

THE EFFECT OF JOURNALING TECHNIQUES IN LOWERING ANXIETY LEVELS IN GRADE XI STUDENTS IN FACING EXAMS AT SMA COLOMBO LEMAN DI YOGYAKARTA

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ABSTRACT

Anxiety is a condition that is often experienced by every individual without exception, including being felt by students in order to prepare for the exam. In order to minimize anxiety conditions, the Journaling Technique is one of the Journaling Techniques for behavior modification intervention techniques in the formation of positive behaviors that can be done easily. The research was carried out at SMA Colombo Sleman, D.I. Yogyakarta involving 75 grade XI students who will take the grade promotion exam. The research method used was a quantitative pre-experimental design without a control group with the One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design research type. The results of the study showed a decrease of 14.25 in the average score of anxiety level of students of SMA Colombo Sleman, D.I Yogyakarta. So it can be said that there is an influence of journaling techniques in reducing students' anxiety levels when facing exams.

KEYWORDS anxiety, journaling techniques, students



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INTRODUCTION

The Education Program that is planned and aims to be a forum in knowing how the learning progress achieved by students is by procuring various exams or tests (Nuryanti, 2010; Pebriyani, et al., 2019). The school exam is held every year as a requirement for student graduation. Issues related to anxiety and worries in facing exams are often heard and need to get the attention of both schools, teachers and parents. The tendency of individuals is to feel anxious when faced with a condition full of uncertainty. The results of the exam are a matter of concern because it can be in accordance with expectations or vice versa. The focus that can be done is to overcome the level of anxiety so that it does not interfere with the physical condition or daily activities of the individual.

Anxiety is a condition that is often experienced by every individual without exception. Anxiety conditions are also often felt by students. This can be caused by

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the thought of the possibilities that can occur if they fail to meet the graduation criteria so that it is felt as a burden by students (Lubaba, 2018; Pebriyani, et al., 2019). Anxiety is an individual subjective experience that is difficult to observe directly and becomes an emotional state without a specific object (Walasary, 2015; Pebriyani, et al., 2019). Anxiety is an appropriate response to a threat that is considered reasonable if the condition is not self-harming, but if it interferes with the condition or daily activities of the individual, it can be said to be something unreasonable (Pebriyani, et al., 2019).

Anxiety can arise when individuals feel threatened both physically and psychologically, such as self-esteem, self-image, and self-identity that feel threatened (Pebriyani, et al., 2019). Anxiety conditions felt by individuals can appear by being marked by *somatic* symptoms such as tension in the form of a faster heartbeat, sweating and difficulty breathing (Annisa, 2016; Pebriyani, et al., 2019). There are several levels of anxiety, namely mild, moderate to severe anxiety. According to Naveh & Benjamin, anxiety conditions felt by individuals show to be able to reduce activity in organizing information in memory (Lubaba, 2018; Pebriyani, et al., 2019). Anxiety conditions experienced by individuals can be in the form of worry, fear, pressure and threatened to feelings of anxiety about uncertainty in facing the reality that exists in the future (Lubaba, 2018; Pebriyani, et al., 2019).

Living conditions are full of uncertainty and individuals who can feel *negative* emotions require *coping* to reduce the *negative emotions* present that are able to affect the mental health condition and daily life of the individual. *The Journaling technique* is one of the behavior modification intervention techniques in the formation of positive behavior in adolescents (Veriza, et al., 2023). *Journaling* itself is an activity of pouring out all forms of things that individuals think and feel in a form of writing (Veriza, et al., 2023).

Activities *Journaling* tends to be easier for anyone to do because and has been done by many people as a medium in expressing the emotions they are feeling. The purpose of *Journaling* itself is to help reduce anxiety levels, Management *stress* Increase *self awareness*, trauma recovery media, introspection, life management to be more structured, reduce the level of depression, improve individual behavior, improve communication skills and improve one's mood state (August, 2022; Veriza, et al., 2023). This is also in line with research conducted by Rima (2022) which states that *Journaling* can be useful in increasing immunity, improving memory, improving individual mood, strengthening emotional function, reducing anxiety, as a medium in self-recognition, a medium in finding new perspectives in solving problems, helping to heal physical conflicts and a medium in achieving *Goals* or goals (Suryaman, et al., 2024). Activities *Journaling* which is carried out for approximately 15 minutes to 20 minutes per day which is carried out regularly based on research by (Anggarini, 2022) states that it helps lower blood pressure and improve individual liver function (Suryaman, et al., 2024).

Previous research that tried to see how the influence of the *Jurnaling Technique* in shaping positive behavior among adolescents was carried out by (Veriza., et al. 2023). In his research entitled *Journaling Techniques* in the formation of positive behavior in adolescents, it shows that *Journaling Techniques*

are effective in helping adolescents in forming new behaviors that are more positive than before. The method carried out in the study was a quasi-experiment and time series design for 3 months involving 78 high school students in grade XI in the city of Jambi.

Other interesting research related to *Journaling* was also carried out by counseling guidance teachers. This research was conducted by Suryaman, et al. (2024) trying to focus on providing *Journaling* therapy in overcoming stress symptoms. The subject of this study is teachers, especially counseling guidance teachers in schools. The results of this study showed that after the journaling therapy, participants were able to manage the stress symptoms that appeared. The therapy carried out also shows that journaling can help vocational school guidance and counseling teachers in Bogor Regency in overcoming stress.

Other research related to creative writing or *Journaling* was also carried out by (Ramadhanti, 2024). In this research, the journal can be used as a tool to find out the creative process of students in writing. The activity of writing down experiences can create creativity through a thinking process based on the experience he went through and then recorded it. *Journaling* can also be a step in determining students' readiness to learn and provide motivation because it can be used as a medium for self-reflection and understanding of themselves. The study involved 16 students who were randomly selected to provide information about their experiences using the reflective journal. What is different from the research is that the research conducted by Ramadhanti is carried out with a descriptive qualitative approach.

This study tries to focus on *Journaling* Techniques which in previous studies used more *Expressive Writing* Techniques in reducing students' anxiety levels. The subjects focused on this study are grade XI students who will enter the new semester and move up to class XI at SMA Colombo Sleman, D.I. Yogyakarta. The selection of research locations and research subjects is the limitation and renewal in research.

This *Journaling technique* is also used to see that SMA Colombo Sleman D.I. Yogyakarta has never used the *Journaling* Technique as a medium to handle the mental health condition of students. So this can be a step for researchers to provide an introduction to the importance of mental health and efforts that can be made to harmonize their physical and mental health conditions so as to support their learning achievements.

Based on the problems that have been explained earlier, the formulation of the problem in this study is "What is the Effect of *Journaling* Techniques in Reducing Anxiety Levels in Grade XII Students of SMA Colombo Sleman D.I. Yogyakarta?"

Theoretical Studies

Anxiety

Basically, anxiety is a psychological condition of a person who is full of fear and worry, where the feeling of fear and worry about something that is not certain to happen. Anxiety comes from Latin (*anxius*) and from German (*anst*), which is a word used to describe negative effects and physiological stimuli (Muyasaroh et al. 2020). According to the *American Psychological Association* (APA) in (Muyasaroh et al. 2020), anxiety is an emotional state that arises when an individual is *stressed*, and

is characterized by feelings of tension, thoughts that make the individual feel worried and accompanied by a physical response (heart beating fast, increased blood pressure, and so on).

There are 3 types of anxiety according to Sigmund Freud (Feist & Feist, 2012; Sari, 2020) :

1. Neurotic *anxiety*, which is anxiety that arises from feelings of anxiety due to unidentified dangers.
2. Realistic anxiety is what appears as an unpleasant and non-specific feeling that may include a danger in the face.
3. Moral anxiety, this anxiety arises due to the conflict between the ego and the superego. It is possible that when children build a superego at the age of five or six they experience anxiety that grows out of the conflict between realistic needs and superego imperatives.

In addition to the types, anxiety is also divided into 4 levels by Peplau (Sari, 2020), namely:

1. Mild anxiety, which is related to human daily life.
2. Moderate anxiety, this anxiety allows a person to focus their attention on something that important so that it overrides other things and causes individuals to experience quite selective attention but can still do things more Directional.
3. Major anxiety, severe anxiety tends to greatly affect the individual's perception and will encourage the individual to focus his attention on something detailed and specific so that he is unable to think about anything else.
4. Panic. Anxiety at this level is related to flawedness, fear and terror. When the individual in this condition allows him to lose control and leads to an increase in motor activity, his ability to relate to others decreases, perception is distorted and he is at a rational stage of consciousness.

Furthermore, there are several factors that affect anxiety. Blacburn & Davidson (in Annisa and Ifdil, 2016) mention several factors that affect anxiety, such as knowledge in responding to a threatening situation and being able to know the ability to control oneself in dealing with anxiety. Then Adler and Rodman (in Annisa & Ifdil, 2016) stated that there are two factors that can cause anxiety, namely;

1. Negative experiences in the past. The main cause of anxiety is the existence of traumatic experiences that occur in childhood. The event has an influence in the future. When individuals face the same event, they will feel tension causing discomfort. For example, when an individual has failed in facing a test, then in the next test he will feel uncomfortable so that anxiety arises in him
2. Irrational thoughts. Irrational thoughts are divided into four forms, namely; (a) Catastrophic failure, the individual thinks that something bad will happen to him so that the individual is unable to overcome his problem; (b) Perfection, individuals have certain standards that must be achieved in themselves so that they demand perfection and there are no defects in behavior; (c) Consent; (d) Improper generalization, i.e. excessive generalization, this occurs

The Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS).

One of the measuring tools that is often used in order to measure individual anxiety is *The Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale* (HAM-A, sometimes called HARS). HARS was first used by Max Hamilton in 1956. HARS itself is used to measure the severity of anxiety symptoms, both psychological and somatic, felt by individuals (Euan Thompson, 2015).

This study uses the Hamilton Rating Scale For Anxiety (Hars) measuring tool which has been modified by Dililla, et al., 2020. The items that have been modified are 25 items which include 2 aspects; (1) Somatic behavior with indicators of excessive sweating, muscle tension, shortness of breath, dizziness, nausea, diarrhea, irritability, and easy sadness. (2) Psychological symptoms with indicators of difficulty sleeping, fatigue, loss of motivation and interest, unreal feelings, restlessness, inability to be still, doubt and disturbing fear.

Journaling Techniques

The *Journaling* technique itself in Erford (2015) is a technique in counseling that is included in the cognitive-behavioral approach. Journaling techniques allow counselors to express and externalize their thoughts, feelings and needs, as well as emotions stored by counselors for personal internal parts by writing. With this technique, it is hoped that individuals who experience emotional outbursts will be able to channel their emotions into things that are not destructive or negative. This is related to the journal itself which gives individuals the freedom to express and identify their life problems, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors so that they can direct individuals to improvements and steps to overcome the problems they experience (Tas'adi & Dewi, 2019). Another benefit of the Journaling Technique itself is the expression of feelings so that it directs the individual's awareness as well as self-acceptance and creates a relationship with himself (Tas'adi & Dewi, 2019)

The implementation of *Journaling*, which tends to be easy to do individually, can be used as a medium to express all forms of emotions on a daily and continuous basis. So that individuals are allowed to have personal records to maintain their mental health conditions. This is easy to do just by writing down what is being felt, thought and actions taken by individuals every day. *The Journaling* technique is adopted from the *Rational-Emotive Behavioral Therapy* (REBT) counseling technique formulated by Albert Ellis. *Journaling* itself can be used as an alternative in self-discovery, growth and self-actualization by channeling feelings and emotions through creative expression and the writing process.

The technique of daily *journaling* is considered to be able to show an important role in improving a person's psychological well-being (Lange, Richard, Gest, de Vries, & Lodder, 1998; Creswell, 2015; Estria, 2020). Specifically, the technique used in Journaling is to provide positive affirmation of oneself (*self-affirmation*) which is used in order to improve adaptive function in a person (Estria, 2020). This is because *Self-Affirmation* is a medium for self-affirmation in positive terms in order to protect self-integrity, as well as affirmation that comes from a sense of self-worth (Steele, 1988; Creswell, 2007; Estria, 2020). So according to Estria (2020) *The daily journaling self affirmation* technique can increase self-

esteem and individual self-esteem.

The procedures carried out to apply Self affirmation to the daily journaling technique adapted through the Estria (2020) daily journaling module are:

- a. Preparing tools (daily journaling books)
- b. Write with the theme of everything about yourself, self-strengths, self-shortcomings, things to be grateful for, weekly activity plans, reviews of days passed, daily self-data, and weekly activity reports.
- c. Do it consistently with a period of writing every day to once a week in the context of planning and evaluating the activities that have been carried out.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to find out how the influence of Journaling Techniques in order to reduce anxiety levels in grade XI students of SMA Colombo Sleman D.I. Yogyakarta. The research was carried out at SMA Colombo Sleman D.I. Yogyakarta which is located on Jl. Rajawali 10, Demangan Baru, Yogyakarta in the even semester of the 2023-2024 school year in May 2024. The number of students who are part of this study is 75 grade XI students who will move up to class XII.

The research method used is quantitative with a pre-experimental research design. While the type of research carried out is *One- Group Pretest- Posttest Design*. The design of the study is that there is a *pre-test* before being given treatment and a *post-test is carried out* after being given *treatment*. The sampling technique used by the researcher is *purposive sampling*. The results obtained were then analyzed in order to find out how *Jurnalng* affects in reducing anxiety in students who are about to face exams at SMA Colombo Sleman, Yogyakarta.

The treatment was carried out within 2 treatment meetings. The first meeting was held to provide direction related to *Journaling*. Furthermore, the second meeting was held in order to see the extent of the progress of *the Journaling* activities that have been carried out by the students. In this study, categorization criteria with high, medium, and low norms are used (Azwar, 2007).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The respondents in this study were 75 students, 46 students (61%) were male. Meanwhile, female respondents were 29 students (39%).

Gender Table

Thus, it can be concluded that in this study, men are the most respondents, namely 46 students (61%).

Based on the results of the distribution of anxiety scales in SMA Colombo Sleman students, it can be categorized into 3 categories (Low, Medium, High) which are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Categories Student Anxiety

Category	Score	Frequency	%
Low	58	7	9%
Keep	59-90	44	59%
Tall	91>	24	32%

The table above explains the level of anxiety before the Journaling technique, 7 students (9%) are known to have a low level of anxiety, 44 students (59%) are known to have a moderate level of anxiety, while a high level of anxiety is known to be 24 students (32%).

The results show the difference in the level of anxiety felt in students. In this study, *treatment* was only carried out on students who had a high level of anxiety, which was 24 people.

Tabel 2. HASIL Pre-Post Test

	Mean	P
Pre Test	96.58	0.000
Post Test	82.33	

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage

No.	Sex	Frequency	Presented (%)
1.	Man	46	61%
2.	Woman	29	39%

Based on the table above, the average value or mean before being given the *journaling* technique was 96.58 which indicates high anxiety. After the *journaling technique treatment*, the average score or decreased by 82.33, the results showed that the level of anxiety of students became moderate. There was a decrease of 14.25 points in the average score of the anxiety level of students of SMA Colombo Sleman D.I Yogyakarta.

The decrease in anxiety level obtained from the average score was strengthened by the results of the test sample. In the sample test conducted with SPSS 27 For Mac, the value of $P=0.000$ (<0.05) was obtained. With the results, it can be interpreted that H_a is accepted and H_o is rejected, which means that there is an influence of journaling techniques in reducing students' anxiety levels when facing exams.

Discussion

1. Gender

In this study, respondents with male gender were the most common, namely 46 students with a percentage of 61%. The results of the previous study showed that the most respondents were dominated by 38 women with a percentage of 88.4% (Verawaty & Widiastuti, 2020). In this study, male respondents were the most, because the majority of students of SMA Colombo Sleman D.I Yogyakarta were male.

2. Students' Anxiety Levels Before Being Given Treatment

Based on the table above from the total number of respondents as many as 75 students, with details of 7 students with low anxiety levels (9%), 44 students with moderate anxiety levels (59%), the remaining 24 students with high anxiety levels (32%).

Previous research conducted on grade XII students of SMA Negeri 1 Raman Utara with 78 respondents, as many as 48 respondents experienced moderate anxiety with a percentage of 61.5%, 20 respondents were found to have a high level of anxiety with a percentage of 25.6%, and the last 10 respondents were found to have a low level of anxiety with a percentage of 12.8% (Pebriyani, et al., 2019).

As a result of previous research, the average level of anxiety of students is in the moderate category. There is a similarity between the results of previous research and current research, that the level of anxiety of students when memorizing is dominated by moderate anxiety.

Anxiety is an unpleasant emotional state that involves physical sensations as well as alerting a person to impending danger. Individuals who experience mild anxiety may be motivated to generate creativity. At moderate levels of anxiety, individuals experience a decrease in the perceptual field in their environment, focusing only on the essentials and ignoring others. At high levels of anxiety, the individual's perception widens and tends to focus on small details and ignore other things (Verawaty & Widiastuti, 2020). The factor that causes anxiety in students when facing exams is the assumption that the exam they will face is difficult, and they cannot complete the exam properly (Idriani & Idris, 2019).

3. Anxiety Levels After Being Given Treatment

Previous research conducted by (Muticara, et al., 2021) with class XII totaling 30 students obtained a result of 0.001 which means less than 0.05. The difference between the previous research and the one conducted by the researcher lies in the independent variable. In this study, the independent variable used is Journaling Technique.

The results obtained by the researcher in the table above stated that $P = 0.000$ which means less than 0.05. The results can be said that *Journaling Techniques* have an effect on lowering the anxiety level of grade XI students when facing exams.

4. The Effect of Journaling Techniques in Lowering Student Anxiety Levels

The influence of *journaling* techniques in reducing anxiety levels in students can be seen from the average results between *pre-test* and *post-test*. The

average score obtained during the *pre-test* was 96.58 and the score obtained during the *post-test* was 82.33, from the average score it can be seen that there was a decrease in score.

This study is also strengthened by the results of the *bivariate* test using an *independent sample test*, namely $p = 0.000 (<0.05)$, then H_a is accepted and H_o is rejected. The P value results mean that there is an influence of Journaling Techniques in reducing students' anxiety when facing exams.

Thus, the results of this study are suggested to apply *Journaling* Techniques to students. With the hope that *Journaling* activities can overcome various pressures felt in the learning process.

CONCLUSION

The number of respondents was 75 students. There were 29 female students (39%) and 46 male students (61%). With the category of low anxiety 7 students (9%), moderate anxiety 44 students (59%) and high anxiety 24 students (32%). The treatment was only given to students who had high anxiety, which amounted to 24 students. The *mean* or average value of the *pre* and *post* anxiety levels indicates a decrease in anxiety levels. The mean value of pre-intervention was 96.58 and the *mean value* of post-intervention was 82.33, there was a decrease of 14.25. The mean value was strengthened by the results of the *independent test* obtained $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, then H_a was accepted and H_o was rejected, meaning that there was an influence of Journaling Techniques in reducing the level of anxiety when facing the exam in grade XI students of SMA Colombo Sleman D.I Yogyakarta.

Overall, the results suggest that journaling therapy can be an effective means of reducing anxiety, but it needs to be accompanied by other interventions for more optimal outcomes.

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