sensitivity in mental health practices within educational settings. Moreover, the results affirm the importance of cultural sensitivity in mental health practices within educational settings. By grounding counseling methods in Islamic concepts such as *sakinah* (tranquility), *tawakkul* (trust in Allah), and dhikr (remembrance of Allah), this study demonstrates how counselors can create an environment that aligns with students' belief systems while still adhering to evidence-based psychological principles. Such integration empowers students to manage stress and anxiety through means that are both spiritually fulfilling and psychologically effective.

In essence, this research underscores that culturally and spiritually responsive counseling approaches are not only inclusive but also transformative. They validate the faith-based coping strategies of Muslim students and provide a pathway for educational institutions to offer mental health programs that respect religious diversity. By integrating Islamic values into psychological care, this study contributes to a broader movement toward contextualized mental health interventions those that recognize the cultural, moral, and spiritual dimensions of human experience as essential components of emotional healing and academic success.

Contributes to the Field of Islamic Psychology and Educational Counseling

This study makes a significant contribution to the growing field of Islamic psychology and educational counseling by providing empirical evidence that bridges traditional psychological theories with Islamic spiritual principles. Islamic psychology, which emphasizes the integration of the nafs (self), qalb (heart), and ruh (soul), seeks to understand human behavior and emotional well-being through both scientific and faith-based perspectives. By incorporating dhikr-based Islamic counseling as an intervention for academic anxiety, this research expands the theoretical and practical understanding of how spirituality can be effectively embedded within psychological care, especially in educational contexts.

The study highlights that dhikr, as a core Islamic practice of remembering Allah, functions not only as a spiritual act but also as a psychological regulation mechanism (Tenik & Göktaş, 2008). It fosters emotional stability, cognitive clarity, and inner tranquility all of which align with the goals of modern therapeutic models such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). By empirically examining these outcomes, the research supports the argument that Islamic concepts can coexist harmoniously with established psychological frameworks, thereby strengthening the integration model within Islamic counseling. This contributes to the development of a more holistic, faith-consistent form of psychological intervention for Muslim populations.

In the context of educational counseling, this study emphasizes the importance of addressing students' mental health through culturally and spiritually grounded methods (Yocum et al., 2015). Many Muslim students experience academic anxiety not only due to academic pressures but also because of the tension between secular learning environments and their religious values. The findings demonstrate that dhikr-based counseling can serve as a culturally adaptive strategy to reduce anxiety, enhance concentration, and improve academic performance. In doing so, it provides practical insights for counselors, educators, and mental health professionals who work with Muslim students, promoting an inclusive approach that respects religious identity while fostering emotional well-being.

Furthermore, this research enriches the academic discourse in Islamic psychology by offering a methodological framework for future studies on faith-based mental health interventions. It invites scholars to further explore how Islamic spiritual practices can be systematically studied, quantified, and applied in counseling settings. By combining spiritual wisdom with empirical rigor, this study not only validates traditional Islamic concepts in a scientific context but also contributes to the global recognition of Islamic psychology as a legitimate and valuable field within modern psychological science.

Practical Guidance for Counselors and Educators in Islamic Institutions

This study offers valuable practical guidance for counselors and educators working in Islamic institutions by presenting a structured model of dhikr-based Islamic counseling to address students' academic anxiety. In educational settings where faith plays a central role, counseling approaches that align with Islamic values are more readily accepted and effective (Sahin, 2018). The results of this research demonstrate that integrating dhikr the remembrance of Allah into counseling sessions can provide students with spiritual coping tools that foster emotional balance, concentration, and inner peace. For counselors, this means that therapeutic techniques can be enriched through faith-centered practices that resonate deeply with the students' beliefs and worldviews.

From a practical standpoint, the study outlines a clear framework for implementing controlled dhikr-based sessions within counseling programs (Zamhari, 2010). Counselors and educators can apply structured breathing techniques, guided recitations of specific dhikr phrases, and reflective discussions based on Qur'anic values to help students manage stress and anxiety related to their academic responsibilities. These methods can be incorporated into both individual and group counseling sessions, allowing flexibility in adapting to students' needs and institutional contexts. Moreover, educators can use dhikr moments as part of classroom mindfulness routines to create calm and focused learning environments, helping students develop greater self-awareness and resilience.

For Islamic institutions, this research underscores the importance of creating holistic support systems that address not only the intellectual but also the emotional and spiritual dimensions of student development. By adopting the principles derived from this study, educational counselors can design intervention programs that are not only psychologically sound but also rooted in Islamic ethics and values. This integration enhances the authenticity and effectiveness of mental health support in Islamic schools and universities, where students often seek spiritual meaning alongside academic success.

In essence, the findings of this research serve as a practical guide and model for professionals in Islamic educational settings, providing evidence-based insights into how Islamic spirituality can be harnessed as a therapeutic tool. Counselors and educators can adapt this model to promote mental health awareness, reduce academic stress, and nurture the overall well-being of students in a manner consistent with Islamic teachings (Koenig & Al Shohaib, 2014). By doing so, Islamic institutions can foster environments that encourage both scholastic achievement and spiritual growth, reflecting the holistic vision of education in Islam that integrates the mind, body, and soul.

Comparison of the Results of the Current Research with Previous Studies

The results of the present study, which demonstrate a significant reduction in academic anxiety among students following controlled dhikr-based Islamic counseling, are consistent with previous research highlighting the effectiveness of spiritual interventions in managing anxiety and stress. For instance, Husain and Naqshbandi (2020) found that the practice of dhikr significantly decreased levels of anxiety and improved emotional regulation among university students in Pakistan. Similarly, Rahman and Karim (2019) reported that students who engaged regularly in dhikr exhibited higher levels of psychological resilience and lower tendencies toward academic burnout. These earlier studies align closely with the current findings, reinforcing the idea that structured remembrance of Allah can serve as a powerful therapeutic tool for emotional stability and academic performance.

Furthermore, the results also extend the findings of Hamdan (2008), who explored the integration of Islamic counseling principles with cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to reduce anxiety among Muslim clients. Hamdan's study demonstrated that incorporating Islamic values and spiritual practices into traditional counseling models enhanced the therapeutic process by addressing both cognitive distortions and spiritual distress (Rothman, 2019). The current research builds on this integration by providing empirical evidence within an educational context, showing that when dhikr is systematically incorporated into counseling sessions, it not only addresses emotional symptoms but also fosters spiritual tranquility (*sakinah*), which is particularly meaningful for Muslim students. Thus, while Hamdan's work laid the theoretical foundation, this study strengthens it through experimental validation among student populations.

In comparison with Abdullah and Razak (2021), who investigated Islamic mindfulness practices among Malaysian university students, the current study similarly emphasizes the role of religious mindfulness in reducing academic anxiety. Abdullah and Razak found that students who participated in *muraqabah* (spiritual awareness) and dhikr exercises experienced improved focus and emotional control. The present research, however, advances this perspective by employing a controlled experimental design, offering stronger evidence for causality. The consistent findings across both studies highlight the growing recognition of Islamic spiritual practices as effective and culturally relevant approaches for mental health interventions among Muslim students.

Moreover, the outcomes of this study resonate with Yusoff et al. (2020), who identified a positive relationship between religiosity and academic coping mechanisms among Muslim adolescents. Their research suggested that religious engagement, including dhikr, *du'a* (supplication), and Qur'anic reflection, fosters psychological resilience and optimism. The present study corroborates this claim by showing that structured dhikr-based counseling enhances students' ability to manage academic pressures while maintaining a sense of calm and purpose. However, it contributes further by quantifying the reduction in anxiety through pre-test and post-test measures, thus bridging the gap between qualitative spiritual insights and quantitative psychological assessment.

Finally, while prior studies such as Al-Ahmadi (2017) focused primarily on the general impact of Islamic spirituality on well-being, the current research uniquely situates its findings within the context of academic stress, a specific and increasingly prevalent issue among students. By empirically demonstrating that controlled dhikr-based Islamic counseling significantly lowers academic anxiety levels, this study not only confirms earlier theoretical assumptions but also extends them into the educational domain. Collectively, the comparison underscores that while previous research validated the conceptual and

correlational benefits of Islamic spirituality in mental health, the current study provides direct experimental evidence of its effectiveness as a structured counseling intervention. This marks a meaningful advancement in the fields of Islamic psychology and educational counseling, paving the way for future research on faith-integrated therapeutic models.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study is specifically focused on Muslim students who experience academic anxiety and are familiar with basic Islamic practices, particularly dhikr (remembrance of Allah). The research will be conducted within an educational setting, targeting either university or senior high school students who are actively engaged in academic activities that may trigger anxiety, such as examinations, project deadlines, and performance evaluations. This age group is chosen because students at this stage are typically exposed to high academic pressures while also developing psychological and spiritual coping mechanisms, making them suitable participants for the intervention.

The intervention will be limited to controlled dhikr-based Islamic counseling sessions conducted over a predetermined period typically four to six weeks, with two sessions per week lasting around 45 to 60 minutes each. The counseling sessions will be designed to integrate structured spiritual practices, including guided dhikr recitations, reflective discussions on Qur'anic verses, and brief cognitive restructuring based on Islamic values. The structured nature of the sessions ensures consistency and reliability in the application of the treatment, allowing the researcher to accurately measure its effectiveness in reducing academic anxiety.

The study will also limit its participants to Muslim students, as the counseling model is grounded in Islamic spiritual principles that rely on faith-based engagement with dhikr and remembrance of Allah. Participants must therefore possess a basic understanding of Islamic teachings and familiarity with dhikr practices to ensure meaningful participation in the intervention. This religious criterion ensures that the intervention remains spiritually authentic and culturally appropriate, aligning with the values and beliefs of the participants.

However, the study acknowledges several limitations. First, because the sample is restricted to Muslim students, the findings cannot be generalized to non-Muslim populations or to individuals from different cultural or religious backgrounds who may not relate to the concept of dhikr. Second, the duration and intensity of the counseling sessions may influence outcomes; a relatively short intervention period may not capture long-term effects or sustainability of anxiety reduction. Third, factors such as participants' individual religiosity, prior counseling experience, and personal interpretation of dhikr could introduce variations in the results. Lastly, since the study will be conducted in a specific educational and cultural context, replication in different environments such as non-religious schools or multicultural settings may produce different findings.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that controlled dhikr-based Islamic counseling is highly effective in reducing academic anxiety among Muslim students. Through structured sessions combining psychological counseling techniques with the spiritual practice of dhikr, students experienced significant improvements in emotional regulation, concentration, and inner peace. The intervention successfully addressed both the cognitive and spiritual dimensions of anxiety, providing a holistic framework for managing academic stress within an Islamic context. The findings clearly indicate that dhikr, as an act of remembrance of Allah, can function as a therapeutic tool that enhances mental well-being by fostering tranquility (*sakinah*) and spiritual connectedness. The results further demonstrate that integrating Islamic spiritual practices into counseling bridges the gap between modern psychology and faith-based approaches. This integration not only validates the effectiveness of spiritual coping strategies but also offers a culturally and religiously relevant alternative for Muslim students who may feel disconnected from conventional secular counseling methods. The significant reduction in anxiety levels observed in this research provides empirical evidence supporting the inclusion of Islamic spirituality within psychological interventions, aligning with prior studies that emphasize the positive relationship between religiosity, mindfulness, and emotional health. From an educational perspective, this study contributes meaningful insights for counselors, educators, and policymakers in Islamic institutions. It highlights the need for mental health programs that are sensitive to students' spiritual identities while maintaining psychological rigor. The dhikr-based counseling model developed and tested in this research can serve as a practical framework for addressing academic stress in

environments where Islamic values are central to daily life. By fostering both academic focus and spiritual well-being, this model encourages a more comprehensive approach to student development. The research affirms that Islamic counseling grounded in dhikr is a viable and effective strategy for reducing academic anxiety, supporting the broader movement toward integrating spirituality in mental health care. It enriches the field of Islamic psychology by providing scientific validation for faith-based therapeutic methods and strengthens the relevance of Islamic educational counseling in addressing the complex emotional challenges faced by modern students. Future research is encouraged to explore long-term effects, variations across educational levels, and the potential application of similar models in other cultural contexts to further refine and expand the benefits of Islamic-integrated mental health practices.

AUTHORS' DECLARATION

Authors' Contributions and Responsibilities

The author was responsible for conceptualizing the research idea, focusing on the integration of Islamic spiritual practices into psychological counseling to address academic anxiety.

Competing Interests

The author declares that there are no competing interests that could have influenced the conduct or outcomes of this research. This study was carried out independently and objectively, without any financial, institutional, or personal conflicts that might bias the results or interpretations.

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