

## The Effect of Dhikr Therapy on Anxiety Levels in the Elderly at UPT PSTW husnul Khotimah, Riau Province

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### ABSTRACT

**Background & Objective:** Anxiety is a common psychological problem among the elderly that can reduce quality of life if left unmanaged. Dhikr therapy is a non-pharmacological spiritual intervention that may help alleviate anxiety. **Method:** This study aimed to determine the effect of dhikr therapy on anxiety levels among elderly individuals at UPT PSTW Husnul Khotimah, Riau Province. A quantitative pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design was used with 61 elderly respondents selected through purposive sampling. Anxiety levels were measured using the Indonesian version of the Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (ZSAS). Dhikr therapy was administered for three consecutive days, and data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. **Result:** The results showed a significant reduction in anxiety levels after the intervention ( $p < 0.05$ ). **Conclusion:** In conclusion, dhikr therapy is effective in reducing anxiety among the elderly and can be applied as a non-pharmacological nursing intervention in elderly care settings.

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### Introduction

The elderly population continues to increase globally and in Indonesia due to improvements in health services and life expectancy. Aging is a natural process characterized by progressive physical, psychological, and social changes that may reduce functional capacity and overall well-being (Santrock, 2020). Along with these changes, elderly individuals are more vulnerable to mental health problems, particularly anxiety, which is one of the most frequently experienced psychological disorders in later life (Rahmawati et al., 2024).

Anxiety in the elderly often arises from multiple factors, including declining physical health, chronic illness, loss of a spouse, reduced social interaction, and decreased roles within family and society (Šare et al., 2021). If left untreated, anxiety can negatively affect sleep quality, appetite, cognitive function, emotional stability, and quality of life. In severe cases, prolonged anxiety may accelerate physical deterioration and increase dependency on others (Setyowati et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, the prevalence of anxiety among elderly individuals remains high. Studies indicate that anxiety affects approximately 15–52.3% of adults and elderly populations, with higher prevalence observed in individuals aged over 65 years (Mawardi, 2024). These data highlight the importance of early identification and appropriate management of anxiety in elderly care settings, especially in institutional environments such as nursing homes and social care facilities.

Management of anxiety in the elderly commonly involves pharmacological and psychological interventions. However, pharmacological therapy may cause side effects and drug interactions, particularly in elderly individuals with multiple comorbidities. Cognitive behavioral therapy, although effective, may not be easily accessible or suitable for all elderly individuals due to cognitive limitations and resource constraints (Azizah, 2023). Therefore, complementary and non-pharmacological approaches that are simple, culturally appropriate, and spiritually meaningful are needed.

Dhikr therapy is a spiritual intervention rooted in Islamic practices that involves remembering Allah through repetitive verbal expressions. Dhikr has been shown to promote relaxation, reduce sympathetic nervous system activity, and enhance parasympathetic responses, leading to a calmer mental state (Kamila, 2020). Previous studies have demonstrated that dhikr therapy can significantly reduce anxiety in various populations, including elderly individuals, pregnant women, and preoperative patients (Tamelia et al., 2023)

Based on preliminary observations conducted at UPT PSTW Husnul Khotimah, Riau Province, many elderly residents reported symptoms of moderate to severe anxiety related to health problems, emotional disturbances, and limited family support. However, dhikr therapy had not previously been implemented as part of routine nursing care in this setting. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of dhikr therapy on anxiety levels among elderly individuals at UPT PSTW Husnul Khotimah, Riau Province.

## **Objective**

To determine the effect of dhikr therapy on anxiety levels in the elderly at UPT PSTW Husnul Khotimah, Riau Province.

## **Method**

This study used a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design. The research was conducted at UPT PSTW Husnul Khotimah, Riau Province. The population consisted of all elderly residents at the institution. A total of 61 elderly respondents were selected using purposive sampling.

The instrument used to measure anxiety levels was the Indonesian version of the Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (ZSAS), consisting of 20 items with a four-point Likert scale. Dhikr therapy was administered to all respondents for three consecutive days in accordance with the established procedure. Anxiety levels were measured before (pretest) and after (posttest) the intervention.

## **Results**

Based on the results of the study on anxiety levels among 61 elderly respondents at UPT PSTW Husnul Khotimah, Riau Province, the following results were obtained:

**TABLE 1.** Respondent Characteristics

No	Characteristics	F	%
1	Gender		
	Male	32	52,5%
	Femele	29	47,5%
	Total	61	100%
2	Age		
	60-69 Years Young Elderly	25	41,0%
	70-79 Years Middle Elderly	29	47,5%
	80 Years and Above	7	11,5%
	Total	61	100%

Based on Table 1, the gender characteristics show that out of 61 respondents, 52.5% were male and 47.5% were female. The age characteristics indicate that among the 61 respondents, 41.0% were aged 60–69 years, 47.5% were aged 70–79 years, and 11.5% were aged 80 years and above.

**TABLE 2.** Anxiety Levels in the Elderly Before Zikir Therapy

Anxiety	F	%
Mild	0	0%
Moderate	35	57,4%
Severe	26	42,6%
Very Severe	0	0%
Total	61	100%

Based on table 2, it can be seen that the level of anxiety of 61 respondents before carrying out dhikr therapy on the elderly at the UPT PSTW Husnul Khotimah, Riau Province Social Service, the majority with a percentage of 57.4% experienced moderate anxiety.

**TABLE 3.** Anxiety Levels in the Elderly After Zikir Therapy

Anxiety	F	%
Mild	13	21,3%
Modarate	47	77,0%
Severe	1	1,6%
Very Severe	0	0%
Total	61	100%

Based on table 3, it can be seen that the level of anxiety of 61 respondents after carrying out dhikr therapy on the elderly at the UPT PSTW Husnul Khotimah, Riau Province Social Service, the majority with a percentage of 77.0% experienced moderate anxiety.

**TABLE 4.** The Effect of Zikir Therapy on Anxiety Levels in the Elderly

Terapi Zikir	Mean	Min - Max	Pvalue
<i>Pre Test</i>	59.2131	50-70	0,000
<i>Post Test</i>	46.8525	33-63	

Based on Table 4, the average anxiety level of the elderly before receiving dhikr therapy (pretest) was 59.21, with a value range of 50–70. This indicates that most elderly people were in the moderate to high anxiety category. After receiving dhikr therapy, there was a decrease in the elderly's anxiety level, with the average anxiety level in the posttest dropping to 46.85, with a value range of 33–63. This decrease illustrates a change in the elderly's anxiety after receiving regular dhikr therapy.

## Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the majority of elderly participants at UPT PSTW Khusnul Khotimah, Riau Social Service, experienced moderate anxiety before receiving dzikir therapy. Out of 61 respondents, 57.4% were classified in this category, indicating that anxiety is a common condition among older adults. Factors contributing to anxiety include loss of independence, bereavement, medication side effects, mobility limitations, chronic illnesses, past trauma, and environmental, financial, developmental, or family issues (Savitri, 2024). Elderly individuals also commonly worry about illness, physical decline, and mortality. Psychological changes, reduced social interaction, and limited family engagement may further increase feelings of loneliness. Excessive worry can impact both mental and physical health, leading to emotional disturbances, psychosocial issues, and decreased ability to perform daily activities (Putra et al., 2023).

These findings are consistent with (Husnah & Ramayanti, 2023), who reported that 28 out of 30 elderly respondents (93.3%) experienced moderate anxiety prior to dzikir therapy. (Rika Syafitri, 2022) found that 11 of 19 hypertensive elderly participants (65.6%) had moderate anxiety before relaxation dzikir intervention. Similarly, Zukhruf et al. (2024) observed that 63.6% of cancer patients experienced moderate anxiety, while 36.4% had high anxiety, which was associated with physical and psychological stress during treatment. (Amelia et al., 2023) also reported that post-stroke elderly individuals predominantly experienced severe anxiety, with a mean score of 38.55, due to functional limitations and increased dependence.

After dzikir therapy, most participants (77.0%) were classified as having moderate anxiety, demonstrating a significant reduction compared to pretest scores. Dzikir promotes the balance of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and norepinephrine, which play a role in emotional regulation. It also enhances parasympathetic nervous system activity, inducing relaxation and stabilizing the limbic system, which regulates emotional responses (SomanaAan et al., 2020).

The recitation and movements involved in dzikir, including phrases such as *istighfar* and *tahmid*, have been shown to increase inner calm, improve blood circulation, and reduce physical symptoms of anxiety, such as shortness of breath, muscle tension, and restlessness. Furthermore, dzikir provides additional benefits, including improved sleep quality, mental tranquility, and greater optimism in daily life (Putri, 2025).

(Mawardi, 2024) reported that morning and evening dzikir therapy significantly reduced depression scores, from a mean of 27.85 to 22.9, with 15 out of 20 respondents showing meaningful improvements. (Mastuty et al., 2022) added that

dzikir stimulates brain activity, triggering endorphin release, which produces physical relaxation and positively impacts psychological conditions. (Di & Subang, 2024) found that dzikir can interrupt negative thought cycles by focusing attention on positive phrases, helping patients with chronic illnesses achieve mental calmness. Collectively, these findings support dzikir as an effective non-pharmacological intervention to reduce anxiety in the elderly.

Bivariate analysis revealed a significant effect of dzikir therapy on anxiety levels, with a significance value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Dzikir reduces sympathetic nervous system activity, associated with stress responses, while increasing parasympathetic activity, promoting relaxation. Reduced sympathetic activity is reflected in slower heart rate, more regulated breathing, relaxed muscles, and decreased stress hormones, including cortisol and adrenaline. Enhanced parasympathetic activity facilitates homeostasis and alleviates physical symptoms of anxiety (Tisna et al., 2025).

Dzikir also impacts psychological well-being. Repeating dzikir phrases promotes mental focus, reduces intrusive thoughts, and strengthens self-control, a sense of security, hope, and self-confidence (Apipin & Winarti, 2024), (Himawan, 2020) reported that morning and evening dzikir significantly decreased anxiety and depression symptoms ( $p = 0.007$ ). Nuraeni and Nurhayati (2020) observed that four sessions of dzikir therapy significantly reduced anxiety in elderly participants. (Zethira et al., 2022) demonstrated that dzikir lowered anxiety levels by 40–60% among hypertensive elderly after several intervention sessions.

Overall, the results indicate that dzikir therapy is effective in reducing anxiety among elderly participants. It helps the body return to a relaxed state, mitigates physical symptoms of anxiety, and fosters a sense of security and self-confidence. These findings support the use of dzikir as a safe and effective non-pharmacological intervention to improve elderly individuals' quality of life by managing anxiety.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the study conducted at UPT PSTW Husnul Khotimah, Riau Province, it can be concluded that dhikr therapy has a significant effect on reducing anxiety levels among elderly individuals. Prior to the intervention, most respondents experienced moderate to severe anxiety, while after the implementation of dhikr therapy, a noticeable decrease in anxiety levels was observed, with respondents predominantly categorized as having mild to moderate anxiety. Statistical analysis using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test showed a significant difference in anxiety levels before and after the intervention ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that dhikr therapy effectively contributes to anxiety reduction in the elderly. These findings suggest that dhikr therapy provides psychological calmness, emotional stability, and spiritual comfort, enabling elderly individuals to better cope with anxiety related to aging. Therefore, dhikr therapy can be recommended as a safe, simple, and non-pharmacological nursing intervention in elderly care settings. Future research is suggested to involve control groups, longer intervention durations, and additional psychosocial variables to further explore the long-term effects of dhikr therapy on mental health among the elderly.

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