

The Effectiveness of Group Counseling Using Stress Inoculation Training and Systemic Desensitization Techniques to Reduce Public Speaking Anxiety

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Abstract

Public speaking anxiety was experienced by many santriwati in the Roudlotussalam Islamic Boarding School, Banjarnegara Regency. This study aims to test the effectiveness of group counseling with stress inoculation training and systematic desensitization techniques to reduce public speaking anxiety for santriwati. 21 students involved in experimental research with a randomized pretest-posttest comparison group design. The results of Wilcoxon and Kruskal Wallis tests point out that group counseling using stress inoculation training technique, systematic desensitization technique, and a combination of the two effectively reduce santriwati's public speaking anxiety. Group counseling with the stress inoculation training technique is more effective to carry out than the systematic desensitization and the combined techniques. This study recommends the use of stress inoculation training technique to reduce students' public speaking anxiety.

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INTRODUCTION

Public speaking competence is very essential for santriwati (female Islamic students) to support the interests of da'wah in the future. Unfortunately, there are still many female students who have anxiety about speaking in public. In reality, they often feel worried or afraid to speak independently; they suddenly have difficulty expressing arguments, tend to be passive even when prompted to question something, and look so troubled in opening-ending discussion and giving input to friends (Isti'adah, 2017).

Ririn et al. (2013) mentioned that the observed high school students are at a low level (48.53%) in the case of communication competence. In line with that, anxiety when doing public speaking is quite high, namely 42.65%. Furthermore, when examined more deeply, some students are still very closed off as they feel pressured by the situation—especially by their peers, are less creative in expressing arguments about various topics, and are less sensitive to dynamics of any group discussion (Lianasari & Purwanto, 2016).

In secondary education, many students do not have a proper openness. This can be seen through multiple cases. Many students are hesitant and have anxiety in expressing their opinions to other individuals, do not dare to tell what they feel, cannot express their content, and are often embarrassed during discussions (Kanti & Sugiyo, 2014). Individuals with high speaking anxiety levels appear hesitant and greatly closed in speaking their opinions up. They will tend to avoid all associations—from small to large. They even wait for urgency or emergency before talking to others. This social phenomenon is certainly extremely unfortunate. If it occurs continuously, the individual may be isolated from his environment (Agustiyana & Awalya, 2016).

Counsellors might utilize multiple techniques to help students. One of the most frequently used techniques is group counseling. Wibowo (2019) explained that this type of counseling might effectively escalate students' problem-solving. In group counseling, assisted

individuals will acquire adequate supervision—primarily in facilitating their social development and growth (Kurnato, 2013). A study exemplifies that group counseling can simply reduce anxiety (Boonsuchat, 2015). Two used techniques to help santriwati reduce their public speaking anxiety are stress inoculation training and systematic desensitization.

Stress inoculation training technique is an intervention that will be implemented in this study. Its relation with counseling service will facilitate students to directly interact with various stimuli from mild to the most severe stress (Mahfud, Japar, & Sunawan, 2017).

The stress inoculation training technique is very likely to improve students' ability to deal with stress. By involving the cognitive component, students are facilitated to focus on modifying their emotions to deal with problems more effectively. They are also assisted to learn skills that can be applied in other situations in the future (Erford, 2016).

Sheely & Horan (2004) measured the effectiveness of stress inoculation training on anxiety, stress, irrational thoughts, and academic performance. The results show that stress inoculation training successfully reduces stress levels of students in the experimental group than those in the control group.

This study also used the systematic desensitization technique as the second technique to reduce public speaking anxiety. Corey (2013) explained that systematic desensitization in counseling could be very helpful in declining students' anxiety.

Risyadi's research (2016) provides specific evidence that the systematic desensitization technique can reduce students' anxiety—seen from the pretest score, which was originally 130,2. When the posttest was carried out, the score became 94.6. This technique is also great to create a peaceful situation for students who previously felt uncomfortable. Desensitization can also effectively decline communication and speaking anxiety (Sedanayasa, & Dharmayanti, 2016). Sutisna (2016) specifically proved the effectiveness of this model in high school students.

One of the strategies that counselors can do to reduce the santriwati's speaking anxiety is by providing group counseling. According to Johan & Awalya (2017), group counseling can create and develop a sense of empathy in individuals. This attitude is greatly prominent for group dynamics. The reason is, empathy always marks care and the intention to feel for each other. Wibowo (2019) said this type of counseling is appropriate for solving various problems, specifically summarized in seven elements: physical, moral, psychosocial, affective, sexual, and vocational.

Based on the preceding various descriptions, further research that discusses the implementation of stress inoculation training and systematic desensitization techniques in group counseling to reduce public speaking anxiety needs to be executed. In this study, the authors propose research on implementing these two techniques in group counseling to reduce santriwati's speaking anxiety at Roudlotussalam Islamic Boarding School.

METHODS

21 subjects of this study were classified in the high category of public speaking anxiety. They were selected from 119 students. Purposive sampling was carried out to group each of seven female students into three experimental groups.

This study scale adapted the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) scale by McCroskey (1970), consisting of 34 items. The results of the reliability test on 34 items show that the PRPSA scale has an alpha coefficient level of 0.798.

The experiment was executed through several stages. First, pre-test Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA). Second, the intervention, namely in the form of group counseling on stress inoculation training techniques with six sessions, group counseling on systematic desensitization techniques with six sessions, and a combination of the two techniques with six sessions. The duration of each group is 90 minutes. Third (last), measurement after treatment or post test Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The obtained data demonstrate that the mean and standard deviation of the experimental group's public speaking anxiety level decline after the intervention. The explanation: stress inoculation training technique (M=31.88; SD = 1.959), systematic desensitization technique (M=30.25; SD = 2.121), and the combined model (M=31.75; SD = 1.982). More detailed data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Results of Stress Inoculation Training, Systematic Desensitization, and the Combined Model Techniques

Group	Pre-test		Post-test		Z
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Kel. SIT	41.75	2.659	31.875	1.959	-2.524*
Kel. DS	35.625	2.973	30.25	2.121	-2.530*
Kel. SIT + DS	39.375	1.767	31.75	1.982	-2.552*
$\chi^2 (2)$	12.496**		2.895		

*P<0.05 **P<0.01

Table 1 contains the Wilcoxon test results, showing that group counseling utilizes three effective techniques in reducing public speaking anxiety. The intervention with the stress inoculation training technique is more effective

than the other two models. Thus, the Mann Whitney test should be performed to measure the differences in the three techniques. This test demonstrates that the stress inoculation training technique is more effective than group counseling

with the systematic desensitization technique ($Z=-3.061, p < 0.01$). It is also more effective than group counseling with stress inoculation training techniques integrated with the systematic desensitization technique ($Z=-1.977, p<0.05$). Then, the stress inoculation training group

counseling, which is integrated with the systematic desensitization technique, is more effective than the systematic desensitization technique group counseling ($Z=-.2382, p<0.05$). The full results will be shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Mann Whitney Test Data

Group Pair	Z	p
SIT – SD	-3.061	<0.01
SIT - (SIT+SD)	-1.977	<0.05
SD - (SIT+SD)	-.2382	<0.05

Description:

Sit: Stress Inoculation Training; Sd: Systematic Desensitization; Sit+Sd: Combination of Stress Inoculation Training and Systematic Desensitization

These results indicate that group counseling stress inoculation training and systematic desensitization techniques are effective in declining public speaking anxiety.

Public speaking anxiety is an individual's inability to develop a conversation. One cannot convey a message completely, marked by certain physiological and psychological reactions that are very obvious—though the individual does not basically lack knowledge (Ririn, Asmidir, & Marjohan, 2013).

This study analyzes the effectiveness of group counseling using stress inoculation training and systematic desensitization techniques to reduce female students' anxiety. It aims to reveal how far the group counseling intervention using the two techniques are effective in reducing speaking anxiety so that problems such as difficulty in conveying ideas can be overcome.

The results of this study are in line with research conducted by Szabo & Marian (2012), that stress inoculation training techniques can reduce anxiety in public speaking. What distinguishes this research from research conducted by Szabo & Marian (2012), Marantini et al (2014), and Ariani (2016) is: this study implements counseling in a group format, whereas in previous studies it used a group guidance format.

Based on the research results, group counseling using stress inoculation training and systematic desensitization techniques is effective

in reducing the anxiety of female students in public speaking. Therefore, counselors can apply both. In this study, the stress inoculation training technique is the most effective in reducing public speaking anxiety. Philips in Ririn, Asmidir, & Marjohan (2013) reveals this phenomenon as reticence, a condition when a person cannot convey a message completely, marked by certain physiological and psychological reactions that are very obvious.

The stress inoculation training technique can encourage santriwati solve the problem of nervousness and stimulate them to practice speak confidently in public.

Meanwhile, in the systematic desensitization technique, santriwati are trained to think that the fear of speaking in public will be coped with by practicing consistently. They have to fight it on their own.

However, this study still has limitations as there is no follow-up to see the effect of time on group counseling on the two applied techniques.

CONCLUSION

The study results point out differences in the effectiveness levels of the three experimental groups in reducing public speaking anxiety. Group counseling using the stress inoculation training technique is more effective than the systematic desensitization technique and a combination of the two techniques. This finding

at once encourages counselors to use stress inoculation training group counseling as an intervention to reduce santriwati's public speaking anxiety. Furthermore, future researchers can focus more on studies by considering gender diversity.

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