

## Reducing Students' Anxiety Scores in Facing Examination through Spiritual Emotion Freedom Technique

Arena Lestari<sup>1</sup>, Gunawan Irianto<sup>2</sup>, Suzanna<sup>3</sup>, Septi Ardianty<sup>4\*</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Pringsewu Lampung, Indonesia

<sup>3,4</sup> Institut Ilmu Kesehatan dan Teknologi Muhammadiyah Palembang, Indonesia

Corresponding Author\*: [septibudi2@gmail.com](mailto:septibudi2@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

One of the tools that the government requires in order to guarantee high-quality graduates is the competency test. Mentorship is one way to help students be ready for the competency test and achieve the best possible outcomes. This study aimed to determine the effects of Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) on nursing students' anxiety and competency exam performance. This study is quantitative, employs a pre- and post-test methodology, and uses a quasi-experimental approach with a control group. The Mann Whitney test is the statistical test used in this investigation. Nursing students from two distinct universities- Institute of Health and Technology of Muhammadiyah Palembang and Musi Charitas Catholic University Palembang—made up the population of this study, which had a sample size of 153. Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) intervention had a significant (0.001) impact on reducing student's anxiety scores and level of preparedness for the competency test. Students' anxiety and degree of preparedness for the competency exam are significantly impacted by SEFT. It is anticipated that the SEFT treatment will function as a stand-in method for addressing the anxiety problem that college students encounter.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the tools that the government requires in order to guarantee high-quality graduates is the competency test. A method is used to examine health workers' knowledge, abilities, and attitudes in compliance with professional standards when the competency test is implemented. In the health industry, competency tests are a component of the evaluation of students' learning outcomes (Kemenristek, 2019). This competency test may be given as an exit exam at the conclusion of the educational process, in accordance with the Directorate General of Higher Education's Circular. In this case, it is important to take into account the value of an expert in academic setting (Kemenristek, 2019). According to information gathered from the Directorate General of Higher Educational Institutions in 2018: 30,812 people took competency tests, and 53.46% of them graduated. Nurse



participation grew significantly to 48,068 in 2018 with a 50.58% passing rate. Data from 2018 showed that 50,058 people took competency tests, with a 50.38% passing percentage (Kemenristek, 2019).

The cumulative accomplishment index (GPA), student learning styles, and the try-out process that is required before taking the competency test are some of the variables that contribute to the low graduation rate for nurse competency test (Syah, 2018). Moreover, a lack of concentration on learning, uncertainty and nervousness during competency exams, and a lack of understanding of the CBT (Computer Based Test) work system are some other factors making the low graduation rate. Another obstacle to participants' graduation from competency tests is computer-based testing (Kurniawati & Kusumaningsih, 2015). Other viewpoints also stated that outcomes should be tried out. At the national level, student engagement and academic GPA have an impact on competency test of ners' graduation rates (Syah, 2018).

Mentorship is one way to help students be ready for the competency test and achieve the best possible outcomes. The goal of mentoring is to get aspiring graduates ready for the competency exam that they will take to graduate (Masfuri, 2020). Students need to practice reading the question outlines, managing their time, and concentrating on problem solving as part of the preparation process. When using this, the professor who takes on the role of mentor must possess the necessary expertise, such as having participated in training sessions and having reviewed the material (Kurniawati & Kusumaningsih, 2015).

On the other hand, both external and internal variables frequently contribute to worry. A phobia raises elements associated with the object. Sometimes, the external factors are caused from a neurotic anxiety. Coping mechanisms that emerge in individuals often originate from feelings of anxiety (Salami & Fatmawati, 2020). The urgency and relationship of the description above, namely student anxiety, can originate from the final exam or test that students must pass, especially in the final assignment (Livana et al., 2023).

It is evident from the explanation above that anxiety is a phenomenon that affects people of all ages and in a variety of social circles. As a result, receiving psychological treatment is crucial for managing the anxiety issue. One kind of treatment for patients with anxiety is SEFT. One of the many approaches created to assist patients in resolving their issues is the Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT). The SEFT method was created with each person's unique characteristics in mind and is intended to address everyone's spiritual needs (Maryatun, 2020). SEFT stresses that people are ape-like primates who welcome common experiences. Additionally, based on earlier research findings, it was discovered that women's anxiety may be effectively managed with the application of SEFT procedures (Nuroh, 2022). The results confirm previous studies' findings that after using the SEFT technique, students' anxiety levels varied (Asmawati et al., 2020). Case studies on students who struggle with anxiety before taking exams also showed the positive effects of the SEFT technique (Pandey, 2020). Some of the SEFT tapping points are explained in the figure below.



**Figure 1.** SEFT tapping points

Cr: Crown, EB: Eye Brow, SE: Side of the Eye  
 UE: Under the Eye, UN: Under the Nose, Ch: Chin  
 CB: Collar Bone, UA: Under the Arm BN: Bellow Niple  
 IH: Inside of Hand, OH: Outside of Hand, Th: Thumb  
 IF: Index Finger, MF: Middle Finger, RF: Ring Finger  
 BF: Baby Finger, KC: Karate Chop, GS: Gamut Chop

According to the previous study of the holy verses of the Al-Quran and Hadith regarding the anxiety felt by individuals, it is described in the following explanation (Jannah, 2023).

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ

In fact, we are closer to Him than his jugular vein, having formed him and knowing the whispering of his soul (*Syurah Qaf: 16* in (Jannah, 2023).

عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ مَا يُصِيبُ الْمُسْلِمَ مِنْ نَصَبٍ وَلَا وَصَبٍ وَلَا هَمٍّ وَلَا حُزْنٍ وَلَا أَدَى وَلَا غَمٍّ حَتَّى الشُّوْكَةِ يُشَاكُهَا إِلَّا كَفَّرَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ خَطَايَاهُ

"Says the Prophet Muhammad, salallaahu 'alaihi wasallam: No Muslim suffers from illness, weariness, anxiety, or melancholy; not even a thorn can injure him; instead, Allah will forgive his transgressions" (Somana & Kuku, 2017).

This verse and hadith are often used to describe the anxiety or feeling of worry **تُوَسْوِسُ** that is entrenched in the heart (Sukmal et al., 2020). Interview data from many Ners students revealed that students experienced feelings of worry, anxiety, fear, and confusion when they had to take the test of competence later. Along with the roughly two years of online learning that students have experienced with in the academic process, which is regarded as subpar. Given the background information

provided, is it important to determine how mentoring and the emotional freedom method (SEFT) affect a nurse's anxiety before taking a competency test? The formulated hypothesis is whether there is a difference in students' anxiety scores before and after implementing SEFT. The novelty is that there is a decrease in anxiety scores felt by students after being able to implement SEFT optimally.

## **METHODS**

The methodology of this research uses a quasi-experimental approach, pre and post test with a control group. The Mann Whitney test is the statistical test used in this investigation. Students from Musi Charitas Catholic University Palembang and Institute of Health and Technology of Muhammadiyah Palembang in the 2021–2022 academic years made up the study's population. The reason for choosing the location of the control and intervention groups at a sufficient distance apart is to ensure bias from the study by providing two different treatments. This study's sample was selected via total sampling, and the inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) students who had anxiety based on the assessment anxiety instrument from Zung using specific anxiety assessment in students (Dincer et al., 2022); (2) students who desired to be respondents and mentors; and (3) students who completed the research project.

### **Procedure**

In this research, data were collected from two distinct locations far from the study site. Each group had six sessions of intervention, which were held once a week. An explanation of the intervention's phases is provided below. This was done based on previous research with the provision of the same intervention, namely SEFT with six sessions within a week with a duration of each session ranging from 25-30 minutes (Maryatun, 2020; Nuroh, 2022).

### **Intervention group**

First meeting: the intervention group's first activities included gathering biodata, outlining the goals, methods, and advantages of the study, establishing trust, inquiring about their thoughts regarding the competency assessment, completing an informed permission form, and evaluating Nursing students' anxiety levels and preparedness for learning.

Next meeting: a full discussion of ways to answer competency test questions was conducted, in addition to mentorship meetings led by a team of facilitators who start by outlining the importance and crucial terms of the questions. After the second part of the program, students had to complete an exercise where they had to respond to questions based on the synergy book and their own mobile synergies.

Third meeting: the emotional freedom strategy was introduced, together with evidence-based practice and subject explanations, to help students overcome their anxiety issues and become more motivated to take the exam. Group talks and questions and answers were also held in this phase, attempts to instill in pupils the belief that SEFT can serve as a substitute for treating anxiety issues and preparing them for the test through study. The third meeting's last task involved breaking the students up into smaller groups so they could practice SEFT.

Fourth meeting: SEFT tutorials or practical learning based on small group divisions were the activities conducted at the fourth meeting. The team has developed the SEFT lesson learning video screening. Respondents and facilitators practiced on a mat provided by the multi-media laboratory where this activity was conducted.

Fifth meeting: SEFT implementation exercises were conducted during the fifth meeting. Setup, tune-in, drilling, nine gamut processes, and tapping again were the five stages of the exercises. Two facilitators were present throughout this activity.

Sixth meeting: The SEFT implementation exercise was repeated in five steps, including set-up, tune-in, tapping, the nine-gamut method, and tapping once more, during the sixth meeting. Two facilitators were present throughout this activity.

### **Control Group**

First meeting: Students need to be informed that the questions on the competency test have been examined by national examiners who made the questions. This is the first action in the mentorship program of short stories.

Second meeting, the focus will be on elucidating the significance of the questions in every area included in the assessment of competence, as well as the required minimum of responses to pass the test.

Third meeting: To make the best use of the time allotted, the third activity in this mentorship program is to teach students how to answer competency test questions in a fast, easy, and clear manner.

Fourth meeting: Using the ideas and techniques that have been given, participants will explain and discuss about the questions on the competency exam in this mentoring session's fourth activity.

Fifth meeting: Using the suggestions and techniques that have been taught, participants will answer competency test questions for all subjects in the fifth activity of this mentoring program.

Sixth meeting: Students will learn how to answer competency test questions for all disciplines swiftly, fluidly, exactly, and clearly in this mentorship session's sixth activity.

### **Data Analysis**

This study employed a quasi-experimental design, with a control population and a prior to and after-test approach. The Mann Whitney test, a statistical analysis, was used. The study's population consisted of 153 nursing students from two universities: Musi Charitas Catholic University Palembang and Institute of Health and Technology of Muhammadiyah Palembang.

### **Ethical Clearance**

Aisyiah University of Yogyakarta research ethics commission's review board or committee on ethics granted ethical approval for this work. (No.013KEP/ADM2/2020)

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Bivariate analysis with data interpolation was performed after univariate analysis using frequency distribution and data from two groups was presented. The table below provides an explanation of the research findings. The distribution of respondents is divided into two: the youngest age is 22 years in the same two groups (IKEST & UNIKA) and the oldest age is from IKEST, 42 years and UNIKA, 29 years with an average of 23 years old.

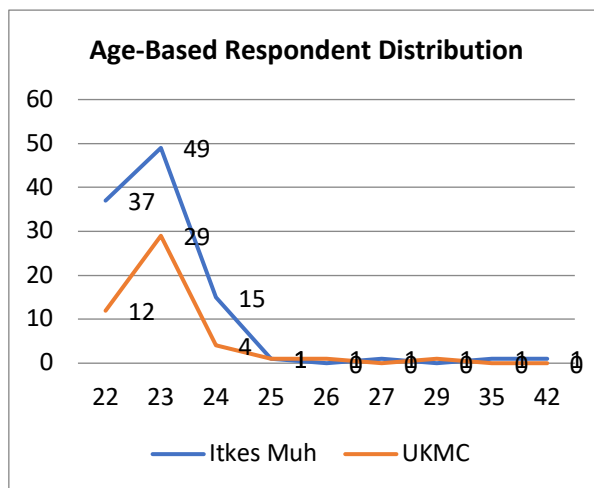


Figure 2. The Distribution of Respondents

Tabel 1. Anxiety Distribution for IKEST Previous to and Post SEFT

Stage	Anxiety	f	%
Before Treatment	High	42	40
	Low	63	60
After Treatment	High	33	31,4
	Low	72	68,6
Total		105	100.0

Tabel 2. Anxiety Distribution for UNIKA Previous to and Post Mentoring

Stage	Anxiety	f	%
Before Treatment	High	23	47,9
	Low	25	52,1
After Treatment	High	30	62,5
	Low	18	37,5
Total		48	100.0

Tabel 3. Results of Control and Intervention Group on the Anxiety Correlation Test (SEFT)

Group	Anxiety					p- value	r	
	High		Low		Total			
	f	%	f	%	f			%
Intervention (SEFT)	33	31,4	72	68,6	105	100	0,001	0,503
Control (Mentoring)	30	62,5	18	37,5	48	100		
Total	63	41,2	90	58,8	153	100		

A substantial intervention's effect of Technique for releasing spiritual emotions (SEFT) in reducing anxiety for nursing students taking competency exams is indicated by the outcome comparison test's p-value of 0.001 (<0.025). Anxiety can be defined as an unpleasant emotional state characterized by a deep and persistent worry, discomfort, or fear. In reality, when anxiety becomes persistent or excessive, a person may have anxiety disorder. However, if it is not excessive and it is not a split personality, then occasional disrupted conduct is still occurred within a person's normal range of ability. Conversely, anxiety is thought to be a feeling of uneasiness as a reaction to circumstances that appear unfavorable to the individual but are not overtly dangerous.

### Factors Causing Anxiety

According to the previous study, there are several factors that cause anxiety condition, for example, suppressed feeling, negative perception, bad environment and physical disorder. Anxiety

symptoms include shaking hands or chills, fear, lack of desire, trust in one's ability to make decisions, palpitations in the heart, or awareness of one's own heart rate (Meyers & D, 2020). The environmental aspects of physical development and mindset; family and social issues; developmental issues; life crises and traumatic experiences; guilt and fear of punishment; conflict between needs and inclinations; and weak feelings are the factors that contribute to anxiety (Livana et al., 2023).

### **Anxiety Levels**

Anxiety comes in various forms, having three stages, high, medium, and mild anxiety. A person with mild anxiety becomes more aware of his surroundings and becomes more alert. It is related to the tension in daily life (Hidayat et al., 2023; Kumar, 2022; Wegmann et al., 2023). At this stage, signs include weariness, agitation, elevated perception, high awareness, learning ability, enhanced drive, and acceptable behavior in certain contexts. Moderate anxiety enables a person to selectively attend to one item while focusing on another crucial task, allowing them to take decisive action (Kumar, 2022). This level is characterized by a number of symptoms, such as elevated heart rate, breathing, muscle tension, fast and loud speech, narrow perception, impaired ability to learn, decreased ability to concentrate, selective attention, and a focus on stimuli that do not increase anxiety, irritability, impatience, forgetfulness, anger, or crying. High anxiety: People who experience extreme anxiety often become fixated on one subject and find it unable to think about anything else (Kanthamani & Vijayalakshmi, 2019). To focus his attention, the person requires a lot of instructions. At this stage, symptoms include whining, lightheadedness, headaches, nausea, sleeplessness, frequent urination, diarrhea, palpitations, narrowed perceptions, incapacity to learn, self-centeredness, low anxiety, feelings of powerlessness, confusion, and anxiety) Panic deals with shock, fear, and terror due to lack of control. Panic symptoms include rapid breathing, dilated pupils, palpitations, paleness, diaphoresis, halting speech, inability to obey straightforward instructions, yelling, screaming, hallucinations, and delusions (Driscoll et al., 2009).

### **The intervention (Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique)**

SEFT is a relaxing approach that applies pressure to specific body locations to integrate bodily systems awareness with spiritual therapeutic procedures (Asmawati et al., 2020). Energy psychology and spiritual power are combined in SEFT therapy. There are four types of SEFT; the first is for healing, which aims to achieve maximum physical and psychical health and healing; the second is for success, which aims to achieve whatever the individual personally desires; the third is for happiness, which aims to achieve happiness; and the fourth is for individual greatness, which aims to form a good and right person and not cause negative impact on the environment (Rachmawardany et al., 2024). Stress, depression, and anxiety can be decreased by using the SEFT procedures based on several discoveries that have been presented to people in different sectors (Nuroh, 2022). The SEFT Technique's Steps Yobel (2019) outlined the following applications for SEFT techniques:

### **The Set-Up**

There will be two different kinds of setup at this point: 1) The set-up belief, also known as the set-up, is a belief that seeks to ground our actions (people can replace outdated beliefs with new ones or employ preexisting ones). As an illustration, the person decides not to bother about voicing their opinions, for example, expressing one's opinions in front of the class is a good thing, and doing so will demonstrate to friends that we understand what is being taught. Other beliefs that can be ingrained in an individual include "I believe that I can express thoughts in front of the class," and

others. 2) The set-up words—prayer and resignation—are meant to channel spiritual energy into each person's body, guiding it toward the right guidance and overcoming psychological opposition, or psychological reversal. I can't, for instance, voice my ideas. I am unable to comprehend the content. I'm not going to dispute in front of the class, etc. The set-up is to say, "Oh God, even though my hands are shaking to argue, but I decide to argue in front of the class, make it easier Oh God because only you are the Giver of Science," whenever negative beliefs or thoughts such as those in the aforementioned situations arise.

### **Tapping**

Tapping is the practice of lightly tapping specific body parts with two fingertips up to seven times while maintaining awareness. These are "The Major Energy Meridians" tips, and tapping these areas a few times will help balance out any emotional pain or anguish we may be experiencing. This is a result of the flow of energy throughout the body returning to balance and operating regularly. The following are the Fats points that require tapping: karate chops, inner wrist, outer wrist in the middle of the pinkie bone, side thumb, side finger, middle finger, side pinkie, and sweet. At these places, tapping is performed repeatedly (Nuroh, 2022).

### **Nine Gamut Procedure**

Nine movements make up this brain-stimulating approach. Any movement to activate a certain area of the brain, even if it seems weird. You perform these nine moves while pressing the gamut spot, one of the body's energy centers. The procedure consists of nine movements: tightly closing the eyes, opening them, gently turning the eyes to the lower left and right sides (silent heads) turning the eye clockwise, twisting it counterclockwise, mumbling (hm hm hm) for a second, mumbling in rhythmic sequence from night one to night five, and mumbling like a seven (Nuroh, 2022).

### **The Tapping Again**

The last stage in the nine gamut technique is to repeat the tapping, take a deep breath, and exhale it (combined with giving thanks) (Dincer et al., 2022). Spiritual Emotion Freedom Technique (SEFT) is an alternative psychotherapy that can be used to overcome issues with anxiety and motivation when taking exams. It is a straightforward psychological therapy that operates on the basis of lightly tapping nineteen body meridian points with the fingers (Pandey, 2020; Pramudya, 2024; Zani & Shari, 2024). This stimulation alters brain chemistry, which in turn can transform negativity and moods into positive feelings and emotions (Asmawati et al., 2020). According to the research findings, the systematic review characterizes the SEFT approach to have a highly therapeutic effect in resolving anxiety and motivation issues in students. This is additionally supported by the findings of experimental investigations with students who underwent SEFT treatment, which significantly reduced their anxiety levels (Rachmawardany et al., 2024). Experimental study on students who struggle with exam anxiety has demonstrated the efficacy of the SEFT technique (Clond, 2016; Gaesser & Karan, 2017) The results of the body of research are similar to those of earlier studies because of the similarities between the traits of those who participated and the measuring instruments used in the investigations. There are actually five steps that the research team completes when using SEFT (Yobel, 2019).

- a. The first step is the setup, which consists of words of encouragement and resignation that can help students overcome their anxiety. It also includes the statement, "Ya Allah SWT, Ya Allah



SWT, Allahu Akbar despite my concern, I am able to accept this situation as is, enjoy the feelings." The exact afternoon area on the chest is emphasized.

- b. The second step of the tune-in seeks to counteract unpleasant feelings, namely a sense of unease about the statement. "I sincerely submit to You, O Allah SWT, with all of my uncomfortable emotions.
- c. The third stage, known as the tap, involves tapping the body gently with the fingertips at a specific location while continuously tuning in to what the mind is wishing to accomplish at that precise instant.
- d. A set of nine motions called the Four Stage Nine Gamut Procedure are intended to stimulate the brain. These motions include blinking and opening these eyes, moving the eyes back and forth, turning the eyeballs in both directions, and murmuring rhythmically for two counts while counting 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8.
- e. The final stage involves tapping once more, pausing to take a deep breath, and then exhaling deeply.

The study found that the presence of negative emotions was associated with a decrease in anxiety levels. These negative emotions were found to be highly disruptive to the body's energy system, beginning with the process of trigger-impact (Zani & Shari, 2024). This procedure may stop by applying a mild meridian point stimulation, which can eventually change the chemistry of the brain to channel good energy. Specifically, recognizing anxiety-inducing emotions can help manage anxiety in an adaptive manner (Cholilah et al., 2023; İrmak et al., 2019; Zani & Shari, 2024).

It can be assumed from the results and earlier research that Spiritual Emotion Freedom Technique has an impact on lowering anxiety. This is as a result of pupils being able to recognize anxious sentiments that affect their attitudes and actions. A gentle tapping technique is used to help children overcome the anxiety they are still experiencing. The team's tapping operation is based on the development of an intersection of negative energy, specifically the nervousness experienced by the nursing students when taking the competence assessment.

When a stimulus is applied at several meridian sites with a light touch of the finger, this negative energy line occurs. This tap alters chemistry in the brain, resulting in a more positive sentimental condition and, generally, a sense of serenity and confidence in handling the competency exam. In the previous study, there were several approaches to treat someone with anxiety and fear. One way is to use positive self-talk, which is similar to the concept of autonomy in modern psychology (Astuti, 2022). Self-talk aims at recognizing all the power of God in this case is about spirituality, being able to reduce feelings of anxiety, restlessness and fear that are possessed by individuals. This is in line with the research results that have been obtained (Raudah et al., 2023).

In reality, feeling anxious is our response to the situation we find ourselves in. But, if this persists and worsens, it will surely have a negative impact on someone's morning. While coping with anxiety, a technique is required to adapt and overcome it; this can be accomplished through Islamic psychotherapy. Islam offers numerous methods for dealing with unpleasant situations, like anxiety, such as reminiscence therapy, murottal, reading the Qur'an, and praying. All types of psychotherapy work to increase pleasure and happiness inside the individual. The delta wave stimulus in the brain, as well as the Qur'an's and dhikr's efficient therapeutic effects, cause the human neurotransmitter system to become a defence mechanism against anxiety in a variety of conditions. All of the above descriptions are certainly very much in line with the working principles of SEFT which prioritize belief in the spiritual aspects that individuals must have when facing feelings of anxiety (Hidayat et al., 2023; İnangil et al., 2020)).

## CONCLUSION

The spiritual emotions freedom technique has a significant (0.001) impact on the anxiety that nursing students feel before taking the competency test. The intervention group shows a more substantial decline in anxiety levels compared to the control group. It is advised that the SEFT intervention serve as a substitute strategy for dealing with the anxiety issue that co-ners in educational institutions face. However, the research sample consists of two universities and uses a quasi-experimental approach, pre and post-test with a control group. Therefore, further research with more diverse sample characteristics is needed, and it can be conducted through another research design to explore the spiritual emotion freedom technique's effect on anxiety.

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