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Article

The ECRA model of ego state counseling for enhancing personal peacefulness among students with academic anxiety: a single-case experimental research study

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of the ego state counseling model on personal peacefulness and academic anxiety among students. A single-subject A-B-A research design was employed with two students selected from 160 screened participants based on moderate personal peacefulness and high academic anxiety. Personal peacefulness and academic anxiety were measured using the Self-Perceptions Scale (SPS; α = 0.83) and Academic Anxiety Scale (AAS; α = 0.80), respectively. The study was conducted over 10 weeks, consisting of a 3-week baseline phase, a 4-week intervention phase, and a 3-week follow-up phase. The intervention involved four counseling sessions based on the ECRA model (Eliminate, Changing, Reinforce, and Adherence). Data were analyzed using visual analysis, Nonoverlap of All Pairs (NAP), and Tau-U. The results showed increased personal peacefulness and decreased academic anxiety in both participants. For personal peacefulness, MZ obtained NAP = 0.83 and Tau-U = 0.67, while KN obtained NAP = 1.00 and Tau-U = 1.00. For academic anxiety, MZ obtained NAP = 1.00 and Tau-U = 1.00, while KN obtained NAP = 0.83 and Tau-U = 0.67. These findings provide preliminary evidence that ego state counseling may be associated with improved personal peacefulness and reduced academic anxiety among students. However, the findings should be interpreted cautiously because of the single-subject design and small sample size.

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Introduction

Students' academic anxiety is caused not only by low intellectual ability but also by an individual's inability to adapt to the pressures and demands of college (Pascoe et al., 2022). College students tend to experience increased psychological stress due to academic demands, changes in their social environment, and greater responsibilities, which can lead to feelings of fear, worry, stress, and restlessness (Maulida et al., 2025; Worsley et al., 2021). Importantly, academic anxiety is not always associated with objective academic ability, as even high-achieving students may experience irrational performance-related thoughts that undermine self-acceptance and emotional calm, while also contributing to poorer academic performance, impaired psychological well-being, mental

fatigue, chronic stress, and an increased risk of depression (Cassady & Johnson, 2002; Cassady, 2010; Beiter et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2025)

A study involving 130,090 college students from various countries, the prevalence of anxiety was found to be 39.65%, highlighting the substantial burden of anxiety in higher education and its association with academic stress, achievement pressure, and difficulties in emotional regulation and coping with academic demands (Malebari et al., 2024). Similarly, Rahmawati et al. (2024) selected 348 active guidance and counseling students through a saturated sampling method and revealed that academic anxiety spans diverse age groups, genders, and academic years, with most students exhibiting moderate anxiety, whereas female, older, and final-year students reported significantly higher levels of anxiety Although these studies demonstrate the widespread occurrence of anxiety among college students, research suggests that academic anxiety is also related to students' psychological experiences and their ability to respond adaptively to academic demands. Internal psychological resources play an important role in students' responses to academic stress and adjustment (Kritikou & Giovazolias, 2022; Zheng et al., 2023). These findings suggest the need to examine positive psychological conditions that may support more adaptive responses to academic demands and reduce academic anxiety (Öztekin et al., 2025).

One psychological construct that may provide a complementary perspective for understanding academic anxiety is personal peacefulness. In the context of positive psychology and psychological well-being, personal peacefulness describes a person's tendency to accept themselves, their capacity for self-compassion, and their ability to foster harmony among various aspects of their being (Sims et al., 2014). Xi & Lee (2021) explain that personal peacefulness is a balanced and stable mental state, reflected through acceptance of loss, the ability to transcend pleasure and material things, and the presence of internal balance and tranquility. Personal peacefulness refers to a state of mind characterized by calmness, acceptance of oneself and others, and emotional balance that helps individuals cope with life's pressures, reduce internal conflict, and maintain healthy and harmonious interpersonal relationships (Putri et al., 2022; Pedhu, 2022). Higher levels of personal peacefulness have been associated with greater psychological well-being, healthier emotional regulation, happiness, life satisfaction, and lower stress levels (Chérif et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2023)

Sims et al. (2014) explain that personal peacefulness encompasses three main aspects: intrapersonal peace, interpersonal peace, and a peaceful orientation toward groups and the nation. Intrapersonal peace plays a role in supporting individual well-being by increasing positive feelings and reducing negative feelings (Sophie et al., 2022). Interpersonal peace is the ability to build good relationships with others so that peaceful relationships can be formed (Söderström et al., 2021), while peace toward groups and the nation concerns broader social harmony and cohesion (Bottoni & Addeo, 2024). Nelson (2014) defines personal peacefulness as an individual's ability to practice self-acceptance, self-compassion, and self-kindness through alignment between values, beliefs, and actions, as well as the ability to forgive oneself. Self-acceptance involves acknowledging oneself without excessive avoidance, denial, or negative judgment (Klussman et al., 2022; Putri, 2018). Self-compassion is the attitude of treating oneself with care and understanding when facing mistakes, shortcomings, or difficulties (Neff, 2022), whereas self-kindness involves treating oneself with warmth, gentleness, and support during difficult experiences (Han & Kim, 2023; Neely et al., 2009; Ryff, 2013).

The relationship between peace-related constructs and academic anxiety has been supported by emerging empirical evidence. Nguyen & Wilson (2024) reported a positive relationship between self-peace and higher GPA achievement as well as resilience in pursuing studies. Furthermore, the results of Gul (2024) found a negative relationship between peace awareness and academic anxiety, indicating that greater awareness of peace was associated with lower academic anxiety among students. Research by Haryani et al. (2024) indicates a significant negative effect of self-compassion on academic anxiety, where an increased capacity for self-compassion reduces anxiety levels. Conversely, high levels of academic anxiety resulting from low levels of inner peace can disrupt concentration, trigger confusion, and lead to a less-than-optimal learning process (Ningrum et al.,

2021). Taken together, these findings suggest that higher levels of peace-related psychological resources may be associated with lower academic anxiety and more adaptive academic functioning.

Existing counseling interventions for academic anxiety have primarily focused on reducing anxiety symptoms and improving students' academic functioning. For example, research by Permatasari & Prasetyawati (2023) shows that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is effective in improving participants' ability to manage academic anxiety. Furthermore, the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) approach which emphasizes thoughts, feelings, and memories that have long been avoided so that individuals can continue to function optimally in an educational environment has been found to significantly reduce academic stress levels (Syifa et al., 2022). Another approach, Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), has also been found to be highly effective in reducing academic stress and procrastination among college students (Melarisisha & Saranya, 2022). Based on these findings, it is clear that counseling services are needed not only to reduce symptoms of anxiety but also to strengthen students' mental well-being, underscoring the need for a more holistic and comprehensive approach to understanding students.

One counseling approach that has the potential to address this gap is ego state counseling, a psychodynamic approach based on the assumption that an individual's personality is composed of various organized ego states, each with relatively consistent patterns of experience, emotions, and behavior (Watkins, 1993). These parts of the personality are referred to as "resources," defined as components formed through the repeated use of coping skills that subsequently become embedded in the nervous system (Emmerson, 2014). Emmerson (2007) emphasizes that ego states can be understood as an "internal family of self-parts" that take turns becoming dominant in an individual's consciousness and influence how the individual thinks, feels, and acts in specific situations. This approach assumes that every individual possesses various ego states formed from life experiences, learning, and emotionally charged memories that are organized semi-automatically (Watkins, 1993).

The primary goal of ego state counseling is to identify the ego states that harbor pain, trauma, or frustration in order to facilitate expression, release, comfort, and empowerment (Emmerson, 2007). Within the framework of resource therapy as outlined by Emmerson (2014), the goal is to address pathologies expressed as unwanted feelings, behaviors, or conflicts. This therapy also focuses on facilitating functional communication among various ego states so that individuals can achieve resolution of internal conflicts and inner peace (Emmerson, 2007). This method enables clients to recognize and engage in dialogue with conflicting internal parts of the self, such as the part that tends toward self-harm versus the part oriented toward healing in order to promote integration and inner harmony (Sugara et al., 2026). This objective aligns with the concept of personal peace, which envisions individuals integrating various aspects of their personality to achieve affective and cognitive balance (Nelson, 2014). Ego state therapy aims to strengthen communication and cooperation among parts of the self to foster internal cohesion, psychological flexibility, and adaptive emotional management, consistent with the view that inner harmony is a key component of psychological well-being characterized by acceptance of life experiences, emotional balance, and adaptive coping with stress (Carreno et al., 2021; Torem, 1993)

In the context of academic anxiety, symptoms such as fear of failure, overthinking, self-criticism, and avoidance can be understood as manifestations of the dominance of certain ego states that are protective yet maladaptive (Emmerson, 2007). Through the therapeutic process, individuals are guided to recognize, understand, and develop a more adaptive relationship with that ego state so that the emotional responses that arise in academic situations can be regulated in a healthier way (Watkins & Watkins, 1997).

Previous empirical studies have demonstrated the application of ego state counseling in certain cases. Christensen et al. (2013) reported reductions in anxiety among participants with post-traumatic stress disorder following ego state-oriented therapy. Sugara et al. (2021) found that ego state counseling reduced grief and increased feelings of peace among adolescents who had

experienced parental loss. Other studies have demonstrated the benefits of ego state counseling in promoting prosocial behavior and health motivation among young adults with mild physical disabilities, as well as gender awareness and mental well-being among gay adolescents (Asyraf et al., 2024; Malik, 2024). However, previous studies have primarily examined the effects of ego state counseling on anxiety, grief, behavioral outcomes, or general mental well-being, rather than examining personal peacefulness and academic anxiety simultaneously among college students. In addition, limited attention has been given to individual changes across intervention and follow-up phases.

The objective of this study was to evaluate whether ego state counseling increased personal peacefulness and reduced academic anxiety among college students experiencing academic anxiety. It was hypothesized that participation in the intervention would increase personal peacefulness while reducing academic anxiety. To achieve this objective, a Single-Subject Research design with an A–B–A structure was implemented involving two purposively selected college students who met the predetermined inclusion criteria. The A–B–A design was selected to examine individual changes across baseline, intervention, and follow-up phases and to assess whether changes were maintained after the intervention. Participants completed an ego state counseling intervention consisting of four sessions, and changes in personal peacefulness and academic anxiety were evaluated across the baseline (A), intervention (B), and follow-up (A) phases. Personal peacefulness and academic anxiety were assessed using the Self-Perceptions Scale (SPS) and Academic Anxiety Scale (AAS), respectively. This study contributes to the literature by providing individual-level evidence through evaluating the potential of ego state counseling to simultaneously increase personal peacefulness and reduce academic anxiety among college students.

Methods

Participants

The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling from 160 undergraduate students enrolled at Muhammadiyah University of Tasikmalaya, class of 2024. The screening procedure was conducted to identify students who met the predetermined inclusion criteria: (1) moderate scores on the Self-Perceptions Scale (SPS); (2) high levels on the Academic Anxiety Scale (AAS), and (3) being willing to participate in the entire ego state counseling intervention series. Although several students met the scoring criteria during the initial screening stage, only two students met all inclusion criteria and expressed their willingness to participate in the intervention. Therefore, this study involved two participants who voluntarily agreed to take part in the counseling intervention.

Participant 1: MZ, a 21-year-old man, lived in an Islamic boarding school. He reported experiencing academic anxiety related to the responsibilities he had to manage both at the boarding school and in his college classes. These demands contributed to feelings of insecurity and restlessness, particularly because he wanted to perform well but lacked confidence in his ability to manage academic and boarding-school responsibilities.

Participant 2: KN, a 19-year-old woman, reported experiencing academic anxiety characterized by persistent negative thoughts about the academic demands she would face in the following semester. KN always feels unsure that she can handle the workload in the next semester, and she worries that she won't be able to make her parents proud because she feels she hasn't achieved enough to be proud of so far. She also reported uncertainty regarding her academic aspirations and future goals, which contributed to feelings of restlessness and confusion.

Procedure

This study used a Single Subject Research (SSR) approach with an A-B-A design to evaluate the effect of ego state counseling in enhancing personal peacefulness among students with academic anxiety. The A-B-A design consists of three phases: pre-test, intervention, follow-up. This design

aims to examine changes in each participant's scores taken at baseline, during the intervention, and after the intervention was discontinued (Gast & Ledford, 2014).

In the initial stage of the study, 160 students completed a screening questionnaire using Self-Perception Scale (SPS) and Academic Anxiety Scale (AAS) to measure their levels of personal peacefulness (M = 46.9, SD = 5.99) and academic anxiety (M = 26.5, SD = 4.26). Based on the screening results, two students were found to meet the study criteria, which included a moderate level of personal peacefulness, a high level of academic anxiety, and a willingness to participate in the study. Before the intervention was implemented, participants were asked to complete an intake form to assess their background and a counseling contract as an agreement between the counselor and the participant regarding the implementation of the ego state counseling process. Personal peacefulness scores were categorized into three levels: 12–31 indicating low personal peacefulness, 32–52 indicating moderate personal peacefulness, and 53–72 indicating high personal peacefulness. Meanwhile, academic anxiety scores were interpreted using the classification established by Finch et al. (2024), the resulting categories were: 11–14 = not anxious, 15–20 = mild academic anxiety, 21–29 = moderate academic anxiety, and 30–44 = high academic anxiety. The measurement results for each participant showed that: participant MZ had a personal peacefulness score of 40 (moderate) and an academic anxiety score of 31 (high); participant KN had a personal peacefulness score of 39 (moderate) and an academic anxiety score of 37 (high).

The next stage involved scheduling the pre-test (A1) measurements, which were conducted three times to obtain baseline data on the participants' conditions. Once the pre-test data showed a stable pattern, the participants received the Ego State Counseling intervention (B), which followed the protocol developed by Sugara & Muhajirin (2025). Participants received the intervention, consisting of four sessions over four weeks, conducted in person and lasting approximately 45-90 minutes each. A few days after each session, participants were re-assessed to identify changes that occurred following the intervention. After the entire intervention series was completed, follow-up measurements (A2) were taken three times to determine the participants' condition after receiving the Ego State Counseling intervention. The results from the A2 phase were then compared with those from the A1 phase to determine the changes and the effectiveness of Ego State Counseling in enhancing the inner peace of college students experiencing academic anxiety.

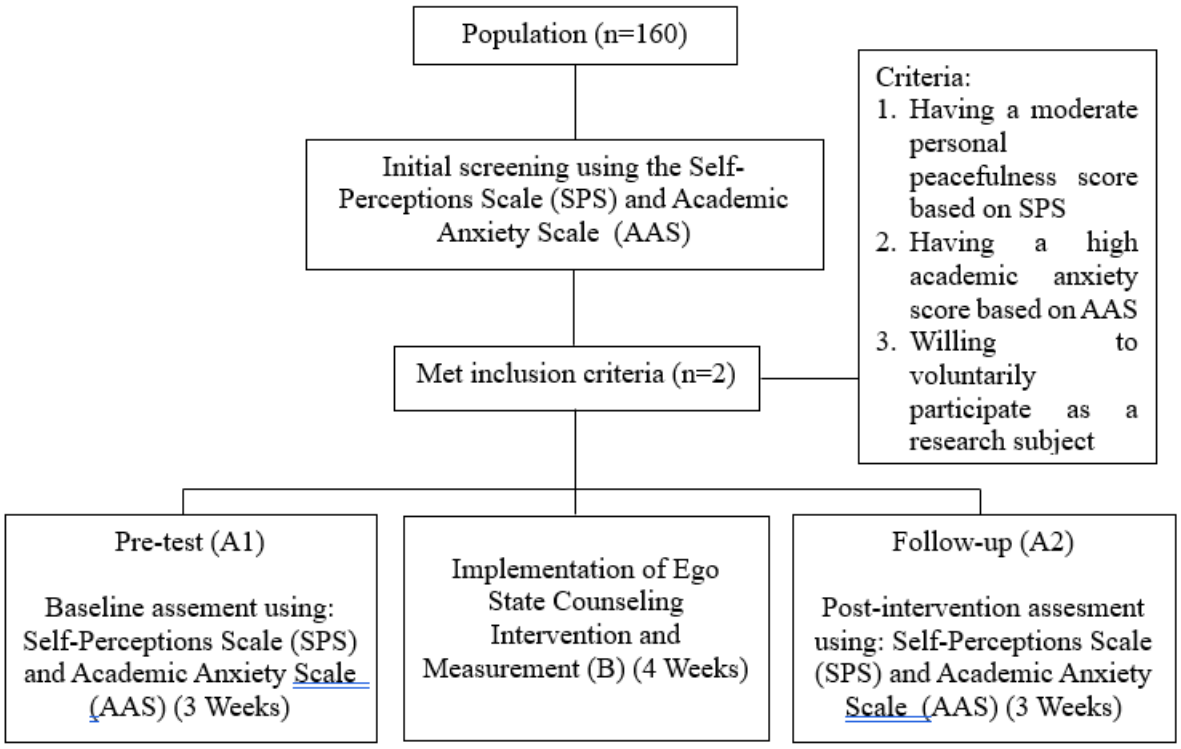


Figure 1. Participant Recruitment and Research Procedures

Ego State Counseling Interventions

The procedures used in the application of ego-state counseling were developed based on Emmerson's (2014) perspective, which explains that individuals consist of various parts of the self, each with distinct functions, emotions, experiences, and response patterns shaped by life experiences. The ego state counseling model developed by Sugara & Muhajirin (2025) is represented by the acronym ECRA. It consists of four main stages designed to support the individual's gradual healing and recovery: Eliminate, Changing, Reinforce, and Adherence. The ECRA model was designed to facilitate the identification, processing, and integration of wounded or maladaptive ego states. This procedure aims to help clients access and understand their wounded ego states, release pent-up negative emotions, build healthier internal relationships, and enhance personal peacefulness by strengthening a more adaptive and accepting adult ego state.

Table 1. Ego State Counseling Procedure Using the ECRA Model

Phase	Session	Focus	Activities
Eliminate	1	Eliminate negative emotions that arise as a result of unpleasant experiences.	Build good relationships with clients Activating the client's negative emotions in the last two weeks Identifying the client's parts of themselves Bridging the client to the event of first appearing negative feelings in childhood (ISSE) The client expresses negative emotions through dialogue with wounded ego state The client releases negative emotions
Changing	2	Resolve internal conflicts and reconcile counseling with unpleasant experiences.	Evaluate the change process after the previous The client re-accesses the injured ego state through guided imagery or the empty chair technique to dialogue between the wounded inner child and the healthy part of the self (wise self)

Phase	Session	Focus	Activities
Reinforce	3	Explore successful experiences that reinforce change, improve self-calm, and reduce tension, anxiety, and excessive emotional responses.	Clients reframing meaning and beliefs to be more positive Activating the positive part of the self that can be a source of strength and healing Evaluate the change process after the previous session Activating mature, adaptive, and hopeful parts of the self as reinforcement Clients access positive memory through visualization techniques The counselor guides the client to instill positive sensations into the body (somatic anchoring) Helping clients build hope by designing the future through an optimistic and realistic narrative Integration of ego state for the long term Evaluation of travel during counseling Identify triggers that can cause relapse
Adherence	4	Focus on developing commitments and strategies to prevent recurrence.	Clients build strategies for ego state regulation Making a conscious commitment to amplify change Integrate internal visualization as the first step to a new and healthier life Termination

Self-Perception Scale (SPS)

The Self-Perceptions Scale (SPS) is a psychological instrument developed by Nelson (2014) to assess intrapersonal peace, particularly self-acceptance, self-compassion, and self-kindness. The indonesian version used in the present study was based on the version reported by Al Khoiri (2025). The instrument consists of 12 items; responses are rated on a six-point Likert scale using reverse scoring, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) for positive statements and the reverse for negative statements. Previous research reported satisfactory validity and reliability of the instrument (CFI = 0.956; Cronbach's α = 0.865) (Buchori et al., 2025), while the SPS demonstrated good internal consistency in the present study (Cronbach's α = 0.83).

Academic Anxiety Scale (AAS)

The Academic Anxiety Scale (AAS), developed by Cassady et al. (2019) consists of 11 statements using a 4-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. The AAS measures various forms of anxiety that arise in academic contexts, such as concerns about academic performance, pressure to complete assignments, anxiety about academic evaluation, social concerns in the classroom environment, as well as emotional and physiological reactions in academic situations. The instrument was adapted into Indonesian through translation and readability testing, followed by item validity testing using Pearson's product-moment correlation and reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha in JASP. All 11 items met the validity criterion, with item-total correlations ranging from 0.339 to 0.743, and the instrument demonstrated good internal consistency (α = 0.80).

Social Validation

Social validation data were collected after the intervention to explore participants' perceptions and experiences of the ego state counseling intervention. Social validation provides qualitative information that complements quantitative findings by offering deeper insights into participants' perceptions of the intervention and its outcomes (Turner et al., 2014). Participants were asked open-ended questions to examine their views regarding the usefulness, relevance, and perceived impact of ego state counseling on their personal peacefulness, academic anxiety, emotional experiences, and behavioral responses.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in Single Subject Research (SSR) studies with an A-B-A design is conducted through repeated measurements during the pre-test (A1), intervention (B), and follow-up (A2) phases, followed by visual analysis of trend direction, data stability, and changes in behavioral levels throughout the intervention process (Lenz, 2015). Visual analysis is used to evaluate the extent to which the intervention influences the dependent variable through patterns of increase or decrease in the data over time (Harrington & Velicer, 2015). The effectiveness of the intervention can be observed through changes in data trends following the administration of the treatment, whether in the form of an increase or decrease in the target behavior during the intervention phase (Tankersley et al., 2008). Furthermore, analysis in SSR also emphasizes the importance of data stability during the baseline phase before the intervention is administered so that any changes that emerge can be interpreted more accurately as the effects of the intervention (Lane & Gast, 2014).

To reinforce the visual results of the analysis, SSR research can also use the Non-overlap of All Pairs (NAP) and Tau-U methods to measure the strength of the intervention's effect on changes in participant behavior (Parker & Vannest, 2009). The NAP calculation is performed by comparing all data pairs between the baseline and intervention phases to determine the number of non-overlapping data points, with interpretations of weak (0.00–0.65), moderate (0.66–0.92), and strong (0.93–1.00) (Parker & Vannest, 2009; Vannest & Ninci, 2015). Meanwhile, Tau-U is used to identify the direction and magnitude of change while accounting for trends that emerge during the baseline phase. In addition to the NAP, the Reliable Change Index (RCI) is used to determine the significance of changes in scores between the pretest and posttest, where a value above 1.96 indicates a statistically significant change (Cunningham & Turner, 2016; Jacobson & Truax, 1991). Because this study employed an SSR design with two participants, the analyses were used to evaluate intervention-related changes at the individual level. The combination of repeated measurements, visual analysis, NAP, Tau-U, and RCI was intended to provide converging evidence of changes across the study phases rather than to establish population-level generalizability.

Results and Discussion

Total SPS

This study examined changes in personal peacefulness among students with academic anxiety following the implementation of ego state counseling using a single-case A–B–A design. Visual analysis of the data showed a consistent trend of increasing scores in both participants during the intervention phase (B), which continued into the follow-up phase (A2).

As presented in Figure 2, positive changes in personal peacefulness scores were observed starting from the pre-test phase: MZ (M = 41.33, SD = 1.15) and KN (M = 38.00, SD = 1.00); the intervention phase: MZ (M = 49.25, SD = 8.85) KN (M = 48.00, SD = 4.97), and the follow-up phase: MZ (M = 60.67, SD = 0.58) KN (M = 56.33, SD = 3.21). All participants showed an increase in total personal peacefulness following the ego-state counseling intervention. This is evident from the Non-overlap of All Pairs (NAP) values for MZ (0.83) and KN (1.00), as well as the Tau-U values in the moderate (MZ = 0.67) and large (KN = 1.00) categories, indicating a positive effect of the intervention with varying magnitudes for each participant. The Reliable Change Index (RCI) values exceeded the threshold of 1.96 for all participants, confirming the presence of reliable change.

Across all aspects of personal peacefulness, positive progress was observed in all participants. Self-acceptance in the MZ group showed a moderate intervention effect (Tau-U = 0.67) with a high level of non-overlap (NAP = 0.83), whereas the KN group showed a large intervention effect (Tau-U = 1.00) with a strong level of non-overlap (NAP = 1.00). Regarding self-compassion, MZ showed a relatively small intervention effect (Tau-U = 0.33) with a moderate level of non-overlap (NAP = 0.67), while KN showed a large intervention effect along with a high level of non-overlap (Tau-U = 0.83, NAP = 0.92). Meanwhile, for self-kindness, MZ showed a small intervention effect (Tau-U = 0.50) with a moderate level of non-overlap (NAP = 0.67), while KN showed a moderate intervention

effect (Tau-U = 0.67) with a high level of non-overlap (NAP = 0.83). Based on the Tau-U and NAP values, self-acceptance showed the most pronounced intervention-related change in both participants, whereas the changes in self-compassion and self-kindness were comparatively smaller for MZ.

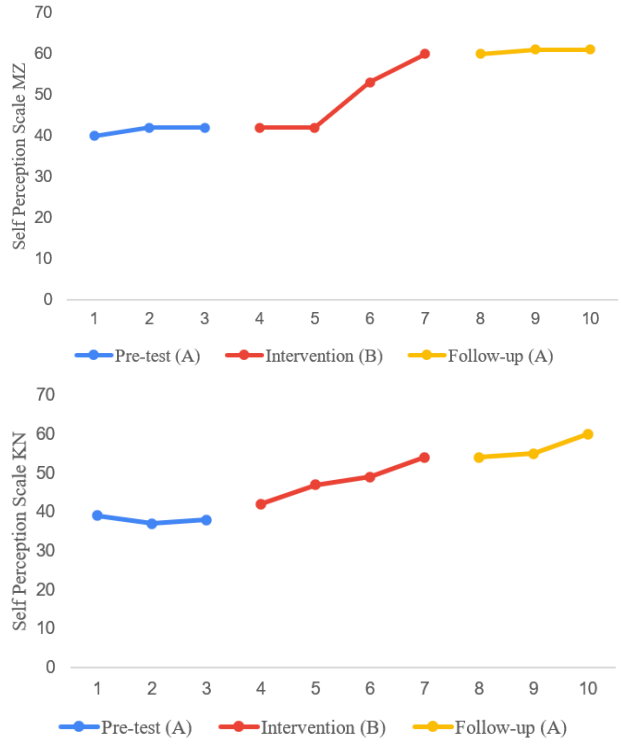


Figure 2. Changes in MZ and KN's personal peacefulness scores during the intervention period

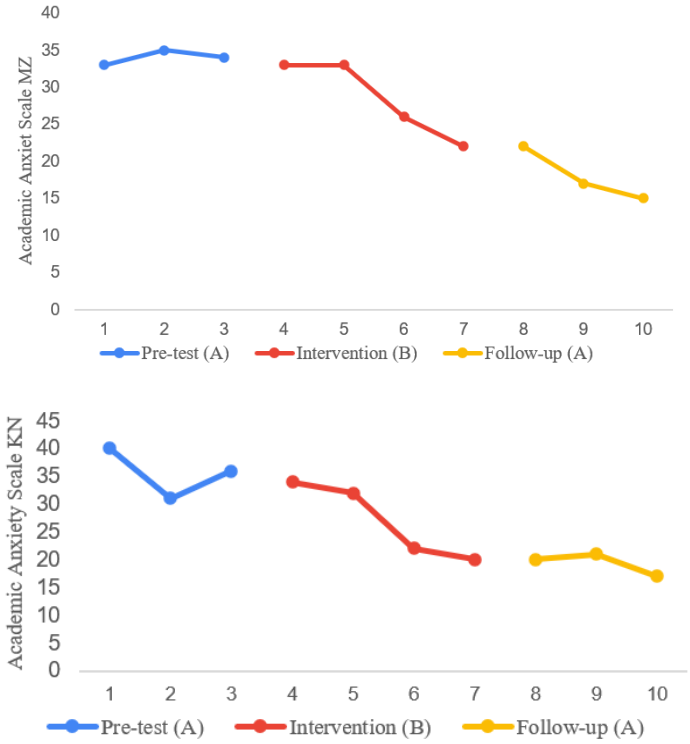


Figure 3. Changes in MZ and KN's academic anxiety scores during the intervention period

Total Academic Anxiety

The results of academic anxiety for all participants are shown in Figure 3, indicating a decrease in academic anxiety scores from the pre-test phase: MZ (M = 34.33, SD = 0.58), KN (M = 35.67, SD = 4.51); the intervention phase: MZ (M = 28.50, SD = 5.45) and KN (M = 27.00, SD = 7.02), and the follow-up phase: MZ (M = 18.00, SD = 3.61) and KN (M = 19.33, SD = 2.08). These findings are supported by the Non-overlap of All Pairs (NAP) values, which indicate a strong level of non-overlap for MZ (1.00) and a moderate level for KN (0.83). The Tau-U values indicate a large intervention effect for MZ (1.00) and a moderate effect for KN (0.67). Furthermore, the Reliable Change Index (RCI) values were −44.52 for MZ and −5.73 for KN. The negative signs reflect the direction of change in the academic anxiety measure, in which lower scores represent improvement. The absolute RCI values exceeded 1.96 for both participants, indicating reliable changes according to the criterion applied in this study.

Table 2. Total SPS scores and SPS aspect scores, as well as total AAS scores during the pre-test phase (A1), the intervention phase (B), and the follow-up phase (A2)

	Pre-test (A1)		Intervention (B)		Follow-up (A2)		Tau-U	NAP	RCI
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
MZ									
Total SPS	41.33	1.15	49.25	8.85	60.67	0.58	0.67	0.83	28.84
Self-acceptance	20.33	1.15	24.00	4.24	31.67	1.53	0.67	0.83	16.91
Self-compassion	6.33	0.58	10.00	4.69	13.33	1.53	0.33	0.67	20.70
Self-kindness	14.67	0.58	15.25	0.50	15.67	0.58	0.50	0.67	2.96
Total AAS	34.33	0.58	28.50	5.45	18.00	3.61	1.00	1.00	-44.52
KN									
Total SPS	38.00	1.00	48.00	4.97	56.33	3.21	1.00	1.00	29.72
Self-acceptance	19.67	1.53	24.00	0.82	27.67	3.06	1.00	1.00	8.97
Self-compassion	4.67	1.15	9.25	3.77	13.00	1.00	0.83	0.92	4.54
Self-kindness	13.67	1.53	14.75	0.50	15.67	1.15	0.67	0.83	1.31
Total AAS	35.67	4.51	27.00	7.02	19.33	2.08	0.67	0.83	-5.73

Social Validation

At the end of the intervention, social validation data were collected to explore participants' perspectives on ego state counseling and the changes they experienced following the intervention. Participants' narratives indicated a decrease in academic anxiety and an increase in inner peace, though the extent of these changes varied among participants.

Participant MZ stated that the ego state counseling intervention helped him better understand himself, including recognizing the conflict between feelings and thoughts that arise when facing various academic situations. Before the intervention, MZ stated, "*I'm exhausted, why are all the boarding school assignments always given to me? I feel overwhelmed when I have to juggle so many academic responsibilities at college and at the boarding school at the same time. I'm not confident I can get through it all, and when I'm overwhelmed, I feel restless.*" However, after the intervention, the participant reported a change in himself, stating, "*After getting to know myself better and accepting all my strengths and weaknesses, I'm more confident that I can navigate any challenge with greater composure.*" This statement indicates that MZ reported experiencing an increase in self-acceptance and confidence in dealing with the demands he faces, which in turn supports his ability to maintain composure when facing academic situations.

Meanwhile, KN also reported changes after participating in the intervention. Before the intervention, KN explained that she always overthought her own abilities, and seeing her friends' progress made her anxious; she stated, "*With the abilities I have, I feel I'm not worthy of success.*" After attending the counseling sessions, KN reported, "*I feel calmer because I'm better able to control myself, I no longer compare myself to others, and I've learned coping strategies that help*

me deal with anxiety, so I feel more at peace." This statement indicates an improvement in KN's self-efficacy, evident in their ability to accept themselves by reducing comparisons with others, thereby enabling them to manage anxiety calmly and achieve a state of peace.

The findings of this study indicate that both participants demonstrated changes in the expected direction following the ego state counseling intervention: personal peacefulness increased, whereas academic anxiety decreased. The present findings provide preliminary evidence of intervention-associated changes in enhancing personal peacefulness and reducing academic anxiety in both participants. The changes were evident not only in the mean scores but also in the phase-level patterns, NAP, Tau-U, and RCI results. Importantly, the increases in personal peacefulness and decreases in academic anxiety continued during the follow-up phase.

The findings showed consistent intervention-related changes in personal peacefulness and academic anxiety across both participants. The increase in personal peacefulness scores included positive developments in the aspects of self-acceptance, self-compassion, and self-kindness. These findings are consistent with a systematic review and exploratory meta-analysis of Transactional Analysis encompassing 41 clinical trials, which reported moderate to large effects on psychopathology, social functioning, self-efficacy, ego-state functioning, well-being, and behavior, while changes in ego-state functioning, self-efficacy, social functioning, and the client–practitioner relationship were associated with changes in psychopathology (Vos & van Rijn, 2022). Malik (2024) found that ego state therapy improved prosocial behavior and health motivation among young adults with physical disabilities, with effects maintained at a five-month follow-up, while Asyraf et al. (2024) reported changes in gender awareness and mental well-being following five sessions of ego state counseling using an A-B-A single-case design, providing contextual support for the present findings despite differences in outcomes and participant characteristics. Thus, the findings suggest that Ego State Counseling may enhance personal peacefulness and reduce academic anxiety, providing preliminary evidence of intervention-associated change rather than definitive causal effects.

At the end of the intervention, both participants showed an increase in personal peacefulness following the intervention. Participant MZ showed a moderate level of change, while participant KN showed a large level of change. The increase in personal peacefulness experienced by both participants can also be understood through changes in the aspects of self-acceptance, self-compassion, and self-kindness. One of the key findings of this study is the increase in self-acceptance observed in both participants following the ego state counseling intervention, with a relatively more pronounced increase in scores compared to the aspects of self-compassion and self-kindness. Self-acceptance describes an individual's ability to accept various characteristics, limitations, aspects of the self-considered less than ideal, and the experiences within themselves (Ryff, 1989). The relationship between self-acceptance and the ability to cope with stress is also relevant for college students experiencing academic anxiety, as academic demands can lead to negative self-evaluations and increase psychological stress (Danitz et al., 2016). Therefore, the increase in self-acceptance among both participants not only led to a reduction in academic anxiety but also indicated a shift in how participants viewed themselves, from a perspective previously marked by doubt and pressure toward a more accepting self-understanding. Among college students, self-compassion supports coping with failure and academic pressure without excessive self-criticism, while self-kindness emphasizes a supportive and caring attitude toward oneself during difficulties (Binder et al., 2019). Qualitative and experimental studies among college students indicate that self-compassion interventions can foster greater self-awareness, self-kindness, acceptance of painful experiences, and emotional stability while increasing self-compassion and reducing anxiety, depression, stress, and maladaptive perfectionism (Binder et al., 2019; Schaab et al., 2024; Woodfin et al., 2021). These differences in the magnitude of change are related to individual characteristics that influence how a person receives and responds to the intervention process (Villiers et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, regarding academic anxiety, both participants showed a progressive decrease in scores, moving from the high category during the pre-test phase to the moderate category during the intervention phase and the low category during the follow-up phase. These findings are consistent with several single-case studies showing that psychological interventions can reduce academic anxiety through changes in thought patterns, emotional regulation, or coping strategies, including CBT among final-year college students (Evriani & Fardana, 2024; Farahmita et al., 2024). Theoretically, the decrease in academic anxiety may reflect changes in how participants perceived academic demands and themselves, with differences in the magnitude of change potentially influenced by academic pressure, concerns about academic demands, and individual emotional regulation capacities (Yang & Yang, 2022).

The observed changes in personal peacefulness and academic anxiety can be understood through ego state theory, in which distinct parts of the self may hold sensory-based emotional experiences that become activated in response to current situations, while resource therapy helps individuals access these states and develop more adaptive internal resources (Emmerson, 2017). College students often experience academic anxiety due to a heavy course load, self-doubt, and a tendency to overthink (Rahmawati et al., 2024). This framework is relevant to MZ's experience of conflict between academic demands and the internal belief that he was unable to manage all his responsibilities, as well as KN's conflict between negative self-evaluation, social comparison, and the desire to succeed. In this context, ego state counseling facilitates the identification and restructuring of ego states associated with internal conflict or fear, helping individuals release negative emotions and strengthen more adaptive ego states (Emmerson, 2007; Watkins, 1993). Through parts therapy techniques, clients are guided to reconnect with various parts of the unconscious mind that may trigger inner conflict in order to discover positive aspects within themselves that can support adaptive changes (Sugara & Fadhilah, 2024). These changes in personal peacefulness and academic anxiety are consistent with the mechanisms of ego state counseling, which emphasizes the identification and integration of conflicting parts of the self through the release of negative emotions and the strengthening of more adaptive ego states (Watkins, 1993).

While both MZ and KN showed increased personal peacefulness and decreased academic anxiety, KN demonstrated a greater change in personal peacefulness, whereas MZ showed a greater reduction in academic anxiety. In psychotherapy research, variations in outcomes among individuals can be influenced by participants' baseline characteristics, the therapeutic process, and the mechanisms of change that occur during the intervention (Solomonov & Barber, 2022). In this study, this difference may reflect their distinct sources of internal conflict: MZ faced multiple academic and Islamic boarding school responsibilities whereas KN experienced self-doubt, social comparison, and concerns about parental expectations.

Although the findings showed positive changes following ego state counseling, several limitations should be considered. First, the small sample size (n = 2) limits the generalizability of the findings to broader student populations. The results are therefore more appropriately interpreted as individual-level evidence. Second, the A–B–A design without a control condition limits causal interpretation, as changes may also be influenced by factors outside the intervention. Third, this study did not directly measure changes in ego-state functioning, limiting conclusions about the mechanisms underlying changes in personal peacefulness and academic anxiety. Future studies should involve more participants, stronger single-case designs, and direct measures of ego-state functioning to further examine how and for whom ego state counseling may be beneficial.

Conclusions

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of ego state counseling in enhancing personal peacefulness and reducing academic anxiety among college students. Using a single-subject A–B–A design with two participants, the findings indicated that both participants showed increases in personal peacefulness and decreases in academic anxiety following the

intervention. The improvement in personal peacefulness was reflected across the measured dimensions of self-acceptance, self-compassion, and self-kindness, which represent specific dimensions of personal peacefulness rather than separate outcomes from the primary construct. These findings are consistent with the principles of ego state counseling, which emphasize identifying and integrating conflicting internal states, regulating emotional responses, and developing a more accepting relationship with the self. However, given the very small sample size, absence of a comparison condition, lack of randomization, and potential selection bias, the findings cannot be generalized to the broader college student population or interpreted as conclusive evidence of intervention effectiveness. Therefore, the findings should be considered preliminary and specific to the participants and conditions examined in this study. Future research involving larger samples, controlled comparison conditions, and more rigorous experimental designs is needed to further examine the effectiveness and generalizability of ego state counseling for college students experiencing academic anxiety.

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