

## Group Counselling with Systematic Desensitization and Emotional Freedom Techniques to Reduce Public Speaking Anxiety

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### Article Info

#### History Articles

Received:  
March 2018  
Accepted:  
April 2018  
Published:  
June 2018

#### Keywords:

*emotional freedom technique, group counseling, public speaking anxiety, systematic desensitization*

#### DOI

<https://doi.org/10.15294/jubk.v7i1.22679>

### Abstract

Public Speaking or the ability to speak in public is one of basic competencies that must be owned by students. However, apparently, there found many students having public speaking anxiety and in high category. Regarding this problem, this study was aimed at examining the effectiveness of a group counselling with desensitization technique and emotional freedom technique in reducing students' public speaking anxiety. The implementation of those techniques were done twice in each group counselling service. Meanwhile, the research method employed was mixed anova repeated measures test design by involving 16 students having high level public anxiety chosen from 100 students by using purposive sampling. Further, the results of mixed anova repeated measure showed that the group counselling with systematic desensitization technique and emotional freedom technique (EFT) was proved to be effective in reducing the public speaking anxiety of students. Besides, seen from the average score and time effect, emotional freedom technique resulted higher decrease than systematic desensitization technique. For more, the more emotional freedom technique was given, the higher decrease of the public speaking anxiety of students would result.

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## INTRODUCTION

Public Speaking or the ability to speak in public is one of basic competencies that must be owned by students. Wibowo (2017) argues that future competencies needed in facing the flow of globalization are, among others, the ability to communicate, the ability to think clearly and critically, the ability to consider the moral aspect of a problem, the ability to be responsible citizens, the ability to try to understand and tolerant of different views, and the ability to live in a global society. However, there are still many university students found to have high levels of public speaking anxiety. Anxiety is actually a form of behavior that is normal for everyone. It acts as a level of fear associated with direct or indirect communication between a person and another person (McCroskey, 2009). However, a high level anxiety will result in boredom in learning and disruption of students' well-being (Andriyani, Himma, Alizar, Amin, & Mulawarman, 2017).

The results of a study conducted by Ririn et al (2013) on Guidance and Counselling (BK) department students of FIP (Faculty of Educational Sciences) of State University of Padang indicate that students' communication competence is in low category, while their public speaking anxiety is in high category. The students who are afraid and anxious to speak in public have difficulty in expressing their opinions in discussion situations, tend to be silent when given the opportunity to ask questions, have difficulty in starting and ending a conversation with others as well as difficulty giving feedback to friends (Isti'adah, 2017). Besides, there are also students who always close themselves from problems that happen to them, depressed by peers when commenting so they show less sensitivity to the dynamics of each group discussion, less creative in devoting opinions related to learning topics that support their ability or self-potential (Lianasari & Purwanto, 2016). These conditions will continue to grow and certainly will lead to other more complex problems. If the ignorance of these conditions continue to happen, it will cause the individuals suffering the anxiety and get isolated from their environment (Agustiyana & Awalya, 2016).

From the description above, it is known that speaking anxiety is a fear behavior that must be immediately given intervention to make any of its level on individual getting reduced to low level because based on a research conducted by

McCroskey (2009), individuals with high speech anxiety have unsatisfactory skills. They are also considered as people with irrational cognition. Gladding (2012) states that counseling with a behavioral approach is useful in dealing with anxiety, stress, self-confidence, parent-related relationships and social interaction with the aim of changing or eliminating maladaptive behavior into healthy and constructive behavior.

The technique used in behavioral group counseling is a systematic desensitization technique. This technique is used as a core treatment to help students reduce the anxiety of public speaking. Also, the systematic desensitization technique is a technique used to eliminate unwanted emotional responses to certain types of stimuli where situations which arise unwanted emotions are coupled with inhibiting responses (Nursalim, 2013). In line with this, the systematic desensitization technique is chosen to reduce public speaking anxiety on the grounds that this technique has the basic assumption that response to anxiety can be learned or conditioned and can be prevented (Corey, 2013).

Studies related to reducing public speaking anxiety by using systematic desensitization techniques have been widely done. Some of these studies include a research conducted by Syafryadin et al (2017), mentioning that public speaking training with systematic desensitization technique is effective to improve the competence of public speaking of students. There is another study conducted to measure the effectiveness of systematic desensitization in reducing academic anxiety and anxiety in facing of the test on students (Fitri, Wibowo, & Sunawan, 2017; Risyadi, 2016; Solechah, Wibowo, & Japar, 2016). It is Sutisna (2016) who proves in his research that systematic desensitization is able to lower the level of apprehension in Senior High School students. However, other researches suggest that the systematic desensitization technique is no more effective than implosive techniques in reducing speech anxiety in front of the class (Ariani, Suami, & Dantes, 2016).

In applying systematic desensitization to reduce public speaking anxiety, this technique will be compared with emotional freedom technique (EFT) therapy. EFT is a psychological intervention technique used to facilitate emotional healing. EFT is a method used to balance the body's energy system and to assist in the release of unwanted emotions,



technique had an impact on reducing public speaking anxiety. The results of the hypothesis testing analysis can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The Results of The Hypothesis Testing Analysis

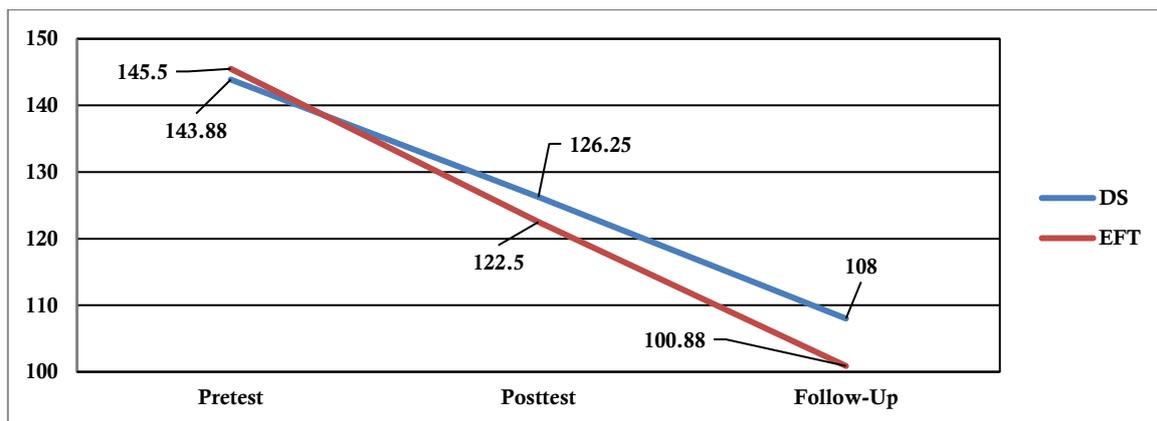
Group	Pretest		Posttest		Follow-Up		F <sub>1</sub>	F <sub>2</sub>	F <sub>3</sub>
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	(1,38, 19,3)	(2,28)	(1,14)
Systematic Desensitization	143.88	2.85	126.25	2.964	108	3.464	5336.83	6653.554 (p < 0.01)	2.79
EFT	145.5	4.69	122.5	4.14	100.88	4.324	(p < 0.01)	1951.367 (p < 0001)	(p < 0.01)

By referring to Table 1, it was proved that public speaking anxiety condition in both treatment groups was at high level (> 131) with pretest mean in group A of 143.88 (SD = 2.85) and in group B of 145.5 (SD = 4.69). Then, on posttest measurement, group B experienced a greater decrease in public speaking anxiety with the mean value of 145.5 (SD = 4.14) than group A whose mean value of 126.25 (SD = 2.964). Furthermore, the decrease in public speaking anxiety in group B was seen to be higher than in group A at follow-up measurements with the mean values of 100.88 (SD = 4.324), while the mean in group A was 108 (SD = 3.464). Therefore, it showed that the anxiety of public speaking in group B has decreased consistently rather than group A.

Based on the calculation of data analysis using mixed anova technique, it showed that counseling group with systematic desensitization technique and emotional freedom technique was effective in reducing public speaking anxiety of the students ( $F_{(2,28)} = 5336.83, p < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, there was no significant difference in the effectiveness between group counseling with

systematic desensitization technique and emotional freedom technique ( $F_{(1,14)} = 2.79, p < 0.01$ ). Interestingly, the results of the study showed an interaction effect of the type of technique and time of measurement on anxiety ( $F_{(1,38, 113,02)} = 64.150, p < 0.01$ ). for more, the EFT group had an effect of decreasing anxiety levels higher than those with systematic desensitization technique.

Based on the results of data analysis, it could be concluded that the difference in the effectiveness level of systematic desensitization technique and emotional freedom technique was at the same level. This meant that both techniques were at the same level of effectiveness. However, when viewed from the average result and the effect of time, the emotional freedom technique decreased higher than the systematic desensitization technique. The longer the emotional freedom technique treatment was given, the higher the level of public anxiety decreased in the students. Furthermore, the degree of decreased anxiety of public speaking on the application of each technique is shown in Graph 2.



**Graph 1.** The Graph of Public Speaking Anxiety Level

The analysis of mixed anova also showed an effect of decreased public speaking anxiety at each stage of measurement through pairwise comparison seen in table 2. In the table, it could be seen that changes in each stage of measurement majority showed significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ). As a result, it proved that the majority of measurements showed a

significant decrease in the level of public speaking anxiety in college students and it could be interpreted that group counseling technique with systematic desensitization technique and emotional freedom technique contributed positively to the decrease in public speaking anxiety.

**Table 2.** The Results of Pairwise Comparison Analysis

Comparison	Systematic desensitization technique			Emotional freedom technique		
	MD	SE	P	MD	SE	P
Pretest-Posttest	17.625	0.263	< 0.01	23.000	0.707	< 0.01
Pretest-Follow-Up	38.875	0.295	< 0.01	44.625	0.944	< 0.01
Posttest-Follow-Up	18.250	0.366	< 0.01	21.625	0.375	< 0.01

Based on the results of the study, it was known that the level of anxiety in public speaking before the students were given treatment was in high category, so it could be concluded that the majority of students experienced anxiety in public speaking. This could be seen from many students who felt tense and nervous when speaking in public, felt stiff, fast heart beats and trembling hands when giving a presentation. On the one hand, in student discussions, students often experienced difficulty in expressing their opinions, tended to be silent when given the opportunity to ask questions, had difficulty in starting and ending a conversation with others, as well as difficulty in giving feedback to friends.

The data of the results of the study indicated that the public speaking anxiety of students after being given treatment was in moderate and low level. The decrease in the mean of pretest-follow-up scores from groups with systematic desensitization technique was due to this technique which was being able to eliminate unwanted emotional responses to certain stimuli where emotion-generating situations were not paired with inhibiting responses, such as an anxiety-stimulating stimulus coupled with relaxed response, so the stimulus that evoked anxiety ultimately no longer caused anxiety (Nursalim, 2013).

This is in accordance with several studies such as a research conducted by Marantini et al (2014) on the application of desensitization technique to students who have communication anxiety. Efforts by counselors to reduce the

anxiety in communication through systematic desensitization techniques are done by counselors train students to achieve relaxed or relaxed state. This exercise was done through a special procedure called relaxation that seeks to condition students in a state of complete relaxation.

The results achieved by the research subjects of this study could be used as a proof that changing the relaxed conditions was associated with speaking anxiety. Further, it was important to prepare a counseling strategy which was able to touch the emotional sphere. This is in line with what Armasari, et al. (2013) says that basically systematic desensitization is used to remove negatively reinforced behavior that includes the appearance of behaviors and responses that are contrary to the behavior to remove. In relaxation techniques, students were trained to relax and associate relaxed circumstances in experiences of anxiety which were imagined and visualized. Then, gradually, the experiences related to anxiety were eliminated along with the relaxed conditions created by students, and also the students were trained to relieve tension on the mind and create a relaxed state on the body.

In this way, even though both forms of intervention were equally proven effective in reducing public speaking anxiety in college students, the emotional freedom technique group counseling demonstrated greater effectiveness compared with systematic desensitization technique to reduce public speaking anxiety in college students. This was supported by the

results of research conducted by Ariani et al (2016) which state that systematic desensitization technique is less effective on students, given their limitations in visualizing the situation that is considered problematic. This will interfere with the therapeutic process, since in essence, in the implementation of systematic desensitization technique to the students requires the ability to take back the problematic situation, and try to be reapplied with a new perspective (Erford, 2016).

Different things laid in the application of EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique). It is a technique that directly deals with the disruption of the body's energy system and is useful for eliminating negative emotions (without the need to dismantle past traumatic memories). EFT can do a "short cut" by cutting the chain right in the middle (energy disturbance), with a harmonious body energy system, then the negative emotions felt will be lost by itself (Zainuddin, 2009). In accordance with the results of a research by Adhriani & Yusra (2014), there is a decrease in anxiety on beginners radio announcer after doing EFT. When a person experiences a disruption of the body's energy system such as anxiety, the flow of energy through the meridian point of the body will be disrupted. To eliminate the disruption of the body's energy system, it is necessary to correct the disruption of energy flow at the points of the body meridians by finger knocking in a certain way according to the EFT technique.

The results obtained from this study, showed similar results with previous studies on EFT. They were similar to Jones' research, Thornton & Andrews's study (2011) on public speaking anxiety (PSA), which gave EFT to eighteen people in the experimental group, showed a decrease in anxiety levels in public speaking after a forty-five-minute EFT session. EFT was also proven to reduce anxiety and improve students' academic performance in presentation in front of the class after being given EFT for fifteen minutes (Boath et al., 2013).

Based on the above explanation, it is important for school counselors to reconsider the use of systematic desensitization technique to improve student self-confidence. If this technique will be done to the students, then it should be only

for students who have more ability in visualizing events. Emotional freedom technique is more recommended to counselors to reduce public speaking anxiety in students because each student has the potential for self-verbalization although cognitive improvement has not reached the level of perfection.

## CONCLUSION

This study has tested the effect of the implementation of group counseling with systematic desensitization technique and emotional freedom technique in reducing the anxiety of public speaking of the students of BK department of FKIP Darul 'Ulum Jombang University. The implementation results were seen from the acquisition of pretest, posttest and follow-up results analyzed using ANOVA repeated measures. They results show significant differences. From these results, "group counseling with systematic desensitization technique and emotional freedom technique can reduce the anxiety of public speaking to students".

In this study there was no control group as comparison group, so it is expected that the next research can add control group. Further, the result of this study is still dominant from sample with female gender at university level, so it needs development with number of samples which not only focus on female gender and at other education level. Also, the time range used for repeated measurements in this study was quite short, so in the next study is expected to use a long time.

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