

Dzikir Psychotherapy as Therapy in Counseling for Depression: Literature Review

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ABSTRAK. This study aims to explore the effectiveness of dzikir psychotherapy in reducing depression among university students. The research method used is library research, which involves collecting relevant literature and research results related to dzikir therapy, Islamic psychotherapy, and depression. This study included 10 articles published between 2014 and 2024, which showed that dzikir psychotherapy had a significant impact on reducing depression levels. The results of the study show that dzikir therapy, especially dzikir istighfar, can significantly reduce depression levels. Dzikir functions as a form of worship that provides emotional and spiritual peace, as well as improving mental and physical well-being. This therapy not only reduces symptoms of depression but also strengthens the spiritual and emotional aspects of the individual.

Kata kunci: Depression, Dzikir, Students, Dzikir Psychotherapy, Islamic Psychotherapy Depresi

INTRODUCTION

Depression is one of the mental disorders that poses the greatest challenge to the world community today. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2023, approximately 280 million people worldwide suffer from depression, a very alarming figure that shows how widespread this mental disorder is (World Health Organization: WHO, 2023). In Indonesia, the prevalence of depression is equally significant. One in ten people in Indonesia are diagnosed with a mental disorder, with depression being one of the most common (Azizah, 2023). Given the enormous impact of this disorder on the lives of individuals, families, and communities, depression has become a very serious mental health issue that requires prompt and effective treatment.

Depression is an emotional state characterized by intense sadness, feelings of worthlessness and guilt, withdrawal from others, difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, loss of sexual desire, and loss of interest and pleasure in daily activities. It explains that depressive disorders are classified as mood disorders (DSM IV-TR, 2000). Those who are depressed exhibit low self-control, namely negative self-evaluation, low expectations of performance, a tendency to punish themselves, and a tendency to give themselves few rewards (Leitenberg et al., 1986; Banica et al., 2022).

Depression is one of the mental disorders that can be treated with various psychotherapy approaches, one of which is Islamic psychotherapy. Islamic psychotherapy is a healing technique that is preventive, curative, and rehabilitative in nature, which aims to overcome physical, mental, and spiritual problems, using an Islamic paradigm (Saifuddin, 2022). In practice, Islamic psychotherapy can take the form of pure practice based on Islamic teachings, or it can be integrative, combining contemporary psychotherapy with Islam.

Indonesia is a Muslim-majority country, which provides opportunities for Islamic psychotherapy to be implemented. This is due to the high level of public interest and religious

studies related to mental health (Saifuddin, 2022). Numerous studies on the effectiveness of Islamic psychotherapy for various mental, behavioral, and spiritual disorders, such as those by Nashori et al. (2020) and Trimulyaningsih (2017), have made Islamic psychotherapy a viable form of psychotherapy.

One form of Islamic psychotherapy that is easy to practice is dzikir therapy. Dzikir is an effort to remember Allah and is one of the forms of worship in Islam. The benefits of dzikir psychotherapy for mental disorders such as depression can be felt both psychologically and physically. Physically, it restores damaged nerves, tests the level of mental disorders, prevents and treats diseases psychologically, and cleanses the soul from evil deeds (Arham, 2016).

Based on the previous explanation, depression is a serious global mental health concern, including in Indonesia, and its high prevalence has a profound impact on individuals' quality of life. These conditions highlight the need for effective treatment approaches. Various therapeutic methods-both conventional and spiritually oriented-have been developed to address depressive symptoms. One approach that merits further attention is Islamic psychotherapy, particularly dzikir therapy.

Dzikir psychotherapy not only offers an approach that is more in line with the religious and cultural values of Indonesian society, but also provides significant benefits in helping individuals overcome feelings of anxiety, sadness, and tension, which are often the main triggers of depression. Therefore, this study explores the effectiveness of dzikir therapy on depression levels.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of dzikir therapy in reducing depression levels and to assess whether this spiritually-based approach can be an effective alternative solution in treating depression among Indonesians, particularly depression among university students. This study is expected to make an important contribution to enriching the literature on Islamic psychotherapy and to provide alternative treatments that are more suited to the needs and spiritual beliefs of the Muslim community in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Depression

Depression, according to Beck and Alford (2009), is a psychological disorder characterized by abnormalities in an individual's emotions, cognition, and behavior. This is in line with the opinion that depression is an emotional condition that is usually characterized by extreme sadness, feelings of worthlessness and guilt; withdrawal from others; and inability to sleep, loss of appetite, sexual desire, interest, and pleasure in activities that are normally enjoyed (Davison et al., 2010). Individuals experiencing depressive disorders may feel sadness, loneliness, a diminished sense of self, and exhibit behavior that withdraws them from their environment.

Chaplin (2002) defines depression in two states, namely in normal people and in pathological cases. In normal people, depression is a state of gloom (sadness, discouragement) characterized by feelings of inadequacy, decreased activity, and pessimism about the future. In pathological cases, depression is an extreme unwillingness to respond to stimuli, accompanied by decreased self-esteem, delusions of inadequacy, helplessness, and despair.

A person suffering from depression will increase risks that will certainly affect their life. According to Dirgayunita (2016), the risks caused by depression include interpersonal disorders, disorders in carrying out daily activities such as work disorders, interpersonal disorders, and eating disorders. In addition, people with depression also experience sleep disorders, aggressive behavior, and even worse, suicide.

According to Beck (1985), the source of depression is negative cognition. People who are depressed seem to have a negative view of themselves, their world, and their future. People who are depressed draw false conclusions and, as a result of negatively assessing themselves, their world, and their future, become depressed, lose their abilities, reject hope, have suicidal thoughts, and experience increased tension.

Islamic Psychotherapy

One effective approach to treating depression is Islamic psychotherapy. This is because the majority of Indonesians are Muslim, making Islamic psychotherapy highly relevant and easy to use (Saifuddin, 2022). Islamic psychotherapy is an effort to overcome several psychological problems based on the Islamic perspective (the Qur'an and Hadith) (Amiruddin, 2015). This is in line with Trimulyaningsih's (2017) opinion that Islamic psychotherapy is a method used to deal with individual problems and treat mental, spiritual, moral, or physical disorders by increasing awareness of Allah SWT and guiding individuals back to the path in accordance with His guidance through the guidance of the Qur'an and Hadith. The main objective of Islamic psychotherapy is to provide a preventive, curative, constructive, and rehabilitative approach that combines Islamic legal sources with modern psychology (Saifuddin, 2022).

There are various methods and models of Islamic psychotherapy. According to Rajab (2014), Islamic psychotherapy models include faith psychotherapy, worship psychotherapy, Sufism psychotherapy, and ihsan psychotherapy. Meanwhile, according to Pujiastuti (2021), Islamic psychotherapy methods include prayer, fasting, zakat, hajj, patience, and dzikir. Among the various types of Islamic psychotherapy that have been developed, research shows that dzikir therapy has significant effectiveness in reducing psychopathological symptoms, one of which is depression (Uyun et al., 2024)

Dzikir Therap

Dzikir is an activity of remembering and obeying Allah in various situations, as well as expressing love for Him through words or actions. The essence of dzikir is communication between servants and Allah, which is demonstrated by constantly remembering and obeying Him through the recitation of *Allahu Akbar (Takbir)*, *Alhamdulillah (Tahmid)*, *Subhanallah (Tasbih)*, prayers, and recitations from the Qur'an. Dzikir is one of the religious practices in Islam that provides peace of mind (Akrom, 2010). According to Al-Mahfani (2006), dzikir can be done anywhere and anytime, either aloud or silently.

Pujiastuti (2021) mentions in her book that Dzikir, as a reminder of Allah, can serve as an effective form of psychotherapy in helping individuals overcome emotional and mental problems such as stress, anxiety, and depression. The process of remembering Allah through dzikir helps calm the mind. This allows individuals to shift their attention away from the problems weighing on their minds, focusing instead on the names and attributes of Allah.

The purpose of dzikir therapy is to reduce the duration of treatment for psychological disorders, strengthen self-concept and mentality, and have a positive effect in reducing stress (Setyoadi and Kushariyadi, 2011). Dzikir therapy can also create a relaxed, calm, and peaceful state of mind. This condition affects the brain by stimulating hypothalamic activity, which in turn inhibits the release of corticotropin releasing factor (CRF) hormone. As a result, the secretion of adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) from the anterior pituitary gland is also inhibited, thereby reducing the production of cortisol, adrenaline, and noradrenaline hormones. This process also inhibits the production of thyroxine hormone by the thyroid gland. In addition, dzikir affects the parasympathetic nervous system, which contributes to a decrease in blood pressure, heart rate, and muscle tension, creating a sense of relaxation, calmness, and increasing the body's ability to concentrate (Setiyani, 2018).

Dzikir in the field of psychology is a form of transcendental meditation (Pujiastuti, 2021). Meditation is focusing the mind on a state of consciousness that brings calmness, clarity, and happiness. Dzikir is included as a model of psychotherapy because it contains spiritual elements that can inspire hope and self-confidence in a person who is ill; which in turn increases the body's immunity, thereby accelerating the healing process (Hawari, 2003). In transpersonal psychology, it is mentioned that another positive function of consciousness is for healing, the emergence of new knowledge and understanding, and it has a social function, which is often found in the beauty of dzikir (Pujiastuti, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

The method used in this study is library research or literature review, conducted by collecting various sources and research findings relevant to the topic. A literature study is a series of research activities that utilize library references to gather data and process the information into research findings (Zed, 2008). According to Arikunto (2019), a literature review involves processing research materials through reading, note-taking, and compiling information from various sources.

In this study, the researchers gathered literature and empirical findings related to dzikir, Islamic psychotherapy, and depression. The search for research articles was conducted through Google Scholar. The inclusion criteria were research articles published within the last 10 years (2014–2024). Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria were articles that do not discuss dzikir therapy or dzikir-based psychotherapy as an intervention for depression. After the selection and screening process, 10 relevant articles were identified that examine the effects of dzikir psychotherapy on depression.

DISCUSSION

Efforts to address depression have involved the development of various therapeutic approaches, one of which is dzikir therapy. Dzikir, or the remembrance of Allah, can function as an effective form of psychotherapy in helping individuals cope with emotional and mental difficulties (Pujiastuti, 2021). Dzikir psychotherapy carries profound meaning, as it connects individuals with spiritual strength, leading to inner peace and emotional balance. Recent studies have shown that dzikir psychotherapy can reduce levels of depression and can be applied across various populations, ranging from university students to the elderly.

The results of research conducted by Ma'rufa et al. (2023) show that providing psychotherapy in the form of dzikir, specifically *istighfar* dzikir, can significantly reduce depression levels in students. This *istighfar* dzikir psychotherapy is carried out by providing psychoeducation about depression and dzikir, followed by practicing dzikir in accordance with the correct procedures and with full appreciation 100 times. In the implementation of *istighfar* dzikir therapy, the dzikir used was not just listened to but focused on dzikir that was deeply understood by the students, and applied anywhere and anytime. Participants admitted that after participating in *istighfar* dzikir therapy, they felt calmer, more relaxed, and slept better. This phenomenon indicates that the practice of dzikir combined with full awareness of its meaning can bring about significant changes in a person's mental state.

Interestingly, the effectiveness of dzikir therapy is not only observed among university students but also among the elderly who experience depression. This has been demonstrated by Setianto et al. (2023), who found that dzikir psychotherapy in the form of training can effectively address psychological problems experienced by older adults, including depression. Similarly, Rosyidah et al. (2023) found a significant influence of dzikir therapy on reducing depression levels among the elderly. Dzikir psychotherapy is easily accepted and practiced by older adults, particularly in Indonesia, because dzikir is a form of religious devotion and spiritual practice that is deeply rooted

in the daily life of Muslims (Bahtiar et al., 2020). Older adults are able to enhance their concentration during dzikir sessions, which require focused attention, thereby contributing to a decrease in depressive symptoms (Bahtiar et al., 2020). Therefore, dzikir therapy is not only effective but also highly acceptable across various age groups, including older adults who may find it difficult to engage with conventional therapeutic approaches. It offers a practical and spiritually compatible alternative that can be performed anytime and anywhere.

One of the underlying mechanisms behind the effectiveness of dzikir therapy lies in the physiological changes that occur in the body during the practice. Rosyidah et al. (2023) explained that during dzikir, temporary constriction of cerebral blood vessels occurs as a result of biochemical processes. This reduction in blood flow to brain tissues triggers a reflex response in which the brain prompts deeper inhalation through the lungs. Subsequently, the blood vessels dilate, increasing the supply of oxygen and glucose to brain tissues. Through dzikir practice accompanied by regulated breathing, the cerebral cortex becomes stabilized, which has a positive effect on reducing depressive symptoms. In conclusion, the practice of dzikir not only produces psychological benefits but also induces physiological changes, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of this therapy in alleviating depression.

Moreover, dzikir therapy has also been proven effective in managing depression among patients with certain medical conditions. The level of depression among patients with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) can be reduced through dzikir psychotherapy. This finding is supported by Ado et al. (2023), who reported that dzikir therapy effectively alleviated depression as participants expressed a sense of acceptance toward their fate after engaging in the dzikir sessions. Interestingly, however, when another intervention Benson relaxation was administered to the same group of participants, it was found to be even more effective in reducing depression levels compared to dzikir therapy. This is attributed to the fact that Benson relaxation stimulates the release of epinephrine in CKD patients, which contributes to improved mood and physiological relaxation.

Beyond CKD, dzikir psychotherapy has also demonstrated efficacy in reducing depression levels among patients with Diabetes Mellitus through the recitation of dzikir *Al-Ma'tsurat* (Wardaningsih & Widyaningrum, 2018). These findings align with those of Himawan et al. (2020), who discovered that engaging in morning and evening dzikir significantly decreased depression levels in patients with kidney failure undergoing hemodialysis. The study suggested that reciting dzikir in the morning and evening instills hope, inner peace, and a positive outlook on life. However, it is important to note that dzikir therapy alone is not the sole factor influencing the reduction in depression levels; rather, it functions as one component within a broader psychological and spiritual support system.

In addition to pure dzikir therapy, combining dzikir with other therapeutic modalities such as music therapy has also yielded positive results. A study by Umamah and Fabiyanti (2018) reported a decrease in depression severity among elderly participants, shifting from severe to moderate levels after receiving dzikir music therapy. Similarly, Wahyuningsih et al. (2020) demonstrated that combining dzikir with natural sound music effectively reduced depression scores among breast cancer patients. Although the absence of a control group was a limitation in this study, the results nevertheless reinforce the notion that dzikir, when integrated with complementary elements such as music, can accelerate emotional healing and generate positive psychological effects for individuals experiencing depression. The study further indicated that the more frequently older adults engaged in dzikir music therapy, the lower their depression levels became, as this form of therapy functions as a dynamic meditation or short-term relaxation technique.

Dzikir therapy has also shown effectiveness in patients with more complex mental disorders, such as depression associated with bipolar disorder. This was evidenced by Triwidiastuty et al. (2019), who found that engaging in dzikir a practice that fosters a sense of connection with Allah anytime and anywhere can reduce depressive symptoms in individuals with bipolar disorder.

According to the study, the therapeutic effect of dzikir on bipolar depression is linked to the emergence of positive emotional states, including feelings of peace, calmness, relaxation, and spiritual protection. The dzikir therapy employed in this context integrates various spiritual dimensions at each stage such as mindfulness during dzikir, a sense of divine connection, and meaningful reflection upon the recitations of dzikir and *kalimah thayyibah*. These spiritual aspects imbue each dzikir recitation with profound meaning, reinforcing faith and fostering a deep sense of tranquility within the individual.

Based on a synthesis of studies conducted over the past decade, it can be concluded that dzikir psychotherapy has shown significant effectiveness in reducing depression. Engaging in dzikir psychotherapy by reciting the names of Allah can generate positive energy, inner peace, tranquility, and optimism within individuals. Each dzikir recitation carries profound meaning that can help alleviate and prevent stress. The phrase *Lā ilāha illallāh* fosters strong faith; *Astaghfirullāh* 'Azhīm promotes the expulsion of carbon dioxide from the lungs; *Subhānallāh* cultivates positive thinking; *Alhamdulillah* encourages gratitude; and *Allāhu Akbar* inspires optimism (Mustary, 2021). The more sincere and consistent an individual is in performing dzikir, the greater the psychological and emotional benefits they experience.

Efforts to address depression have involved the development of various therapeutic methods, one of which is dzikir therapy. Dzikir, or remembrance of Allah, serves as a form of psychotherapy that effectively helps individuals manage emotional and psychological distress (Pujiastuti, 2021). Dzikir psychotherapy carries deep spiritual meaning, connecting individuals to a higher divine power, thereby producing inner calm and emotional balance. Several recent studies have demonstrated that dzikir psychotherapy effectively reduces depressive symptoms across diverse populations, ranging from university students to the elderly.

A study by Ma'rufa et al. (2023) revealed that dzikir istighfar psychotherapy significantly reduced depression levels among university students. This intervention involved providing psychoeducation about depression and dzikir, followed by guided practice of dzikir istighfar performed 100 times with deep reflection and mindfulness. In this therapy, the dzikir was not merely heard but internalized and meaningfully recited, encouraging participants to engage in dzikir anywhere and at any time. Participants reported feeling calmer, more relaxed, and experiencing better sleep after completing the dzikir istighfar sessions. This finding suggests that the practice of dzikir, when integrated with mindful awareness of its meaning, can bring about substantial improvement in one's mental state.

Interestingly, the effectiveness of dzikir therapy is not only evident among students but also among the elderly who experience depression. Setianto et al. (2023) found that dzikir psychotherapy, when administered as a structured training program, helped alleviate psychological problems in older adults, including depression. Similarly, Rosyidah et al. (2023) reported a significant relationship between dzikir therapy and reduced levels of depression among the elderly.

Dzikir psychotherapy is well-received and easily practiced by older adults, particularly in Indonesia, where dzikir is a deeply rooted act of faith and daily worship among Muslims (Bahtiar et al., 2020). Elderly participants were able to enhance their concentration during dzikir sessions, which in turn contributed to a decrease in depressive symptoms (Bahtiar et al., 2020). Therefore, dzikir therapy is not only effective but also highly acceptable across age groups, including older adults who may be less receptive to conventional forms of therapy. It provides a practical and spiritually attuned approach that can be performed anytime and anywhere, making it a meaningful alternative for emotional and psychological healing.

One of the mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of dzikir therapy lies in the physiological changes that occur in the body during the practice. Rosyidah et al. (2023) explained that during dzikir, a temporary constriction of cerebral blood vessels occurs as a result of biochemical processes. The reduction in blood flow to brain tissues triggers a reflex response in

which the brain prompts inhalation through the lungs to increase oxygen intake. This process is followed by vasodilation, leading to a rapid increase in the supply of oxygen and glucose to brain tissues. With the consistent practice of dzikir accompanied by regulated breathing, the cerebral cortex becomes stabilized, which has a positive effect on reducing depressive symptoms. In conclusion, the practice of dzikir provides not only psychological but also physiological benefits, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of this therapy in alleviating depression.

Moreover, dzikir therapy has been proven effective in addressing depression among patients with specific medical conditions. The level of depression among patients with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) can be reduced through dzikir psychotherapy. This was demonstrated in a study by Ado et al. (2023), which found that dzikir therapy effectively lowered depressive symptoms because respondents reported feeling a greater sense of acceptance toward their life circumstances after engaging in dzikir. Interestingly, when another intervention, Benson Relaxation Therapy, was administered to the same participants, it was found to be more effective in reducing depression levels than dzikir therapy. This difference may be attributed to Benson relaxation's ability to stimulate the release of epinephrine among CKD patients.

In addition to CKD patients, dzikir psychotherapy has also been found effective in reducing depression among individuals with Diabetes Mellitus through the recitation of dzikir al-Ma'tsurat (Wardaningsih & Widyaningrum, 2018). These findings are consistent with Himawan et al. (2020), who discovered that performing morning and evening dzikir significantly reduced depression levels among kidney failure patients undergoing hemodialysis. The researchers explained that reciting dzikir in the morning and evening fosters hope, spiritual tranquility, and a positive outlook on life. However, they also noted that dzikir therapy is not the sole factor influencing the reduction of depressive symptoms, suggesting that it interacts with other psychological and spiritual variables.

Beyond pure dzikir therapy, the combination of dzikir with other methods such as music therapy has also shown positive outcomes. A study by Umamah and Fabiyanti (2018) reported a reduction in depression severity among older adults, from severe to moderate levels, following the implementation of dzikir music therapy. Similarly, Wahyuningsih et al. (2020) found that listening to natural sounds while performing dzikir effectively lowered depression scores in breast cancer patients. Although the absence of a control group was noted as a methodological limitation in this study, the findings nonetheless reinforce the notion that combining dzikir with complementary elements like music can accelerate emotional recovery and yield positive psychological outcomes for individuals experiencing depression. Frequent engagement in dzikir music therapy was also associated with reduced depressive symptoms, as this practice serves as a form of dynamic meditation or rapid relaxation technique.

Dzikir therapy has also demonstrated effectiveness in managing more complex mental disorders, such as bipolar depression. Triwidiastuty et al. (2019) found that engaging in dzikir which allows individuals to connect with Allah anytime and anywhere helped reduce depressive symptoms among patients with bipolar disorder. According to the study, the effectiveness of dzikir therapy in alleviating depressive symptoms in bipolar patients stems from the positive emotional effects experienced during the practice, including feelings of peace, relaxation, protection, and spiritual connectedness. The dzikir process integrates spiritual elements at every stage, such as maintaining focus (*khushyu*) during recitation, fostering a sense of closeness to Allah, and deeply reflecting on the meanings of the dzikir phrases (*kalimah thayyibah*). This spiritual integration provides profound meaning in every recitation, strengthens faith, and cultivates inner tranquility within the individual.

Based on a synthesis of research conducted over the past decade, it can be concluded that dzikir psychotherapy has demonstrated significant effectiveness in reducing depression. The practice of dzikir, or the recitation of the names of Allah, generates positive energy, serenity, peace, and optimism in individuals. Each dzikir phrase holds deep meaning that can alleviate and prevent stress. For example, *Lā ilāha illallāh* instills strong faith; *Astaghfirullāh* 'Aẓīm promotes respiratory release

of carbon dioxide; Subhānallāh fosters positive thinking; Alhamdulillah cultivates gratitude; and *Allāhu Akbar* evokes optimism (Mustary, 2021). The more sincere and consistent an individual's dzikir practice, the greater the psychological and spiritual benefits derived.

CONCLUSION

Dzikir psychotherapy has been proven effective in reducing depression levels in various groups, from students to the elderly. Research shows that dzikir, as a form of worship that remembers Allah, can provide peace and reduce emotional stress, which can be used in the counseling process. Several studies, such as those conducted by Ma'rufah, Rumaisha, and Nashori (2023), show that istighfar dzikir significantly reduces depression in students, while other studies, such as those conducted by Seianto, Risdiani, and Yusuf (2023), prove that dzikir is also effective in the elderly. The effectiveness of dzikir therapy has also been confirmed in patients with certain medical conditions, such as Chronic Kidney Disease and Diabetes Mellitus, with a significant reduction in depression levels after regularly practicing dzikir. Thus, dzikir psychotherapy can be an effective intervention that is accepted by various groups in society, providing both psychological and physical benefits, as well as strengthening spiritual faith in overcoming depression.

Research on the effect of dzikir psychotherapy on student depression is still limited. In addition, the research subjects used in previous studies also tend to be less varied. Therefore, the author suggests that future research explore the effect of dzikir therapy on depression in various groups of society.

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