

## Community Service

### STRESS MANAGEMENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM REDUCES THE ANXIETY LEVELS OF STUDENTS FACING THE NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL EXAM

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#### ABSTRACT

**Background.** The national exam is seen by students as something scary and threatening to the future, thus increasing negative cognition and anxiety. Education will focus on individual reactions to a situation and the ability to face the exam. The purpose of this community service was to increase students' knowledge about stress management and decrease students' anxiety level in facing national school exams.

**Implementation Method.** This community service was carried out on grade 12 students of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Surabaya with a total of 15 people. The activity was carried out in December 2022. The method used was stress management training and a combination of several ways to reduce stress, including deep breathing relaxation techniques, positive thinking exercises, and spiritual emotional freedom technique (SEFT) exercises.

**Findings.** The results of the activity obtained mostly students' increased knowledge about stress management of 10 students (66.7%) and 10 students had anxiety within normal limits as many as 10 children (66.7%).

**Conclusion.** Stress management education and training combinations are very useful for reducing student anxiety in facing school exams.

**Keywords:** Anxiety level, Education-training, Exam, School, Stress management, Students.

#### BACKGROUND

Adolescents are those who are in transition from children to adults, adolescence is a dynamic phase of development and, experiences many changes and problems in adolescent life. These changes include physical, mental, social, and emotional changes.[1] Problems in adolescents are most often experienced in school such as self-adjustment, course load, final exams, and, learning achievement. The many demands and problems faced make many adolescents experience stress and anxiety.

Student anxiety also increases in line with the increasing grade level, namely before the national final exam. Social comparison and listening to some stories of previous experiences of failure have an impact on student anxiety. Anxiety is an unfocused, diffuse response that increases an individual's alertness to a threat, real or imagined.[2] Anxiety is

an assessment and emotional response to something dangerous. Anxiety is strongly associated with feelings of uncertainty and helplessness.

The prevalence of test anxiety has been studied using two different methods. The prevalence of anxiety in the world is more than 200 million people with a percentage (of 3.6%), anxiety sufferers in Indonesia aged 15-19 years are at a percentage of 6.1% or 11 million people. The number of suicides in Indonesia is at 80%-90% due to anxiety. In the research, it is stated that the level of anxiety in Madrasah Aliyah (hereinafter abbreviated as MA)/ High School students tends to be constant.[3] Based on the results of preliminary interviews, 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students are undergoing Semester Final Examinations and will continue tutoring to face the final school exams. Based on the results of the initial questionnaire survey, 3 out of 15 students at MAN Surabaya experienced severe anxiety levels. Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Surabaya only guides physically for the psychology of its students has not been given much attention by the counseling guidance. Based on these interviews it seems that many students and teachers do not know stress management.

Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 43 of 2019 concerning the Implementation of Examinations Organized by Education Units and National Examinations (hereinafter referred to as UN) that the Examination organized by the Education Unit is an assessment of learning outcomes by the Education Unit which aims to assess the achievement of graduate competency standards for all subjects.[4, 5] With the issuance of the regulation (hereinafter referred to as SE) No. 1 of 2021, the UN as a form of evaluation of the education system was eliminated. This is in line with the issuance of PP No 57 of 2021 which states that the evaluation of the education system is carried out in the form of a National Assessment (hereinafter referred to as AN), data analysis of Education Units, educators, education personnel, and Local Governments.

The many changes that occur regarding the standardization of higher average scores and the number of subjects tested during the exam have a lot of impact on students such as feeling afraid, depressed, anxious and depressed facing the exam and it is very likely to have an impact on psychological disorders if they later fail. Failure to face the exam after being examined was not only caused by students' unpreparedness in mastering the learning material tested as contained in the established curriculum, but more due to stress and fear of facing the exam; fear of failure and for students, exams are a scourge on their lives.[6]

Therefore, adolescents must be able to control themselves so that this anxiety does not increase and drag on, even if it is not overcome, mild anxiety will increase to panic, even

depression. To overcome this, adolescents individually must be able to apply therapy for themselves. These individual therapies include self-talk and stress management.[7]

Stress management is the ability to effectively cope with mental and emotional disturbances or chaos that arise due to responses (responses). The purpose of stress management itself is to improve the quality of life of the individual to be better. Stress management consists of 4 sessions including recognition of stress and its impact, relaxation if exposed to stress, positive thinking in dealing with problems, and overcoming stress with spirituality.[8]

In addition, there are many ways that students can overcome stress, and each individual can overcome stress in their way according to their abilities. The ways that can be done: self-efficacy training is made based on the principle of experiential learning, doing time out, developing a self-care plan, developing a time management plan, and solving problems together. The purpose of this community service was to increase students' knowledge about stress management and decrease students' anxiety in facing national school exams.

## **METHOD OF ACTIVITIES**

This community service activity uses education and training methods for 12th-grade students at MAN Surabaya with the inclusion criteria of 12th-grade students who are doing their final school exams and will take national exams to continue to college and students who experience anxiety. The education provided was a Focus Group Discussion on stress and anxiety management. The training provided is a combination of deep breath relaxation exercises, positive thinking exercises, and the Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (hereinafter abbreviated as SEFT).[9] This community service activity was carried out for 1 month in December 2022.

The stages of this community service activity are:

1. Filling out the Knowledge Level and anxiety questionnaire using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS)[10] via google form and activity attendance list
2. Explanation of material and training. The material and questions and answers were given for 40 minutes. Training on each definition and simulation. The simulation is practicing as a role model for participant students to take deep breath relaxation exercises, positive thinking exercises, and SEFT. After that, the service activity participants imitated the exercises that had been taught.

3. Participants performed the combination of exercises independently for 3 weeks with a frequency of 3 times/week and 2 times per day morning and evening).
4. Online monitoring (group / private chat to activity participants) to check the exercise routine, and obstacles/difficulties experienced and provide solutions if any.
5. Completing the anxiety level questionnaire after doing the exercise several times to determine the effect of this community service activity.

Before the stages of this community service activity began, permission was obtained from the principal of MAN Surabaya with Letter of Permit Number B-2026/Ma.13.29.01/TL.00/12/2022 and informed consent was given to the participants. The instruments used have been valid and reliable and use descriptive tests to describe the results of the activities.

## RESULT OF ACTIVITIES

General description of the location of community service activities MAN Surabaya is a state high school with Islamic characteristics, the only one among 23 state high schools in Surabaya City. MAN Surabaya stands on an area of 1,597.5 m<sup>2</sup> on Jalan Bendul Merisi Selatan IX/20, Bendul Merisi Village, Wonocolo District, Surabaya City. MAN Surabaya has its own local in East Wonorejo no.14 and officially moved in early 2015 and accredited A. The number of students at MAN is also quite large, around 100 students per batch. There is no training on stress and anxiety management at MAN Surabaya. Students are allowed to participate in self-development training.

Table 1. Characteristics of Students

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	6	40%
Female	9	60%
Total	15	100%
<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
17 years old	9	60%
18 years old	6	40%
Total	15	100%

Table 1 shows that most students who experience anxiety are female with 9 people (60%) and 17 years of age. The figure 1 shows the process of providing educational materials, training, and simulation.



Figure 1. Implementation of Training Program

Table 2 shows that before education, a small part of students had sufficient knowledge about anxiety and stress management as many as 7 students (46.7%) and mostly had good knowledge as many as 8 students (53.3%). After the education, 10 students had good knowledge (66.7%) which is increased knowledge about 20% and only 5 students (33.3%) had sufficient knowledge.

Table 2. Result of Knowledge Level

Knowledge Level	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Good	8	53.3%	10	66.7%
Sufficient	7	46.7%	5	33.3%
Less	0	0	0	0
Total	15	100%	15	100%

Table 3 shows that before education was obtained, 12th-grade students at MAN Surabaya had a severe anxiety level of 3 students (20%), a moderate anxiety level of 6 students (40%), a mild anxiety level of 3 students (20%), and normal anxiety level of 3 students (20%). After health education was carried out, 10 students (66.7%) had a normal anxiety level, while 2 students (13.3%) had mild anxiety levels and 3 students (20%) had moderate anxiety levels.

Table 3 Reduction Level of Anxiety with Education-Training Program

Anxiety Level	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Normal	3	20%	10	66.7%
Mild	3	20%	2	13.3%
Moderate	6	40%	3	20%
Severe	3	20%	0	0
Total	15	100%	15	100%

## **DISCUSSION**

Based on the results of community services at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Surabaya obtained from data on grade 12 students and location surveys, it was found that all of students had conducted the Final Semester Examination and would take the School Examination and Tutoring to go to higher education so that some of these students would certainly have a lot of thoughts. The results of the Focus Group Discussion (abbreviated as FGD) obtained that more or fewer students feel worried, anxious, nervous, and afraid of failure. This result has similar with the previous research that before the national exam, the students felt anxiety and fear due to the tension and the lack of resources to deal with final exams.[6] Feelings of anxiety and worry arise because of the increased value standards compared to the previous year. This condition makes them feel depressed and uncomfortable so it is difficult to concentrate, difficult to understand the material, and even difficult to manage study time.

The results of this community service show that the level of knowledge of the participants is increasing so that the provision of health education is considered effective. This is because the right education technique makes participants focus on listening and understanding the material presented. This results similar with the previous research and community service about health education stated that nurses must identify the level of need of participants and provide education with appropriate techniques and materials.[11, 12]

Peplau identified four levels of anxiety, namely mild anxiety is related to everyday life. This anxiety can motivate learning to produce growth and creativity. Signs and symptoms include increased perception and attention, alertness, awareness of internal and external stimuli, ability to cope effectively with problems, and learning ability.[13] Physiological changes are characterized by restlessness, sleeplessness, hypersensitivity to sound, normal vital signs, and pupils. Moderate anxiety allows a person to focus on what is important and put aside others, so that individuals experience selective attention, but can do something more purposeful. Physiological response: frequent shortness of breath, pulse and blood pressure rise, dry mouth, anxiety, constipation. While the cognitive response is that the field of perception narrows, external stimuli cannot be accepted, focusing on what is of concern.

Before stress management education, there were 3 students who experienced severe anxiety. Severe anxiety greatly affects individual perception, individuals tend to focus on something detailed and specific, and cannot think about other things. Signs and symptoms of severe anxiety are headaches, dizziness, nausea, trembling, insomnia, palpitations, tachycardia, hyperventilation, frequent urination and defecation, and diarrhea. Emotionally,

individuals experience fear and all attention is focused on themselves. This is also experienced by families of patients with critical conditions who are treated in the ICU. They feel severe anxiety characterized by headaches, dizziness, and insomnia. When the patient's family was given an explanation they were not focused and attentive to their own condition.[14]

After this activity students feel more relaxed and the level of anxiety mostly in normal. It is certain that everyone even students also experience examination that makes them anxious. The relaxation technique used is a combination of deep breath relaxation technique, positive thinking and spiritual emotional freedom technique so that it is proven effective in reducing anxiety levels. These results are not different from the results of similar studies on religious relaxation therapy that a combination of respiratory and spiritual or religious relaxation from a person can improve the quality of sleep of patients and reduce insomnia, one of the symptoms of anxiety.[15, 16] However, we need to face the examination with a normal level of anxiety. This normal anxiety allows a person to still be able to complete all their tasks, and do activities that are beneficial to themselves or those around them.

## **CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION**

The condition at MAN Surabaya school before this activity was held, had not implemented stress management for grade 12 students. After this community service activity, it reduced student anxiety facing exams. This stress management is very useful so it is hoped that the Counseling Guidance teacher (abbreviated as BK) can apply it to other students who experience anxiety before the national exam.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

There was no conflict of interest during community service activity and the release of this article.

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