

## Effectiveness of Islamic Counseling with Dhikr in Reducing Public Speaking Anxiety among Eighth-Grade Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to test the effectiveness of Islamic counseling with dhikr in reducing public speaking anxiety among eighth-grade students of IT An-Nafis Private Junior High School. The problem of public speaking anxiety experienced by students has the potential to disrupt their learning process and speaking skills development, necessitating appropriate intervention. This research employs a quantitative method with a one-group pretest-posttest pre-experimental design. The sample consists of eight students with high anxiety levels selected purposively from a population of 47 eighth-grade students. The intervention was conducted through four sessions of Islamic counseling that integrated dhikr. Data analysis using the Wilcoxon test with SPSS version 30 showed significantly decreased anxiety levels ( $p = 0.012$ ). Before the intervention, all students (100%) experienced high anxiety, while after the intervention, 75% were in the low anxiety category and 25% in the moderate category. These findings indicate that Islamic counseling with dhikr is effective as a spiritual-psychological approach to reducing anxiety in public speaking among eighth-grade students.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is fundamental to developing quality human resources to face future challenges [1]. Schools as formal institutions play a crucial role in the learning process, which aims not only to enhance knowledge but also to develop students' communication skills and self-confidence. An effective learning requires dynamic interaction between teachers and students, where communication becomes a key element in expressing ideas, opinions, and thoughts clearly and persuasively [2].

However, the reality in the field shows that many students struggle to understand learning material due to a lack of effective communication and active participation during class discussions [3]. This leads to a low ability to speak in public, which is often

accompanied by feelings of anxiety and fear [4]. Public speaking anxiety is not just a momentary nervous reaction, but a significant psychological issue that can hinder the learning process and the overall well-being of students [5].

In a broad sense, dhikr encompasses all forms of remembrance of Allah SWT, formed outwardly and inwardly [6]. Dhikr is not only limited to the utterance of certain words or phrases, but also encompasses all actions and states of the heart, specifically directed towards Allah SWT, following His commands and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. In other words, dhikr involves a full awareness of Allah's presence in every aspect of life, whether through worship, prayer, or the control of thoughts and feelings to remain connected to Him [7].

Psychologically, anxiety is a feeling of fear that arises in response to perceived threats, affecting the physical and mental aspects of an individual [2]. In the context of public speaking, this anxiety is characterized by feelings of nervousness, discomfort, and physiological reactions that hinder the ability to communicate the message effectively [6]. The initial survey results at An-Nafis Private IT Middle School confirmed that several students experience anxiety when asked to speak or present material in front of the class. Some students even refuse to participate due to fear of making mistakes, being mocked, or lacking self-confidence.

To address this issue, counseling becomes one form of intervention that can help students manage anxiety when speaking in public. The Islamic counseling approach that integrates Islamic values offers a meaningful alternative, as it targets not only psychological solutions but also spiritual ones [8]. One method in Islamic counseling is dhikr (remembrance of Allah SWT), which can psychologically provide tranquility and a sense of peace through awareness of the presence of Allah SWT in every situation [4]. This is following the word of Allah SWT in QS. Ar-Ra'd verse 28: "Indeed, it is by the remembrance of Allah that hearts find tranquility."

Anxiety when speaking in public is a common psychological barrier experienced by students, especially during adolescence. Previous research has extensively discussed various psychological interventions and counseling to address this anxiety, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), relaxation, and communication techniques [9]. However, studies on applying the Islamic counseling approach, especially through the dhikr method, are still very limited and have not been extensively researched quantitatively in the context of primary and secondary education.

The study by Hartini et al. has affirmed the benefits of dhikr in providing inner peace and reducing anxiety in general [10]. However, the specific focus on the influence of dhikr as an intervention in reducing public speaking anxiety among junior high school students has not been widely studied empirically. Anwar's research emphasizes the management of general anxiety without specializing in the context of speaking in front of the class [11]. Meanwhile, existing studies are generally case studies or narrative-based, thus providing less strong quantitative evidence regarding the effectiveness of this intervention.

In addition, the cultural and religious context of Indonesia, which is predominantly Muslim, provides a unique opportunity to integrate Islamic counseling approaches with dhikr methods as a relevant and accepted alternative psychosocial intervention for students

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[12]. However, to this day, there is still a lack of empirical data regarding the effectiveness of these methods in elementary and secondary school environments, particularly at the IT An-Nafis Private Junior High School.

Therefore, this research aims to fill that gap by quantitatively measuring the effectiveness of Islamic counseling using dhikr in reducing public speaking anxiety among eighth-grade students. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the dhikr method as a measurable form of Islamic counseling intervention. This empirical study was conducted in a junior high school context with distinct cultural and Islamic values, namely An-Nafis Private IT Junior High School. The effectiveness measurement by comparing anxiety levels before and after the intervention provides concrete evidence regarding the impact of dhikr on counseling practices. Thus, this study contributes theoretically to the development of the Islamic counseling approach and has practical implications for guidance counselors and educators in addressing public speaking anxiety, often a major barrier in the learning process.

## 2. METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with a One-Group Pretest-Posttest type pre-experimental research design [13]. This design involves providing an initial measurement (pre-test) to respondents, followed by an intervention, and then a re-measurement (post-test) to assess changes after the treatment is given. The form of the design used can be described as follows:

$$O_1 \quad X \quad O_2$$

Explanation:

$O_1$  = Pre-test (measurement of public speaking anxiety before the provision of Islamic counseling with dhikr).

$X$  = Islamic counseling with the dhikr method.

$O_2$  = Post-test (measurement of public speaking anxiety after counseling provision).

This research was conducted at the An-Nafis IT Private Junior High School, which has a population of all eighth-grade students, totaling 47. The research sample consisted of 8 students who experienced a high level of anxiety in public speaking, with counseling services provided in a group format. The sampling was conducted using purposive sampling based on the criterion of very high anxiety levels. Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire that measures public speaking anxiety based on three aspects, according to Rogers, namely physical, cognitive, and affective aspects [14]. Two experts assessed this questionnaire for validity and reliability before using it in the research.

Respondents answered the questionnaire using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4, which consists of the options: very appropriate (SS), appropriate (S), not appropriate (TS), and very inappropriate (STS). This scale was chosen to avoid neutral responses from the respondents. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 30 with the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test [15]. This test compares public speaking anxiety scores before and after the intervention. The selection of this test is based on the characteristics of the data that are not normally distributed and a sample size of less than 30 respondents, making it suitable for testing the effectiveness of Islamic counseling using the dhikr method in reducing public

speaking anxiety. In conducting the research, ethical aspects are also taken into account by obtaining written consent from the students and their parents/guardians as a form of permission and support for participation in this research.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Results

This research was conducted at the IT An-Nafis Private Middle School from June 11 to June 21, 2025. The main focus of the study is to measure the effectiveness of Islamic counseling with the dhikr method in reducing public speaking anxiety levels among eighth-grade students. Data collection was carried out by using an instrument in the form of a questionnaire that has undergone validation and reliability testing, using the Likert scale as a measurement tool to assess the level of public speaking anxiety. This study employed a pre-experimental design with one sample group that was given a pre-test, followed by the provision of Islamic counseling intervention using dhikr, and concluded with a post-test measurement on the same group.

The results of the pre-test on the scale of public speaking anxiety among students are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Pre-test

Category	Interval	Frequency	%
High	63–84	8	100
Medium	41–62	0	0
Low	21–40	0	0
Total		8	100

Based on the analysis results of the pre-test data presented in Table 1, it is evident that all respondents, namely eight students, fall into the category of high public speaking anxiety, with a percentage of 100%. The anxiety scores of the students ranged from 63 to 84, indicating that the level of anxiety they experienced is classified as high. This finding suggests that before the intervention was provided, all students faced significant difficulties in managing anxiety when speaking in public.

Following this condition, this study provides Islamic counseling services using a group dzikir technique approach. The intervention was carried out in six sessions, where students received guidance through dzikir practices directly led by qualified counseling and guidance personnel. This approach is expected to help students reduce their anxiety levels through spiritual reinforcement and inner peace obtained from dzikir. The post-test results on the public speaking anxiety scale for students are as follows.

Based on the results of the post-test data analysis presented in Table 2, there is a significant change in the level of anxiety about public speaking among students after being given an Islamic counseling intervention using the dhikr method. Out of a total of 8 students, two students (25%) fell into the moderate anxiety category, while the majority of the students, namely six students (75%), showed anxiety in the low category. No students were found in the high anxiety category in the post-test results.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Post-test

Category	Interval	Frequency	%
High	63–84	0	0
Medium	1–62	2	25
Low	21–40	6	75
Total		8	100

The frequency distribution and percentage changes indicate the effectiveness of Islamic counseling using the method of dhikr in reducing anxiety about public speaking. The decrease in the proportion of students with high anxiety to a lower level indicates an improvement in positive behavior in managing public speaking anxiety overall. These findings illustrate that intervention through dhikr can positively impact students' psychological condition in the context of public speaking.

The initial findings from this study indicate that Islamic counseling services using dhikr techniques significantly contribute to reducing anxiety in public speaking among students. However, advanced statistical analysis is required to ensure that the observed differences are not merely coincidental. Therefore, this study employs the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test with the assistance of SPSS version 30 to test the significance of the differences between pre-test and post-test scores.

Table 3. Results of the Wilcoxon Test

	Post-test - Pre-test
Z	-2,521
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0,012

The results of the Wilcoxon test presented in Table 3 show a Z value of -2.521 with a significance value (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.012. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ), it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference between public speaking anxiety scores before and after the intervention of Islamic counseling using the technique of dhikr. Thus, this counseling service is effective in reducing the level of public speaking anxiety among students.

### 3.2. Discussion

This research successfully reveals the effectiveness of Islamic counseling using the dhikr method in reducing public speaking anxiety among eighth-grade students at the IT An-Nafis Private Junior High School. The initial condition, where all respondents experienced high anxiety, provides a real picture of the need for appropriate interventions to address a fairly common psychological issue among high school adolescents. The intervention, in the form of group counseling using the dhikr technique applied over six sessions, yielded significant results in the form of a noticeable decrease in anxiety levels, which is statistically supported by the Wilcoxon test with  $p < 0.05$ .

This finding is consistent with the study by Pusvitasari & Jayanti, which emphasizes that anxiety, as a response to life and environmental pressures, requires a holistic approach, including spiritual aspects [16]. Dhikr, as a form of remembrance and spiritual approach to

Allah SWT, serves as an internal mechanism that provides inner peace and reduces psychological burdens, thus becoming an effective tool in coping with anxiety. This is reinforced by Amalia, Sutoyo, and Mulikah, who show that dhikr therapy can reduce academic anxiety, illustrating that this technique is relevant in the context of education and the academic pressure experienced by students [17].

The approach of dhikr combined with physical relaxation practices, as demonstrated by the research of Alawiyah et al., provides dual effects: physical calm through breathing techniques and spiritual calm through dhikr [18]. This combination is very effective in reducing the anxiety levels experienced by students, consistent with the results of this study, which used a group approach so that students could feel social support and spiritual reinforcement together. The research by Dyah Pitaloka, Bharata, and Anwar also shows that dhikr functions as a cognitive restructuring tool that helps students change negative thought patterns into positive ones, increasing their focus on spiritual aspects that support self-confidence and calmness when speaking in public [19].

Furthermore, A'yun demonstrated that the consistent practice of dhikr can improve mental health conditions and reduce psychological stress, emphasizing the role of dhikr as a routine practice that supports the emotional and psychological stability of students [20]. These findings are in line with Ashani's research, which highlights the effects of dhikr relaxation in enhancing emotional stability and significantly reducing anxiety [5].

Naor, Sitasari, and Safitri theoretically explain how conscious recognition of the presence of Allah SWT through dhikr brings a calming psychological effect, which is supported by empirical evidence in this study [21]. Khotimah & Nurjannah also reported that the majority of adolescents participating in dhikr therapy showed positive psychological changes, including an anxiety reduction in anxiety, which reinforces the relevance of dhikr as an effective intervention for the adolescent age group [22].

In addition, the study by Muzaki & Saputra strengthens the use of dhikr in a broader context, including public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where dhikr has been shown to provide tranquility and reduce anxiety in situations of stress and uncertainty [8]. This indicates that dhikr is not only effective in addressing academic or social anxiety but also serves as an adaptive spiritual therapy in various stressful situations. This research shows that Islamic counseling using the dhikr method effectively reduces public speaking anxiety among eighth-grade students at IT An-Nafis Private Middle School. The significant results of this anxiety reduction suggest that a spiritual approach through dhikr can be an appropriate intervention to help students manage fear and anxiety in the context of academics that require public communication skills.

Interestingly, compared to several studies discussing interventions in other fields, there are striking differences in relevance and focus. For instance, a study by Rengganawati exploring stress management through a positive psychology approach in adult employees shows the effectiveness of the intervention in the work context. However, it does not address aspects of public speaking anxiety or the role of spirituality [23]. Similarly, the research by Syahdiah et al., which explores music therapy to reduce stress in elderly patients, provides important insights into relaxation techniques. However, the age context and type of

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intervention are very different from this study, making the results less applicable directly to school adolescents facing academic anxiety [24].

In addition, the study by Fauzan & Jamilah on the influence of digital technology usage on student learning motivation provides an overview of the factors that affect academic achievement. However, it does not discuss public speaking anxiety or spiritually-based counseling interventions [25]. This emphasizes that although the findings are valuable, they are less accurate for strengthening the argument in handling speaking anxiety through dhikr. This comparison reinforces that dhikr-based interventions have unique characteristics that integrate spiritual, psychological, and social aspects holistically, something that cannot be replaced by non-spiritual interventions or those with different focuses in context and objectives. Therefore, researchers and educational practitioners must consider the context and specific psychological issues when selecting appropriate interventions.

Overall, the results of this study reinforce the view that Islamic counseling based on dhikr is an intervention that not only relies on spiritual aspects but also has a significant impact on students' psychological well-being. The significant decrease in anxiety scores indicates that dhikr can bridge the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of students in overcoming the fear of public speaking. Group intervention also adds a social dimension that can strengthen students' motivation and sense of security in facing public communication challenges.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations, especially regarding pre-experimental design that did not include a control group, and the relatively small sample size. Therefore, further research using experimental design with a larger sample and the integration of dhikr methods with other counseling techniques, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) or mindfulness, can provide a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the mechanisms and effectiveness of dhikr as a psychosocial intervention in the educational realm.

Future research could also broaden its focus on various other variables such as increased self-confidence, learning motivation, and overall mental well-being, as well as reviewing the long-term impacts of dhikr therapy to ensure the sustainability of its benefits. Thus, this research opens new horizons in integrating Islamic approaches and modern psychology that could become a model for holistic intervention in schools and the wider community.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Islamic counseling using the dhikr method has proven effective in reducing anxiety about public speaking among students. Before the intervention, students experienced a high level of anxiety, marked by the emergence of psychological and physical symptoms that disrupted their comfort when speaking in public. After participating in a series of structured counseling sessions using dhikr techniques, there was a positive change in the emotional condition of the students, characterized by increased calmness, self-confidence, and their ability to manage anxiety. This occurred because dhikr provides a calming and relaxing effect. These results are supported by various previous studies that show dhikr can help individuals achieve inner peace, reduce tension, and enhance focus and emotional stability.

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Nevertheless, this study has limitations, including a small sample size, being conducted at just one school location, and a relatively short intervention duration. Therefore, future research needs to involve a larger sample, diverse school contexts, and a longer intervention period to ensure the long-term effectiveness of dzikir-based counseling. Schools may consider implementing dzikir-based counseling services as an alternative intervention to help students manage anxiety, particularly in the context of public speaking. The integration of this spiritual approach also has the potential to be combined with other counseling methods, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) or mindfulness techniques, to provide a more comprehensive and holistic approach in supporting students' mental health.

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