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Original Research

Mindfulness and SEFT Training for Anxiety and Stress Management in Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

Background: *Nursing students preparing for the national nursing competency examination may experience anxiety and stress. Mindfulness and Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) are practical approaches that can be introduced to support psychological well-being. This community service programme aimed to provide mindfulness and SEFT training to nursing students preparing for the national competency examination and evaluate changes in their anxiety and stress scores.*

Methods : *The programme was conducted online via Zoom at Universitas Harapan Bangsa. Thirty-six nursing students participated in three training sessions over one week, each lasting 45 minutes. The sessions covered mindful breathing, body scanning, and SEFT tapping accompanied by spiritual affirmations. Anxiety and stress were assessed before and after the programme using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (DASS-21). Pre-test and post-test scores were analysed using paired-samples t-tests.*

Results: *The mean anxiety score decreased from 12.56 (SD 8.08) before training to 10.89 (SD 7.19) after training, but the difference was not statistically significant (p = 0.149). The mean stress score decreased from 15.06 (SD 9.56) to 13.56 (SD 7.44), with no statistically significant difference (p = 0.201).*

Conclusion: *Mindfulness and SEFT training provided nursing students with practical techniques for managing anxiety and stress during competency examination preparation. Although mean anxiety and stress scores decreased after the programme, the changes were not statistically significant. Further evaluation is needed to assess the programme's potential benefits.*

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INTRODUCTION

Nursing students preparing for the National Nursing Competency Examination may experience psychological pressure related to examination expectations, fear of failure, and uncertainty about their results. Anxiety and stress during this period may affect concentration, emotional well-being, and examination readiness. Providing psychological support alongside academic preparation is therefore important in nursing education.

Mindfulness is an approach that encourages individuals to focus attention on present-moment experiences. Mindfulness-based interventions have been studied for their potential benefits in psychological well-being and stress management (Creswell, 2017). Research

involving university nursing students has also reported improvements in perceived stress and mindfulness following a mindfulness-based intervention (Liu et al., 2024). In addition, emotional freedom technique (EFT) has been explored as an approach to stress management among nursing students (Hendricks-Patel & Harvey, 2025). Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT), which incorporates spiritual affirmations, has also been examined in relation to anxiety among students preparing for competency examinations (Ardianty et al., 2024).

Despite these developments, nursing students may need structured opportunities to learn and practise practical self-management techniques during examination preparation. Integrating mindful breathing, body scanning, and SEFT tapping with spiritual affirmations into a training programme may provide students with accessible strategies for managing emotional tension. Delivering the programme online can also facilitate participation when face-to-face activities are difficult to arrange.

This community service programme at Universitas Harapan Bangsa aimed to provide mindfulness and SEFT training to nursing students preparing for the National Nursing Competency Examination. The programme was evaluated by comparing participants' anxiety and stress scores before and after training using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (DASS-21). The activity was intended to provide practical self-management skills and inform the development of psychological preparation activities for future nursing competency examination candidates.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This community service programme was conducted at Universitas Harapan Bangsa, Indonesia, to support nursing students preparing for the National Nursing Competency Examination (UKOM). The programme was delivered online through Zoom to accommodate participants' schedules and facilitate participation.

Participants

The programme involved 36 nursing students preparing for the National Nursing Competency Examination. All participants attended three training sessions and completed pre-test and post-test assessments. Participant records were matched using email addresses. Minor differences in email spelling were treated as typographical variations after the records were confirmed to belong to the same participant.

Implementation of the Programme

The programme consisted of three training sessions delivered over one week, with each session lasting approximately 45 minutes. The training integrated mindfulness practices and Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT). Mindfulness activities included mindful breathing and body scanning to help participants focus on present-moment experiences and recognize physical and emotional responses. SEFT activities involved tapping on selected body points accompanied by spiritual affirmations. Participants were guided to practise these techniques as practical strategies for managing emotional tension during competency examination preparation.

Evaluation Instruments and Data Collection

Anxiety and stress were assessed before and after the programme using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (DASS-21). The instrument consists of 21 items divided into three subscales: depression, anxiety, and stress, with seven items in each subscale (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The Indonesian version of DASS-21 has been evaluated for its psychometric properties in Indonesian populations (Fitria et al., 2021; Hakim & Aristawati, 2023). The evaluation focused on anxiety and stress scores in accordance with the programme objectives. Pre-test and post-test responses were matched for each participant before analysis.

RESULTS

A total of 36 nursing students participated in the mindfulness and Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) training and completed pre-test and post-test assessments. Changes in anxiety and stress scores were evaluated by comparing the scores before and after the programme. As shown in Table 1, the mean anxiety score decreased from 12.56 (SD = 8.08) before the training to 10.89 (SD = 7.19) after the training. The mean stress score also decreased, from 15.06 (SD = 9.56) to 13.56 (SD = 7.44). However, paired-samples t-tests indicated that neither the change in anxiety scores (p = 0.149) nor the change in stress scores (p = 0.201) was statistically significant.

These findings indicate a descriptive decrease in the mean anxiety and stress scores following the programme, although the observed changes did not reach statistical significance.

Table 1. Comparison of anxiety and stress scores before and after the training (n = 36)

Subscale	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Mean change	p-value
Anxiety	12.56 (8.08)	10.89 (7.19)	−1.67	0.149
Stress	15.06 (9.56)	13.56 (7.44)	−1.50	0.201

Note. Mean change was calculated as the post-test mean minus the pre-test mean. Negative values indicate lower scores after training. Neither change was statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

DISCUSSION

The results of this community service programme showed a decrease in the mean anxiety and stress scores among nursing students after participating in mindfulness and Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) training. The mean anxiety score decreased from 12.56 (SD = 8.08) before the programme to 10.89 (SD = 7.19) after the programme, while the mean stress score decreased from 15.06 (SD = 9.56) to 13.56 (SD = 7.44). However, these changes were not statistically significant (anxiety, p = .149; stress, p = .201). Therefore, the findings indicate a descriptive improvement in participants' scores but do not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that the programme significantly reduced anxiety or stress.

These findings should be interpreted in the context of previous research on mindfulness interventions among nursing students. Chen et al. (2021), in a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials, reported that mindfulness-based interventions were associated with significant reductions in anxiety, stress, and depression among nursing students. Similarly, Bultas et al. (2021) evaluated a brief mindfulness intervention before examinations and found decreased feelings of helplessness and anxiety among students in the intervention group. Their findings suggest that mindfulness activities can be incorporated into nursing education as a practical option for supporting students who experience examination-related distress.

Evidence from online interventions is also relevant to the present programme. Franco (2022) evaluated a four-week online mindfulness programme for prelicensure nursing students and reported reductions in anxiety and stress after the intervention. Holden and O'Connell (2023) likewise found significant decreases in self-reported depression, stress, and anxiety following a four-week online mindfulness meditation intervention. These studies support the potential usefulness of online mindfulness approaches in nursing education. Nevertheless, their findings should not be directly equated with the present programme because the intervention duration, study design, and evaluation conditions differed. The present programme consisted of three online sessions delivered over one week, which may have provided less time for participants to practise and consolidate mindfulness skills.

In addition to mindfulness, this programme incorporated SEFT, which combines tapping techniques with spiritual affirmations. The integration was intended to provide participants with a structured opportunity to focus their attention, regulate emotional responses, and use personally meaningful affirmations when facing examination-related concerns. Ardianty et al. (2024) examined SEFT in relation to examination anxiety among students, providing a relevant context for considering this approach in educational settings. However, because mindfulness and SEFT were delivered together in the present programme, their individual contributions cannot be distinguished. The results should therefore be interpreted as an evaluation of the combined training programme rather than evidence of the independent effects of either technique.

Several factors may help explain why the decreases in anxiety and stress scores did not reach statistical significance. First, the intervention was relatively brief, comprising three sessions of approximately 45 minutes each over one week. Second, participants may have differed in their initial levels of distress, personal circumstances, and responses to the training. Third, the programme evaluation relied on self-reported DASS-21 scores collected before and after the intervention. Without a control group, it is not possible to determine whether the observed changes resulted from the training or from other factors occurring during the same period. In addition, the evaluation did not include follow-up measurements to establish whether any changes were maintained over time.

Despite these limitations, the programme provided an opportunity for nursing students preparing for the national competency examination to learn practical strategies for managing anxiety and stress. Mindfulness exercises and SEFT techniques may be introduced as complementary self-management activities within student support programmes, while recognising that the present results do not establish their effectiveness. Future community service programmes should consider a longer intervention period, structured home practice, and follow-up evaluation. Where feasible, the use of a comparison group and a larger participant sample would also strengthen the evaluation and help determine whether changes in anxiety and stress are attributable to the intervention.

Overall, the programme demonstrated that mindfulness and SEFT training could be delivered online to nursing students preparing for the national competency examination. Although the mean anxiety and stress scores decreased after training, the changes were not statistically significant. The findings support the feasibility of implementing the programme and highlight the need for more rigorous evaluation before drawing conclusions about its effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The community service programme provided 36 nursing students preparing for the National Nursing Competency Examination with training in mindfulness and Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT). Following the three-session programme, the mean anxiety and stress scores decreased; however, the changes were not statistically significant. The programme offered practical techniques for emotional self-management during examination preparation, but further evaluation is needed to determine its potential benefits. Future programmes may incorporate continued practice and follow-up assessment to examine whether changes are maintained over time.

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