

**Original Research****Taizé Meditation as an Intervention to Reduce Anxiety in First-Year Nursing Students****Mestiana Br. Karo<sup>1</sup>, Tince Maria Hati Ndruru<sup>2\*</sup>**<sup>1,2</sup> Nursing Study Program STIKes Santa Elisabeth Medan, Indonesia**ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Taizé meditation is a form of meditative worship that fosters inner peace through repetitive chants and musical prayers. This practice is particularly beneficial for individuals experiencing anxiety. Anxiety itself is characterized by distressing and uncomfortable emotions that can disrupt a person's sense of equilibrium, manifesting as tension, restlessness, fear, nervousness, sweating, and related symptoms. The objective of this study is to examine the impact of Taizé meditation on anxiety levels.

**Methods:** This study utilized a pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test approach. The population consisted of 99 individuals, and 33 participants were selected through purposive sampling. The instrument used was the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS)-42, specifically the 14-item anxiety subscale. Data were analyzed using the Paired T-Test.

**Results:** The average anxiety score prior to Taizé meditation was 3.73, which decreased to 1.76 after the intervention. Statistical analysis using the Paired T-test revealed a p-value of  $<0.001$  ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating a significant difference.

**Conclusion:** These findings suggest that Taizé meditation has a significant effect on reducing anxiety levels. Students are encouraged to practice Taizé meditation independently as a strategy to manage anxiety.

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**INTRODUCTION**

According to Aninda (2023), anxiety is a painful and unpleasant feeling. Someone who experiences anxiety can disturb personal balance such as tense, restlessness, fear, nervousness, sweating, and so on. Anxiety can arise with different levels of intensity. This level is divided into mild anxiety, moderate anxiety, severe to very severe anxiety causing panic from individuals can sometimes cause obstacles to carrying out activities.

Based on an initial survey conducted at the Santa Elisabeth College of Health Sciences Medan on February 04, 2024 on 10 people from the D3 nursing study program at the first level by distributing questionnaires, the results showed that 1 person experienced mild anxiety, 5 people experienced moderate anxiety, 1 person experienced

severe anxiety and 3 people experienced very severe anxiety characterized by symptoms of dry mouth, frequent fatigue, and easy panic. Anxiety disorders can begin in adolescence around the age of 12-18 years old and this problem is a common problem experienced at this age. The main factor that causes individuals to experience anxiety is negative thoughts whose appearance is not realized, another factor is caused by social media, because the use of social media affects self-confidence which causes self-neglect, avoidance of others, social isolation and others (Muhammad et al., 2021).

Factors causing anxiety are divided into two factors, namely internal factors (individual) and external factors (environment). Internal or individual factors, namely those that come from individual attitudes and personality traits such as gender, age, lack of understanding, mastering the material written. External or environment factors that come from the environment, for example, such as work demands, academic final assignments, student relationships with the environment, characteristics of supervisors, parents and family (Muhammad et al., 2021).

Indicators and symptoms of anxiety are often reflected through alterations in vital signs. Anxiety triggers physiological responses such as elevated blood pressure, increased heart rate, and rapid breathing. Mild anxiety may present with symptoms including muscle tension, irritability, fear of anticipated events, reduced concentration, occasional shortness of breath, heightened blood pressure and pulse, facial tension, trembling lips, dry mouth, restlessness, constipation, difficulty sleeping, and a general sense of insecurity (Muhammad et al., 2021).

For new students residing in dormitories, adjusting to unfamiliar surroundings including the living space, new peers, institutional rules, academic activities, and coursework can be challenging. While some individuals adapt with ease, others may struggle with the transition. Encountering a completely different environment for the first time often leads to feelings of shock and the need to become self-reliant. Inadequate adjustment to dormitory life may negatively impact both physical and mental well-being (Karo, 2020).

Negative outcomes are often linked to mental stress among undergraduate students. They are more prone to issues such as cognitive difficulties, substance use, poor academic performance, and learning challenges. This indicates that emotional strain can heighten the risk of developing further mental health disorders (Limone & Toto, 2022). According to Suacana (2022), meditation has been practiced in India for over 7.000 years and continues to be embraced by certain communities today. Historically, meditation has been recognized as a method for cultivating inner peace, serenity, and overall well-being.

One effective approach to alleviating anxiety is Taizé meditation, which involves worship in a setting surrounded by candlelight and repetitive chants that soothe the soul. This practice fosters a sense of reverence and spiritual openness, enabling individuals to connect with God through song. Taizé meditation can bring comfort and joy, especially for those struggling with worry and fear (Karo et al., 2020). Mindfulness practices have also demonstrated benefits in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression, while also positively affecting individuals with mental health challenges and chronic conditions. Mindfulness involves conscious awareness of the present moment and surroundings, aiming to foster clarity and emotional balance (Chen et al., 2021).

Given this context, the researcher is motivated to explore the impact of Taizé meditation on anxiety levels among first-year nursing students at Santa Elisabeth College of Health Sciences in Medan. The novelty of this research lies in the application

of Taizé meditation as a non-pharmacological intervention to reduce anxiety levels among first-year nursing students living in dormitories, a vulnerable group that has rarely been the focus of previous studies. This study is among the first in Indonesia to quantitatively assess the effectiveness of Taizé meditation within the context of new student adjustment in a nursing education environment, using a pre-test and post-test design that provides statistically significant evidence. Another unique contribution is the introduction of a simple, independent, and spiritually based approach that can be applied in daily life as an accessible and sustainable alternative for managing anxiety.

## **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

The research will employ a pre-experimental design, in which a single group is observed and given an intervention (Polit & Beck, 2020). This study follows a one-group pretest-posttest design. Participants are assessed before the intervention (pretest) and again after the intervention (posttest) to evaluate its effect.

The population of the study consists of 99 first-year nursing students at Santa Elisabeth College of Health Sciences, Medan, in 2024 (B.A.A.K Santa Elisabeth College of Health Sciences, Medan, 2024). The sample includes 33 first-year nursing students who were identified as experiencing varying levels of anxiety mild, moderate, severe, and very severe. The inclusion criteria are students who experience anxiety and those who are living in the dormitory for the first time.

The exclusion criteria in this study include students who have been previously diagnosed with severe psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, as these conditions may confound the assessment of anxiety related to dormitory living. The independent variable in this study is Taizé meditation, while the dependent variable is the level of anxiety. An instrument is considered valid if the *r*-value calculated exceeds the *r*-table value of 0.362. However, the researcher did not perform an initial validity test, as the instrument used was a standardized tool.

Instead, validity and reliability testing were conducted after data collection. The instrument used was the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS) 42 questionnaire, which is a recognized standard tool. Validity testing of 3 out of the 14 items for each subscale (stress, anxiety, depression) was conducted using Pearson's product-moment correlation, and all items yielded a positive correlation coefficient above 0.532. Reliability testing was performed using Cronbach's alpha, and results showed high internal consistency: stress = 0.951, anxiety = 0.943, and depression = 0.952 (Polit & Beck, 2020).

The results of the data normality test showed that the pretest anxiety category had a skewness value of 3.73, while the posttest anxiety category had a skewness value of 1.76. These results indicate that the distribution of anxiety scores before the intervention was highly skewed and deviated substantially from a normal distribution. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26 for Windows. The paired *t*-test was applied to assess the differences in anxiety levels before and after the Taizé meditation, under the assumption that the data are normally distributed and measured at the interval or ratio scale. This research has received ethical approval from the Health Research Ethics Committee of Santa Elisabeth College of Health Sciences, Medan, with approval number 040/KEPK-SE/PE-DT/III/2024.

## RESULTS

The research findings describe the characteristics of nursing students and analyze the level of anxiety among students who are living in a dormitory for the first time. Descriptive statistics aim to provide an overview of the profile of nursing students, followed by inferential analysis to address the research objectives. The following are the results of the study:

**Table 1.** Characteristics of First-Year Students in the Nursing Study Program (n = 33 Nursing Students)

Characteristics	n	%
<b>Age</b>		
17-19 years (Late Adolescence)	30	90.9
20-22 years (Early Adulthood)	3	9.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	31	93.9
Male	2	6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: n = number of observations; % = percentage

Table 1 describes the characteristics of first-year nursing students. The characteristics based on age indicate that the majority fall within the 17-19 years age category (late adolescence) to 90.9%. The subsequent characteristic based on gender shows that the majority of nursing students are female, accounting for 93.9%.

**Table 2.** Pre-PostTest Anxiety Level of First-Year Students in the Nursing Study Program (n = 33 Nursing Students)

Category	n	%
<b>Pre-Test</b>		
Mild Anxiety	3	9.1
Moderate Anxiety	12	36.4
Severe Anxiety	9	27.3
Very severe anxiety	9	27.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Post-Test</b>		
Normal	17	51.4
Mild Anxiety	9	27.3
Moderate Anxiety	5	15.2
Severe Anxiety	2	6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: n = number of observations; % = percentage

Table 2 describes the level of anxiety among first-year nursing students. The pre-test anxiety level (before the intervention) was mainly categorized as moderate anxiety, accounting for 36.4%. The anxiety level decreased during the post-test after the Taizé Meditation intervention, with the majority falling into the normal category at 51.4%.

**Table 3.** Effect of Taize Meditation Intervention on Anxiety Level of First-Year Students in the Nursing Study Program (n = 33 Nursing Students)

Variable	Mean ± SD	95% CI	p-value*
Anxiety Level (Pre-Post Test)	1.97 ± 0.85	1.67-2.27	<0.001

Note = CI: Confidence Interval; \* the Paired T-Test

Table 3 shows the effect of the Taize meditation intervention on anxiety levels. The results of the paired t-test yielded a p-value = <0.001 ( $p < 0.05$ ), thus the hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is an effect of Taizé meditation on the level of anxiety among first-year nursing students at the Santa Elisabeth School of Health Sciences in Medan in the year 2024.

## DISCUSSION

According to the assumptions of researchers, some students experience moderate anxiety because students sometimes experience trembling, sometimes worry about situations, fear, sometimes fear of being hampered by tasks, often panic easily, sometimes fear for no apparent reason, often experience fatigue and sometimes excessive anxiety with a situation. Anxiety arises due to several factors, including being away from parents and living in a new environment, psychological factors, namely negative thoughts that often arise and cannot be controlled and worries about the future, family factors, namely family economic problems, poor relationships between children and parents in the past. According to Nghiem, (2021) his research entitled "Difficulties When Studying Away From Home" shows that students who are far from home, have many difficulties such as getting used to the new environment, making friends, causing anxiety because new students are homesick, this research shows that they need time to adapt (Nghiem et al., 2021).

Whittenburg, (2023) states that anxiety is a normal reaction to stress experienced by everyone in different forms. Common symptoms of anxiety include restlessness, tiredness, trouble focusing, irritability, sleep disturbances, muscle tightness or shaking, and chest discomfort. Anxiety can significantly impair daily functioning, and college students are especially at risk for mental health issues such as anxiety. According to researchers, anxiety is a mental condition characterized by excessive and uncontrollable worry and anxiety. It can impact on a person's daily life and interfere with their ability to perform daily activities.

Anxiety can be influenced by internal and external factors. One of the internal factors that can affect anxiety is gender. For example, women are more likely to experience anxiety than men. External factors include parental status and place of residence. For example, someone who lives in an unsafe environment or experiences frequent conflicts with parents may be more likely to experience anxiety. Anxiety is prone to occur in students in the form of excessive thoughts and worries that always lead to negativity which results in fear in a student who always thinks negatively or worries about his future (Widodo, 2021).

According to Tan et al, (2023) anxiety is part of the personality that is shaped by life experiences. These factors are classified into two factors, namely internal factors (gender, history of chronic disease, physical condition, perception of health, stress vulnerability and personality and external factors (parental status, domicile, number of close friends, frequency of conflict with parents, economic status, exam burden).

According to Tan et al, (2023) anxiety is very prevalent among university students. Anxiety is characterized by thoughts and worries that result in continuous worry and tension, fear, anxiety is also described as a disproportionate amount of worry compared to everyday situations, which leads to bad thoughts and predictions about future events.

### **Anxiety Levels of First-Year Nursing Students After Receiving Taizé Meditation**

Researchers assume that anxiety in students decreases with the provision of taize meditation in this meditation technique. A person can be more relaxed and calmer. After doing taize meditation, the respondents never experienced interruptions in breathing, did not worry about the situation, and could control themselves and not tremble anymore. Because of this meditation, a person can be present here and now not tied to the problems being faced. When someone is relaxed and calm, it can reduce the anxiety that is being experienced, a comfortable and calm environment, and the presence of taize music instruments can help students to overcome their anxiety.

According to Karo, (2020) in his study titled "The Effect of Taizé Meditation on Anxiety Levels in Students of the Nursing Program at STIKes Santa Elisabeth Medan," Taizé meditation involves worship conducted in a candlelit environment accompanied by repetitive chants that soothe the soul. This practice helps individuals achieve calmness and open their hearts to God through chanting as a form of spiritual communication. It brings peace and happiness, particularly for those experiencing worry.

Following Taizé meditation, the body experiences relaxation, and levels of anxiety and tension decrease (Karo, 2020). According to Willie, (2023) meditation is a mind-body practice that has long been used to promote calm and relaxation, psychological balance, help overcome illness, strengthen overall health and well-being. There are many types of meditation, but they generally have four things in common, namely focus of attention, and passivity or indifference to distractions from the environment.

According to the researcher's assumption, meditation is a way or form of exercise to focus and calm thoughts to be calmer and more comfortable. Meditation is done by focusing attention or concentration on a particular object by involving a focus on breathing and thoughts can also focus on sounds or sensations to achieve inner calm. Meditation is a way to demonstrate mental well-being, involving focusing on present thoughts and feelings, and reducing uncontrollable thoughts and negative feelings. Meditation has other benefits such as improving sleep, reducing loneliness, and increasing overall feelings of well-being.

Singh, (2022) describes meditation as a mental exercise aimed at training the mind to attain focused attention, cultivate mindfulness, and enhance self-awareness. The purpose of meditation is to reach a state of mental clarity and emotional tranquility. Key elements of meditation include relaxation, sustained concentration, altered consciousness, temporary suspension of logical thinking, and maintaining a perspective of self-observation.

### **The Effect of Taizé Meditation on Anxiety Levels Among First-Year Nursing Students**

Indicating a significant difference in anxiety levels before and after Taizé meditation among the 33 respondents. This demonstrates that Taizé meditation had a meaningful impact on reducing anxiety in first-year students of the Nursing Study

Program at Santa Elisabeth College of Health Sciences Medan in 2024. The researchers suggest that the anxiety reduction effect of Taizé meditation stems from its focus on self-awareness and being present in the moment, which helps calm the mind by fostering positive feelings, thereby reconciling thoughts and minimizing negative thoughts that disrupt mental peace.

Listening repeatedly to Taizé music during meditation supports this process. Physiologically, meditation enables the adrenal glands to suppress stress hormones (such as cortisol) and increase cerebral blood flow, which contributes to anxiety reduction. Additionally, it encourages the development of positive attitudes and behaviors toward oneself, others, and ongoing situations, including forgiveness of past experiences.

According to Yoo et al., (2023) meditation is a safe practice for the mind and body that enhances physical and mental health. It functions as a form of self-counseling and psychotherapy by activating self-healing through introspection. Meditation is an effective therapeutic approach for students facing mental health, behavioral, and learning challenges, as it reduces stress markers like cortisol and enhances self-reflection, happiness, and concentration.

Meditative prayer, which is the daily prayer of the brothers in the community, is commonly known as taize worship. Taize has given birth to worship music and chants of a simple and meditative nature better known as "Taize Chants". Taize music emphasizes simple phrases, usually short sentences from psalms or other passages of scripture, which are repeated and sometimes also sung in canon form.

According to the researcher's assumption, Taize meditation is a simple and meditative form of meditation that emphasizes the repetition of simple lines from psalms. Taize music is often used as a tool to create a calm and meditative atmosphere that shows many benefits, including reducing anxiety and stress and improving focus and concentration. Taize meditation is a practice that can be done independently by first-year students by listening to taize music. Taize music is listened to accompanied by relaxation and will provide inner calm and will affect the psychology of students by showing positive attitudes or better coping and can reduce anxiety.

According to Bella, (2021) Taize music or taize singing teaches us about freedom from anxiety. With simplicity we will also be enabled to combat complexity, because complexity makes people overexert themselves in something that is difficult to live and brings a sense of peace and joy by enjoying the peak in the appreciation of the meaning of life in building a relationship with God. According to Bella, (2021) through taize meditation we become aware of the interconnectedness between our emotional, mental and physical levels.

The relaxation achieved through meditation has a major influence on psychological or mental well-being. Meditators also feel more calm enjoyment of life, empathy and better acceptance of self and others. Meditation has proven to be useful in altering the levels of neurotransmitters that help in changing moods.

Based on the direct experience of researchers in this research process, there are several limitations experienced and can be some factors that can be considered for future researchers in further perfecting their research because this research itself certainly has shortcomings that need to be improved in future studies. Some of the limitations in this study include: The pre-test data collection was not done in one day and the distance between the pre-test and the intervention should have been done one day before the intervention was given to the respondents. This is because students have

various tasks and activities on campus and outside campus hours so that researchers have difficulty collecting respondents' pre-test data. The Taize meditation intervention was carried out 3 consecutive days, which should be done once a week. It is recommended that future research assess anxiety levels not only through questionnaires but also by monitoring vital signs before and after the intervention.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that Taizé meditation is effective in reducing anxiety levels among first-year nursing students at Santa Elisabeth College of Health Sciences in Medan. Among the 33 participants who initially experienced anxiety, 51.4% reached a normal anxiety level after participating in Taizé meditation for three consecutive days. These findings suggest that Taizé meditation can be considered a beneficial independent intervention for managing stress and anxiety, particularly among new students adapting to academic and social transitions.

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