

The Effectiveness of Relaxation Techniques in Reducing Academic Burnout among University Students: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: University students face various academic pressures that can lead to physical and mental exhaustion, a condition known as academic burnout. One intervention approach believed to reduce the level of academic burnout is relaxation techniques. This study aims to systematically review the effectiveness of relaxation techniques in reducing academic burnout among university students. The method used is a systematic literature review with the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach as a guideline in the process of searching and selecting literature. The results show that relaxation techniques are effective in reducing academic burnout among university students. The techniques used include affirmation relaxation, mindfulness, biofeedback, progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing, and spiritual approaches such as ablation therapy and Benson relaxation. Relaxation techniques have been proven to be an effective non-pharmacological approach that is flexible and adaptable to the student context.

1 INTRODUCTION

Higher education transforms an individual's status from a student to a university student, which brings greater responsibilities and expectations. As university students, they face new challenges and obligations and are required to develop the ability to think critically, solve problems, build creativity, and communication skills (Nurhalimah & Mulyani, 2022). Over time, the level of difficulty for students tends to increase. This growing burden often presents various challenges in students' academic aspects. The increasing pressure on students sometimes leads to physical and mental exhaustion, a condition known as burnout (Ariani et al., 2022). Burnout in academics is often referred to as academic burnout.

Academic burnout arises from students' involvement in the learning process, which results in

emotional exhaustion, a tendency toward pessimism, and low self-esteem (Christiana, 2020). Schaufeli et al. (2002) define academic burnout as feelings of exhaustion due to academic demands, a cynical attitude toward coursework, and a sense of incompetence as a student. Academic burnout can lead to negative tendencies in relation to the increasing demands and pressures of education (emotional exhaustion), pessimistic attitudes toward education (anxiety and pessimism), and low competence and efficiency in learning (inefficiency) (Moghadam et al., 2020).

Yang defines academic burnout as a mental disorder that leads to exhaustion, cynicism, and a sense of low self-confidence (Pouratashi & Zamani, 2020). Meanwhile, Lin and Huang (2014) suggest that academic burnout occurs because individuals experience academic pressure, excessive workload,

and psychological factors, including emotional exhaustion, negative attitudes, and a low sense of achievement. Academic burnout can have both positive and negative impacts. Its negative impact is decreased individual performance, where individuals with high burnout tend to perform poorly. However, the positive impact is that it can encourage individuals to become more self-aware and create new experiences (Arlinkasari & Akmal, 2017).

Burnout is a state of ongoing emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by stress (Ariani et al., 2022). Academic burnout tends to increase among students during their studies, and one possible intervention to reduce burnout is music-based (Situmorang, 2019). Academic burnout experienced by students needs to be addressed immediately to change behavior for the better, one of which can be done through behavior-focused approaches (Rahmawati et al., 2023). High levels of academic burnout require specific interventions and treatments. These treatments may take the form of services tailored to the problems faced, using appropriate approaches and techniques (Maulidya & Prabawa, 2024).

One approach often used in psychological practice is relaxation techniques. Behavioral therapy techniques known as relaxation can help individuals develop a good personality, preserve their mental well-being, eliminate irrational thoughts that arise from an inability to control the ego, and maintain both physical and mental health (Hikmah et al., 2020). According to Yusuf et al. (2010 in Rahmawati et al., 2023), relaxation techniques are a combination of two methods: deep breathing relaxation and the gradual, programmed repetition of simple positive statements. This is reinforced by Ningsih (2016), who stated that

when individuals practice relaxation regularly, it is believed to bring both physical and psychological benefits.

Based on the description above, this study aims to systematically review the effectiveness of relaxation techniques in reducing academic burnout among university students. This review is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the types of relaxation techniques used, their effectiveness, and recommendations for their application among students experiencing academic burnout.

2 METHOD

This study is a systematic literature review that aims to systematically examine the effectiveness of relaxation techniques in reducing academic burnout among university students. PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) was used as a guideline in reporting and selecting scientific articles. The literature search was conducted systematically following the PRISMA flow, which consists of four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and included.

Identification refers to the process of searching literature through several online scientific databases, such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and PubMed. The search keywords used included “teknik relaksasi,” “kejenuhan akademik,” “mahasiswa,” “relaxation techniques,” “academic burnout,” and “college student.” The publication year was limited to the range of 2014 to 2025. The languages used were Indonesian and English.

Screening refers to checking the titles and abstracts to ensure their relevance to the topic based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion

criteria included articles that showed a reduction in the level of academic burnout, articles that involved interventions in the form of relaxation techniques, and articles that studied students as the population. The exclusion criteria included irrelevant articles, articles without full-text access, and articles that did not provide intervention outcome data.

Eligibility refers to reviewing in depth the full-text of articles that passed the screening process to ensure methodological appropriateness and quality. Articles that did not provide data before and after the intervention were excluded. Included refers to articles that met all the criteria and were included in the final analysis and used as sources in the discussion of the effectiveness of relaxation techniques in reducing academic burnout among university students.

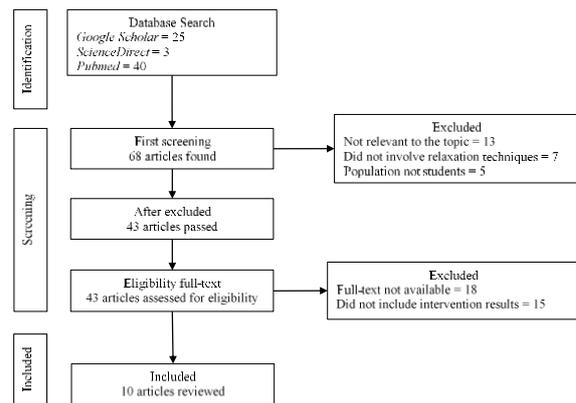


Figure 1: Flowchart of The Selection Process of Materials to Be Reviewed

3 RESULT

The results of the systematic review of the selected journals are presented below:

Table 1: Summary of Articles Entered in The Review Process

No	Author/Year	Title/Journal	Method	Participant	Result
1	Rahmawati, A.I.N., Latifah, L., Saidatun, I. (2023)	Konseling Behavioral Teknik Relaksasi Afirmasi untuk Menurunkan Academic Burnout, Efektif Tidak? <i>Jurnal Konseling Indonesia (JKI)</i>	Quasi-Experimental Design. There was a control group and an experimental group. Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design	Students of Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang	The posttest scores in the experimental group after receiving affirmation relaxation treatment showed a significant decrease compared to the control group, which only received a placebo effect. The comparison between pretest and posttest scores demonstrated that the experimental group was more effective in reducing academic burnout using behavioral group counseling with affirmation relaxation techniques compared to the control group. This study proved that behavioral group counseling with affirmation relaxation techniques is effective in reducing students' academic burnout.
2	Gallo, G.G., Curado, D.F., Machado, M.P.A.	A randomized controlled trial of mindfulness: effects on	Generalized mixed models to assess the effect of	Undergraduate or postgraduate students over 18 years old	Improvements were found in symptoms of stress (B = 5.76, p < 0.001), depression (B = 1.55, p < 0.01), and

No	Author/Year	Title/Journal	Method	Participant	Result
	(2023)	university students' mental health. <i>International Journal of Mental Health Systems</i>	intervention. Randomized controlled clinical trial	enrolled at a Brazilian university	insomnia (B = 1.35, p = 0.020) from baseline to post-intervention, compared to the control group. No effects were found regarding trait anxiety. The Maslach Burnout Inventory proved effective in reducing important symptoms related to students' mental health, potentially serving as a basis for further research.
3	Ravada, V.R.A.B., Lahari, K.V.M.S., Reffipogu, H.T., Vuyyuru, L.P., Konda, C., Pinjar, M.J. (2023)	Reducing Stress and Anxiety in First-Year Undergraduates Through Biofeedback-Assisted Relaxation Training. <i>Cureus</i>	Experimental. Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design	First-year MBBS students selected through purposive sampling	The study involved 93 students, with 47 in the intervention group and 46 in the control group. After biofeedback training, the intervention group showed significantly lower stress and anxiety scores than the control group. Biofeedback training effectively reduced stress and anxiety levels among medical students and can be implemented in university settings to support students' mental health.
4	Komarlah, M., Ibrahim, K., Pahria, T., Rahayuwati, L., Somantri, I. (2023)	Effect of Mindfulness Breathing Meditation on Depression, Anxiety, and Stress: A Randomized Controlled Trial among University Students. <i>Healthcare</i>	Experimental design. Pretest and posttest measurements were conducted before and after the intervention. Randomized controlled trial	122 students from Universitas Padjadjaran & several other provinces in Indonesia, 61 in each group	The study revealed that mindfulness breathing meditation significantly reduced average scores of depression, anxiety, and stress in the intervention group. However, only stress (p = 0.007) and anxiety (p = 0.042) showed significant differences between intervention and control groups in the posttest results. This indicates that mindfulness breathing meditation can be applied to improve psychosocial well-being and self-awareness among students.
5	Wild, K., Scholz, M., Ropohl, A., Brauer, L., Paulsen, F., Burger, P.H.M. (2014)	Strategies against Burnout and Anxiety in Medical Education—Implementation and Evaluation of a New Course on Relaxation Techniques	Autogenic Training (AT) and Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR). Pretest and posttest	39 medical students (classical curriculum, clinical part, semesters 5–8) and 3 psychology students (semester 6)	Students who participated showed significant reductions in cognitive and emotional exhaustion as well as trait anxiety. They also reported reductions in state anxiety and depressive symptoms, while coherence increased. The relaxation course introducing AT and

No	Author/Year	Title/Journal	Method	Participant	Result
		(Relacs) for Medical Students.			PMR significantly reduced exhaustion and anxiety among medical students.
		<i>PLoS ONE</i>			
6	Mauliddya, N., Prabawa, A.F. (2024)	Efektivitas Konseling Kelompok Behavioral Teknik Relaksasi Dengan Terapi Wudhu Untuk Menurunkan Academic Burnout: Studi Di Perguruan Tinggi Islam.	Quantitative research. One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design	90 students at BKPI UIN Salatiga, with 10 used as the sample	Results showed differences in academic burnout levels before and after behavioral group counseling with ablation therapy. The t-test indicated $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$), proving the intervention effective in reducing academic burnout. The study confirmed that ablation therapy relaxation techniques effectively reduced students' academic burnout.
		<i>Helper: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pembelajaran</i>			
7	Robaiyani, S., Azizah, I.N., Ahyauddin M.W., Sultonah, N., Aula, S.T., Aini, D.K. (2024)	Penerapan Teknik Relaksasi Pernapasan Dalam dan Relaksasi Benson Untuk Mengatasi Stres pada Mahasiswa di Ma'had Al Jami'ah UIN Walisongo Semarang.	Experimental with a within-subject approach. Wilcoxon analysis comparing pretest and posttest data	16 students of UIN Walisongo Semarang	The Wilcoxon analysis showed $p = 0.005$ ($p < 0.05$). It was concluded that deep breathing and Benson relaxation techniques significantly reduced stress levels. Initially, 79.4% of participants experienced moderate stress, and 8.8% high stress. After the intervention, 14 of 16 students showed a significant reduction in stress levels.
		<i>Jurnal Pengabdian Sosial</i>			
8	Ningsih, F. (2016)	Efektifitas Teknik Relaksasi untuk Mengurangi Kejenuhan Belajar.	Quantitative research using a quasi-experimental method. Non-equivalent control group design	259 11 th -grade high school students (SMA N 6 Yogyakarta)	Results showed that muscle relaxation effectively reduced learning fatigue. The mean score in the experimental group decreased from 26.6923 (pretest) to 18.0385 (posttest). The t-test yielded sig. $0.003 < 0.05$, indicating relaxation techniques were effective in reducing learning fatigue.
		<i>E-Journal Bimbingan dan Konseling</i>			
9	Velasco, C.B., Genty, C., Jausent, I., Benramdane, M., Courtert, P., Olie, E. (2020)	Study protocol of a multicenter randomized controlled trial of mindfulness-based intervention versus relaxation to reduce emotional	Experimental. Randomized controlled trial	4 th and 5 th -year medical students	If the proposed intervention is well-received and beneficial in reducing negative emotions and/or enhancing well-being, it should be disseminated widely among medical students and incorporated

No	Author/Year	Title/Journal	Method	Participant	Result
		exhaustion in medical students in France: the “must prevent” study			into emotional skills training as part of routine medical practice.
		<i>BMC Psychiatry</i>			
10	Ariani, E. N., Sari, N. P., Putro, H. Y. S., (2022)	Effectiveness of Relaxation Techniques in Reduce Academic Burnout in Guidance and Counseling Students Class of 2021 Lambung Mangkurat University	Quantitative experimental research. Non-equivalent control group design	2021 Counseling students at Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarmasin	Before being given relaxation techniques, academic burnout among counseling students in 2021 at Universitas Lambung Mangkurat was categorized as high. After being given relaxation techniques, academic burnout among Counseling students of 2021 at Universitas Lambung Mangkurat was categorized as very low. Based on the research results, relaxation techniques were effective in reducing academic burnout among Counseling students of the 202 at Universitas Lambung Mangkurat.

4 DISCUSSION

This study reviewed ten articles that examined various relaxation techniques as interventions to reduce academic burnout among university students. Academic burnout is defined as a condition of emotional exhaustion, cynicism toward academic activities, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Its causes vary, ranging from academic pressure and poor time management to an imbalance between academic demands and personal needs (Mandaviya, 2016). Relaxation techniques are considered simple yet effective non-pharmacological interventions for addressing this issue, whether through physiological, psychological, or spiritual approaches (Ariani et al., 2022).

One technique that has been proven effective is affirmation relaxation, as explained by Rahmawati et al. (2023). In their study, this technique was combined with behavioral group counseling services and showed a significant reduction in burnout scores among students. This technique helps participants transform negative thought patterns into positive affirmations, while simultaneously calming stress responses through deep breathing. The success of this intervention is also influenced by active participant engagement, facilitator support, and daily self-practice. Beyond psychological benefits, affirmation techniques also build self-confidence and foster students' intrinsic motivation to endure academic pressures. This process supports the development of stronger self-awareness, enabling students to recognize their own limitations and regulate expectations more realistically (Rahmawati et al., 2023).

A spirituality-based relaxation approach was also found in the study by Maulidya and Prabawa (2024), which integrated relaxation techniques with ablution (wudhu) therapy in group counseling services. This intervention showed significant effectiveness in reducing academic burnout among BKPI students at UIN Salatiga. Ablution was positioned not only as a religious activity but also as a form of hydrotherapy that provides calming effects. This demonstrates that relaxation can be combined with spiritual values to produce deeper therapeutic outcomes, particularly in Islamic campus environments. The combination of spiritual and physiological aspects in this therapy also strengthened students' sense of belonging to their religious community, thereby creating implicit social support that accelerated mental recovery. This practice further allowed for the emergence of new meaning in navigating the challenges of academic life (Maulidya & Prabawa, 2024).

In addition, mindfulness emerged as one of the most widely used relaxation approaches in the reviewed studies. Gallo et al. (2023) reported that an eight-week mindfulness-based relapse prevention (MBRP) program significantly reduced symptoms of stress, depression, and insomnia. Komariah et al. (2023) found similar results with a simpler version, namely four weeks of mindfulness breathing meditation. Although the effects on depression were not significant, both studies highlighted the strong relevance of mindfulness in the context of burnout prevention. The effectiveness of mindfulness techniques is influenced by consistent session structures, facilitator quality, and participants' daily practice. This technique teaches students to recognize thoughts and emotions without judgment, and to

remain consciously present in learning activities. As a result, students become more capable of managing academic pressure without being overwhelmed by negative reactions. These findings suggest that mindfulness holds great potential if integrated into psychological support systems on campus (Komariah et al., 2023).

Besides mindfulness, biofeedback techniques were also found to be effective in the study by Ravada et al. (2023). Through visual feedback on physiological responses such as heart rate and breathing rate, participants were able to consciously regulate their stress responses. This technique is particularly suitable for first-year students who are vulnerable to exam anxiety and adaptation stress. Although its limitations include the duration of training and sustainability of practice, the results showed significant reductions in stress and anxiety. Biofeedback techniques also allow for personalized interventions, as each participant can objectively monitor their own progress. This opens opportunities for the use of technology in academic settings as a modern and responsive tool for individual needs (Ravada et al., 2023).

In the study by Robaiyani et al. (2024), deep breathing relaxation and Benson relaxation were applied in combination among students living in dormitories. The Benson technique integrates breathing relaxation with religious affirmations or dhikr, providing both spiritual and physiological effects. Fourteen out of sixteen participants experienced significant stress reduction, demonstrating that this simple technique can serve as an effective and easily applied community-based intervention in religious environments.

Progressive muscle relaxation techniques were also applied in several studies. Ningsih (2016) examined the effectiveness of progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) on high school students, showing significant reductions in learning fatigue. Although the subjects were secondary school students, learning fatigue is an important component of academic burnout. This technique utilizes gradual contraction and relaxation of muscles from head to toe, which is effective in relieving physical tension caused by prolonged academic stress.

The study by Wild et al. (2014) combined autogenic training (AT) and progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) in a relaxation course integrated into the medical school curriculum in Germany. The results showed decreases in emotional exhaustion and anxiety, along with an increase in sense of coherence. This approach illustrates that relaxation techniques can be structured as systematic training programs integrated into higher education. This provides universities with opportunities to develop emotional skills curricula as part of student mental health promotion.

Meanwhile, Ariani et al. (2022) investigated relaxation techniques in the form of group counseling services aimed at students with high levels of academic burnout. The results also showed the effectiveness of these techniques in reducing physical fatigue, cynicism, and emotional disturbances. Although the sample size was small, the findings were consistent with previous studies and demonstrated that even simple approaches can yield meaningful results when implemented appropriately. The effectiveness of group counseling services was also influenced by interpersonal dynamics among members. When participants felt heard and accepted,

the relaxation process became more emotionally meaningful. Therefore, competent facilitator training in group dynamics is a critical factor (Ariani et al., 2022).

Velasco et al. (2020) expanded the scope of evaluation by comparing mindfulness-based interventions (MBI) and relaxation training (RT) on a national scale among medical students in France. Although the final data have not yet been reported, the methodological design was robust and addressed multiple aspects of mental health, including emotional exhaustion as the core of burnout. The final results of this study are expected to serve as guidance for campus policies in developing evidence-based burnout prevention programs. If the final outcomes demonstrate intervention effectiveness, this public policy-based approach could become a key model for universities in developing countries to design mental health promotion policies grounded in scientific research (Velasco et al., 2020).

Overall, the reviewed studies demonstrate that relaxation techniques are effective in reducing various components of burnout, including emotional exhaustion, cynicism, reduced personal accomplishment, as well as related symptoms such as stress and anxiety. The effectiveness of these techniques depends greatly on the implementation context, duration, participant characteristics, and the presence of facilitators or supervisors. Techniques incorporating spiritual aspects tend to be effective in religious settings, whereas physiologically based techniques are suitable for students experiencing somatic symptoms from academic stress.

A key strength of relaxation techniques lies in their flexibility. Certain techniques, such as deep breathing, affirmations, or muscle relaxation, can be

learned and practiced independently without requiring special tools. This creates opportunities for universities to integrate these techniques into student orientation programs, counseling services, or online training. The implementation of relaxation techniques can also be tailored to the specific needs of target groups, whether based on study programs, cultural backgrounds, or levels of burnout severity.

5 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the review of ten articles, it can be concluded that relaxation techniques have been proven effective in reducing the level of academic burnout among university students. These techniques, whether physiological such as progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing, and biofeedback; psychological such as mindfulness and positive affirmations; or spiritual such as ablution therapy and Benson relaxation, all demonstrated positive impacts in alleviating emotional exhaustion, stress, academic cynicism, and reduced self-achievement. Although each technique employs different approaches, all contribute to the improvement of students' mental well-being.

The effectiveness of these interventions is strongly influenced by the duration of implementation, participant engagement, and the alignment of techniques with the characteristics and backgrounds of students. Relaxation techniques practiced independently in a structured manner, or guided by professional facilitators, yielded more significant outcomes. Furthermore, the integration of religious or cultural values within certain relaxation techniques has been shown to enhance acceptance

and effectiveness in the appropriate contexts. These findings reinforce the position of relaxation techniques as simple, flexible, and highly promising non-pharmacological intervention strategies if systematically implemented within the campus environment.

As a recommendation, future research should be conducted in the form of direct experimental or quasi-experimental studies to further examine the specific effectiveness of each relaxation technique in reducing academic burnout. It is also suggested to compare several types of relaxation techniques within a single study to determine which is the most effective for particular student profiles. Through such research, the results of this systematic review are expected to serve as a strong foundation for designing more measurable and applicable experimental interventions.

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