

Psychoeducation For Anxiety Management In Student Communities

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ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: Komunitas HF adalah organisasi mahasiswa di sebuah departemen universitas di Surabaya, Jawa Timur. Observasi lapangan dan wawancara informal mengungkapkan bahwa banyak anggota mengalami kecemasan akademik, yang ditandai dengan kesulitan berkonsentrasi selama perkuliahan, perasaan bersalah ketika memprioritaskan tanggung jawab akademik daripada keterlibatan komunitas atau sebaliknya, dan keluhan psikosomatik seperti sakit kepala, insomnia, dan kelelahan berkepanjangan. Kondisi ini menunjukkan stres berkepanjangan, yang dapat memicu aktivasi berkelanjutan dari sistem saraf simpatik. **Tujuan:** Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi masalah psikologis yang berkaitan dengan kecemasan akademik yang dialami oleh anggota Komunitas HF saat menyeimbangkan peran akademik dan organisasi. **Metode:** Pendekatan psikoedukatif digunakan, yang terdiri dari kuliah singkat, diskusi kelompok kecil, dan kegiatan refleksi individu. Intervensi dilakukan dalam satu sesi 90 menit menggunakan format interaktif yang santai. **Hasil:** Psikoedukasi meningkatkan literasi psikologis peserta dan mendorong refleksi diri yang lebih dalam mengenai kecemasan akademik. **Kesimpulan:** Peserta menunjukkan peningkatan pemahaman tentang kecemasan dan strategi penanggulangan dasar. Banyak mahasiswa menjadi lebih terbuka dalam membahas tekanan yang dirasakan dan mulai menyadari pentingnya istirahat, manajemen waktu, dan dukungan sosial dalam mengelola tuntutan akademik.

Kata kunci : Kecemasan akademik; Psikoedukasi kelompok; Mahasiswa universitas; Organisasi mahasiswa; Kesejahteraan psikologis

ABSTRACT

Background: The HF Community is a student organization within a university department in Surabaya, East Java. Field observations and informal interviews revealed that many members experience academic anxiety, characterized by difficulty concentrating during lectures, feelings of guilt when prioritizing academic responsibilities over community involvement or vice versa, and psychosomatic complaints such as headaches, insomnia, and prolonged fatigue. These conditions indicate prolonged stress, which may trigger sustained activation of the sympathetic nervous system. **Objective:** This study aimed to identify psychological problems related to academic anxiety experienced by HF Community members while balancing academic and organizational roles. **Methods:** A psychoeducational approach was employed, consisting of brief lectures, small group discussions, and individual reflection activities. The intervention was conducted in a single 90-minute session using a relaxed, interactive format. **Results:** The psychoeducation increased participants' psychological literacy and encouraged deeper self-reflection regarding academic anxiety. **Conclusion:** Participants demonstrated improved understanding of anxiety and basic coping strategies. Many students became more open in discussing perceived pressures and began recognizing the importance of rest, time management, and social support in managing academic demands.

Keywords : Academic anxiety; Group psychoeducation; University students; Student organization; Psychological well-being

INTRODUCTION

Community is a social context that plays a crucial role in shaping individual psychological well-being and the social functioning of groups. In contemporary community psychology, communities are understood as dynamic systems comprised of individuals interconnected through social relationships, shared values, and collective goals that influence the adaptation process and mental health of their members (Jason et al.,

2019). Thus, communities are not only the setting for psychological problems but also have the potential to be a key resource for psychosocial prevention and recovery efforts.

Recent research shows that the quality of social relationships within a community, including social support, active participation, and a sense of belonging, contributes significantly to psychological well-being and resilience in the face of life stressors (Allen et al., 2021). Individuals who feel connected to their community tend to have lower stress levels, more adaptive emotion regulation, and more effective coping strategies. Conversely, weak community cohesion and involvement can increase vulnerability to various psychological problems, including anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and social withdrawal.

From a modern community psychology perspective, communities are also viewed as agents of change, capable of identifying problems, managing resources, and developing solutions based on local needs (Kagan et al., 2020). This approach emphasizes the importance of psychological empowerment, the process of increasing control, participation, and critical awareness of individuals and groups regarding the social conditions that affect their lives (Christens, 2019). Therefore, current community psychology interventions are more directed at promotive and preventive efforts, rather than solely curative, with the goal of strengthening the community's internal capacity and building sustainable support systems (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021).

In this context, the HF Community is a student organization at the Faculty of Agricultural Technology (TF), located in Surabaya, East Java. This community consists of 34 active students from various classes, particularly those in their 5th, 6th, and 7th semesters. HF was founded as a forum for developing organizational skills, strengthening student relationships, and contributing to academic and non-academic activities at the department level. Historically, the HF Community has been known for its disciplined and resilient work culture, with a strong focus on developing TF student leadership. Its various activities include cadre development forums, leadership training, internal team-building activities, and active involvement in departmental collaborative activities such as internal seminars, new student mentoring, and department-based academic projects.

In addition to its structural organizational functions, the HF Community also plays a role in building solidarity and a sense of togetherness among students. This community provides a space for its members to share experiences, collectively overcome academic challenges, and develop the social and emotional competencies needed for campus life. One of the main activities involving the HF Community is the engineering cadre development program, a character and leadership development program mandatory for all fourth-semester students. This program lasts one semester, with activities up to four days a week, and is a graduation requirement for ITS students.

However, the high intensity and demands of this cadre development program pose psychological challenges for HF Community members, particularly in balancing academic roles and organizational responsibilities. The busy and time-consuming schedule requires members to work extra hard to manage lectures, academic assignments, midterm and final exam preparation, and the responsibility of managing cadre development activities that occur almost every week. During this process, some members began reporting complaints related to academic anxiety, such as concerns about being unable to meet academic demands, fear of declining performance, feelings of pressure from lecturers, and limited rest time, which results in physical and mental fatigue.

Recent research shows that academic anxiety in students is often triggered by the burden of multiple roles, high performance demands, and limited adequate recovery time (Putwain et al., 2020; Son et al., 2020). Unmanaged academic anxiety can lead to decreased concentration, overthinking, sleep disturbances, and a tendency to procrastinate as a response to feelings of overwhelm (Fong et al., 2021). This condition not only impacts individual well-being but also has the potential to disrupt students' functioning within the community.

Although various studies have addressed academic anxiety in college students, most studies have focused on the individual level and solely on clinical or educational approaches. There is limited research and interventions that address academic anxiety as a psychological phenomenon influenced by community dynamics, particularly in the context of student organizations with high cadre demands. Furthermore, promotive and preventative intervention approaches at the community level such as group psychoeducation

and strengthening psychological literacy are still relatively rarely systematically applied in the context of student organizations.

Based on these conditions, the HF Community is a relevant context for community psychology interventions focused on increasing awareness of academic anxiety, strengthening student coping capacities, and developing a more adaptive balance between academic and organizational roles. Community-based interventions are expected to not only help individuals manage the anxiety they experience, but also strengthen the community's function as a healthy and sustainable psychological support system.

METHOD

The method used in this activity is group-based psychoeducation provided to members of the HF Community as a promotional and preventive effort to address academic anxiety. Psychoeducation was chosen because it aligns with the characteristics of the problem experienced, namely academic anxiety that arises collectively due to the demands of academic and organizational roles, and is still at a mild to moderate level. This approach allows for increased psychological literacy without creating stigma, while also encouraging active student involvement in the psychological learning process (Walsh, 2020).

Psychoeducation is designed to help students increase awareness of their psychological conditions, particularly in recognizing the forms, triggers, and impacts of academic anxiety. The material presented includes a basic understanding of academic anxiety as a normal psychological response to performance demands, time pressure, and role conflict, as well as an explanation of the relationship between thoughts, emotions, and behavior in the academic context. Providing this understanding aims to normalize the experience of anxiety, reduce self-blame, and develop a more adaptive attitude toward academic pressure (Putwain et al., 2020).

Psychoeducation is implemented in a group format using a participatory approach. Activities involve more than just one-way material delivery, but also small-group discussions, reflection on personal experiences, and sharing strategies used by community members to cope with academic and organizational demands. The group approach was chosen because it strengthens a sense of togetherness and belonging, enabling students to recognize that the anxiety they experience is not solely an individual experience, but rather a phenomenon shared by other community members (Allen et al., 2021).

In addition to increasing understanding, this psychoeducation also aims to encourage students to try healthier and more effective coping strategies. The coping strategies introduced include simple time management techniques, role prioritization, basic emotion regulation strategies, and the importance of utilizing social support within the community. Emphasis is placed on realistic and applicable coping strategies within the context of students' lives, so they can be directly tried and adapted to each individual's circumstances (Fong et al., 2021).

As part of a community psychology approach, this psychoeducation also aims to strengthen the capacity of the HF community as a psychological support system. Through a process of discussion and collective reflection, it is hoped that the community will be able to foster a more open climate toward mental health issues, increase sensitivity among members to signs of academic anxiety, and encourage more supportive communication. Thus, psychoeducation focuses not only on individual change but also on strengthening the community's function as an agent of change in supporting the psychological well-being of its members (Christens, 2019; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021).

Overall, through this community-based psychoeducation method, it is hoped that HF Community students will gain a better understanding of their psychological state, be able to recognize signs of academic anxiety early on, and be encouraged to implement healthier and more effective coping strategies to continuously face academic and organizational demands.

2.1 Participant

Participants in this psychoeducational activity were active members of the HF Community, a student organization at the Faculty of Agricultural Technology (TF), Surabaya, East Java. In total, there were 34 active students from various classes, with the majority in their 5th, 6th, and 7th semesters. All participants were directly involved in community organization activities and played an active role in implementing engineering cadre development programs at the department level. The participants were characterized by

dual involvement in academic and organizational roles. In addition to fulfilling their academic obligations, they also assumed responsibility for planning, coordinating, and implementing intensive cadre development activities throughout the semester. This situation placed participants in a situation with relatively high demands on their time, energy, and responsibility, potentially leading to psychological stress, particularly academic anxiety.

2.2 Procedure

Psychoeducation was conducted in a single face-to-face session using a group approach. This session was designed to be structured yet flexible, ensuring participants felt safe, comfortable, and actively engaged throughout. The entire series of activities focused on increasing students' awareness of their psychological conditions and encouraging the development of healthier and more adaptive coping strategies for dealing with academic anxiety.

The activity began with an opening and ice-breaking session. During this stage, the facilitator introduced themselves, explained the purpose of the activity, and provided an overview of the psychoeducation session. The initial explanation emphasized that this activity was not an assessment or evaluation, but rather a safe space for learning and sharing experiences. The ice-breaking session was conducted in a light-hearted manner to break the ice, build a sense of psychological safety, and increase participant engagement. This phase aimed to create a supportive climate so that participants would be more open to participating in the next session.

The next stage was the delivery of the psychoeducation material. The facilitator explained academic anxiety, including its definition, common causes, and its impact on students' academic functioning and psychological well-being. The material was presented in simple and contextual language, accompanied by examples relevant to the students' experiences during their cadre formation and organizational activities. This stage also explained that anxiety is a normal response to certain demands, but it needs to be managed so that it does not interfere with individual functioning.

Following the presentation, the activity continued with small group discussions. Participants were divided into groups and asked to share experiences related to the most stressful situations they felt during their cadre formation, particularly those related to academic demands and time management. These discussions were facilitated openly without coercion, allowing participants to choose how much they wanted to share. This stage aimed to help participants recognize that their experiences of anxiety were not solely individual, and to strengthen a sense of togetherness and social support within the community.

The next stage was an introduction to simple strategies for dealing with academic anxiety. The facilitator introduced several coping strategies that are easy to apply in students' daily lives, such as realistic time management and priorities, deep breathing techniques to reduce physiological tension, calming the mind when excessive worry arises, and the importance of sharing stories and seeking support from peers. Emphasis was placed on selecting strategies appropriate to each participant's individual circumstances, rather than on rigid or forced implementation.

The activity concluded with a reflection and closing stage. At this stage, participants are asked to write down one important thing they learned during the session and one small step they would like to try after the activity ends. This reflection aims to help participants internalize the material learned and encourage personal commitment to try realistic and sustainable changes. The session concludes with a brief summary from the facilitator and appreciation for the participants' active involvement throughout the activity.

2.3 Data Measurement

Data measurement approach that emphasizes changes in participants' subjective experiences aligns with the view that promotive-preventive interventions are more appropriately evaluated through indicators of awareness, understanding, and perceived benefits rather than formal clinical diagnoses (Weiss et al., 2020). In the context of higher education, subjective experience-based measures are considered capable of capturing early psychological changes that are often not immediately reflected in a reduction in clinical symptoms.

The use of self-report instruments to measure academic anxiety is also supported by findings that learning anxiety is the most accurately assessed internal emotion by individuals themselves, particularly when interventions aim to increase reflection and self-regulation (Doménech-Betoret et al., 2020).

Therefore, self-report questionnaires are considered appropriate for evaluating the initial impact of psychoeducation.

Furthermore, evaluating post-intervention understanding aligns with the outcome-based approach to psychoeducation, which places increased knowledge and awareness as key indicators of early intervention success (Donker et al., 2019). Increased understanding is seen as a crucial prerequisite for more adaptive, long-term changes in attitudes and behaviors.

The use of written reflections as qualitative data is also relevant to the reflective learning approach, which emphasizes that the process of reflection helps individuals integrate emotional experiences with new knowledge. Written reflections have been shown to be effective in revealing changes in meaning and readiness to act following brief psychological interventions (Mann et al., 2020).

Within the framework of community psychology, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data is considered essential for capturing the complex impact of community-based interventions. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of both individual changes and the group dynamics that develop during the intervention process (Kagan et al., 2020).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test Academic Anxiety

Aspect	Mean	SD	Category
Academic performance worry	3.94	0.61	High
Task/exam tension	3.88	0.58	High
Concentration difficulties	3.71	0.64	Moderate-High
Role conflict pressure	4.02	0.55	High
Physical and mental fatigue	3.96	0.6	High
Total score	3.9	0.57	Moderate-High

Table 2. Categorization of Pre-Test Academic Anxiety Levels

Category	Score Range	Frequency (n)	Percentage
Low	1.00–2.49	3	8.8%
Moderate	2.50–3.49	11	32.4%
Moderate-High to High	≥3.50	20	58.8%

Meanwhile, a post-test was conducted on 34 members of the HF Community after a psychoeducational session on academic anxiety. The instrument used was the same as the pre-test, namely a self-report academic anxiety questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1–5. The post-test aimed to observe changes in participants' levels of academic anxiety and psychological responses after gaining understanding and coping strategies through psychoeducation. The post-test was conducted collectively at the end of the psychoeducational session, after the reflection and closing stages. Before completing the questionnaire, the facilitator re-explained the purpose of the measurement, emphasizing that participants' answers were confidential and would not affect their academic assessment or participation in the community. This emphasis was given to reduce the tendency for socially desirable answers and encourage participants to answer according to their true psychological state.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Post-Test Academic Anxiety

Aspect	Mean	SD	Category
Academic performance worry	3.21	0.59	Moderate
Task/exam tension	3.14	0.56	Moderate
Concentration difficulties	3.02	0.61	Moderate
Role conflict pressure	3.26	0.58	Moderate

Physical and mental fatigue	3.18	0.6	Moderate
Total score	3.16	0.56	Moderate

Table 4. Categorization of Post-Test Academic Anxiety Levels

Category	Score Range	Frequency (n)	Percentage
Low	1.00–2.49	8	23.5%
Moderate	2.50–3.49	20	58.8%
Moderate–High to High	≥ 3.50	6	17.7%

2.4 Data Analysis

The comparison of pre-test and post-test results showed a decrease in academic anxiety levels among HF Community members after participating in psychoeducational activities. The average academic anxiety score decreased from moderate-high in the pre-test to moderate in the post-test. This decrease was evident across all measured aspects, including concerns about academic performance, tension during assignments and exams, difficulty concentrating, stress due to dual roles, and physical and mental fatigue.

The most significant decrease occurred in dual role stress and physical and mental fatigue, which had previously been the primary sources of academic anxiety for participants. Furthermore, there was a shift in anxiety categories, with the number of participants with moderate-high anxiety decreasing, while the number of participants with low and moderate anxiety increased. Overall, these results indicate that psychoeducation is effective as an initial intervention in increasing students' psychological awareness and helping them manage academic anxiety more adaptively, although some participants still require further support.

Table 5. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Aspect	Mean (Pre)	Mean (Post)	Δ Mean
Academic performance worry	3.94	3.21	-0.73
Task/exam tension	3.88	3.14	-0.74
Concentration difficulties	3.71	3.02	-0.69
Role conflict pressure	4.02	3.26	-0.76
Physical and mental fatigue	3.96	3.18	-0.78
Total score	3.9	3.16	-0.74

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Result

Overall, the implementation of the academic anxiety psychoeducational intervention in the HF Community demonstrated positive results. A comparison of pre-test and post-test data revealed a decrease in academic anxiety levels in most participants after participating in the psychoeducational activities. The average academic anxiety score, which was initially in the moderate-high category, decreased to the moderate category, indicating an improvement in students' psychological well-being. This decrease in anxiety was consistent across all measured aspects, particularly stress resulting from dual roles as a student and an organization member, as well as physical and mental fatigue arising from a busy schedule. Furthermore, there was a shift in anxiety categories, with the number of participants with moderate to high levels of anxiety decreasing, while the number of participants with low and moderate anxiety increased. These findings indicate that participants are beginning to interpret academic demands more adaptively.

These changes can be explained through the cognitive-behavioral stress framework, which emphasizes that anxiety is influenced by how individuals interpret the relationship between thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Psychoeducation helps participants recognize maladaptive thought patterns related to academic demands and replace them with more realistic interpretations, thereby suppressing anxiety responses (Hofmann et al., 2021). Furthermore, the pressure experienced by participants aligns with the concept of academic role overload, where the accumulation of academic and non-academic demands contributes to increased anxiety, fatigue, and decreased psychological well-being. Psychological education-based

interventions have been shown to help students manage these role burdens more adaptively, even though objective demands remain (Pascoe et al., 2020).

The reduction in concerns about academic performance and stress in facing assignments can also be understood through the perspective of self-regulation theory. This theory emphasizes the importance of self-awareness and emotional management in dealing with learning demands. Through psychoeducation, students are encouraged to develop more effective emotional regulation and coping strategies so that anxiety does not develop into a significant barrier to learning (Ben-Eliyahu, 2019). This is reflected in the participants' reflections, which indicate increased psychological awareness and a readiness to try healthier coping strategies, such as more realistic time management, breathing techniques to reduce tension, and utilizing peer support.

These qualitative findings also support the concept of mental health literacy, namely the ability of individuals to recognize, understand, and independently manage mental health conditions. Psychoeducation plays a crucial role in improving students' mental health literacy, enabling them not only to understand their psychological conditions but also to be prepared to undertake independent and adaptive coping efforts (Kutcher et al., 2019). In the context of community psychology, the use of a group format in psychoeducation aligns with the community-based mental health promotion approach, which emphasizes the role of social support, normalization of stressful experiences, and active group participation as protective factors against anxiety. This community-based approach is considered more contextual and sustainable than solely individual interventions (Barry et al., 2019).

Thus, psychoeducation has proven effective as an early and preventative intervention in helping students improve their psychological understanding and manage academic anxiety more adaptively. However, given that some participants still exhibit moderate to high levels of anxiety, psychoeducation needs to be complemented with follow-up interventions or additional psychological support to achieve optimal and sustainable impact.

4.2 Discussion

The finding of reduced academic anxiety following psychoeducational intervention aligns with research showing that increased psychological understanding and emotional literacy play a crucial role in helping students manage academic stress more adaptively (Conley et al., 2020). Psychoeducation enables students to understand the sources of academic stress and differentiate between objective demands and subjective emotional responses. The reduction in anxiety related to burnout and role strain is also consistent with studies that suggest that high academic workloads and limited recovery time are key predictors of anxiety and burnout in students (Duffy et al., 2019; Maymon et al., 2021). When students are equipped with basic understanding and coping strategies, they tend to demonstrate increased adaptability despite ongoing academic demands.

In terms of emotion regulation, changes in performance anxiety and task tension support the finding that psychological education-based interventions can reduce negative academic emotions by helping individuals manage irrational thoughts and excessive expectations of achievement (Pekrun & Stephens, 2020). This process contributes to increased focus on learning and more adaptive decision-making. In the context of community psychology, the use of group formats in psychoeducation also aligns with findings that peer social support and normalization of stressful experiences act as protective factors against academic anxiety (van der Zanden et al., 2020). Community-based interventions are considered effective because they not only target individuals but also strengthen the psychological climate and sense of safety within study groups or student organizations.

CONCLUSION

Psychoeducational interventions have been shown to increase students' psychological awareness of their conditions, particularly in understanding academic anxiety as a normal response to high academic demands and organizational roles. Through this understanding, participants begin to interpret academic pressure more adaptively and are encouraged to try healthier coping strategies, such as more realistic time management, setting priorities, and utilizing social support from peers. In addition to impacting individuals, psychoeducation also contributes to strengthening the HF Community's function as a psychological support

system. The process of discussion and collective reflection helps foster openness, a sense of community, and sensitivity among members to mental health issues. This demonstrates the relevance of a community-based approach to addressing collective psychological issues, such as academic anxiety, within the context of student organizations.

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