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Literature Study on the Impact of Congregational Morning Prayer on Academic Anxiety: A View on Psychospiritual and Psychoneuroimmunology in Students

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Abstract: The practice of congregational morning prayer holds significant importance in both the context of worship and globally, as it promotes positive impacts. From a psychospiritual perspective, congregational prayer can be therapeutic in the modern era. Anxiety is a human adaptation response to any imminent or uncertain event that can occur in daily life situations. During the preparation for the thesis, most university students experienced several symptoms of anxiety (physical, cognitive, emotional, and affective symptoms). These symptoms can affect the students' cognitive ability, intelligence, family demands on campus, and social interactions. This study aimed to describe efforts to overcome academic anxiety among university students through psychospiritual and psychoneuroimmunological points of view. The study used a library research approach by gathering credible sources from books, scientific articles, documents, and previous research. The findings of this study showed that congregational prayers can be an effort to relieve academic anxiety among students.

Keywords: Subuh prayer, Psychospiritual, psychoneuroimmunology, academic anxiety, studied

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A. Introduction

The daily routines of Muslims are highly related to prayers, particularly the five obligatory prayers that consist of Fajr, Zuhr, Asr, Maghrib and Isha prayers. It has been a sort of identity for Muslims to practice daily Salah prayer as a form of worshipping one who commands them, Allah (SWT). Allah will give blessings and guidance to those who perform the Salah prayer.

Salah prayers are the first deed to be judged on the Day of Judgment, as stated in the Ḥadīth. Muslims that attain khusyu’ in Salah prayers will have improved lifestyles and daily routines avoided from immoral acts. The Salah prayers can be everlasting individual virtuous deeds, leading to the enhancement of the behavior and morality of humans. Therefore, the Salah prayer becomes an essential parameter in representing the social values of the Muslim people.

In the Islamic religion, Salah prayers are considered religious pillars where it is stipulated and prioritized as a necessity for Muslims. According to the Five Pillars of Islam, Salah is the second order after the declaration of faith by reciting Shahada. Hence, it is crystal clear that Salah is very crucial in the daily life of a Muslim life. Moreover, the importance of Salah is mentioned in the Al-Quran 83 times. The praying of Salah is considered a spiritual way to communicate with Allah, the Almighty Creator, directly. In many ways, Muslims who conduct the Salah prayer show that they are surrendering themselves to Allah SWT.

Anxiety refers to a situation where an individual fears an uncertain event in the future (Lianasari, 2021). In most cases, pressures on university students come from academic anxiety, especially students in their last semester who dreaded thesis preparation. The issue of academic concern among university students is widely discussed during the period of thesis writing (Permatasari, 2021). As mentioned by Putro and Prasetyaningrum (2016), final-year students tend to show anxiety in many forms, particularly when they are preparing for their final tasks. Feelings of anxiety are commonly caused by the occurrence of personal conflicts as a response to what they can do. Anxiety can also refer to an adaptation form to what happens in human daily lives (Permatasari, 2021). Students are prone to negative thoughts when writing their thesis, leading to academic anxiety (Situmorang, 2018). Cognitive, affective, physical, and emotional aspects contribute to students’ ability to develop a thesis. Several examples of the influencing aspects are intellectual, cognitive ability, parental expectations, and other social situations (Lianasari, 2021).

The Islamic Psychospiritual is a concept that combines the psychological and spiritual aspects of Islam (Situmorang, 2016) that includes the interconnectivity of humans with Allah (SWT), enhancement of human life purpose, human trust towards fate, self-acceptance and perceiving reality, the awareness of society and environmental influence on the present, as well as the development of spiritual growth. Based on a study by Mujib (2015), the individual spiritual psychospiritual can be grouped into (1) pure materialism, (2) pure spiritualism, (3) spiritualism-materialism, and (4) materialism-spiritualism. Psychospiritual appears as an implementation of Islamic values in the psychological state of a person and becomes the optional effort to give spiritual virtues through psychological factors in internalizing Islamic values.

Psychoneuroimmunology refers to the interdisciplinary field of the connection between the nervous system, immune system, endocrine system, and psychological state.
with health and diseases (De Vos et al., 2022). Several studies discussing the role of the gut microbiome in psychoneuroimmunology in integrative medicine found that the human immune system is linked to the gut microbiota and psychological factors. The links between those factors can be utilized as an alternative to integrative medicine to intervene in health regulation. Thus, psychoneuroimmunology exerts an essential role by influencing the human immune system through psychological factors. Another study by Pariante & Lightman (2021) reported the development of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis in major depression disorder that the HPA axis connects the central nervous system and endocrine system, implying its importance as the focus of psychoneuroimmunology study (Pariante & Lightman, 2008). Research by Chinnadurai and Venkatasubramanian (2021) involving medical students stated the longitudinal relationship between academic stress and their response to psychoneuroimmunology. Students experiencing elevated levels of academic stress had heightened rates of inflammation and cortisol response. Furthermore, academic stress has been observed to impair immune system function, increasing individuals' susceptibility to infections and disorders (Chinnadurai, 2021).

Studies in psychoneuroimmunology indicate that stress can impact the immune system, as well as impose an influence on both physical and mental well-being. The effects are apparent in university students with social, academic, and emotional pressure (Hathaisaard, 2022). Various psychoneuroimmunology management approaches, such as meditation and breathing exercises, can effectively decrease stress levels and improve mental well-being in university students. Integrating stress management techniques, such as physical exercise or workouts, with cognitive behavior therapy can effectively assist students in enhancing their capacity to handle stress and mental well-being (Situmorang, 2016). Therefore, this study aims to review theoretical literature and practices in managing academic anxiety through psychospiritual and psychoneuroimmunology perspectives to improve the mental health of university students.

B. Research Method

This research used the library research methodology, which consists of reviewing and critically analyzing written sources, including research articles, that investigated specific topics (Andrikopolou & Rowley, 2021). The collection data used literature identification analysis on research articles, magazines, scientific journal articles, websites, books, and other sources that discuss the same topic as the current study. In collecting the data, it is imperative to observe the text systematically and thoroughly to fully understand the essential elements of the text, such as research topics, purposes, text structure, and other components relevant to the research aims (Creswell, 2018). The descriptive analysis method by collecting and organizing the data (in written sentences, pictures, topics, and aims instead of numerical data) was used in this study. In general, descriptive analysis is a useful data analysis method for describing perspectives that can determine the observed characteristics and the data trend or patterns (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The inclusion criteria in this study are published within the last seven years (2017-2023), published in international journals written in English or national journals written in Bahasa Indonesia, and discussing the relationship between academic anxiety, psychospiritual, and psychoneuroimmunology.

The data was collected from various database sources, including ScienceDirect, PubMed, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar (n=374), followed by removing the duplicated
sources (n=174), filtering the appropriate source (n=37) and a complete review of the source based on the inclusion criteria (n=37). Ten research articles were discussed in this literature review (n=10), consisting of two articles in Bahasa Indonesia from Google Scholar and eight in English from international journals.

C. Result and Discussion

The obtained data from the descriptive analysis of ten selected articles discussing academic anxiety, psychospiritual, and psychoneuroimmunology in this study is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of the reviewed sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Journal description</th>
<th>Title of the article</th>
<th>Research methods (Design, Samples, Variables, Instrument and Analysis)</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Database Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ridha et al., 2017</td>
<td>Jurnal Intervensi Psikologi (JIP) Volume 9, Number 2, pages 141-154</td>
<td>Apakah Mendengarkan Murotal Al-Quran dapat Menurunkan Kecemasan Akademik Pada Mahasiswa ?</td>
<td>D: one group, pre-test and post-test experiment  S: random sampling with 21 participants  V: the effect of Al-Quran murottal (reciting) to reduce academic anxiety  I: Holmes stress scale  A: Wilcoxon statistical test</td>
<td>Listening to Al-Quran murottal effectively decrease academic anxiety in university students ($P = 0.00$)</td>
<td>Google Scholar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Anna et al, 2023</td>
<td>Jurnal teraputik: Bimbingan dan konseling</td>
<td>Efektivitas Layanan Konseling Kelompok melalui Teknik Poetry Therapy untuk mereduksi Academic Anxiety pada Mahasiswa BK</td>
<td>D: group experiment  S: purposive sampling  V: poetry therapy impact on academic anxiety  I: questionnaires pre- and post-counseling  A: paired t-test</td>
<td>Group counseling of poetry therapy reduce academic anxiety (pre-counselling score: 135 vs post-counselling score: 97) with $P = 0.000$</td>
<td>Google Scholar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Michelle Rozenman</td>
<td>Psychiatry Research,</td>
<td>Improvement in anxiety and cognition</td>
<td>D: cognitive behavior therapy</td>
<td>The CBT test in adolescents with</td>
<td>PubMed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Pages</td>
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<td>276</td>
<td>Depression symptoms following cognitive behavior therapy for pediatric obsessive-compulsive disorder</td>
<td>Syafı’l, M. H., &amp; Mulya, A.</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>115-123</td>
<td>JICC Vol.3 Number 1 January 2024 E ISSN: 2828-3961 P ISSN: 2827-9794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>Income inequality is associated with heightened test anxiety and lower academic achievement: a Cross-nation study in 51 countries</td>
<td>Ronnel B.King, et al.</td>
<td>2023</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Journal of The European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI), Volume 89, pages 115-123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Impact of a Yoga and Meditation Intervention on Students’ Stress and Anxiety</td>
<td>Virginia Lemay, et al.</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>747-751</td>
<td>American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education Number 5, pages 115-123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety Levels</td>
<td>students at the University of Rhode Island College of Pharmacy)</td>
<td>and meditation program for six weeks. The findings indicate that practicing mindfulness at least once every six weeks can reduce stress and anxiety levels in university students. Further study involving more students and a more extended research period is essential to ensure continuous and positive effects.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Christoph E.J, et al., 2023 | Mental Health and Physical Activity, Volume 25 | Anxiety sensitivity and physical activity are inversely related: A meta-analytic review. | Significant, inverse relation between anxiety sensitivity and physical activity with control treatment (r= -0.09). The contrariwise link was seen to increase in higher intensity of physical activity. Significant values between physical and cognitive issues were observed, but not in the link between physical and social issues. A rise in |

D: literature review | S: a review of 43 research with a total of 10,303 respondents | A: PROSPERO meta-analysis (CRD4202230783) | Science Direct
| 7. | Eirini Karyotaki, et al., 2022 | Behaviour Research and Therapy, Volume 150, pages 1-12 | Guided internet-based transdiagnostic individually tailored Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (iCBT) for symptoms of depression and/or anxiety in college students: A randomized controlled trial | **D:** iCBT intervention to TAU treatment  
**S:** sample calculation with 100 participants  
**V:** iCBT  
**I:** Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) and Treatment as usual (TAU)  
**A:** statistical analysis using STATA (version 16.0) for chi-square and t-tests. Analysis was based on the intention-to-treat principle. | The mental disorder of anxiety and depression in college students during the transition period was analyzed using iCBT. A total of 100 participants were randomly divided into the treatment group (n=48) and control group (n=52). No significant difference was seen between groups after iCBT and TAU tests in every observed mental disorder ($P > 0.05$) | Science Direct |
| 8. | Peter Baylis et al., 2022 | Journal of Integrative Medicine, Volume 20, Number 2, Pages 135-144 | Stress reduction via neuro-emotional technique to achieve the simultaneous resolution of chronic low back pain with multiple inflammatory and bio-behavioral indicators: A randomized, double-blinded, placebo-controlled study | **D:** a randomised, double-blinded, placebo-controlled study  
**S:** all participants (n=112) were randomly divided to control and treatment group  
**V:** determine the effect of Neuro Emotional Therapy (NET) in chronic low back pain (CLBP) patients  
**I:** analog scale, psychoneuroimmunology markers of | Comparison between the control and treatment groups showed reduced pain level, rate, and inflammation level after a statistical test ($P < 0.001$) of physiological, pain, and disability markers. | Science Direct |
<p>| 9. | Alessandra N. Bazzano, 2022 | International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, Volume 19, Number 19, Pages 1-12 | Effect of Yoga and Mindfulness Intervention on Symptom of Anxiety and Depression in Young Adolescents Attend Middle School: A Pragmatic Community-Based Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial in a Racially Diverse Urban Setting | Performing yoga and mindfulness interventions in school can decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression in the treatment group, but no significant difference was reported. | PubMed |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Journal Title</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 10. | Dharma Singh Khalsa | Journal of Alzheimer's Disease, Volume 80, Number 2, Pages 505-519 | Spiritual Fitness: A New Dimension in Alzheimer's Disease Prevention

**A:** statistical analysis using SPSS (version 23.0 Chicago, IL, USA) to perform between-group comparison, descriptive statistics, student's t-test and Chi-square test.

**B:** The Finnish Geriatric Intervention Study to Prevent Cognitive Impairment and Disability (FINGER) as a multidomain intervention.

**S:** a total of 11,260 eligible elderly people participated and were separated into intervention and control groups in this multidomain study.

**V:** multidomain intervention, including dietary pattern, physical activity, cognitive training and vascular risk monitoring.

**I:** instruments, cognitive function tests, physical activity assessments, dietary questionnaires, and

**D:** Spiritual fitness and cognitive health and cognitive health can decrease Alzheimer's risk and lead to positive effects. For example, performing Kirtan Kriya can lower stress levels while increasing cognitive function, brain health, and overall well-being. In general, spiritual fitness, meditation, and having life purposes can increase cognitive health and reduce Alzheimer's risk.

**PubMed**
Congregational Salah praying holds important values in Islam, especially during Fajr, where prayer has higher virtue and degree (An-Nawawi, 2013). Performing the rak'ah sunnah before dawn (Fajr) prayer is better than having the world and all it contains, as The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) once narrated. Congregational Fajr prayer can also result in other essential virtues, such as:

1) Having the level of faith and piety towards Allah (SWT) in the form of devotion to Allah (SWT),
2) Enhancing solidarity between Muslims,
3) Improving self-discipline, as Fajr salah prayer must be done in the dawn and congregational Fajr prayer indicates the individual's self-discipline,
4) Maintaining physical and mental health (Putra, 2020),
5) Obtain multiple rewards, as mentioned in the Hadeeth narrated by Abu Hurairah, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, “The prayer in congregation is superior to the prayer offered by person alone at home, and prayer in congregation is superior to the prayer offered by person alone in a further mosque.” (Hadeeth narrated by Bukhari and Muslim).

The Fajr Salah prayer can also positively affect health by regulating hormonal stability. Engaging in activities during the early morning can stimulate the body, resulting in an earlier awakening and restoring a balanced hormonal system. Waking up early leads to heightened energy levels and increased productivity for an individual. Getting up early leads to greater concentration and increased daily productivity. The adrenal gland in the human body produces the cortisol hormone, which plays a crucial role in stimulating a positive mood in the morning and regulating blood pressure, blood sugar levels, and metabolism within the body (Eidelman, 2012). Hence, Fajr prayer not only showed a significant role in spiritual practices but also in the physical health of an individual. As previously narrated by Imam Al-Bukhari, "It has been told to us by Abdullah ibn Yusuf, who said: Malik told us that from Nafi of Abdullah ibn Umar (RA) that the Prophet Muhammad said, the prayer in congregation is twenty-seven times superior to the prayer offered by person alone."

In addition to the various rewards, congregational Fajr Salah yields other beneficial outcomes outside of spiritual and physical well-being. These include fostering a profound sense of unity and tranquility among Muslim individuals.

Another Hadeeth explaining the superiority of congregational prayer was narrated by Imam Muslim, who explained that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) once said:

"Whoever attends Isha (prayer) in a congregation, then he has (the reward as if he had) stood half of the night. And whoever prays Isha and Fajr in a congregation, then he has (the reward as if he had) spend the entire night standing (in prayer)."
Based on the previous sources, it is evident that the Fajr Salah prayer carries significant importance and is not an ordinary prayer. It is preferable to other Salah prayers, such as the congregational Isha' and Fajr prayers. Fajr time in the dawn is exceptional as the fresh and crisp morning air is reported to have health-beneficial effects such as accelerating blood circulation. Congregational Fajr Salah praying can be a physical activity to lower blood glucose as the glucose in muscle cells is heightened. Predominant isometric or isotonic movement can trigger antagonistic and agonistic muscles in the body. Many predominant isometric muscle contractions during Salah praying also increase isotonic muscle contractions (El-Ma'rufie, 2011). Several examples of the superiority of Fajr praying are:

1) Fajr Salah praying is witnessed by the angels.
2) Obtain the blessings and reward from Allah SWT.
3) Avoided all forms of hypocrisy.
4) Gain multiple sustenance from Allah SWT.

The significance of religion in mental health is demonstrated both theoretically and practically through daily prayer. However, the interpretation of this prayer activity is often not fully implemented. One of the positive effects of prayer is that it can serve as a platform for psychotherapy. Worship in Islam is a practical means of promoting human well-being in various forms, often referred to as Islamic psychotherapy. Islamic psychotherapy is the process of curing diseases and illnesses, encompassing mental, physical, spiritual, and psychological aspects, by applying Islamic values derived from the Al-Quran and Hadeeth.

Anxiety refers to an individual psychological condition of excessive fear and anxiety, which rarely happen at the same time. The word anxiety derives from the Latin substantive angor, ango, and German angst, which is commonly used to depict a negative impact as a physiological response. The American Psychological Association (APA) explains that anxiety is a reaction towards an emotional situation characterized by feelings of stress, accelerated heartbeat, restlessness, and accompanied by various physical responses. Academic anxiety is a physiological and psychological response to something that has not happened regarding the individual's academics. According to Sigmund Freud, anxiety is a mechanism of the ego to generate suitable adaptive responses (Lianasari, 2021).

Academic anxiety in university students can have several psychological impacts, such as feeling anxious in the presence of a lecturer, less concentration, pessimistic thoughts, difficulty in expressing ideas and thoughts in writing, irregular sleep patterns, and increased irritability. The physiological signs of academic anxiety include lower appetite, impaired comprehension of passages, stomach discomfort, lower back pain, strained eyes, oral ulcers, heightened irritability, and increased stress during consultations (Situmorang, 2017). Academic anxiety about uncertain events in the future is commonly found in university students due to overloaded academic work, which can lead to adverse effects on the students, including psychological stress from poor and ineffective study processes. The decrease in the study process in university students results from low attention range, concentration level, and memory impairment.

According to Ottens (1991), academic anxiety is a concerning issue and is characterized by several symptoms, including:
1. The patterns of anxiety-engendering mental activity, in which an individual's viewpoint or interpretation tends to concentrate on the unpredictable, forthcoming academic worry, is one of the symptoms. This viewpoint might result in cognitive processes such as increased anxiety when every choice they make seems like an error.

2. The misdirected attention refers to difficulties concentrating on academic-related activities such as reading, conducting research, and preparing a thesis. These academic-related routines will slowly trigger academic anxiety in the students.

Factors regarding academic anxiety can be divided into several factors, with one of them being the internal factors that include:

a. Low self-confidence.
b. The feelings of excessive anxiety, fear, and worry,
c. The sense of being overwhelmed and stressed when coping with academic pressure and
d. Inadequate knowledge and comprehension of academic assignments by the professors.

External factors that can influence academic anxiety are:

a. Inadequate study environment,
b. High competition against peers,
c. Lack of solid self-motivation and
d. Inadequate students' proficiency or aptitude in addressing academic challenges.

Additional elements that contribute to academic anxiety include social factors such as:

a. High societal expectations,
b. Overwhelming workload,
c. Peer pressure or pressure from social groups and
   The challenge of balancing university responsibilities with social activities for university students.

Thus, it can be concluded that an abundance of factors can affect anxiety in university students. These factors must be considered to measure the level of academic anxiety both theoretically and practically.

Psychoneuroimmunology is a concept of integrating the body's immune regulation and its function to strengthen homeostasis, as the immune system will integrate the psychophysiology of the brain to maintain its homeostasis (Nurdin, 2015). The anxiety found among college students tends to be a form of psychological reaction towards stress and pressure that felt threatening. Most stress responses come from biological compounds in the locus coeruleus noradrenaline (LC-NA) system and the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis, also known as the brain's immune system curve, which is responsible for controlling the overall homeostatic system (Nurdin, 2015). Psychoneuroimmunology is an interdisciplinary field that encompasses psychology, neuroscience, immunology, endocrinology, and psychiatry. The field aims to elucidate the interactions between the nervous and immune systems and the relationship between behavior and physical health.
The primary focus of integration in psychoneuroimmunology revolves around the mutual relationship between immunology and psychology in response to stress (Lilin, 2017).

A previous study investigated academic anxiety by Hafidz and Ghazalah aimed to determine the relationship between academic anxiety and achievements in 200 college students of the Mathematics and Science program in Pakistan. The findings of the study showed a negative correlation between academic anxiety and achievements. A study by Idham and Ridha evaluated academic anxiety in university students through the intervention of Al-Quran listening. The participants were randomly sampled (n=21), and the study used the one-group pretest-posttest design. Listening to Al-Quran murottal effectively reduces academic anxiety in college students, which indicates a new potential alternative for alleviating academic anxiety. Another study by Herawati, Hadi Winarto, and Dharmayana (2023), which discussed the academic anxiety level before and after group counseling of poetry therapy in university students during their fifth semester, was conducted. A pre-experimental design was used. The study results showed reduced academic and overall anxiety before (135 score) and after (97 score) the intervention, with a P value of 0.000. Therefore, it can be concluded that poetry therapy can decrease academic anxiety in counseled university students (Anna, 2023).

The correlation between congregational Fajr prayer in psychoneuroimmunology is mainly found in its positive effects on the immune body by reducing academic anxiety, including (1) lowering stress level as Salah praying also contain the act of contemplation, meditation, and relaxation that can assist an individual to release stress and improve mental health as well as body immune, and (2) reducing the risk of chronic disease. According to a previous study by Koenig (2011), spiritual practices can lower the risk of chronic disorders such as cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. Cognitive activity in the human brain during congregation praying is cognitively hypothetically different. Salah praying is a triad activity that shapes the brain plasticity due to repetitive cognitive action in the long term that can lead to mediation effects. When conducted consistently, congregational Fajr prayer will display beneficial effects. Furthermore, in neuroscience views, congregational Fajr prayer showed higher neurotransmitters. The neurotransmitter stimulates a reduction in cortisol hormone and gives the mind tranquility and calmness, compared to those who do not perform congregational Fajr Salah prayer.

D. Conclusion

This study employs the library research methodology to gather and analyze data from both national and international publications. Based on the comprehensive explanations in the reviewed ten journals, it can be inferred that the combination of psychoneuroimmunology, psychospirituality, and congregational morning prayers has the potential to alleviate academic anxiety in students. However, it is essential to note that this can only be achieved by consistent and frequent interventions.

Several recommendations for future study are:

1. University students can be the pillar of decision maker by conducting congregational Fajr prayer in the mosque and can also be the representative media to counter the assumption that teenagers rarely conduct congregational Fajr prayer,
2. Further research that discusses the effect of congregational Fajr Salah praying in the mosque and its correlation with medical or applied psychology in the future and

3. The present study can serve as the basis for future studies and recommendations for their research. The findings in this study can also be used as an overall view of how to review the positive effects of Fajr prayer using different literature studies or perspectives.
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Supplementary Material

Supplemental data for this article can be accessed here https://jicc.umy.ac.id/index.php/jicc.

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