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## Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) Improves Psychological Well-Being of New Female Students in an Islamic Boarding School

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Psychological well-being is an important component of mental health that indicates an individual's ability to function optimally in daily life, have life satisfaction, and be able to face stress and life challenges adaptively. New students at Islamic boarding schools are in a transition period that is vulnerable to psychological well-being disorders due to the demands of environmental adaptation, changes in lifestyle, and academic and social pressures. **Objective:** The general objective of this study is to explain the effect of SEFT therapy on the level of Psychological Well Being of new students at Islamic boarding schools. **Method:** The research design was a quasi-experimental pre-post test without control. With a sample of 54 female students who had just entered Al-Hadi Islamic boarding school, spesific Annur boarding house. Research instrument questionnaire for Ryff psychological well-being. **Results:** The Paired Sample T-Test statistical test obtained a  $p$  value = 0.000 ( $p$  sign <0.05), meaning that there is an effect of SEFT therapy on improving psychological well-being. **Conclusion:** With this background, this study aims to determine the effect of SEFT therapy on the level of psychological well-being in new students at Islamic Boarding Schools, so that the results of the study are expected to provide scientific contributions to holistic nursing practice and an understanding of strategies for improving mental health among students.

**Keywords:** SEFT therapy; psychological well-being; new students; Islamic boarding schools

### Background

Psychological well-being is not just freedom from mental disorders, but is a richer and more complex condition. In psychological well-being there is a combination of positive feelings and the ability to function effectively in various aspects of life. Psychological well-being is closely related to an individual's psychological ability to deal with what happens in their life. Individuals who are psychologically able to deal with it well can be said to be someone who is psychologically prosperous (1). New students at Islamic boarding schools are in a transitional period that makes them vulnerable to psychological well-being problems due to the demands of adapting to their environment, changing lifestyles, and academic and social pressures. This condition is characterized by anxiety, stress, sleep disturbances, feelings of homesickness, and difficulty adjusting to the rules and culture of the Islamic boarding school. Poor psychological well-being can lead to individuals not experiencing various positive aspects of their lives, such as adequate interaction, dependency, a lack of direction in life, and so on. (2). If this condition of low psychological well-being is not treated immediately, it can have an impact on decreasing motivation to learn, disrupting social relationships, and increasing the risk of mental health disorders in new students.

Based on initial observations carried out at the Al-Hadi Islamic Boarding School, Asrama Annur, researchers found that new students in the age range of 12–14 years often experienced difficulties in the process of adapting to the Islamic boarding school environment. These adaptation difficulties are shown through the emergence of feelings of longing for family, difficulty following a busy schedule of learning and religious activities, as well as emotional stress due to significant changes in lifestyle compared to life before entering Islamic boarding school.

The psychological well-being of new students is an important aspect that needs to be considered because it relates to the individual's ability to manage psychological stress, adapt to the Islamic boarding school environment, and maintain motivation in participating in educational and religious activities. Psychological well-being conditions that are less than optimal in new students can be characterized by the emergence of feelings of depression, anxiety, emotional tension, sleep disturbances, and decreased motivation and social involvement, which have the potential to influence the adaptation process and overall mental well-being of students.

In community nursing and mental health practice, non-pharmacological interventional approaches play a crucial role in supporting individuals' psychological well-being. One emerging alternative approach is the Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT). Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) therapy is a form of non-pharmacological complementary therapy that combines energy psychology techniques with a spiritual approach. SEFT was developed as a method to help individuals overcome emotional, psychological, and stress problems through the stimulation of the body's energy points, accompanied by affirmations and prayer. SEFT is a complementary therapy technique that combines spiritual aspects with nerve point stimulation techniques through tapping, accompanied by prayer or other spiritual elements to help relieve emotional stress and improve psychological well-being (3).

SEFT is a psychological therapy initially designed to complement existing psychotherapy tools. SEFT therapy combines the body's energy system (energy medicine) with spiritual therapy using tapping at specific points. The SEFT approach paradigm refers to its introduction in Energy Psychology, which states that the cause of all negative emotions is a disruption of the body's energy system (4). So with SEFT therapy, it can help new students at the Al-Hadi Asrama Annur Islamic Boarding School improve their psychological well-being so that they can adapt well while studying at the Islamic boarding school.

## Method

This study used a quasi-experimental design with a pre-post test without a control group. The sample size in this study was 54 new students at the Al-Hadi Asrama Annur Islamic boarding school, taken by accidental sampling with the criteria of 12–14 years old, often expressing longing for family, difficulty following a busy learning schedule and religious activities. Researchers provided SEFT therapy, evaluated their psychological well-being before and after the therapy, with an 18-item questionnaire instrument for Ryff psychological well-being (5). Data analysis used a Paired Sample T-Test.

## Result

Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) therapy is a complementary approach that integrates tapping, emotional focus, affirmations, and spiritual components to help individuals manage negative emotions and psychological distress. Recent empirical research has shown that SEFT is effective in improving psychological well-being, with individuals receiving SEFT interventions experiencing improved psychological well-being scores compared to pre-intervention or non-treatment groups. SEFT interventions have also been reported to help reduce anxiety and negative emotions in various groups of subjects, which are integral to psychological well-being.

**Table 1. Respondent Characteristics**

| Characteristics                                      | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>Age</b>                                           |               |                |
| 12 years old                                         | 5             | 9%             |
| 13 years old                                         | 29            | 54%            |
| 14 years old                                         | 20            | 37%            |
| <b>Length of Stay at the Islamic Boarding School</b> |               |                |
| < 1 years                                            | 37            | 69%            |
| 1 years                                              | 17            | 31%            |

Based on the characteristics of the respondents, the majority of respondents were 13 years old, namely 29 respondents (54%), and the length of stay at the Islamic boarding school was mostly <1 year, namely 37 respondents (69%)

**Table 2. Psychological Well-Being Data before and after SEFT intervention**

| Category     | Before Intervention |             | After Intervention |             |
|--------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|
|              | n                   | %           | N                  | %           |
| High         | 0                   | 0%          | 10                 | 19%         |
| Medium       | 49                  | 91%         | 44                 | 81%         |
| Low          | 5                   | 9%          | 0                  | 0%          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>54</b>           | <b>100%</b> | <b>54</b>          | <b>100%</b> |

| Category                     | <u>Before Intervention</u> |   | <u>After Intervention</u> |   |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|---|---------------------------|---|
|                              | n                          | % | N                         | % |
| Mean                         | 56.83                      |   | 71.16                     |   |
| Std. Deviation               | 6.68                       |   | 8.97                      |   |
| Paired Sample T-Test = 0,000 |                            |   |                           |   |

Based on table 2, it shows that before being given Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique therapy, almost all of them were included in the moderate category, namely 49 people (91%) and after therapy it decreased by 10% to 81%. The average (mean) level of psychological well-being before being given Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique therapy intervention was 56.83, while the average (mean) after being given Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique therapy intervention was 71.16. The results of the Paired Sample T-Test statistical test obtained a value of  $p$  value = 0.000 ( $p$  sign <0.05), meaning that there is an effect of SEFT therapy on improving the psychological well-being of new students at Islamic boarding schools after being given intervention.

## Discussion

Before receiving Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique therapy, almost all respondents (49 people, 91%) had moderate psychological well-being. Adolescence is a turbulent period filled with conflict and mood swings. Conflict in adolescence arises from the inability of adolescents to face and resolve their problems, which can have a negative impact on them (6). Entering a boarding school environment or new female students brings significant changes to their lives. This adaptation process encompasses not only physical aspects but also psychological aspects, impacting their psychological well-being. Several important factors can influence this.

Several factors related to the psychological well-being of new students at Islamic boarding schools include self-efficacy, social support, and religiosity. Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in new students' adjustment, their success or failure in adapting to their environment. Adaptability can influence new students' psychological well-being (7). Social support is the behavior of others or groups that provides attention, pleasure, appreciation, or assistance. The environment that provides social support is peers, family, or community members. Social support can take the form of physical or psychological support from others, resulting in feelings of being loved, cared for, and valued as part of a social group for the individual receiving the support. A study found a significant positive relationship between peer social support and subjective well-being in 11th-grade students at Senior High School 9 Jakarta. An individual who receives social support can feel loved, calm, comfortable, cared for, and can foster self-confidence and competence. Receiving social support has a positive impact on individuals who receive social support from those around them, including peers. Individuals who are active in socializing can improve their subjective well-being (8). In addition to social support, the level of religiosity also plays a significant role in improving psychological well-being. The results of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between social support and religiosity with psychological well-being in Islamic boarding school students with an effective contribution of 24.2%. The second hypothesis test found that there was a significant positive relationship between the social support variable and psychological well-being, indicated by  $rx1y = 0.448$  with a significance level of 0.000 ( $p$  0.05), so the second hypothesis was accepted. Meanwhile, the third hypothesis test obtained a score of  $rx2y = 0.364$  with a significance level of 0.000 ( $p$  0.05), meaning that there was a significant positive relationship between religiosity and psychological well-being (9). In addition to self-efficacy, social support, and spirituality, mindfulness is also related to psychological well-being. Mindfulness is a form of attentive awareness of the present moment, without judging or rejecting existing experiences. In Islamic boarding schools, dormitory chaperones, peers, and seniors can assist in developing the mindfulness of new students. A literature review shows that mindfulness training is effective in reducing psychological distress in Generation Z through three stages: self-talk, visual imagery, and deep breathing. Mindfulness training works by focusing on the present moment, increasing self-awareness, and reducing reactivity to negative thoughts and emotions, thereby improving psychological well-being (10). Awareness-based approaches, including mindfulness, are gaining increasing importance in improving adaptation to new conditions and life transformation (11). Furthermore, parental attachment and an individual's belief in self-control (locus of control) are thought to play a role in shaping the psychological well-being of students (12).

The results of this study indicate that, before being given Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique therapy, almost all of them were included in the moderate category, namely 49 people (91%) and after

therapy it decreased by 10% to 81%. The average (mean) level of psychological well-being before being given Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique therapy intervention was 56.83, while the average (mean) after being given Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique therapy intervention was 71.16. The results of the Paired Sample T-Test statistical test obtained a value of  $p$  value = 0.000 ( $p$  sign <0.05), meaning that there is an effect of SEFT therapy on improving the psychological well-being of new students at Islamic boarding schools after being given intervention. The results of other studies show the effect of Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) therapy on improving student well-being in final year students at Bhayangkara University, Jakarta Raya. From the therapy process carried out in groups, each subject has different and diverse problems related to their well-being as students. The students experienced various problems, including the burden of parents demanding they graduate quickly, the boredom of working on their thesis, changes in their habits, the high difficulty of working on their thesis, the difficulty of time management, and the difficulty of contacting their supervisors. After undergoing SEFT therapy, they felt better able to control their emotions and themselves when they felt bored and angry about their thesis. (13). Final-semester undergraduate students are on average 21-23 years old. In this study, the average age of respondents was 12-14, falling into early and middle adolescence. Adolescents are beginning to assert their freedom and right to express their own opinions. Inevitably, this can create tension and conflict, and can alienate adolescents from their families. Adolescents are more easily influenced by their peers than when they were children. This means that parental influence is weakening (14). Therefore, it is crucial for Islamic boarding school administrators to provide motivation so new students can adapt quickly. SEFT is an alternative to help new students adapt to their environment and prevent them from falling into low psychological well-being.

Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) therapy is a relaxation technique that combines tapping on the body's meridian points with affirmations and spiritual elements. SEFT has been shown to help reduce stress and anxiety, and improve emotional balance. By regulating emotions and increasing a sense of calm, SEFT has the potential to increase adolescent resilience. SEFT therapy is delivered through phone setup, tune-in, and tapping. The results of a study on 52 students aged 15-18 at SMK N 3 Kudus were deemed effective as a psychological therapy (15). Meanwhile, the results of research on students at SMAN 8 Tasikmalaya, with the implementation method of the activity began with an educational session on anxiety and its impact on student learning activities for approximately 45 minutes. Next, a demonstration and direct practice of SEFT therapy was carried out for approximately 90 minutes which included identifying negative emotions, affirming self-acceptance, and tapping techniques on the body's energy points. Students who participated in the therapy showed a decrease in physical tension, more regular breathing, and changes in emotions to become calmer and more comfortable. Students also reported a decrease in excessive worry and increased self-confidence in facing learning activities (16). In this study, the duration of SEFT therapy assistance was approximately 90 minutes, which students were then advised to do themselves every day and then evaluate.

Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) therapy has a significant impact on psychological well-being. Based on the results of a literature review, Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) therapy can have a positive and quite good impact on psychology because it increases feelings of optimism, gratitude, purpose, resilience, positive affect, and happiness, involving spiritual, psychological, and physical elements (17). SEFT has been proven to be effective as an intervention technique to improve the emotional stability of students at Muhammadiyah Islamic Junior High School in Bandar Pacitan and can be integrated into character development programs in educational environments (18). This could be a consideration for the management of the Islamic boarding school where this research took place, in implementing the SEFT method as an effort to stabilize the emotions of its students.

Living in an Islamic boarding school means being far from parents, siblings, and friends from before entering the school. As new students, respondents need to adapt to new friends who have a culture different from their home environment. Furthermore, regulations that limit students' freedom can lead to feelings of loneliness. Adolescents living in Child Welfare Institutions have similar living conditions to students in Islamic boarding schools. Research conducted on adolescents in child welfare institutions shows a difference in levels of loneliness between the group of adolescents receiving SEFT therapy and the group not receiving SEFT therapy. Therefore, it can be concluded that SEFT is also effective in addressing loneliness in adolescents (19). In general, SEFT can be seen as a holistic therapy that supports improving the mental well-being of adolescents and has the potential to be integrated into spiritual-based nursing practice and is very suitable for implementation in Islamic boarding schools (20).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This study shows that Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) therapy has an impact on the psychological well-being of new students at Al Hadi Islamic Boarding School. SEFT therapy helps students manage their emotions, reduce psychological stress, and improve their ability to adapt to the Islamic boarding school environment. Through a combination of spiritual aspects, affirmations, and tapping techniques, SEFT therapy can be an effective non-pharmacological intervention to support the mental health and well-being of new students.

Based on the study's findings, SEFT therapy can be considered as a psychological support program for new students in the process of adapting to the Islamic boarding school environment. Future research is expected to expand the study with a larger number of respondents, a longer intervention period, and the inclusion of other variables that can influence psychological well-being to obtain more comprehensive results.

## Ethical Consideration and Competing Interest

In conducting this research, the researcher has applied the principles of research ethics, including respect for respondents' rights, data confidentiality, benefits, and fairness. All respondents received an explanation of the research objectives, benefits, and procedures before participating in the study and provided informed consent to participate. Respondents' identities were kept confidential, and all data obtained were used solely for research purposes. This research was also conducted in accordance with applicable research ethics procedures and provisions. There are no conflicts of interest related to the publication of this article.

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