

The Effectiveness of CBT with a Self-Talk Technique in Reducing Communication Anxiety

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Abstract

Intense communication anxiety can potentially disrupt social interactions and hinder students' ability to communicate effectively. Regarding this issue, the present research examined the effectiveness of a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approach with a self-talk technique to resolve communication anxiety in students. Using a pretest-posttest control group design, this research included 14 students divided into an experimental group and a control group. Data of their behavior was collected using a communication anxiety scale that previously has been tested for validity and reliability. Following the collection, an intervention was carried out in five sessions to determine whether the self-talk technique applied through CBT was able to significantly affect student' anxiety. Surely, the findings of this research provide practical contributions to the application of CBT techniques in counseling and education, as well as broaden the understanding of psychological interventions for communication anxiety problems. Future research should involve larger sample sizes and longer intervention durations. Counselors are recommended to use CBT with self-talk techniques, provide ongoing support, and offer feedback and strategy adjustments based on students' needs.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Munz (2018), humans as social beings naturally depend on others. In establishing relationships, courage is needed to express intentions and goals. The ability to express opinions positively and maintain good social relationships reflects effective interpersonal communication skills.

Santrock (2007) states in the process of life, every adolescent needs good relationships with peers for their social development. Similarly, Hurlock (2015) argues one of the developmental tasks of adolescents is to achieve more mature relationships with peers.

Tsang (2020) in his article considers oral presentations as a crucial aspect of human communication deserves to be studied in depth due to the recognition of communication skills as one of the most important competencies of the 21st century for students around the world. Oral communication ability is said to be one of the major requirements for success in various fields, for understanding communication anxiety is essential because it is the main factor that hinders the effectiveness of communication. Skills in overcoming this anxiety are important since it ensure individuals effective communication to achieve optimal results in various social and professional situations.

High communication anxiety often results in interactions avoidance which can negatively impact one's engagement and performance. A person with high communication anxiety tends to exhibit maladaptive behavior (Homer, 2016).

According to Lacombe (2024) the inability to interact effectively and feeling

uncomfortable in social situations can hinder the development of relationships and professional opportunities, as individuals may feel less competent or unappreciated. Thus, high communication anxiety not only affects the quality of social interactions but can also hinder the achievement of individual goals and aspirations.

Oktavia in (Kholisin, 2019) revealed public speaking anxiety is somehow relies on a person's psychological state such as negative thinking. A person's negative thinking is often found to experience public speaking anxiety. Similar things are conveyed by Swann, Schneider, and McClarty in (Kholisin, 2019) that a positive view of oneself will reduce a person's anxiety, meaning that positive thoughts also affect the level of communication anxiety.

Gorinelli (2023) researched the problem of communication anxiety, where in his research he noted that at least 69.7% of individuals had high levels of communication anxiety. Here, Gorinelli offers ACT (Acceptance Commitment Therapy) based on virtual reality as a psychological intervention strategy to reduce communication anxiety that leads to SAD (social anxiety disorder).

Flitch (2011) highlights that, although communication anxiety is a general phenomenon, it can have a significant impact on educational success, career advancement, and overall individual self-confidence. Xhi (2015) in his research concludes that someone with high communication anxiety tends to engage in self-criticism or negative self-

talk. In another study, on the same side, it is stated that someone can regulate the level of anxiety in speaking by paying attention to, recognizing, and adjusting the frequency and nature of their self-talk. It means that self-talk with a positive nature can be an intervention strategy to reduce communication anxiety and increase individual self-esteem.

Regarding self-talk, Haryanto (2023) assures self-talk appears as a method that supports individuals in the process of self-development and growth. It involves internal dialogue, where individuals communicate with themselves to deal with various situations, with the main goal of reducing communication anxiety. Through self-talk, individuals can replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations, which in turn can increase self-confidence and reduce communication anxiety.

Seligman and Reichenberg (in Erford, 2017) state that the self-talk technique is a "pep talk" or conversation that aims to arouse courage or positive enthusiasm that someone gives to themselves every day.

Yaratan (2010) in his findings mention in public schools positive statements given by the surrounding environment such as fathers, mothers, and siblings have a significant relationship to the formation of children's self-esteem, but the same thing does not happen in private schools which tend not to have a significant relationship between the number of statements given by the environment and the formation of children's self-esteem.

The above inconsistency urged the researchers to conduct further research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the CBT approach using the self-talk technique to reduce communication anxiety and low self-esteem in students.

What is discussed in this article is how Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) intervention with the self-talk technique can reduce communication anxiety and analyze the differences in communication anxiety and self-esteem levels in the experimental group and the control group. The hypothesis in this study was that CBT with the self-talk technique is effective in reducing communication anxiety in research participants.

Of the previous explanation, the purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of CBT with the self-talk technique to reduce communication anxiety, as well as to understand the significant differences in communication anxiety between the experimental group and the control group. It was expected that the findings of this research can provide practical benefits in the application of CBT techniques, especially for professionals in the fields of psychology and counseling, to support individuals who experience communication anxiety. Another benefit is this study can contribute to the development of more effective and evidence-based psychological interventions to improve psychological well-being and individual communication skills.

METHOD

The population in this study were students at SMK Pelita Nusantara 1 Semarang, with a total of 419 students. Of this number, the sample taken was 14 respondents who were divided into 2 groups and selected using a purposive sample technique, with sample selection criteria including students who have high levels of communication anxiety as measured by assessment instruments that have been tested for validity and reliability.

The instrument in this study was a communication anxiety scale using the semantic differential scaling technique. It was compiled by the researchers by referring to the communication anxiety theory proposed by Burgoon and Ruffner. The scale includes three main aspects, namely unwillingness, unrewarding, and uncontrol, with a total of 71 items. Scores on this scale ranged from 1 indicating low communication anxiety, to 5 indicating high communication anxiety. Based on the

validity test, this scale obtained values between 0.37 and 0.86, and an alpha reliability of 0.97. Of the total items, there were 6 invalid items which were later removed from the scale, so the final scale had 65 items.

This experimental research used a pretest-posttest control group design, where the experimental group was given a cognitive behavioral therapy group counseling intervention with the self-talk technique and the control group was given conventional group counseling.

In beginning of this research, a pretest was given to measure the level of communication anxiety of participants before the intervention. After the pretest, participants in the experimental group received treatment in the form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) with the self-talk technique in five sessions. Each lasted for 2x45 minutes and was carried out once a week. Further details of the process are attached in the following table 1. rvensi dari setiap sesi dijelaskan dalam tabel 1.

Tabel 1. The Description of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Intervention with the self-talk technique.

Session	Duration and Frequency	Activity	Goal
1	2x45 minutes/session; once/week	Taking notes on negative self-talk related to communication anxiety, categorizing and analyzing the cause of critics, doing self-monitoring and reporting the results in the following session	Identifying and analyzing participants' negative self-talk as well as reporting the results
2		Reviewing self-monitoring related to communication anxiety, identifying types of self-talk, explore causes, reviewing results and topics for next session.	Identifying and understanding the causes of negative self-talk and planning further action.
3		Developing positive statements as alternatives to negative self-talk that triggered communication anxiety, reinforcement through verbal practice, planning further practice.	Increasing the effectiveness of positive self-talk and planning the follow-up.

Session	Duration and Frequency	Activity	Goal
4		Assessing negative self-talk and communication anxiety levels with SUDS before and after counters, analyzing differences, and planning revisions.	Evaluating and planning the effectiveness of counters.
5		Evaluating responses, experiences, and effectiveness of counters, and follow-up plans. Reviewing changes in communication anxiety levels and application in daily life.	Evaluating the effectiveness of counters and implementing changes.

Following the completion of all sessions, posttest was done to observe changes in the participants' anxiety. Then, both data collected in the pretest and posttest were analyzed to conclude the effectiveness of the intervention using statistical analysis of the Wilcoxon signed rank test and the Mann Whitney test (U test).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Following the data collection, an analysis was conducted, and the results can be seen in table 2. Table 2 shows the results of the statistical analysis for the communication anxiety variable in two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group. The analysis was conducted using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test for paired data and the Mann-Whitney U test for independent data.

Tabel 2. The Results of Wilcoxon and Mann-Whitney Analysis of Communication Anxiety Variables

Group	Pre-test		Post-test		Z_{wilcoxon}	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Experimental Group	243.3	17.7	117.3	31.3	-2.35	< 0.05
Control Group	252.7	19.9	181.6	28.7	-.95	> 0.05
$Z_{\text{mann-whitney}}$	18.0		3.00			
P	> 0.05		< 0,01			

Prior to the intervention, both groups showed high levels of communication anxiety (Experimental group: $M = 243.3$, $SD = 17.7$; control group: $M = 252.7$, $SD = 19.9$). The results of the Mann-Whitney test showed that there was no significant difference between the two groups in the pre-test ($Z = 18.0$, $p > 0.05$).

After the intervention, the results of the Wilcoxon test showed a significant decrease in the level of communication anxiety in the experimental group ($Z = -2.35$, $P < 0.05$). Oppositely, the control

group gained no significant increase ($Z = -0.95$, $P > 0.05$). Moreover, the results of the Mann-Whitney test showed a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group after the intervention ($Z = 3.00$, $P < 0.01$). Of these results, the implementation of CBT approach with the self-talk technique has been effective in reducing communication anxiety.

Earlier was stated that this research has confirmed the effectiveness of CBT approach with the self-talk technique to reduce communication anxiety. This

finding is consistent with Xiaowei Shi's (2015) study which identified that negative self-talk is positively related to anxiety levels, while positive self-talk is negatively related to anxiety levels. Here, an increase in the frequency of positive self-talk is significantly correlated with a decrease in communication anxiety. In the same way, the findings of Haryanto, Sugiharto, and Awalya (2023) are related to the present research, namely self-talk is effective in improving students' self-regulation. This technique helps students control their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, which in turn improves academic performance, emotional well-being, and individual interpersonal skills.

According to the finding, it was known that it confirmed the hypothesis that intervention using the CBT approach with the self-talk technique can significantly reduce communication anxiety. With a very small p value, these results indicated that the techniques applied contributed a substantial impact on the variables measured.

This intervention can be widely applied to help individuals who experience communication anxiety problems, providing practical tools for interpersonal communication skills. However, this study has limitations, such as a small sample size and a short intervention duration. To validate these findings and explore the long-term effects of CBT techniques with self-talk, it is recommended that further research be conducted with a larger sample and a longer intervention period.

Individuals with negative self-image often withdraw from social interactions. It has been previously stated

by Sander Thomaes (2019) in his research that children with negative beliefs about themselves tend to underachieve in school. In this research, self-talk is recommended as an intervention strategy. Thomaes states self-talk can help individuals focus on their competencies, which encourages them to maximize their potential so that psychological barriers can be reduced.

Another opinion that supports the findings of this research is from Ben Conmy's research (2013) who states that negative self-talk can be a specific source that strengthens self-beliefs or views related to self-image that individuals need to take various actions. It proves that self-talk, including negative ones, has the potential to improve individuals' ability to interact by encouraging reflection and changes in self-views.

In his research, Shadinger (2019) states saying positive statements (self-talk) in groups can help CA (communication anxiety) sufferers take concrete steps to overcome their fears. Self-affirmation and group support not only provide additional self-confidence but also build a sense of solidarity which can significantly reduce communication anxiety. In this way, this approach can be an effective strategy in communication training for individuals with CA.

In general, the findings of this study reinforce the evidence that self-talk is an effective intervention to reduce communication anxiety. Even though the results are promising, further research with larger samples and longer intervention durations is needed to validate and expand understanding of the long-term impact of self-talk techniques

pemahaman tentang dampak jangka panjang teknik *self-talk*.

CONCLUSION

The Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) intervention with the self-talk technique has given effective results in reducing students' communication anxiety. It was based on a better significant decrease in communication anxiety in the experimental group. Also, this effectiveness supports the research hypothesis.

Apart from its beneficial findings, this study has limitations in terms of sample size and intervention duration. It is recommended future researchers can involve larger samples and extend the duration of the CBT intervention technique with self-talk. Extending the intervention period will allow for a more in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of self-talk techniques in reducing communication anxiety.

Other suggestions are addressed to counselors, namely conducting CBT with self-talk techniques as one of the intervention strategies to reduce communication anxiety. Furthermore, counselors are advised to provide ongoing support to help clients apply self-talk techniques in everyday situations, as well as provide feedback and adjustments to strategies according to students' daily needs.

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