

Effectiveness of Online-Based Peer Counseling Against Academic Anxiety in Class of 2020/2021, Universitas Binawan During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic that has continued since March 2020 requires everyone to develop new habits that have an impact on mental health decline. A new habit that students must face is the transition from face-to-face learning to distance learning, where the learning process uses software applications developed specifically to manage online learning and distribute lecture materials between students and lecturers. This study aims to determine effectiveness of online-based peer counseling against academic anxiety in Class of 2020/2021, Universitas Binawan during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study uses an experimental methodology of one group pre-test and post-test design. The research subjects were 15 respondents who were selected from 847 students who were Universitas Binawan students who had received a recommendation from the Head of the Study Program because their achievement index score was 3.00. The data analysis technique used in this study is t-test using the statistical product and service solution version 17 assistance program. The results showed that online-based peer counseling was effective in reducing academic anxiety in Class of 2020/2021, Universitas Binawan during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords

effectiveness; counseling; academic anxiety; covid-19 pandemic



I. Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Most people who contract COVID-19 will experience mild to moderate symptoms, and will recover without special treatment. However, some people will experience severe pain and require medical assistance. The virus can be spread from the mouth or nose of an infected person through tiny fluid particles when the person coughs, sneezes, talks, sings, or breathes. These particles can range from larger droplets from the respiratory tract to smaller aerosols. When you breathe air that contains the virus if you are near someone who is already infected with COVID-19. You can also get it if you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth after touching a contaminated surface. Viruses are easier to spread indoors and in crowded places. Everyone has a different response to COVID-19. Most people who are exposed to the virus will experience mild to moderate symptoms, and will recover without needing to be hospitalized. Protect yourself and others around by knowing the facts regarding this virus and taking appropriate precautions. Follow the advice given by local health authorities. After being exposed to a person infected with COVID-19, take action to contact your healthcare provider or COVID-19 hotline for information regarding where and when to get tested.

The COVID-19 pandemic that has continued since March 2020 requires everyone to develop new habits that have an impact on mental health decline. According to the World Health Organization 2 survey of 130 countries affected by the pandemic. 60% of countries reported that mental health services for vulnerable groups, including children and adolescents, experienced disorders reaching 72%. According to the results of user data analysis in 2020, the Association of Indonesian Mental Medicine Specialists, 64% of the < 20 years old (early adult) age group have experienced psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and psychological trauma (Perhimpunan Dokter Spesialis Kedokteran Jiwa Indonesia, 2020).

The age group under 20 years, including students, showed that as many as 79 students felt an increase in anxiety due to changes in online learning methods during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hasanah et al., 2020). A new habit that students must face is the transition from face-to-face learning to distance learning, where the learning process uses software applications developed specifically to manage online learning and distribute lecture materials between students and lecturers.

University is a higher education institution consisting of a number of faculties that provide scientific and/or professional education in a number of specific disciplines. In general, the University has the same goal, namely to produce quality graduates in their fields. Each university also has a different vision and mission. To achieve their respective visions, each university has different plans and programs. In addition, each university also has a different structure to support the vision and mission. Along with the development of technology, the use of information systems at universities has experienced rapid development. Each university has built an information system that is as needed to support the implementation of a better education so that the general goals of the university can be achieved. The information systems built vary widely, but tend to only support daily operational needs. In fact, to be able to maintain the achievement of university goals, the executive also needs to know the information available at the university, one of which is the academic performance of students at the university. Therefore, we need a system that can support the supervision of academic performance so that executives can make the right decisions based on the information obtained.

Universitas Binawan, which uses a learning management system as an adaptation to changes in learning methods in the face of similar conditions, which is based on preliminary research data at Universitas Binawan (Figure 1), shows that the majority of students during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced anxiety problems related to lectures (academic) with the percentage value of 66.1% of 59 respondents. Respondents in this initial study were students of the 2020/2021 class for all study programs.

The resource persons for this preliminary study are students of the 2020/2021 class spread across various study programs. The selection of resource persons is based on psychological studies where this age group is more likely to experience high levels of anxiety because they do not socialize with the environment, including the learning system and lecturers who teach courses. Existing problems can be solved with the participation of students who have been trained to become peer counselors and help other students under the supervision of expert counselors. Peer participation as a consultant because students tend to discuss problems with peers. According to Zeng et al. (2010), the process of implementing online peer consultation is to help students solve problems through online text media (WhatsApp/email) or teleconference (Zoom/ Google Meet).

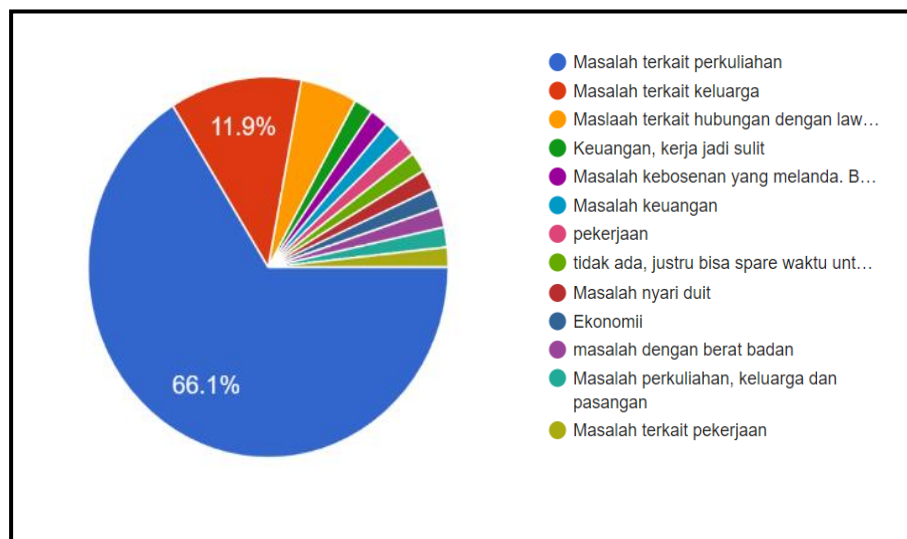


Figure 1. Results of Initial Observation of Academic Anxiety in Class of 2020/2021, Universitas Binawan

The study was conducted using a pre-experimental research method, namely observing one main group by providing intervention during the study without using a control group to be compared with the experimental group and aimed at knowing the effectiveness of peer counseling in reducing academic anxiety in Universitas Binawan students in the class of 2020/2021 due to high rates of anxiety in adolescence to adulthood. This research is necessary to do because there are still limited studies related to anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic while clarity regarding solutions to this disease outbreak has not been found. The lack of clarity regarding COVID-19 will potentially increase the level of anxiety in students which will have an impact on mental health and decrease student academic scores.

This study aims to determine effectiveness of online-based peer counseling against academic anxiety in Class of 2020/2021, Universitas Binawan during the COVID-19 pandemic.

II. Research Method

Data collection is an activity to find data needed in order to achieve research objectives (Octiva et al., 2021; Pandiangan, 2015; Pandiangan, 2018). Data collection was carried out for 3 months, from 23 July 2021 to 23 October 2021 at Universitas Binawan, Cawang Village, East Jakarta.

This study uses an experimental methodology of one group pre-test and post-test design. One group pre-test and post-test design, namely the group of subjects who were given the first measurement (pre-test), then there was treatment and it was measured again (post-test) (Octiva, 2018; Pandia et al., 2018; Pandiangan et al., 2022). The purpose of measurement is to determine the effectiveness of the treatment given in the research process. In addition, the accuracy of the treatment results can be known because there is a comparison of conditions before being given treatment (Asyraini et al., 2022; Pandiangan et al., 2018; Octiva et al., 2018).

The research subjects were 15 respondents who were selected from 847 students who were Universitas Binawan students who had received a recommendation from the Head of the Study Program because their achievement index score was 3.00. The distribution of research subjects showed that there were 13 female students and 2 male students. The age of the respondents is in the range of 18-21 years and most of them live with their families, while the objects are students of the Class of 2020/2021, Universitas Binawan.

The variables of this research include 2 related things, namely:

1. The object of online-based peer counseling by students as counselors who were previously trained in basic counseling skills.
2. Objects regarding academic anxiety in students in 2020/2021. Academic anxiety in this study leads to disturbances in thought patterns, physical reactions such as fear and worry about students' inability to complete academic tasks or exams, and inability to interact and communicate with lecturers.

Data collection was carried out on students at Universitas Binawan in 2020/2021 regarding the application of online-based peer counseling on academic anxiety. The data collection of this research was carried out in several forms, namely:

1. Questionnaire is a measurement of generalized anxiety disorder using a questionnaire given directly to the subject before and after treatment.
2. Observation, namely observing the activities of the subject without being directly involved in the provision of services. Researchers observed the extent to which the online-based peer counseling process took place.
3. Interviews, namely digging up information about the implementation of online-based peer counseling. Interviews were conducted with peer counselors and students who experience academic anxiety.

Data collection in this study was carried out using a questionnaire method to measure academic anxiety in students of the 2020/2021 class at Universitas Binawan.

The data analysis technique used in this study is t-test using the statistical product and service solution version 17 assistance program. A t-test is a type of inferential statistic used to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of two groups, which may be related in certain features (Pandiangan et al., 2021; Pandiangan, 2022; Tobing et al., 2018).

III. Results and Discussion

In this study, there were 3 stages, namely stage 1, preparation where data collection tools such as academic anxiety scales, observation guides and interview guides had been prepared, as well as training provided to prospective peer counselors. Stage 2, the data collection stage is the stage carried out by providing a scale or academic anxiety questionnaire before and after giving peer counseling treatment. Stage 3, namely the stages of processing and analysis.

In the implementation of the first stage, training for peer counselors is given to psychology students who have received counseling psychology courses so that they quickly adapt to apply the results of the training peer counselor. Resource persons provide material and roleplay to peer counselors so that it is easy to understand the skills that exist within the counselor. Based on the results of the pretest before the training, there was an increase in understanding of the peer counseling process material on the posttest results. At this time, coordination is also carried out with the Head of the study program to provide recommendations for students with a score of < 3.00 . This research involved 15 respondents from 3 study programs (Social Welfare Study Program, Psychology Program,

and Pharmacy Program). Initially, the respondent's request was also carried out in several study programs at Universitas Binawan, only the students of these three study programs were willing to take part in this research. Prior to conducting the research, respondents and peer counselors were given an explanation regarding the technical implementation of the research, and were given a letter of commitment as respondents during counseling.

The implementation of data collection in the second stage occurred during before peer counseling treatment and after peer treatment was given. The peer counseling process was carried out 5 times, namely counseling 1 (first related to exploring the respondent's academic anxiety problems, counseling 2 related to giving assignments from the cognitive side (changing beliefs) and counseling 3 related to assignments from the behavioral side to change bad habits that led to academic anxiety. For counseling 4, respondents were assigned to apply their beliefs and good habits from the results of assignments in counseling 2 and counseling 3. Counseling session 5 was a session where the counselor evaluated the implementation.

The implementation of the third stage of data collection was carried out by analyzing data to determine the effectiveness of online-based peer counseling to reduce academic anxiety in the 2020/2021 University Students of Universitas Binawan during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. To find out whether peer counseling had an effect on students' academic anxiety levels and how much Student Academic Anxiety scores before being given counseling services and after being given counseling services were carried out using the t-test data analysis formula, with the distribution value determined, namely degrees of freedom (df) $N-1=9-1=8$ with a significant level (α) 0,5. Based on the statistical calculations in Table 1, the significance value is $0.774 > 0.005$, the conclusion is that online-based peer counseling was effective in reducing academic anxiety in Class of 2020/2021, Universitas Binawan during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1. Results of t-Test Against Academic Anxiety in Class of 2020/2021, Universitas Binawan

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Anxiety Level	Equal variances assumed	.402	.531	-.290	28	.774	-1.200	4.136	-9.673	7.273
	Equal variances not assumed			-.290	27.928	.774	-1.200	4.136	-9.674	7.274

The results of the t-test are results that indicate a change in academic anxiety scores after being provided with online peer-based counseling services. Students who initially had high scores, after being provided with counseling services, their scores decreased by 7,273%.

The results also show that the training of peer counselors is effective in carrying out their duties as counselors under the guidance of expert counselors. The age group 20 is more open in sharing their academic problems with their peers than with their parents or other parties. The formation and training of peer counselors can be the right choice in an effort to fortify children or adolescents from the negative influences of the surrounding environment such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This study proves that peer counselors who have studied counseling psychology courses are important in guiding their friends to deal with problems related to academics.

IV. Conclusion

The results showed that online-based peer counseling was effective in reducing academic anxiety in Class of 2020/2021, Universitas Binawan during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results of the conclusions of the research that have been carried out, the suggestions addressed to the Academic Advisory Lecturers, and the Leaders of the Universitas Binawan are as follows:

1. Establishment of a peer counselor community within Universitas Binawan in order to develop online-based counseling services for peers who need assistance.
2. Students are able to improve their understanding in developing their potential with peer counselors.

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