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EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique) As An Alternative Therapy To Reduce Anxiety Disorders and Depression in People Who Are Positive Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

⁴The increasing number of deaths from Covid-19 is in line with anxiety disorders and depression in people who are positive for Covid-19. The emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) is known as an effective therapy to reduce mental health disorders in certain patients but has never been applied to people who are confirmed positive for Covid-19. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of EFT as an alternative therapy in reducing anxiety and depression in people who are positive for Covid-19. This research design uses a quasi-experimental approach with a one-group pretest and posttest approach. A total of 22 people were isolated in the Health Training Unit (UPELKES) provided by the Pontianak Government in June 2021. The data analysis technique used paired t-test (95% CI). There was a significant decrease in anxiety (t value = 6,738) and depression scores (t value = 7,585) after EFT therapy was given (p-value < 0.05). Thus, EFT can be an alternative therapy in overcoming anxiety and depression disorders in people who are confirmed positive for Covid-19.

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BACKGROUND

Covid-19 that hit the world has caused panic worldwide (Moreno, et al., 2020), including Indonesia. Covid-19 has an impact on mental health, including anxiety disorders (Calvano, et al., 2021; Setiawati, Windi, Tambunan, & Suwarni, 2021; Saurabh & Ranjan, 2020), depression (Orgilés, et al., 2021; Setiawati, Windi, Tambunan, & Suwarni, 2021; Watamura & Koppels, 2020) and so on.

The increase in Covid-19 cases, accompanied by a relatively high death rate, further aggravates the psychology of those who are confirmed positive. Mental health disorders weaken the immune system in the body, which increases the risk of infection (Yang, et al., 2020) dan death (Li, Li, Fortunati, & Krystal, 2020) (Wang, Xu, & Volkow, 2020; Shinn & Viron, 2020). Mental health disorders in the form of anxiety and depression in people with confirmed Covid-19 need to be addressed not to aggravate the existing disease (Khan A. H., et al., 2020).

The *emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)* combines energy and psychology (Asmawati, Ikhlasia, & Panduragan, 2020). The basic principle of EFT is to send activation and deactivation signals to the brain through stimulation of meridian points, usually by tapping (Feinstein, 2019). Tapping acupressure points in traditional Chinese medicine is believed to relax and optimize the body, mind, and emotions (Hartmann, 2016).

EFT has been proven by more than 100 studies that prove its effectiveness in treating physiological and psychological symptoms (Church, 2013; Feinstein, 2012). The efficacy of this EFT has been proven in the student population (Church, 2013; Khan A. H., et al., 2020; Gaesser, 2020), prajurit (Geronilla, Minewiser, Mollon, McWilliams, & Clond, 2016), patients (Bougea, et al., 2013; Ningsih, Karim, & Sabrian, 2016; Lataima, Kurniawati, & Astuti, 2020),

overweight (Stapleton, Bannatyne, Urzi, Porter, & Sheldon, 2016; Stapleton, Church, Sheldon, Porter, & Carlopio, 2013), hospital patient (Boath, Stewart, & Rolling, 2014), athlete (Llewellyn-Edwards & Llewellyn-Edwards, 2012), chemotherapy patient (Baker & Hoffman, 2015) and people who suffer from phobias (Salas, Brooks, & Rowe, 2011; Bach, et al., 2019). Previous studies have also proven that EFT is statistically significant in dealing with psychological distress based on more than 98% of related studies (Rancour, 2017). In addition, it is also significant in reducing anxiety, depression, fatigue, stress management, and fear (Feinstein, 2019; Vural & Aslan, 2019; Sezgin, 2017).

The effect of EFT on medical diagnosis has been the subject of several studies. Chronic disease patients can benefit from holistic health care and research has begun to consider the physiological changes that occur after EFT. A recent qualitative study exploring practitioners' experiences of using EFT to support chronic disease patients showed that while EFT is one technique, "multiple emotions" are present and "physical tap" for pain perception, and negative emotions can increase the perceived intensity and limiting the impact of physical pain is important (Kalla, Simmons, Robinson, & Stapleton, 2018).

EFT has been applied in many areas where individual psychotherapy is impractical, such as after earthquakes and other natural disasters, after terrorist attacks, and refugee camps (Church & House, 2018). Many studies on EFT have been carried out and proven effective in dealing with anxiety and depression but have never been applied to people who are positive for Covid-19. EFT is also predicted to reduce anxiety and depression in people who are positive for Covid-19. The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of EFT in reducing anxiety and

depression in people who are positive for Covid-19.

RESEARCH METHODS

Quasy experimental design was used in this study with a one-group pretest-posttest approach. The subjects of this study were people who were positive for Covid-19 who were isolated in a place provided by the government in Pontianak City, namely the Health Service Unit (Upelkes), in June 2021. The sample in this study was 22 people according to patients isolated in June 2021 (total sampling).

The research was carried out by following strict health protocols by the provisions issued by the government. The intervention in this study was EFT which was carried out offline (for the first time) and online (online using video for four treatments). Measurements were taken before and after four interventions. The duration of the EFT video is 7 minutes 06 seconds (available on youtube with the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aw5ZCtSHpxs&t=38s>). The interventions provided can be seen in the following chart:

Intervensi (Upelkes=22)	PRE	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄	Post
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Keterangan: x = intervensi (EFT)

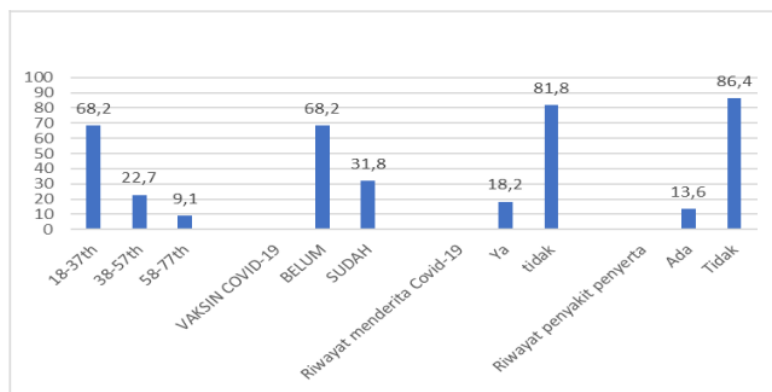
The chart above show the flow of the research conducted, namely by first giving the respondent a pretest, then the EFT intervention was carried out on the first day, then 2 days later the third EFT intervention was carried out, and two days later the fourth intervention. Next, posttest measurements were carried out..

The instrument used to measure anxiety disorders using Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), which consists of 7 items with a reliability value of 0.88 (Johnson, Ulvenes, Øktedalen, & Hoffart, 2019) and depression using the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ)-9 patient Depression Questionnaire (Kroenke, Spitzer, & Williams, 2001) which consists of 9 items with a reliability value of 0.892 (Sun, et al., 2020).

The data analysis technique used univariate and bivariate. To determine the effectiveness of the EFT method in reducing anxiety and depression in people who are positive for Covid-19 using a paired t-test (95% CI).

RESEARCH RESULT

Based on the characteristics of the research respondents, it was known that most of them are aged 18 to 37 years and have not received the Covid-19 vaccine, and have no history of co-morbidities. The following is a graph that depicts the characteristics of the respondents:



Graph 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Based on the symptoms experienced by the respondents, it showed that most experienced symptoms of cough and or

runny nose, shortness of breath, sore throat, weakness, diarrhea, and loss of smell, while only 22.7% experienced fever.

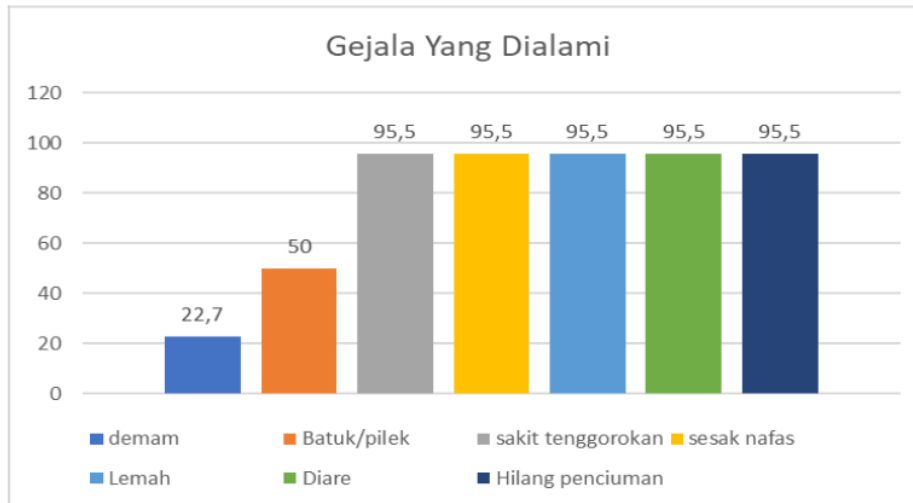


Figure 2. Symptoms experienced

Bivariate analysis performed using paired t-test, obtained p value <0.05, so it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in anxiety scores (delta mean =

3.455; 95% CI = 2.388-4.521) and depression (delta mean = 1.409; 95%CI = 0.275-2.543) between before and after the EFT intervention (Table 1).

Table 1. Differences in anxiety and depression scores between before and after the EFT intervention

Variable	Delta Mean	95% CI	t	p-value
Anxiety	3,455	2,388-4,521	6,738	0,000
Depression	1,409	0,275-2,543	2,585	0,017

DISCUSSION

Nearly everyone who tested positive for Covid-19 in the study developed symptoms. This finding is in line with several previous studies. The symptoms experienced include fever, cough and/or runny nose, and impaired smell (Garg, Srivastava, & Dhamija, 2020; Utku, et al., 2020; Adhikar, Meng, & Wu, 2020; Setiawati, Windi, Tambunan, & Suwarni, 2021).

This study also found that the anxiety experienced by positive people for Covid-19 included excessive worry due to information

about death from colleagues and symptoms experienced during isolation (Pratiwi & Dewi, 2021). Especially for people with the elderly (elderly) because they are more vulnerable and have more impact if they are infected with Covid-19 (Aritonang, Sirait, & Lumbantoruan, 2021). In addition, limited communication with colleagues further increases anxiety (Banerjee, 2020).

The findings of this study also strengthen the evidence that EFT therapy effectively reduces anxiety scores in people who are confirmed positive for Covid-19. Several previous studies also showed the

same result; EFT is significant in reducing the anxiety score of someone who is suffering from a disease (Temple, Allerton, Mollon, & Hospital, 2011; Ningsih, Karim, & Sabrian, 2016; Geronilla, Minewiser, Mollon, & McWilliam, 2016; Bach, et al., 2019; Merida, Febrieta, Husnah, Ria, & Novianti, 2021).

Anxiety is a mental health problem that often occurs when someone experiences disease or suffers from a disease that requires appropriate intervention to worsen a person's condition (König, et al., 2019). Likewise, for people who are confirmed positive for Covid-19, the anxiety that appears is very high because it is a relatively new disease that has emerged with a fairly high mortality rate (Silva, Brito, & Pereira, 2021; Aslaner, Özen, Erten, & Gökçek, 2021). This study strengthens the efficacy of EFT in reducing anxiety after being given the EFT intervention.

In addition to reducing anxiety, EFT also reduces depression scores in people who are confirmed positive for Covid-19. Supported by previous studies that produced relatively similar findings, EFT significantly lowered a person's depression score (Nelms & Castel, 2016; Sebastian & Nelms, 2017; Bach, et al., 2019).

Depression is a psychological disorder characterized by helplessness, hopelessness, and indifference in daily activities that may be accompanied by sleep disturbances, decreased appetite (World Health Organization, 2016). This depression is also experienced by confirmed positive people for Covid-19 because of the high death rate, and the isolation carried out worsens the psychological state (Setiawati, Windi, Tambunan, & Suwarni, 2021; Mazza, et al., 2020; Almira, 2020). News of death from family and colleagues confirmed positive for Covid-19 became factors that exacerbated depression. However, with EFT carried out four times, the treatment could reduce existing depression.

1
EFT is a therapy that combines cognitive and somatic elements that effectively treat physiological and psychological symptoms (Feinstein, 2012; Church, 2014). This therapy can cause a person to calm down after light tapping on specific points (Bougea, et al., 2013; Shari & Suryani, 2014). EFT therapy given as an intervention in this study impacts diverting the mind to positive things that provide calm so that it can increase the body immunity and accelerate healing of existing diseases (Isworu, Anam, & Indrawati, 2019).

It is known that people who are more worried about being infected with Covid-19 tend to have poor mental health. Discrimination and stigma against Covid-19 further worsened his mental health status (Gumantan, Mahfud, & Yuliandra, 2020; Fan, Qian, & Jin, 2021)

This study enriches the evidence that EFT is an effective intervention in treating mental health disorders, as demonstrated in many previous studies (Patterson, 2016; Bach, et al., 2019). It also shows that EFT simultaneously enhances physiological systems. As hypothesized in this study, participants experienced a significant reduction in anxiety and depression. EFT is an effective intervention in overcoming mental health disorders, as demonstrated in many previous studies. EFT can be applied to people who are confirmed positive for Covid-19 in overcoming anxiety and depression that arise in that person. Thus, EFT can be used as an alternative therapy in overcoming anxiety and depression in people who are confirmed positive for Covid-19. It can accelerate the recovery of that person.

This study has several weaknesses, including that this study did not use a comparison group and did not control for external variables that could affect the anxiety and depression of people who were confirmed positive for Covid-19. In addition, this research is limited to confirmed positive

people for Covid-19 with mild and moderate symptoms who are self-isolating in places provided by the government. Further research needs to be implemented in patients confirmed positive for Covid-19 undergoing treatment at the Covid-19 Referral Hospital.

Despite the weaknesses in this study, this study demonstrates the multidimensional physiological effects of EFT and its usefulness in improving emotional health, which is relatively easy for someone with mild-moderate mental health disorders, especially anxiety and depression.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study proves that EFT therapy effectively reduces anxiety and depression scores in positive people for Covid-19. EFT can be used as an alternative therapy in overcoming mental health disorders (especially anxiety and depression) to accelerate the recovery of people who are confirmed positive for Covid-19. This EFT therapy can also be used on people who are confirmed to have Covid-19, both those who are self-isolating and those who are hospitalized.

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