

The Effectiveness of Group Counseling with Games and Self-talk Technique to Reduce Communication Apprehension

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of group counseling with games and self-talk technique to reduce the communication apprehension of the students of Public Senior High School 1 Keo Tengah. The method used was experimental with the design of randomized pre-test – post-test control group design. Meanwhile, it involved 16 subjects chosen through purposive sampling technique from 70 students. The results showed that games and self-talk techniques were effective to reduce communication apprehension by having group counseling with self-talk technique got higher results of the level of effectiveness than games technique. At last, the implication of this counseling has been discussed in the results and discussion session.

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INTRODUCTION

Communication apprehension is a fear that arises within an individual about communication skills. McCroskey (2009) states that communication apprehension is a kind of normal behavior for everyone. It is realized as the level of fear which relates to direct or indirect communication between one and another person. Sugiyo (2005) argues that communication apprehension is realized by a fear of having communication in interpersonal communication, social withdrawal, an attempt to talk less and talking by force. The person who experiences this apprehension usually speaks unfocused and irrelevantly because he is afraid of baiting others' reaction if not doing so.

Communication apprehension is an important matter to consider. It is because when students' communication apprehension problems are ignored by, it will turn into a problem, namely unproductive behaviors.

Communication apprehension in the learning process is one of the causes of the decline in learning achievement. Patil-Shinde, and Karekatti (2012) conducted a study on 100 engineering department students at Mumbai University. He found that 9% of students experience low communication apprehension, 42 students experience fair communication apprehension, and 49 experience high communication apprehension.

Reyhan (2019) who carried out a study in UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta found that 73% of his study participants have high communication apprehension. In line with this, Muslimin (2013) adds the characteristics of people who have communication apprehension, namely withdrawal from society, trying as little as possible to speak, and speak irrelevantly when forced to communicate.

Games technique is believed effective and possible to facilitate students' development based on their potentials and needs in communicating with others. Jean Piaget in Carpendale, Jeremy, I. M, Lewis, C. N. M., and Ulrich (2019) mentions that game can be

It is used as a technique which can improve children cognitive development. It enables them to practice competencies and skills needed in a relaxing and joyful way (Suwarjo, and Eliasa, 2011). The game technique is an activity of playing done to seek for pleasure and satisfaction.

Wouter study (2013) reveals that games technique is designed to change one's mindset to be more rational, and help someone understand illogical things. The way people play games somehow influence these things. Purwati, Sugiyo, and Tajri (2012) explains that games technique can be an alternative to reduce speaking anxiety which plays a role as an aspect of communication apprehension. This matter is used as a consideration because of children natural characteristic which is easy to accept any command through a video game with their peers.

The implementation of games in group counseling is a process occurred within oneself, and centered to conscious thoughts and behaviors. It leads to the form of interpersonal communication such as expressing thoughts and feeling free, reality orientation, self-openness regarding any deep feelings experienced, mutual trust, mutual attention, and mutual support. (Wibowo, 2005). This process surely can arouse students' enthusiasm and encourage them to participate in it more actively. Also, through the implementation of games in group counseling, students not only play but also create group dynamics atmosphere which enables them to interact with their peers and reduce communication apprehension.

In the game, there are useful values for children in developing an attitude of confidence, responsibility, openness, cooperation, respect for others, honesty, and spontaneity. Game activities provide experience for students because they will absorb everything that happens in the surrounding environment. Also, the counseling process that occurs in the game can change behavior, attitudes, and experiences. The values obtained by students for involvement in the games will be inherent. That is what can support students in reducing communication apprehension.

Oppositely, there are gaps found in Gunter, Kenny, and Vick study (2008) that games technique in the games group activity are not understandable by the players when they do not involve directly in the activity and do not obtain cognitive process elements, language, social and intensive emotional in the game. This study shows that the games used in this study were not properly managed so that there happened high communication apprehension. As a result, the cognitive burden is not resolved.

The second technique used to reduce students' communication apprehension is the self-talk technique. It is a way for individuals to dialogue with themselves when facing various situations. Self-talk which is stated both inside the heart and loudly will be a suggestion for oneself. Indeed, self-talk helps oneself become more aware of thinking, feeling, and acting. (Cormier, Nurius, and Osborn, 2009) In line with that Erford (2016) self-talk is a technique that can be used to deny unreasonable beliefs and develop healthier thinking that will produce positive self-talk.

A study on the intervention for communication apprehension done by Shi (2015) shows that self-talk can reduce communication apprehension and reduce public speaking anxiety. Shi, Brinthaupt, and Mccree study (2017) also explains that self-talk technique is effective to reduce communication apprehension showed by the implementation of the technique itself, namely by self-criticizing, self-reinforcement, self-management, social assessment during the public speaking. The results of Hatzigeorgiadis study (2006) show that self-talk can reduce communication apprehension caused by the function of attention to the problem of communication apprehension faced. This study also shows that the types of self-talk can function differently and depend on the self-talk signals given.

However, there are also studies that mention the opposite results of self-talk. Zourbanos (2011) states that self-talk technique is only effective to reduce negative views about oneself before having performance supported by coaches. However, it is not effective for athletes

in reducing negative views or fears within themselves during their performance. Therefore, this study asserted games technique and self-talk technique in reducing communication apprehension.

Communication apprehension is a negative trigger that can inhibit students from completing academic tasks, the use of group counseling services with games technique to eliminate irrational thoughts to be rational is conducted in the form of games and the use of self-talk techniques. In this research, it was intended to eliminate or stop negative stimulus or response as a source of communication apprehension. The results of this study are expected to be able to clarify the impact of using games technique and self-talk technique to reduce students' communication apprehension.

METHODS

This study applied randomized pre-test – post-test comparison group design (pre and post-treatment) by involving two groups, namely one experimental group in the form of games technique group counseling (5 meetings), and experimental group two in the form of self-talk technique group counseling (5 meetings). Participants involved in the pre-test were 70 students from class X of Public Senior High School 1 Keo Tengah. Purposive technique Sampling was used to select students who had a high level of communication apprehension. Through this technique, 16 people were selected, and random assignments were conducted for the placement of subjects in each group consisting of 8 people (Figure 1). This was done to have equality in the two groups. For more, the flow of this study can be seen in Figure 1.

The data collection technique used in this study was in the form of communication apprehension scale adapted from Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) written by McCroskey (1978) which consists of 24 items. To this instrument, the researchers performed the equivalence test by doing a back-translation, and experts' validation to see the similarity of culture for further test. The results of

the test showed that all items were declared valid ($r_{xy} = 0.623 - 0.832$) with an Alpha value of 0.957. For more, the data were obtained using the Wilcoxon and Mann Whitney Test with the help of SPSS 23.

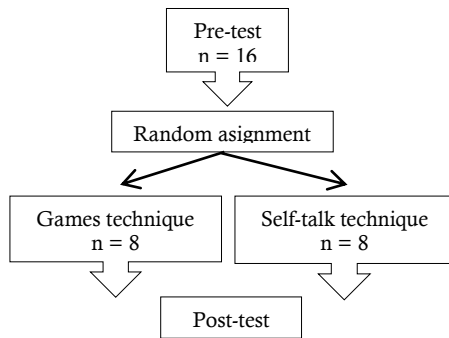


Figure 1. Research Stages

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The initial condition of students' communication apprehension before receiving the treatment indicated that 16 people were having a high level of communication apprehension. After the intervention of group counseling with games and self-talk techniques was given, the students in every group experienced communication apprehension reduction. First, the change in games technique group showed that their condition in the pre-test ($M = 108.37$, $SD = 1.84$) got reductions ($M = 58.12$, $SD = 6.51$). Second, the self-talk technique

group's apprehension level in the pre-test ($M = 109.62$, $SD = 3.58$) got reduction ($M = 47.12$, $SD = 7.69$). After knowing the results of the difference, the Wilcoxon test was carried out to test the hypothesis.

The results of Wilcoxon test (Table 1) showed that the initial condition of games group in the pre-test ($M = 108.37$, $SD = 1.84$) was significantly higher than the post-test ($M = 58.12$, $SD = 6.51$; $Z = -2.524$, $p < 0.05$). Further, the level of students' communication apprehension in self-talk group in the pre-test ($M = 109.62$, $SD = 3.58$) was significantly higher than the post-test ($M = 47.12$, $SD = 7.69$; $Z = -2.527$, $p < 0.05$). Next, to compare the level of effectiveness of both groups, the researchers used the Mann Whitney test ($Z_{(2,21)} = -2.314$, $p < 0.05$). The results of the Z-test showed that there was a reduction in the level of students' communication apprehension significantly before the implementation of group counseling treatment. This showed that the techniques used by the researchers were effective to reduce students' communication apprehension. Even though both techniques were considered effective, each technique had a different level of effectiveness. The results of the effectiveness comparison of both groups indicated that the participants achieving games techniques gained lower effectiveness (M gain score = 50.25, $SD = 7.81$) than self-talk technique (M gain score = 62.5, $SD = 6.88$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 1. The Tabulation of the Effectiveness Test Results of Group Counseling with Games and Self-talk Techniques to Reduce Students' Communication Apprehension

Groups	N	Pre-test		Post-test		Z_1	Gain scores		Z_2
		M	SD	M	SD		M	SD	
Games (G)	8	108.37	1.84	58.12	6.51	-2.524	50.25	7.81	-2,314
Self-talk (ST)	8	109.62	3.58	47.12	7.69	-2.527	62.5	6.88	

Information:

* $p > 0.05$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$;

Z_1 = Wilcoxon test

Z_2 = Mann Whitney test

The data of the findings showed that the condition of Public Senior High School 1 Keo Tengah students' communication apprehension was in the fair and low level. Several previous studies indicate that mostly the level of students' communication apprehension is in the fair category. Beatty, and Pascual-Ferrá (2015) states

that the reasons underlying communication apprehension can be seen from physical and psychological changes. The physical responses are realized by sweaty palms, shortness of breath, fast heartbeat, and speaking haltingly. Meanwhile, psychological responses cover negative feelings, empty thoughts, and confusion.

A study conducted by Neuliep (2012) expresses that a factor inhibiting communication other than psychological factors in communication apprehension is culture. Culture is inevitably one of the aspects which can cause a lack of involvement in communication and even is the most prominent one. This statement shows that the high level of communication apprehension had by students contribute to many negative effects. This condition implies that there is a need to help students in reducing communication apprehension given the enormous impact of communication apprehension in learning motivation and their learning achievement.

The effort made in the form of group counseling with games and self-talk techniques were expected to reduce communication apprehension. Based on the findings it was known that the cause of students' communication apprehension was the distorted thoughts such as worry of not being able to meet the demands using their skills.

Games technique could reduce communication apprehension because this technique was designed to solve cognitive problems (Carpendale, Jeremy, Lewis, and Ulrich, 2019). In this study, the use of games strategy was based on the assumption that this can be given to children with hope to reduce communication apprehension caused by irrational thoughts. This is in line with Putro, Sugiharto, and Sugiyo study (2013) which reveals that games technique is considered appropriate to be given to students who suffer from high communication apprehension. Also, this technique directly creates group dynamics realized in cooperation practices, speaking, listening, responding, and helping each other in a group atmosphere. For more, a study by Trice-Black, Bailey, Kiper, and Morgan (2013) states that games technique can be done in group counseling. It is because the game is a natural means of communication for children and creates more chances to interact with others so that the children may be able to communicate more about their experiences in a group. Also, there is a study by Swank (2013) which validates the current study findings stating that group counseling with

games techniques can reduce communication apprehension caused by the ability to accept reality, improve self-awareness, do self-management, face mental stress, increase self-esteem and involve in group activities.

The implementation of games technique as an intervention in counseling was directed to describe negative thoughts to the positive ones showed in the form of games. It was considered effective and enabled to facilitate students' development based on their potentials and needs in communicating with others to reduce communication apprehension.

The next technique to reduce the communication apprehension faced by the students of Public Senior High School 1 Keo Tengah was self-talk technique. By referring to the findings, it was known that there was a significant reduction of communication apprehension before and after the implementation of self-talk in group counseling. Also, it showed that the students who experienced communication apprehension would create unproductive behaviors to deal with the communication apprehension. Moreover, the focus of this study was the behavioral response that appeared during the occurrence of communication apprehension. Additionally, in group counseling students were directed to imagine, remember and suppress the trigger of communication apprehension when students experienced it at the same time.

A study conducted by Tod, Hardy, and Oliver (2011) which concerns about the positive effects of self-talk mentions that through self-talk individuals will be more familiar with and more accepting of themselves, individuals can consider making decisions, and individuals can control themselves. The use of self-talk techniques is aimed to deny unreasonable beliefs and develop healthier thinking that will produce positive self-talk (Erford, 2016).

Group counseling with games and self-talk techniques has a relationship that relates to the cognitive level. This is supported by Bakker (2017) who studied games and self-talk techniques to improve cognitive aspects and reduce negative emotions. Besides, Shi (2015)

focused his study on self-talk technique, communication apprehension, and public speaking by university students who took part in public speaking groups. His findings show that public speaking activities by emphasizing the problem of communication apprehension using self-talk technique show a significant frequency. In addition to the results of the above research, individuals tend to be more anxious or worry and do self-criticism as well as social assessment that make them afraid to reduce communication apprehension. These can be overcome by applying self-talk to individuals. The results of this study could be a basis in proving that the self-talk technique can reduce communication apprehension.

Based on the above explanation, it is important for counselors to apply games technique and self-talk technique by paying more attention to cognitive and behavioral aspects of students or combining the two techniques to solve the problems of communication apprehension experienced by students.

CONCLUSION

This study was carried out to see the effects of group counseling with games and self-talk techniques to reduce communication apprehension. Based on the findings, it was known that both techniques could reduce communication apprehension by having self-talk technique got higher results than games technique.

Furthermore, the study focuses more on thoughts and visible behavioral patterns. Next, it is important for counselors to understand the concept of group counseling implementation with games and self-talk techniques to reduce communication apprehension. For future researchers, it is suggested to examine group counseling with games and self-talk techniques by adding gender variable and using more approaches.

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