

Integrative Counseling Workshop on Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) with Muhasabah to Manage Stress and Anxiety in Border Students of Indonesia-Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Stress and anxiety issues among students in the Indonesia-Malaysia border region pose a serious challenge to the learning process. The inability to manage emotions can interfere with students' concentration and academic development. This community service activity aims to improve teachers' competence in managing stress and anxiety through integrative counseling based on Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and muhasabah, with the hope that teachers will be able to apply these techniques both for themselves and to assist their students. The participants were 25 teachers from partner schools in the border region. The workshop was conducted face-to-face through theory and practice sessions, supplemented by group discussions. To assess the impact of the activity, participants filled out instruments before and after the training and wrote reflections. The results showed an increase in teachers' understanding, with 65% in the high category, 25% in the medium category, and 10% in the low category. Although an increase in teacher competence was evident, the limitation of this activity was the lack of long-term data on direct application to students and the sustainability of the practice in schools. Therefore, follow-up through continuous mentoring is necessary so that the benefits of this program can be felt more widely.

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INTRODUCTION

Student mental health is a critical issue that directly affects learning, concentration, and academic achievement. This condition is particularly pressing in the Indonesia–Malaysia border region, especially in Nunukan Regency, which faces limitations in educational facilities and psychological support. Previous research that has been published (Cahyono, Ariantini, & Fadilah, 2024) revealed that a significant proportion of students in this region experience moderate to severe anxiety. Quantitative data from the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) administered to 100 students at MA Al Ikhlas Nunukan in 2024 showed that approximately 20–30% of students were in the moderate to high anxiety category (Figure 1).

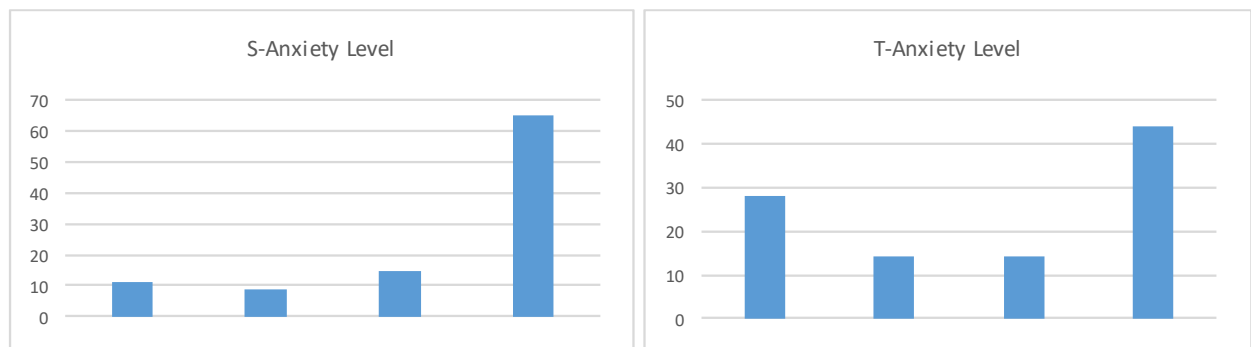


FIGURE 1. State & Trait Anxiety Data of Border Students Indonesia-Malaysia.

Source: PKM Team Research Results

This finding is reinforced by qualitative data from student interviews, as summarized in Table 1, which identified various forms of anxiety, including academic, social, economic, and future-related anxiety. The main contributing factors include inadequate educational facilities, pressure from family and social environments, and the limited availability of counseling support in schools.

TABLE 1. Qualitative Data Analysis of Border Students' Anxiety.

Indicator	Interview Results
Forms of Anxiety in Border Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Anxiety, fear of failure or being unable to keep up with lessons. Social Anxiety, fear and shame in socializing. Economic Anxiety, lack of economic certainty. Anxiety about the Future, career uncertainty.
Causes of Anxiety in Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of Adequate Educational Facilities. Pressure from Family, Social, and Parental Environment. Economic Disparity in Border Areas. Emotional Instability due to Lack of Psychological Support in School/Family.

Source: PKM Team Research Results

Furthermore, the low Human Development Index (HDI) of Nunukan, which consistently ranks lowest among districts and cities in North Kalimantan (Table 2), reflects weak human resource quality, including limited access to mental health services. This low HDI indicates that improving the quality of education must go hand in hand with strengthening psychosocial support for students.

TABLE 2. Human Development Index (HDI) Data by Regency/City, North Kalimantan Province.

Regency/City and Province	2020	2021	2022
Malinau	71.94	72.32	72.75
Bulungan	71.10	71.80	72.08
Tana Tidung	66.97	67.76	68.60
Nunukan	65.79	66.46	67.16
Tarakan	75.83	76.23	76.68
Kalimantan Utara	70.63	71.19	71.83

Source: Central Statistics Agency of North Kalimantan Province

In addition to these structural challenges, a needs assessment conducted with partner schools highlighted priority issues in student mental health services (Table 3: Priority Issues of PKM Partners). The findings show that teacher competence in handling mental health remains weak, as evidenced by the absence of training, the lack of specific modules to support student mental health, and the limited application of psychological approaches in school programs. This indicates that teachers, as the frontliners in schools, urgently require capacity building to address student stress and anxiety.

TABLE 3. Priority Issues of PKM Partners.

Problem	Description
Competence in Handling Mental Health in Schools is Still Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No training for teachers regarding students' mental health. Lack of specific modules or materials to support students' mental health. Limited application of psychological approaches in extracurricular/intracurricular activities at school

This issue is also aligned with national development agendas through the National Research Master Plan (RIRN) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) emphasizes the importance of mental health, while SDG 4 (Quality Education) underscores the necessity of an educational system that supports student well-being. In this context, strengthening teacher capacity to address student mental health emerges as a strategic intervention as well as a priority area of research and community service.

One promising approach is integrative counseling that combines Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) with muhasabah. The integration of modern mindfulness techniques with Islamic spiritual reflection is relevant to the conservative religious characteristics of the Nunukan community (Cahyono et al., 2024). Through training programs for teachers, these skills are expected to benefit teachers' own stress management as well as enable them to provide effective support for students in coping with psychological challenges in schools.

METHOD

This community service program adopted a participatory workshop design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The participants consisted of 25 teachers from Madrasah Aliyah Al Ikhlas

Nunukan, who were purposively selected as representatives from the Indonesia–Malaysia border region. Intervention Framework. The workshop introduced an integrative counseling model that combined Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) with muhasabah. The intervention was delivered through two main stages: (1) theoretical sessions that explained the basic principles of MBSR and muhasabah, and (2) practice-based sessions involving guided meditation, breathing exercises, light physical movements, and reflective writing. Group discussions were facilitated to strengthen peer learning and contextual adaptation.

Target Outputs and Application of Scientific Innovation

The scientific innovation of this program is the integration of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and muhasabah in teacher counseling practice, offering a holistic model that combines evidence-based mindfulness with Islamic reflective traditions. As presented in Table 4 (Achievement Targets and Scientific Innovation of PKM), the target outputs include: (1) strengthening teacher competence in applying stress and anxiety management techniques; (2) providing practical skills that can be implemented both in counseling and classroom learning situations without disrupting lessons; and (3) ensuring sustainability by enabling teachers to independently support students experiencing mild stress and anxiety. This framework reflects the program's contribution to innovative, culturally relevant counseling practices.

TABLE 4. Achievement Targets and Scientific Innovation of PKM

Problem	Scientific Innovation	Target Outputs	Sustainable Implementation
Mental Health Handling Competence in Schools is Still Weak	Teacher Competence in Implementing Integrative Counseling: MBSR and Muhasabah	Teachers have the skills to implement stress and anxiety interventions using an integrative approach: MBSR and Muhasabah to manage students' stress and anxiety.	Subject teachers can handle students with mild stress and anxiety through this intervention. The ease of implementation allows teachers to apply it even in classroom learning situations without disrupting the lesson. Students at an advanced stage.

Workshop Method

The workshop was delivered in a face-to-face format with two main stages: theoretical explanation and hands-on practice. The structure of the counseling model, integrating MBSR and muhasabah, was adapted from the research framework developed by the PKM team and is visually summarized in Figure 2 (Scientific Innovation in Counseling: Integration of MBSR and Muhasabah).

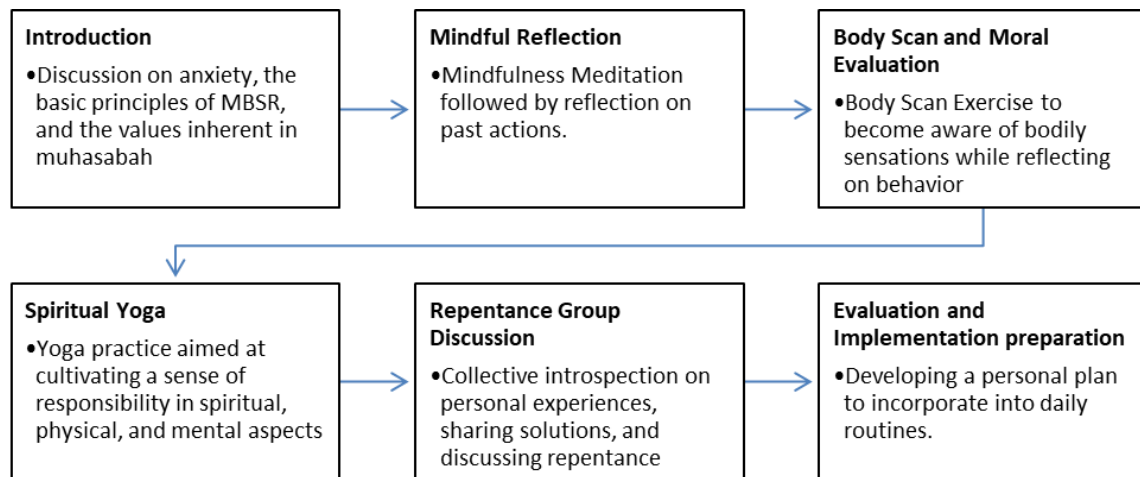


FIGURE 2. Scientific Innovation in Counseling: Integration of MBSR and Muhasabah.
Source: Fundamental Research Results 2024

Theory Session

In this stage, participants were introduced to the fundamental principles of MBSR as developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, including mindfulness awareness and breathing regulation for stress reduction. The concept of Muhasabah was presented as an Islamic practice of Muhasabah to strengthen personal responsibility and spiritual resilience. Delivery methods included presentations, videos, and group discussions that allowed teachers to contextualize the material for classroom application.

Practice Session

Teachers were guided through structured exercises, including mindfulness meditation, breathing techniques, and light physical movements. They were also invited to perform Muhasabah through guided reflective writing. Practice sessions were designed to simulate real classroom or counseling situations, with trainers providing direct supervision and feedback. This was followed by group discussions to consolidate learning and address difficulties encountered.

Workshop Tools and Media

Several tools were employed to facilitate the sessions:

- Integrative Counseling Module with MBSR and Muhasabah – provided as independent learning material for teachers.
- Stress and Anxiety Questionnaire – administered before and after the workshop to evaluate changes in participants' understanding of stress management.
- Reflective Journals – completed by participants after each practice session to record personal experiences and insights.

Participants

The participants consisted of 20 teachers from Madrasah Aliyah Al Ikhlas Nunukan, representing diverse academic backgrounds. None of them had prior formal training in counseling or psychology.

This participant profile reflects the pressing need to strengthen teacher competencies in supporting student mental health in the border region.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

The integrative counseling workshop was carried out in four stages: (1) presentation of student stress and anxiety data, (2) introduction of MBSR and muhasabah counseling theory, (3) practice of the six integrative counseling stages, and (4) reflection and evaluation. The implementation flow is illustrated in Figures 3 and 4, which demonstrate how participants engaged in theoretical exposure and practice-based simulations.



FIGURE 3. Presentation of Integrative Counseling Theory



FIGURE 4. Mindfulness Counseling Practice

Quantitative reflection data, summarized in Table 5 (PKM Achievement), show that 65% of participants achieved a high level of understanding, 25% moderate, and 10% low. This indicates that most teachers were able to grasp the workshop content and apply the techniques effectively during practice. Participants reported improvements in their ability to recognize stress indicators, implement breathing and mindfulness exercises, and conduct Muhasabah through Muhasabah.

TABLE 5. PKM Achievement

Understanding Category	Percentage	Number of Participants
Low	10%	2
Medium	25%	6
High	65%	17
Total	100%	25

Qualitative reflections from participants revealed three main themes: (1) improved personal stress awareness, (2) greater confidence in applying mindfulness practices in classrooms, and (3) recognition of the relevance of combining MBSR with muhasabah in a conservative Muslim context. Several teachers highlighted that integrating religious values enhanced acceptance of the intervention among their peers and could potentially increase sustainability in schools.

Discussion

The improvement in teachers' understanding indicates that the workshop successfully increased their readiness to integrate stress and anxiety management strategies into their professional practice. However, understanding alone does not automatically translate into behavioral change or consistent implementation in schools. Previous studies have highlighted that teacher training programs often achieve short-term cognitive gains but struggle to ensure long-term application in classrooms without systematic follow-up and institutional support (Shibuya et al., 2025). Therefore, while the current findings are promising, they must be interpreted as an initial step rather than definitive evidence of sustainable practice.

The integration of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction with muhasabah represents an important innovation in culturally adapting psychological interventions. Whereas standard MBSR programs have shown effectiveness in reducing stress and anxiety across various populations (Norouzi et al., 2020), their direct transfer to conservative Muslim communities may encounter resistance due to cultural or religious perceptions. By embedding muhasabah as a form of spiritual reflection, this intervention addressed cultural sensitivities and enhanced acceptability, making it more contextually grounded. This aligns with Dein (2020), who emphasizes that religiously integrated approaches can strengthen engagement and effectiveness in mental health interventions.

Another critical point concerns the role of teachers as frontline actors in student mental health support. In border regions such as Nunukan, the scarcity of professional counselors necessitates alternative solutions. Teacher capacity building, as demonstrated in this program, is therefore a strategic response to systemic limitations. However, challenges remain, including heavy teaching workloads, limited time allocation for mental health activities, and the absence of formal curricular space for counseling. These structural barriers must be addressed to maximize the benefits of teacher-based interventions (Larran & Hein, 2024).

Sustainability is also a pressing concern. Without ongoing mentoring, refresher training, or institutional policy support, the skills acquired in a single workshop risk diminishing over time. Longitudinal studies suggest that periodic reinforcement and integration into school systems are essential for maintaining teacher competencies in mental health practices (Miller et al., 2017). Thus, future programs should consider a phased approach: initial intensive training, followed by structured follow-up, peer support networks, and integration into school policy.

Finally, the present study highlights the potential contribution of integrative counseling to broader development agendas. By addressing student mental health through teacher training, the program contributes not only to educational outcomes but also to the enhancement of human resource quality in line with the National Research Master Plan (RIRN) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, this aligns with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). The findings underscore the importance of holistic, context-sensitive interventions in promoting both mental health and educational resilience in underserved regions.

CONCLUSION

The workshop demonstrated that integrating Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) with muhasabah can enhance teachers' awareness and readiness to manage stress and anxiety, both for themselves and their students. Quantitative reflection showed that most participants (65%) achieved a high level of understanding, while qualitative feedback indicated positive experiences with the culturally adapted approach. Nevertheless, these results should be viewed as preliminary. The study did not measure long-term implementation or direct student outcomes, and further research with a longitudinal design is required. Moving forward, follow-up training and institutional support will be critical to ensure sustainability and broader impact in school contexts.

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