

The Implementation of Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (S-EFT) to Reduce Self-discomfort: A Study among College Students

Salami, Fatmawati

Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

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Abstract: Studying at the university gives some challenging experiences for college students which aims to increase their level of academic quality. Reading some books, submitting assignments, finishing some projects, doing oral presentations, taking final exams, and writing a thesis are numerous requirements that must be completed before they are awarded a degree. There are students who are able to cope with those challenges easily, but some of them have to struggle due to some serious cases they have, such as: communication anxiety, family related issue, lack of self-confident, bullying, etc. Those problems may increase the level of self-discomfort which then affect their academic performance. In order to help those students in facing their problem, Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (S-EFT) was applied. S-EFT is performed to ensure the energy flows smoothly in the body by tapping certain points of acupuncture. When the energy is balance, the biochemical system in the body will be influenced as well. While this process occurred, the therapist also reads the affirmation sentence to help the client release the stress and decrease self-discomfort. In this condition, usually, the brain wave is at alpha, so the affirmations will be accepted by the unconscious mind and level of sincerity (*ikhlas*) could be achieved. Subjective Unit of Discomfort Scale (SUDS) was carried out during the period for evaluating the progress of the therapy.

1 INTRODUCTION

According to statistical data, more than 50% university students suffer from stress and anxiety (Saleh, Camart, & Como, 2017), and the number of students dropping out of university due to mental health problems is increasing (Bruffaerts et al., 2018). The sources of stress among students are various –for example, coursework deadlines (Spector & Infante, 2019), exams (Brady, Hard, & Gross, 2018), and balancing study with other commitments (Daniels, Sheahan, & MacNeela, 2019). Going to university can also mean living away from home for the first time (Yan & Pei, 2018), less sleep (Becker et al., 2018), poor eating habits (Abraham, Noriega, & Shin, 2018), and money worries (Sharp & Theiler, 2018). It is clear that the majority of university students experience high levels of stress during their degree, which may then contribute to the rising level of self-discomfort (Wayment & Cavolo, 2019), and of course affect their academic performance later on.

Thus, in order to help the students suffering from the negative events during their university life,

several psychological first aids are trying to be implemented. One of the easiest therapy that commonly used within the scope of education is Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) (Purwoko & Arianto, 2018). EFT actually comes from the basic concept of psychotherapy developed by Gary Craig (Church, Stapleton, Yang, & Gallo, 2018). EFT is the meridian energy therapy that combines psychology and simple acupuncture technique, it works directly to stimulate body meridian system by tapping the acupuncture points (Church et al., 2018). Interestingly, EFT has been known as a technique that helps people overcome with numerous problems. The several previous studies mentioned that EFT was effective in dealing with students who experience smoking addiction problems (Sriwahyuni, Merianti, & Amelia, 2018), reducing anxiety during examination (Patterson, 2016), increasing performance in oral presentation (Boath, Stewart, & Carryer, 2012), and reducing stress due to thesis preparation (Rogers & Sears, 2015).

However, the presence of spiritual aspect in human being cannot be rejected. As clearly mentioned in QS. Al-Hijr verse 28-29 that Allah

SWT creates human from 3 substances, including physical, psychological, and spiritual.

وَأَذَقْنَا لِرَبُّكَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّن صَلْصَالٍ مِّن حَمَآءٍ مَّسْنُونٍ
فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ

Translations: “And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, “I will create a human being out of clay from an altered black mud. And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration.” (QS. Al-Hijr: 28-29).

Nevertheless, it has been broadly acknowledged that most of the psychotherapy practices, including EFT developed in western countries which separated spiritual attribute from human personality (Skinner, 2019). Therefore, this study aimed to bridge this gap. Additionally, as one of the Islamic universities, the existence of UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh is hoped to give a contribution on Islamic development, including increasing students’ well-being through psychological treatment.

The adding of spiritual phase on EFT essentially has been discovered by Zainuddin (2006), which then renamed the EFT into S-EFT or Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique. During the therapy, clients focus on the problem that will be released by saying the affirmation sentence (*du’a*), accepting their current adverse life condition, and asking assistance from Allah SWT. This process has been found as a factor that can decrease the level of someone’s self-discomfort (Zainuddin, 2006). It is believed that when physical and psychological aspects are balanced, the brain wave is at alpha, so the affirmations will be accepted by the unconscious mind and level of sincerity (*ikhlas*) could be achieved. So, at the end, the stress which causes self-discomfort will reduce or even sometimes totally disappear.

As a newly established psychological intervention technique, the implementation of S-EFT on education is still limited because most of the previous studies utilized S-EFT for smoking cessation (Yugistyowati & Rahmawati, (2018); Nurjanah, 2019). Therefore, this research aimed to apply S-EFT in reducing self-discomfort which triggered from various problems, including communication anxiety, family related issue, lack of self-confident, bullying, etc. among college students at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.

2 RESEARCH METHOD

There were 8 college students who participated in this study. They came voluntarily to meet a certified S-EFT therapist with several different problems, including communication anxiety, family related issue, lack of self-confident, bullying, smoking, and pornographic addiction. A Subjective Unit of Discomfort Scale (SUDS) was filled by each participant during the intervention period. This is a scale of 0 to 10 for measuring the subjective intensity of disturbance or distress currently experienced by an individual. The SUDS also used as a benchmark to evaluate the progress of the intervention. The detail of S-EFT procedure will be explained on the table below.

Table 1: S-EFT Procedure.

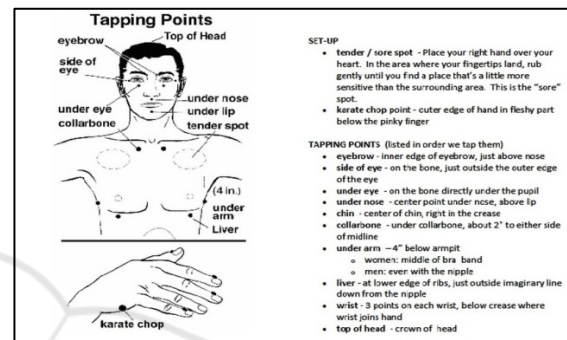
No	Stage	Description
1	Preparation Phase	<p>a. Before therapy process, a client should have some fresh water to avoid him/her from dehydration. The client also put off all metal accessories from the body. He /she also put away the mobile phone to be free from electromagnetic disturbance.</p> <p>b. Then the client decides what problem will be cured. What negative emotion that would be released. If there are some emotions involved in the case, the client can note them on the paper. So they can be released in one time. These emotions also will be put in the affirmation (<i>du’a</i>).</p> <p>c. After that, a client asked to determine the Subject Unit of Discomfort Scale (SUDS). The scale is between 0 and 10. Zero means no problem at all and ten is very high tension. For example, the client is afraid to see the supervisor. The therapist can ask at what level the afraid is. Maybe 8 or 10. Whatever the number is said by the client, the therapist put the circle around that figure. That will be the starting point before therapy until known at what figure is the afraid reduce.</p>
2	The Set-Up Phase	<p>a. The set-up aims to make the energy flows in the body smoothly by neutralizing</p>

		<p>psychological reversal or negative thinking and feeling or limiting belief. In this phase, the therapist should create the affirmation or du'a to be mentioned during the set-up process. For example, "Oh Allah, although I fell very nervous to face this oral exam, I deeply and completely accept myself, and with your help, I decide to release all this negative feeling right now for the sake of my goodness and my future. I sincerely and rely on You for my quietness and calm to take the oral exam, Amin".</p> <p>b. In this process, while repeating the affirmation three times, the client taps at the Karate Chop or press the Sore Spot or Tender Spot counterclockwise three rounds by using two or three fingers. The affirmation should be understood by the client, so the therapist can use any languages based on demand. This is important to get the deep feeling of the client while listening to this affirmation. This will influence the client's unconscious mind where the level of sincerity is. As a result, the negative feeling will reduce and the positive one comes.</p>
3	The Sequence	<p>At this phase, the therapist taps certain points seven or nine times each point by using point finger and middle finger. The tapping is medium, not too hard and not too soft, but it can be felt by the client. The tapping points are the Major Energy Meridians, such as: crown (on the top of the head), eye brow (the start of the eyebrow), side of the eye, under the eye, under the nose, chin, collar bone, under the arm, below nipple (liver point), inside of hand, outside of hand, thumb, index finger, middle finger, ring finger, baby finger, karate chop, and gamut spot</p>
4	Nine Gamut Procedure	<p>While tapping Gamut Spot, there are nine procedures should be done.</p> <p>a. Close your eyes b. Open your eyes</p>

		<p>c. Look to the bottom right d. Look to the bottom left e. Turn your eyes clockwise f. Turn the eyes counterclockwise g. Pray in a certain rhythm. In the original EFT use humming like Happy Birthday song rhythm h. Count 1,2,3,4 and 5 i. Pray or hum once again</p>
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Source: Zainuddin (2006)

For more information about the tapping points, see the picture below.



Source: (Church et al., 2018).

Figure 1: Tapping Points of S-EFT.

3 RESULT

3.1 Case 1: Afraid of Supervisor

A student with initial SY who studied at the Arabic Department was in the last semester of his study. He was afraid of the co-supervisor. When he thought to see the co-supervisor, his heart beats rapidly, his hands like tremor, and his face became pale. He came to the therapist telling all his problems. Then the therapist asked him to take a glass of fresh water, drink it a little bit, then take a deep breath. As the procedure of SEFT therapy, the therapist asked him to put off his watch, put away his mobile phone, and sit on the chair relax. First, the therapist asked him the level of SUDS, then he said the level was 9. After this preparation phase, the therapist explained to him that he should follow whatever the therapist said and did. Then the set-up process of therapy was started. While pressing the sore spot, we prayed: *(Bismillâhirrahmânirrahîm. Oh Allah, although I am afraid to see the co-supervisor, I am sincere, I surrender to You, I deeply and completely accept myself, I decide to be brave now with your blessing for the sake of my better life, Amiin).*

Then the therapist asked him to take a deep breath and drink a little fresh water. After waiting for 20 seconds, the therapist asked him to imagine that he wants to see the co-supervisor and feel the level of afraid. He said that the level of SUDS declined to 5. Then we started the second round with the same process of the first time. After the second round, he said that the level of SUDS became 2. At last, we did the third round of therapy with the same process as the first and the second one. Then the therapist asked him to take three deep breathes. The therapist asked about his fear to see the co-supervisor and he said that he is not afraid anymore. For this student, the therapist did not need to continue to the sequence phase because his problem has been coped in the set-up phase. Because he was brave to see the co-supervisor, he could finish his thesis in that semester. The changes of self-discomfort for SY can be tracked on the figure below.

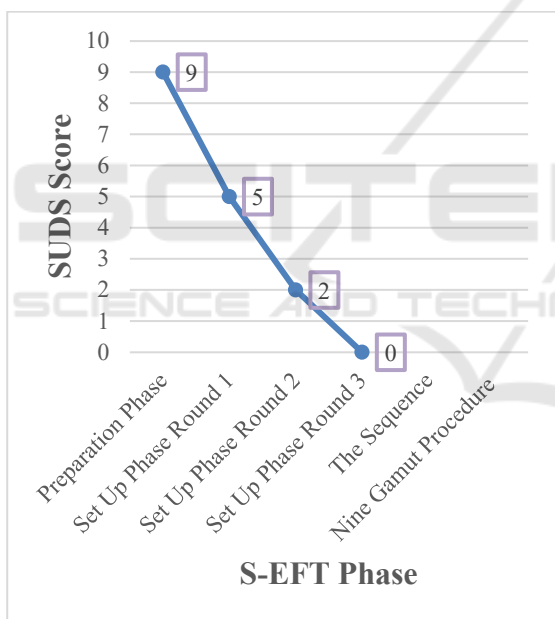


Figure 2: Level of Self-Discomfort for Participant 1.

3.2 Case 2: Deep Sadness Because Left Behind by the Peer in the Project

There was a student with initial T felt very sad because she was often not being involved in group work. Other members of the groups made an appointment to sit together to discuss the project that should be submitted to the lecturer. This student was a member of the group, but she did not get the

information about the time and the place where they discuss the project. She felt that the members of the group did not like her. So, she was very sad. The therapist tried to help her to heal her sadness by using SEFT. The preparation phase was the same as the previous case, but the set-up was different. First, the therapist asked the level of SUDS. The answer was 7. Then we started the therapy. The therapist asked her to take a deep breath and exhale it gently. After that, she drank a little fresh water. We continued by pressing sore spot and prayed: *(Bismillâhirrahmânirrahîm. O Allah, although I am very sad because being not involved in the teamwork, I am sincere, I surrender to You, I deeply and completely accept myself, I decide to be happy now with your blessing, for the sake of my better life. Âmîn).*

After one round of set-up, the sadness reduce to level 2. Then we continue second round with the same process and the result is 0. For this student, we only need two rounds of set-up, so the sequence step was not performed. After the therapy, she could call her friends in the group with a positive feeling and they did the project together until finish. The changes of self-discomfort for T can be tracked on the figure below.

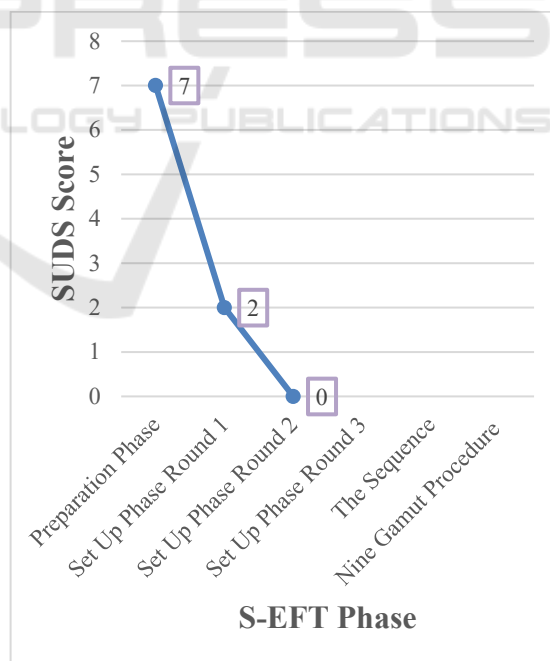


Figure 3: Level of Self-Discomfort for Participant 2.

3.3 Case 3: Bullied by Friends

The student initial **AY** felt not secure because often to get bullied by her friends. This student is introvert but she is good in almost all subjects. Sometimes, her friend said that she is stingy and does not want to share her knowledge with her friends. Another friend called her "Ms. Know-it-all". She felt annoyed by her friends' labeling. Then we decided to solve her problem by using EFT. The preparation phase is the same as the former case. The therapist asked the SUDS level, the answered was 8. After that, the therapist asked her to take a deep breath, exhale it gently and drink a little fresh water. Then we started the set-up phase by pressing the source spot and prayed:

(Bismillâhirrahmânirrahîm. O Allah, although I feel uncomfortable and very annoyed because being bullied by my friends, I am sincere, I surrender to You, I deeply and completely accept myself, I decide to be free from this negative feeling, now, with your blessing, for the sake of my better life. Âmin)

After the first round, the SUDS level became 4, then we continue the second round and reduce to 2. After that, we continue to the third round, the level of SUDS became 0. The changes of self-discomfort for **AY** can be tracked on the figure below.

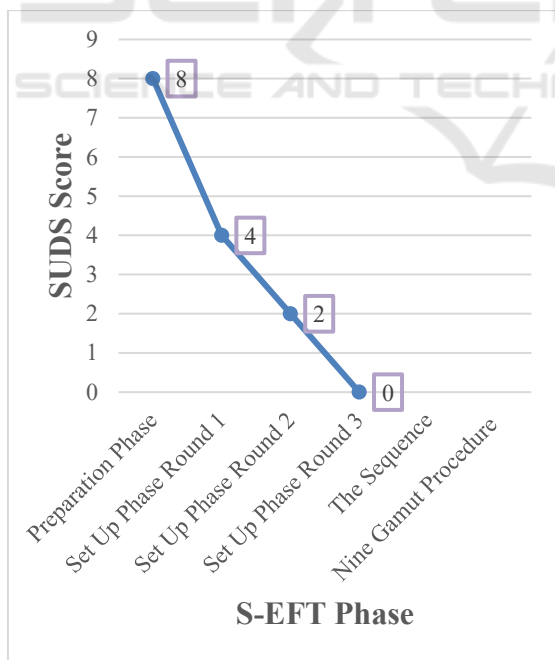


Figure 4: Level of Self-Discomfort for Participant 3.

3.4 Case 4: Lack of Self-Confident to do a Presentation

A student with initial **RA** wanted to present his proposal for his thesis, but he was not brave to do so. He thought that he could not speak in front of the lecturers as the examiners. He came to the therapist asked for help how to overcome his problem. After the preparation phase, the therapist asked him to take a deep breath, exhale gently and drink a little fresh water. Then the therapist asked the level of SUDS and he said it was 7. While pressing the sore spot, we prayed:

(Bismillâhirrahmânirrahîm. O Allah, although I am not confident to do a presentation, I am sincere, I am surrender to You, I deeply and completely accept myself. I decide to release this feeling now with the blessing from You, for the sake of my better future, Âmin)

After the first round of therapy, the SUDS level became 2. Then we continue with the second round like the first step. After the second round, the SUDS became 1. We continue the third round with the same step and the level of SUDS became 0. The changes of self-discomfort for **RA** can be tracked on the figure below.

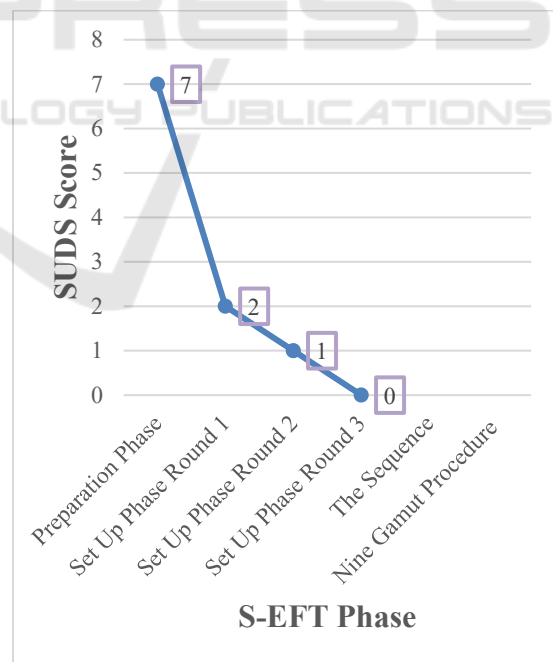


Figure 5: Level of Self-Discomfort for Participant 4.

3.5 Case 5: Nervous Before the Oral Exam

Some students feel very nervous before taking the final oral exam. Usually, they feel this when one of the examiner members is the lecturer who is well-known among them as a "killer" one. When this happened to one of them like **RP**, she came to see the therapist to ask for help. After the preparation phase, the therapist asked her to take a deep breath, exhale gently and drink a little fresh water. Then the therapist asked the level of SUDS and she said it was 8. While pressing the sore spot, we prayed:

(Bismillâhirrahmânirrahîm. O Allah, although I feel nervous before the oral exam, I am sincere, I am surrender to You, I deeply and completely accept myself. I decide to stop my nervous now with the blessing from You, for the sake of my better life, Âmîn)

Then the SUDS reduced to 3. When the process of first-round set-up, she got into tears because she was very impressed with her prayer. Then we continue the second round like the first round and the SUDS level became 0. So we only needed two rounds for this client and we did not need to continue with sequence. Finally, she took the oral exam with a positive feeling, answered all questions, and got a good result. The changes of self-discomfort for RP can be tracked on the figure below.

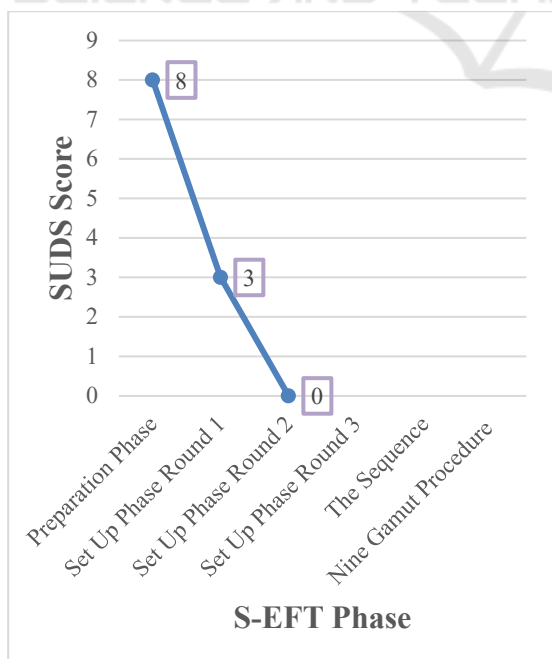


Figure 6: Level of Self-Discomfort for Participant 5.

3.6 Case 6: Want to Quit Study After the Death of the father and Other After the Parents Divorce

A student with an initial **KG** did not want to finish his study because his parents want to divorce. He thought that finishing study is useless and working to earn money is better. He was also very sad because the father always gets angry with his mother. He felt pity for his mother. When the first time he came to see the therapist, we dealt with the sadness first. After the preparation phase, the therapist asked him to take a deep breath, exhale gently and drink a little fresh water. Then the therapist asked the level of SUDS and he said it was 9. We decided to heal the sadness first, then we dealt with the motivation to finish the study. While pressing the sore spot, we prayed:

(Bismillâhirrahmânirrahîm. O Allah, although I feel very sad because my father always gets angry with my mother, I am sincere, I am surrender to You, I deeply and completely accept myself. I decide to release this sadness now with the blessing from You, for the sake of my better life, Âmîn)

After the first round of therapy, the therapist asked him the SUDS level and the answer was 5. Then we continued with the second round like the first step. After the second round, the SUDS became 2. We continue again the third round with the same step and the level of SUDS became 0. For this client, the sequence step was not performed.

After therapy, he felt happy and could forgive the father and continue with writing the proposal for his thesis. After he presented his proposal, got the supervising letter, he started writing a thesis until chapter 3. When he finished collecting the data, another problem happened in his life, the divorce of his parents. Then he decided not to continue his study and no motivation at all to finish his thesis. The therapist called him and treated him to have the motivation to finish his study. After the treatment, he decided to continue writing his thesis and then took the final oral exam. He finished his study in that semester. The changes of self-discomfort for KG can be tracked on the figure below.

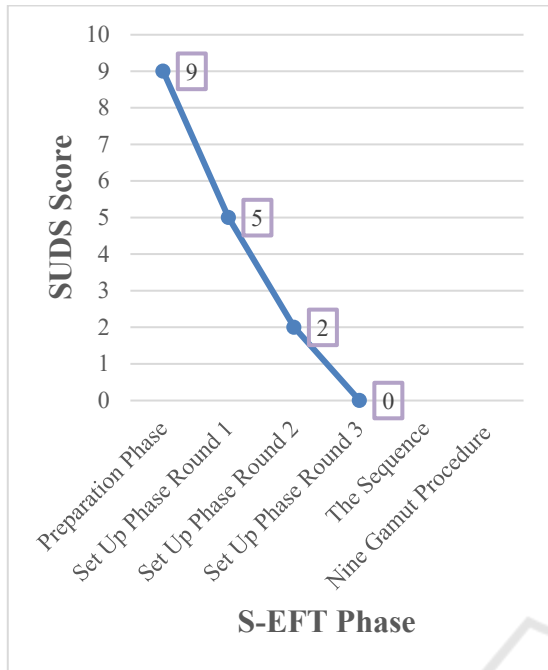


Figure 7: Level of Self-Discomfort for Participant 6.

3.7 Case 7: Smoking

A student with initial AD felt that he should stop smoking because he could not afford to spend a lot of money on smoking. He consumes cigarette 9 boxes a day. He was very eager to stop smoking, but he did not know how to. His friend took him to the therapist to help him in dealing with this problem. The therapist asked him how long he has been smoking. The answer was surprising. He started smoking when he was in secondary school. Then we decided to do the EFT therapy. First, the therapist asked him to smoke as a pre-test. At the pre-test, the therapist asked him at what level the smoke is convenient for him. He said at 9. Then the therapist asked him to take a deep breath, exhale it gently, and drink a little fresh water. We continued with set-up phase. By pressing sore spot, we prayed:

(Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm. O Allah, although I am a smoker, I am sincere, I am surrender to You, I deeply and completely accept myself. I decide to stop smoking now with the blessing from You, for the sake of my future, Āmīn)

After one round of healing, the SUDS level reduced to 5. Then the therapist treated him for the second round with the same process. After the second round, the SUDS level reduced to 3. The therapist

continued the third round, the SUDS level reduced to 1. For this case, the therapist continued to sequence phase because the SUDS did not reduce to 0. By tapping all EFT points until gamut procedure one round, the SUDS level became 0. Then the therapist asked him to smoke again as the post-test after treatment. When he smoked, he felt dizzy, headache, and vomiting. He said that the smoke is harmful to his body. He does not smoke anymore until now after one and a half year of therapy. He used to ask the therapist: “What should I do if I smoke again?” The therapist said: “Just tap by yourself all the tapping points, then you’ll get the same result”. The changes of self-discomfort for AD can be tracked on the figure below.

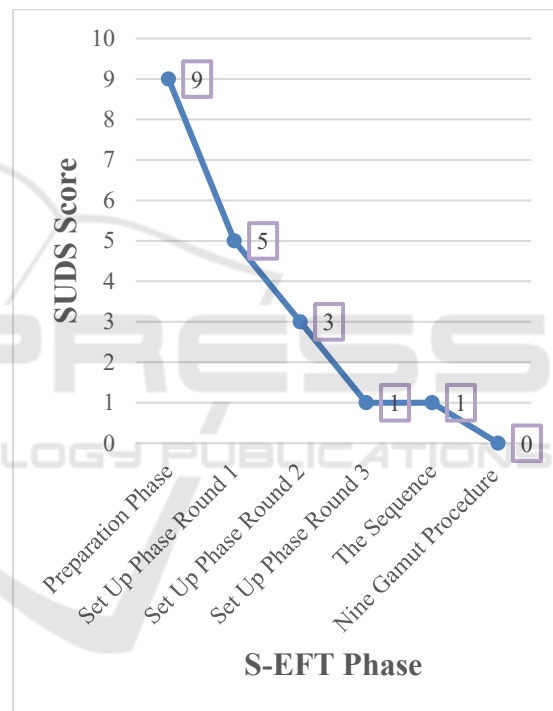


Figure 8: Level of Self-Discomfort for Participant 7.

3.8 Case 8: Pornographic Addiction

A student with an initial ZK came to the therapist and told her that he has been addicted to pornography since he was at the secondary Islamic boarding school. He told the therapist that he could watch a blue film on Sunday for 4 hours even more and sometimes forgot to have lunch. He knew that it was not good for him and he did not know how to stop it. His supervisor asked him to see the therapist to ask for help. After the preparation phase, the therapist asked him to take a deep breath, exhaled

gently and drank a little fresh water. Then the therapist asked the level of SUDS and he said it was 10. While pressing the sore spot, we prayed:

(Bismillāhirrahmānirrahīm. O Allah, although I am addicted to pornography, I am sincere, I am surrender to You, I deeply and completely accept myself. I decide to stop this bad behavior now with the blessing from You, for the sake of my better future, Amīn)

After one round of healing, the SUDS level reduced to 8. Then the therapist treated him for the second round with the same process. After the second round, the SUDS level reduced to 6. The therapist continued the third round, the SUDS level reduces to 4. Then we continued to the sequence by tapping all the tapping points and did the gamut procedure. After one round of sequence, the SUDS level became 0. The therapist asked him to imagine that there is an interesting pornography film if he wants to watch it. He said: "No, I'm not interested anymore to watch that film". Finally, the therapist asked him to report his progress after one week, two weeks, and one month. After one month, the therapist received the call from him by telling that he did not watch any pornography film anymore. The changes of self-discomfort for ZK can be tracked on the figure below.

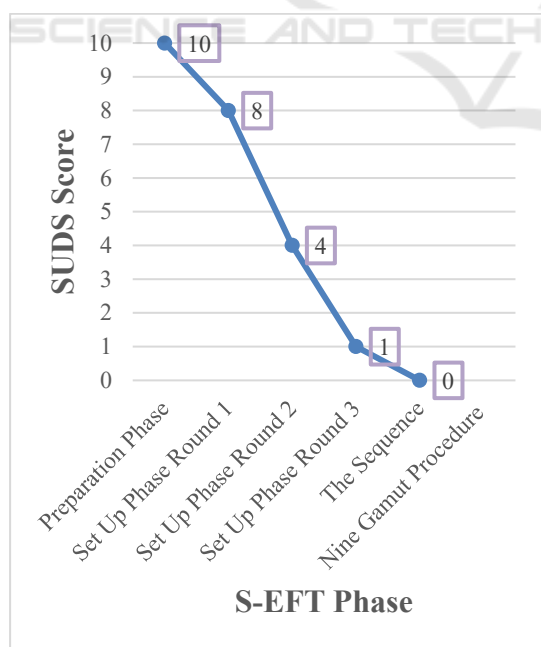
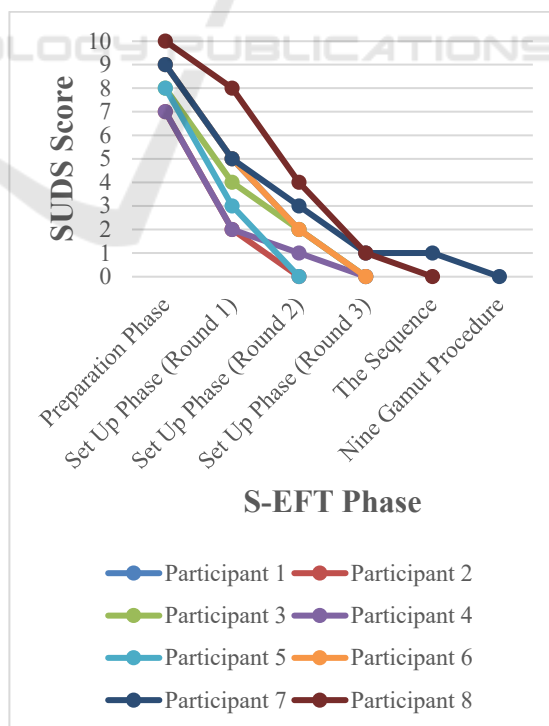


Figure 9: Level of Self-Discomfort for Participant 8.

4 DISCUSSION

Studying at the university gives some challenging experiences for college students which aims to increase their level of academic quality. Reading some books, submitting assignments, finishing some projects, doing oral presentations, taking final exams, and writing a thesis are numerous requirements that must be completed before they are awarded a degree. There are students who are able to cope with those challenges easily, but some of them have to struggle due to some serious cases they have. Those problems may increase the level of self-discomfort which then affect their academic performance.

The S-EFT was performed as a psychological treatment to reduce self-discomfort among college students at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. Based on the explanation above, it has been found that S-EFT was a powerful technique in reducing self-discomfort which resulted from various adverse life events, involving communication anxiety, family related issue, lack of self-confident, bullying, smoking, and pornographic addiction. All participants reported declining level of SUDS until 0, meaning no self-discomfort was discovered. Below is the graphic showing the SUDS score for each participant.



From the graphic shown above, it clearly demonstrated that all the participants started decreasing their self-discomfort after first round of set up phase. This indicated that S-EFT gave an impact on each participant in improving their self-healing ability –which resulted on declining level of self-discomfort. This finding was relevant with previous study conducted by Patterson (2016) which stated that S-EFT is effective for reducing stress and anxiety. The result also signified that the process of using S-EFT is similar for different problems, only the affirmations were altered based on the certain cases. The affirmation sentences have been found to be a core fragment in S-EFT. It implied that spiritual aspect coupled with EFT supported mental health needs. Spiritual energy obtained from prayer became an effective medical treatment for them who underwent psychological problem. These were relevant with study performed by Rosyanti et al. (2018) which mentioned that spiritual gives people the strength to face problems because they believe God helps them. This faith will then stimulate brain performance system where unconscious mind accepts the affirmations, so level of sincerity (*ikhlas*) can be achieved

Although this research contributed to some advantages, it also had some limitations. First, the subjective measure used was only SUDS, thus, other domains of behavior change could not be traced. Besides, as the participants came voluntarily to meet an S-EFT therapist, the measurement of follow-up was difficult to be performed. Not only that, as self-discomfort became a single variable measured in this study, so the result will be less comprehensive.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The S-EFT is the meridian energy therapy that combines spiritual, psychology, and simple acupuncture technique. It works directly to stimulate body meridian system by tapping the acupuncture points. During the therapy, clients focus on the problem that will be released by saying the affirmation sentence, accepting their current condition, and asking Allah for help –which then may reduce their self-discomfort. It is believed that when physical and psychological aspects are balanced, the level of the stress will reduce, or even sometimes totally disappear. In this study, S-EFT was found to be an effective psychological treatment to help college student at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh decreasing their level of self-discomfort which caused by several problems, including

communication anxiety, family related issue, lack of self-confident, bullying, smoking, and pornographic addiction. At the termination process, they reported declining score of SUDS until 0, meaning no self-discomfort was discovered.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this study give significant contribution to the benefit of S-EFT in education. However, based on the limitations mentioned above, there are some points highlighted as the recommendations for further research. First, as one of the non-pharmacological interventions, S-EFT needs to be combined with other techniques of psychological treatment in order to achieve longer effect. With the aim of attaining more comprehensive result, the addition of other variables and subjective measures need to be considered as well, because SUDS is not a diagnostic assessment scale but only a scale for assessing actual clinical description. Furthermore, as the subjects participated in this study were voluntarily, it was difficult to track the follow-up improvement of each participant, therefore, the experimental research design will be helpful to be implemented to determine the changes of the behavior on each phase.

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