

# A Study on the Effects of Breathing Cycle Training Technique Together with *Dzikir* Recitation towards Achievement of Students' HRV

Muhammad Nubli Abdul Wahab

Centre for Modern Language and Human Sciences,  
University Malaysia Pahang,  
Lebuhraya Tun Razak, 26300, Gambang  
Pahang, Malaysia

Azham Abdul Rahman

Centre for Modern Language and Human Sciences,  
University Malaysia Pahang,  
Lebuhraya Tun Razak, 26300, Gambang  
Pahang, Malaysia

## ABSTRACT

This experiment put emphasis on slow breathing exercise while reciting *dzikir*. The HRV readings of the students involved were recorded throughout the experiment. Slow breathing or resonant breathing exercises have been proven to be able to lower the heart rate and thus increase the HRV. Recitation of 'dzikir' (Islamic recitation) is known to have positive impacts towards emotion. When properly recited, 'dzikir' could bring calmness to the mind and emotions. An emotion at peace could then bring better results from any actions. Forty secondary school students with behavioral problems were chosen to undergo a biofeedback procedure that incorporated 'dzikir' recitation together with slow breathing technique. 'Dzikir' intervention enabled the students to make changes themselves using the technique of "Heart Rate Variability" (HRV). Students were instructed to perform resonant breathing while chanting slowly and loudly of the 'la ilaha illa Allah' 'dzikir'. The study found that students who successfully completed the resonant breathing and 'dzikir' training were able to make changes within themselves. The students had successfully achieved the change score "HRV Coherence" of the VLF spectrum of LF and HF spectrum conditions. The study had found that this technique was very effective and suitable to be implemented to assist students in making behavioral changes. This technique can be used in schools to help improve the students' behavior and thus enabling education programs to be implemented successfully.

## Keywords

Slow breathing/resonant breathing, 'dzikir', biofeedback, heart rate variability(HRV).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Dzikir

*Dzikir* recitation was an important element in the experiment. The word "*dzikir*" is derived from the Arabic word "*dzakara*" which means remembering.[1] As a terminology, it means practice speech through recitations and remembrance of Allah, The Almighty Creator. *Dikir* is the best traditions of worship and most pleasing to Allah, the lightest and most easily done by not having certain conditions and rules. It can be done at any time, any place and at any state. [2] *Dikir* has psychological and spiritual benefits. Psychologically, it gives a sense of spiritual comfort and it gives a sense of being closer to God.[3]

For this research, the *zikr* methods used were *jahri* and *sirri*. *Jahri* means reciting verbally or aloud by tongue. *Sirri* or *khofi* means reciting in an undertone manner or in heart. *Dzikir jahri* was commonly practiced since the beginning of Islam,

especially after prayers.[4] It was also mentioned that *dzikir sirri/khofi* is considered as the best of *dzikir* but *dzikir jahri* is also allowed.[4] Based on this, despite the difference in *dzikir* recitations, both have their own effects on human's physiology as being explained in the next paragraph. The effect of *dzikir* recitation was already being proven in a previous experiment. [5]

*Dzikir*, when properly recited could bring calmness to the mind and emotions. An emotion at peace could then bring better results from any actions. The words recited during *dzikir* recitation acts as the focal point in treating a person from within. When combined with psychological relaxation within a person, it would positively influence the autonomic nervous system (a control system in the body that acts largely unconsciously) in regulating the heart rate, respiratory rate and the metabolic rate [6], by lowering the physiological processes.

When discussing the practice of *dzikir* recitation, the importance of it to the well being of humans as a whole is strongly realized particularly by an Islamic concept known as 'Sufism'. Sufism is a school for the actualization of divine ethics. It involves an enlightened inner being, not intellectual proof; revelation and witnessing, not logic. By divine ethics, it is referring to ethics that transcend mere social convention, a way of being that is the actualization of the attributes of God.[7] *Dzikir* acts as a way or mediation to connect humans and Allah, The Creator, in order to seek His assistance in life.[8]

The recitation of *dzikir* is a religious practice. Through religious practice and religious experience; individuals are able to create positive emotions that have association with mental health. Positive emotions that come from religious practice and experience may buffer the daily hassles and stress. Through rituals and rites of passage, religion can increase the positive psychological outcomes by providing community support during major life changes like marriage and death. The religious community promotes altruism, generosity, and forgiveness attitude that enhance the meanings of an individual life. Through these religious practices and beliefs, communities are strengthened and expanded, providing individuals the access to greater social support while also strengthening familial bonds. Finally, religion creates a framework through which social mores can be understood and followed. In this way, the avoidance of certain behaviors (e.g., criminal behavior, substance abuse) that can lead to negative mental and physical health consequences is encouraged and strengthened in the religious community.[16]