

Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) and Time Management to Reduce Academic Stress in Students During The Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Academic stress is mental distress due to stressors related to the academic environment. The study of academic stress on adolescents and students has been extensively researched and has become a topic of great concern. Academic stress is mental distress due to academic stressors. Prolonged academic stress will not only affect adolescents' lives but can potentially reduce academic achievement. The research problem refers to the Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) and whether time management can be used to reduce student academic stress. The research objective was to determine the effect of SEFT therapy and time management on reducing academic stress in students during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study used an experimental method to collect data and an experimental design that used a pretest-posttest control group design. The academic stress measurement tool uses the student - Life Stress Inventory (SSI). Data analysis using one-way ANOVA. The results showed that there was an effect of the three experimental groups SEFT, time management, SEFT, and time management on reducing academic stress in adolescents at school. This decrease has a higher score than the control group. SEFT has the greatest effect on reducing academic stress compared to all other experimental groups and the control group with a significance of 0.011.

Keywords: SEFT, Time Management, Academic Stress, Covid-19 Pandemic



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INTRODUCTION

Academic stress is mental stress due to stressors related to the academic environment. The study of academic stress in adolescents and students has been widely researched and has become a topic of great concern (Busari, 2012; Khan, 2018; Lal, 2014). Academic stress can be perceived as a positive or negative experience if not managed properly. Stress response has a good impact because it can be a constructive and positive challenge and motivation; on the contrary, it causes distress if it is responded to negatively (Wang et al., 2022). Academic demands that are diverse, excessive, and beyond individual abilities are often viewed negatively by some students. This is because academic tasks are never free from stress, thus opening opportunities for teenagers to experience academic stress (Busari, 2012; Lal, 2014; Sun et al., 2011).

Prolonged academic stress will not only affect teenagers' lives but can potentially reduce their academic achievement (Khan, 2018). This is because cognitive functions become disturbed, such as difficulty in concentrating, thinking logically, misinterpreting information, remembering, and considering alternatives (Atkinson, R.L., Atkinson, R.C., Smith, E.E., & Bem, 2010; König & Kleinmann, 2006). Other consequences can affect mental and physical health (Wang et al., 2022; Wen et al., 2018), future, and career (Schraml et al., 2012), and have the potential to lead to deviant behavior (Khan, 2018; Kumar & Talwar, 2014).

A survey conducted by the (American Psychological Association, 2012) of 1200 respondents aged 8-17 years found that 42% of respondents stated that school was a source of worry and fear. Respondents aged 9-13 years who experienced moderate and high levels of stress stated that academics were the main source of stress compared to bullying or family problems. APA's survey (2012) of 1000 teenagers showed that 83% of the sources of stress they experienced came from school. The most important thing to know regarding the results of this adolescent academic stress survey is that 42% do not have good skills to deal with the stress they face.

This academic stress phenomenon also occurs among some students who are studying during covid-19 pandemic. They are currently being directed to study online to break the spread chain of the Covid-19 virus, so with a learning model that they are not used to, problems certainly arose, especially related to academic stress. The conflicts and emotional problems that occurred were very surprising. They grow quickly and experience dramatic changes related to physical, cognitive, social, and moral (Santrok, 2018). The demand to make decisions independently often hurts their lives.

Stress that occurs in adolescents has a core problem that is different for everyone. An integrative paradigm can view stress that occurs in individuals as a psychological condition caused by several biological, psychological, and environmental factors. This paradigm is usually referred to as diathesis-stress, which focuses on the interaction between a predisposition to disease, namely diathesis, and environmental or life disturbances, namely stress. More precisely, diathesis refers to a disease-forming predisposition, but the term can be expanded to refer to any characteristic or set of characteristics possessed by a person that increases their risk of experiencing a disorder (Davison, G.C., Neale, J.M. & Kring, 2012).

In a survey conducted by the Indonesian Clinical Psychology Association (IPK), it was found that learning barriers were the main problem that emerged in the distance learning process, in which as many as 27.2% of children and adolescents experienced learning barriers (Halidi, R. & Fikri, 2020). Added to other data, various psychological problems were found in all age groups, namely complaints of general stress at 23.9%, anxiety complaints at 18.9%, mood swing complaints at 9.1%, and anxiety disorders at 8.8 percent; and psychosomatic complaints 4.7%. (Setiawan, 2020).

These teenagers experience problems that stem from the demands of school assignments. Based on the results of researchers' observations about phenomena in the field, the problems included schools' assignments and the demands to adapt to the applicable of distance learning methods. Learning facilities are less than optimal. Counseling practitioners and psychologists are also not available.

The chance for academic stress symptoms to appear is increasingly open. Some students experience academic stress symptoms. These symptoms include feeling restless, unable to relax, worry, fear, difficulty concentrating, reduced interest, irritability, prolonged fatigue, headaches, indigestion, verbal aggression, escape behavior, and suicide attempts (Maramis, 2010). This is following the finding that junior high school teenagers with high academic demands tend to experience stress. However, these results are different from the research carried out by Antonson, Thorsen, Sundquist, K., Sundquist in several junior high school teenagers, which did not prove that there was a difference in stress levels between schools

with high and low academic demands. It is possible that several factors influence academic stress in adolescents (Antonson et al., 2014).

Research conducted by Rowe, proves the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) as the root of the Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) has been proven to be effective in reducing stress in the long term (Rowe et al., 2013). SEFT works more effectively when applied to specific events that are at the root of emotional disorders. The SEFT procedure is quite simple, effective, efficient, scientific, and without side effects. Teenagers can do this independently regarding academic stress, such as having difficulty in concentrating, being lazy about studying, being moody or anxious about facing exams. In line with this, it has been found that the effectiveness of this technique can also reduce emotional disorders related to anxiety, depression (Sadif & Safitri, 2013) and post-traumatic stress disorder (Karatzias et al., 2011).

Based on these phenomena and several different research results regarding time management and the effectiveness of SEFT regarding stress, it is important to carry out further research. So, this research combined SEFT therapy and time management to determine its effectiveness in reducing students' academic stress during the Covid-19 pandemic.

METHODS

The method in this research contains 4 main aspects: the type, approach and brief research procedures used; research subjects/participants; data collection methods & instruments; and data analysis methods.

Research Design

This research was designed to use quasi-experimental rather than pure experimentation. Researchers did not fully control several variables that might influence changes in academic stress scores. The research model was designed using the pretest-posttest control group design model (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

This design was used to compare academic stress scores before and after the intervention. This design is divided into two groups: the control group (K) and the experimental group (T). The experimental group was further divided into three groups, namely the first group (T1) with the Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT (X1) intervention, the second group (T2) with the time management intervention (X2), the third group (T3) with the Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (X2) intervention (SEFT) and time management (X2). Meanwhile, in the control group (K), subjects did not receive any treatment. The experimental group then had their academic stress scores measured before and after being given the intervention to compare the differences in the effectiveness of the types of intervention. The description of the research design that will be carried out done is in Figure 1.

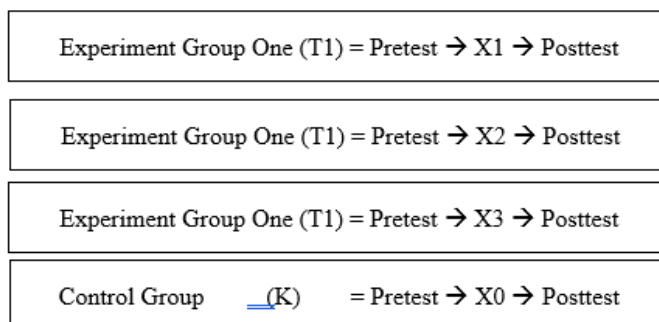


Figure 1. Research Design

Note:

X1 = SEFT

X2 = Time Management

X3 = SEFT + Time Management

X0 = No Intervension

Research Subject

The research subjects were 42 teenagers who were indicated to be experiencing high levels of academic stress based on the student-life Stress Inventory Instrument (SSI). Subjects were divided randomly into two groups, namely the control group and the experimental group. The control group consisted of 10 teenagers. The experimental group consisted of the SEFT experimental group (11 teenagers), the time management experimental group (10 teenagers), the SEFT and time management experimental group (11 teenagers). The demographic characteristics of the research subjects were male or female teenagers aged 12-16 years, registered as students at the As-Syadzili Integrated Islamic Junior High School (SMPIT). The subjects were not currently participating in therapy or other programs related to academic stress.

Research Variable and Research Instruments

Research Variables

To be able to test the research hypothesis, the variables contained in the research must first be identified. In this research there are three variables:

1. Independent variable (X1): Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT)
2. Independent variable (X2): Time management
3. Dependent variable (Y): Academic stress

Research Instruments

In experimental quantitative research, research instruments are needed to bridge the subject and object (substantially between theoretical and empirical matters, between concepts and data). The extent to which the data reflects the concept to be measured depends on the instrument used to collect the data. The research instrument uses a scale to measure values, beliefs, attitudes, and matters related to personological variables with questions on a certain value continuum (Suharsaputra, 2012).

The instrument for measuring academic stress is the Student-life Stress Inventory (SSI) from (Gadzella, 1994). The SSI consists of 51 items that measure the dimensions of stressors and reactions to stress. The dimension of stressors consists of five indicators, namely frustration, conflict, pressure, change, and self-imposed, totaling 23 statements, while the dimension of reactions to stressors consists of four indicators, namely psychological, behavioral, and cognitive, totaling 28 statements. The SSI is prepared in a Likert scale format, to measure teenagers' attitudes towards psychological objects in the form of academic stress (Sarwono, 2006) with a range of answer choices from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). Number 1 represents the answer never, number 2 represents the answer rarely, number 3 represents the answer sometimes, number 4 represents the answer often and number 5 represents the answer always (Gadzella, 1994). The measurement of academic stress for each subject is the overall score of 51 statement items.

The scale has excellent internal consistency (α), with correlations between 0.93 and 0.94 (Zeidner, 1992). Subsequent research found that the SSI instrument's internal consistency (α) was very good, namely 0.91 (Goff, 2011). An example item is "I feel frustrated because I procrastinate on assignments" (Zeidner, 1992).

The results of the SSI try out instrument on 63 junior high school teenagers found a reliability value of 0.914. Several SSI items that were not correlated because the correlation was below 0.3. 10 items were wasted, namely items no. 1, 18, 19, 21, 31, 32, 35, 45, 50, 51. So

the total number of SSI items used in the research was 41 items. The measurement of academic stress for each subject is the overall score of 41 statement items. Academic stress scores are in the range 41 – 205. High scores indicate high academic stress.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique uses one-way Anova. This comparison test is used to test differences in the averages of three or more independent data groups (Priyatno, 2012). This independent data group is the third intervention that will be applied to the experimental group. Data processing used the SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solution) program version 20 with the name IBM SPSS Statistics 20. The data analyzed were pretest and posttest data from the control and experimental groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Description of the Subjects

Based on the analysis that has been done, it is known that among 42 subjects observed, there were 16 teenagers (38.1%) from class VII, 9 teenagers (21.4%) from class VIII, and 17 teenagers (40.5%) from class IX. Based on the gender, there were 12 males (28.6%) and 30 females (71.4%). This is shown in table 1.

Table 1. The Description of the Subject

The Characteristics of the Subjects	SEFT (n,%)	Time Management (n,%)	Group	
			SEFT + Time Management (n,%)	Control (n,%)
Gender				
Male	3 (27,3%)	3 (30%)	4 (36,4%)	2 (20%)
Female	8 (72,7%)	7 (70%)	7 (63,7%)	8 (80%)
Class				
VII	4 (36,63%)	5 (50%)	4 (36,63%)	3 (30%)
VIII	2 (18,18%)	2 (20%)	2 (18,18%)	3 (30%)
IX	5 (45,45%)	3 (30%)	5 (45,45%)	4 (40%)
The Level of academic stress (Pretest)				
High	11 (100%)	10 (100%)	11 (100%)	10 (100%)
Mid	0	0	0	0

The Result of the Assumption Test

The homogeneity of variance values calculation must be conducted at the beginning of data analysis activities to ensure whether the homogeneity assumption in each data category has been fulfilled (Winarsunu, 2002).

The criteria for homogeneity testing are if the significance is <0.05 , then the data groups' variance is not the same, and if the significance is >0.05 then the variance of the data groups is the same. The pretest output showed that the significance is >0.05 ($0.130 > 0.05$). So it can be concluded that the variants of the three data groups; the SEFT group, the time management group, and the SEFT and time management groups are the same.

The normality test is used to test whether the resulting residual values are normally distributed or not. The normality test used the One Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov test. It showed that the significance value is 0.158. The residual value is normal because the significance is more than 0.05 ($0.158 > 0.05$).

Thus, the assumption test for homogeneity and normality has met the basic assumptions for further analysis.

The Result of Analysis

In Table 2, we present the data analysis using one-way Anova to determine the mean differences between the experimental and control groups.

Table 2 The differences between pretest and posttest of Academic Stress in Experimental Group and Control group

Group	Pre-test		Post-test		Delta
	M	SD	M	SD	
SEFT	138,55	10,46	106,45	29,03	32,1
Time Management	132,20	8,84	109,70	12,34	22,5
SEFT+ Time Management	130,80	7,53	110,91	18,94	19,89
Control	126,40	5,52	118,20	19,12	8,2

Based on the results of data analysis in table 2, it was found that there was a slight decrease in the control group from the average score of the pre-test results (M=126.40 with SD= 5.52) while in the post-test (M= 118.20 with SD= 19, 12) so that the delta score which shows a decrease in academic stress is 8.2. The results of data analysis showed that the average stress in the experimental group given SEFT therapy had a greater influence than the other groups with the average in the pretest (M= 138.55 with SD= 10.46) while in the post test (M= 106.45 with SD= 29.03) so the delta score which shows a decrease in academic stress is 32.1. Meanwhile, the average stress in the experimental group given time management therapy had a slightly lower effect than the SEFT group with the average in the pre-test (M= 132.20 with SD= 8.84) while in the post-test (M= 109, 70 with SD= 12.34) so the delta score which shows a decrease in academic stress is 22.5. Meanwhile, the average stress in the experimental group given the combination therapy of SEFT and time management had the lowest effect compared to the other two experimental groups with an average in the pretest (M= 130.80 with SD= 7.53) while in the post test (M= 110.91 with SD= 18.94) so the delta score which shows a decrease in academic stress is 19.89.

All groups experienced a decrease in academic stress. The experimental group had a higher decline than the control group. Reducing academic stress using SEFT therapy had a higher effect compared to other groups. The time management group influences the second order, while the SEFT and time management groups influence the third order in reducing academic stress. Meanwhile, the control group without any treatment also experienced a decline, although the decline was the lowest. It indicates that academic stress can be reduced by using all types of therapy in this experiment.

From the results of the ANOVA analysis, it can be concluded that each group experienced changes in academic stress scores. This means that there is a decrease in academic stress in each group, with the highest to lowest decrease being the SEFT > time management > SEFT group and the time management > control group. Thus, the fourth hypothesis is accepted, namely that there is a higher reduction in academic stress scores in students who receive therapy than those who do not.

The test results regarding changes in reducing academic stress scores in each experimental group (SEFT, time management, SEFT and time management) and the control group can be seen in Figure 2.

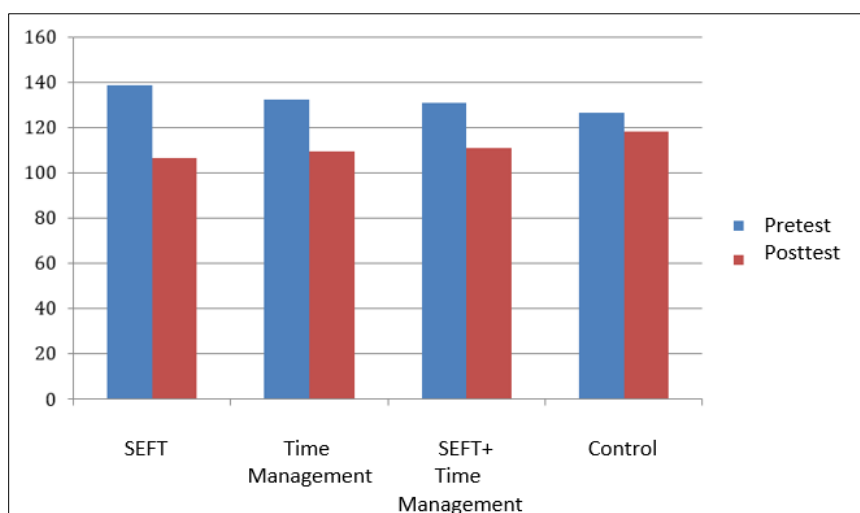


Figure 2. The Comparison Graph of Academic Stress Decrease

The significance of the decrease in academic stress scores in the experimental group was tested again using additional univariate analysis with pairwise comparison of delta scores. Then see its significance by comparing it to the control group as shown in table 3.

Table 3. Delta Score for Academic Stress in the Experiment and Control Group

Group	Time Management	SEFT + Time Management	SEFT	Control Group	Sig. ^b
SEFT	14,300	-12,182	-	-23,891*	0,011
Time Management	-	-9,59	9,59	-14,300	0,125
SEFT + Time Management	-9,591	-	12,18	-11,71	0,197
Control group	14,300	11,709	23,891*	-	-

Note: *Sig 0,01 < 0,05

Based on the results of data analysis in table 3, it was found that there was a change in academic stress scores compared to the control group and its significance. The SEFT group compared to the control group experienced a decrease in academic stress of 23,891 with a significance of 0.011 (<0.05). It meant that the effect of SEFT on reducing academic stress had a significant influence. Thus, the first hypothesis is accepted, in which there is a significant influence of Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) on reducing academic stress in students at school.

The results of data analysis in the time management group compared to the control group showed a decrease in academic stress of 14.30 with a significance of 0.125 (> 0.05). It meant that the influence of time management on reducing academic stress did not have a significant effect. Thus, the second hypothesis is rejected; the hypothesis which states that there is a significant influence of time management on reducing academic stress in students at school is not proven in this research.

Compared with the control group, the SEFT and time management group experienced a decrease in academic stress of 11.71 with a significance of 0.197 (> 0.05). It meant that the influence of SEFT and time management on reducing academic stress did not have a significant effect. Thus, the third hypothesis is rejected, in which the hypothesis stated that there is a significant influence of Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) and time management on reducing academic stress in students at school is not proven in this research.

Discussion

The research results show that there is a significant influence of Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) on reducing students' academic stress at school during the Covid-19 pandemic. Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) which combines spiritual aspects and the body's energy system aims to change thinking (cognition) individuals become more positive so that emotions also become positive (Pierce & Lydon, 1998).

Based on research conducted by (Safitri & Sadif, 2013), Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) can reduce levels of depression. Subjects who know that there are negative emotions within themselves are given the skills to change these negative emotions and thoughts into more positive ones, thereby giving rise to positive emotions as well. The symptoms of academic stress that were previously often felt by subjects can be reduced by managing cognition and emotions to be more positive and realistic through Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT).

Subjects with the skills to carry out SEFT will be accustomed to affirming themselves as positive individuals, full of sincerity and surrendering to all the problems they experience, in this case, academic stress. Apart from providing positive reinforcement to individuals psychologically, SEFT can also positively influence physical health, because SEFT can eliminate negative emotions by harmonizing the body's disturbed energy system.

The research results show that SEFT has the greatest influence compared to the other two types of intervention, this is because SEFT is a type of therapy that is easy to do by anyone, anywhere and is simple in practice. But behind this simplicity several other psychotherapy techniques support its effectiveness, there are cognitive therapy, NLP, hypnotherapy, energy therapy, EMDR, desensitization, suggestion affirmation including relaxation (Zainuddin, 2006).

Time management can reduce academic stress in the subject. Previous research conducted by (Alpturk, 2015), found that good time management can reduce anxiety levels in teenagers. Time management involves activities in managing time effectively and efficiently to achieve predetermined goals (Alpturk, 2015). Determining goals and how important these goals are can influence the time management process that the subject is carrying out (Hellsten, 2012).

Subjects who have skills in time management have a greater opportunity to achieve the goals they want to achieve than subjects who do not have skills in time management. Subjects who were given time management intervention had a greater reduction in academic stress than subjects who were not given the intervention. The reduction in academic stress levels of subjects in this group was second only to SEFT therapy, but the reduction was not significant, perhaps because time management focused more on increasing the individual's cognitive ability to manage time. Meanwhile, academic stress has varied stressors; emotional, cognitive, social, and even financial. Time management has more influence on academic achievement than solving academic stress problems (Khatib, 2014; Lin & Chen, 2009).

The combination of Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique and time management to reduce students' academic stress obtained significant results. Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique uses a process of cognition and emotion (Zainuddin, 2006), while the role of time management is to produce positive behavior as a manifestation of changes in cognition and emotion. Combining these two interventions should be a more effective intervention for dealing with the subject's problems than a single intervention.

This research shows that the greatest reduction in academic stress in students was experienced by subjects who received a single intervention, namely Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT). The initial stage of the Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) is to (Alpturk, 2015) recognize the source of the subject's negative thoughts to make the intervention process effective. Before the subject recognizes the source of the problem, the subject cannot move to the next stage (Zainuddin, 2006).

Greenbergh said that in handling academic stress during the Covid-19 pandemic, students must pay attention to resolving the sources of stress they face, then resolving psychological problems. Based on this, providing Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) and time management interventions to subjects at the same time may result in the subject not understanding some of the processes. The initial process should be given the Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) then ensuring whether the subject has mastered the technique or not, if the subject has mastered it then stress management intervention can be given. Providing Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) intervention and time management should have a certain time interval to make the intervention process more effective. This is what makes the possibility that this combination intervention does not have a significant effect even though it can reduce academic stress in students at school during the Covid-19 pandemic (Greenberg, 2011).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, hypothesis testing and discussions that have been carried out, it can be concluded that SEFT therapy, time management, SEFT and time management as a whole can reduce academic stress. The therapy that has the most significant effect is SEFT therapy. In this research, SEFT was the best therapy for reducing students' academic stress at school during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Based on the research results, it is recommended that future researchers consider the research subjects to be in a more varied stage of development (high school age). It is very important to add moderator variables in future research, such as gender, intelligence level and length of stay at the Islamic boarding school. Try out modules should be carried out in a measurable manner and produce quantitative data related to reducing academic stress. Academic stress can also be measured after several weeks or months of therapy has been stopped so that data can also be obtained regarding the effectiveness of long-term therapy. To use combination therapy between SEFT and time management, it is hoped that future researchers will do it in stages. Recommendations for subjects and schools are that SEFT be the first choice of therapy, rather than time management or a combination of both, to overcome academic stress in students at school.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author certifies that these potential conflicts of interest have not influenced the design, conduct, analysis, or reporting of the research presented in this paper. We remain committed to maintaining the integrity of our work and have taken measures to ensure that these interests do not compromise the validity or impartiality of our findings.

For any inquiries or clarifications regarding these declarations, please contact the corresponding author at abdulazizmuslim@asia.ac.id.

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