

The influence of group counseling services with thought stopping techniques in reducing public speaking anxiety in students

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Abstract: This study on the influence of group counseling services with thought stopping techniques in reducing public speaking anxiety among students at SMPN 1 Abung Surakarta is motivated by the issue of students experiencing anxiety when speaking in public. The aim of this research is to determine the impact of thought stopping techniques in reducing public speaking anxiety among students at SMPN 1 Abung Surakarta. This research uses a quantitative approach with an experimental research type. The design employed is a one-group pretest-posttest design. The population in this study consists of 30 students from class VII C at SMPN 1 Abung Surakarta. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, selecting 8 students as the experimental group based on the results of a high-category scale completion. The subjects received counseling six times. The instrument for data collection is a public speaking anxiety scale. The data analysis technique used is non-parametric statistical analysis with the Wilcoxon test. The results of this study show that the thought stopping technique is effective in reducing public speaking anxiety. This is evidenced by the Wilcoxon test results, which showed a value of ($Z = -2.527$) with an Asymp.Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.012. This indicates that public speaking anxiety decreased after the group counseling services with thought stopping techniques were administered.

Keywords: Group Counseling; Public Speaking Anxiety; Responsive Services; Thought Stopping

Introduction

Group counseling, also known as group therapy, is a form of psychotherapeutic intervention where a small group of individuals gather to discuss and address their shared challenges, personal issues, and emotional well-being (Guttmacher & Birk, 1971; McDermut et al., 2004). This approach to counseling has gained significant attention in the field of mental health, as it offers a unique and effective way to support individuals in a collaborative and supportive environment (Guttmacher & Birk, 1971). One of the key benefits of group counseling is the opportunity for individuals to learn from the experiences and perspectives of others (Parcover et al., 2006). As highlighted in the article "Getting the Most from Group Counseling in College Counseling Centers," group work can be an effective treatment modality in college counseling centers, as it allows students to share their struggles, receive support, and develop coping strategies in a peer-to-peer setting (Parcover et al., 2006).

However, the authors note that many college counseling centers face challenges in filling their group sessions, due to factors such as client resistance, staff reluctance, and ineffective group formats and marketing (First et al., 2017). To address these challenges, the authors suggest several recommendations to maximize the utility of group work in college counseling centers (Keats & Sabharwal, 2008). One of the primary recommendations is to address client resistance to participating in group treatment (First et al., 2017). This can be achieved through effective psychoeducation and by emphasizing the benefits of group counseling, such as the opportunity to connect with peers, receive support, and develop a sense of belonging (DeLucia-Waack, 2009). Additionally, the authors suggest that staff should be trained to be more comfortable with suggesting group work as a preferred treatment modality,

and to effectively market group counseling services across campus to increase awareness and participation (Parcover et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2020).

Public speaking anxiety is often experienced by students. This issue arises due to the students' inability to face others in public. Students argue that their fear of public speaking stems from a fear of criticism or negative evaluation, fear of forgetting, embarrassment, fear of failure, fear of the unknown, and fear due to past negative experiences (Saputri & Indrawati, 2017). Students feel they are not relaxed when asked to stand and express their opinions in front of their peers. According to Seiber, anxiety is considered a hindrance to learning, affecting one's performance and cognitive functions such as concentration, memory, concept formation, and problem-solving (Setianingrum et al., 2020). Public speaking anxiety also falls under social anxiety disorder, one of the most common disorders affecting the population, related to the fear of being observed and judged by others (Hinojo-Lucena et al., 2020).

According to Osborne, this anxiety arises from a physical fear of the audience—fear of being laughed at, fear of becoming the center of attention, fear that what is being said may be inappropriate, and fear of being boring. Individuals who are shy and socially anxious tend to withdraw and be ineffective in social interactions, exhibit disfluent speech, and have difficulty concentrating due to perceived negative reactions. Public speaking anxiety is one of the greatest fears and significantly disrupts an individual's performance (Bergamaschi et al., 2011). According to Gail W. Stuart, indicators of public speaking anxiety can be grouped into behavioral responses, affective responses with worry, and cognitive responses such as difficulty expressing words. The cause of public speaking anxiety is linked to a lack of public speaking skills (Annisa & Ifdil, 2016).

Public speaking anxiety can hinder learning because it disrupts students' cognitive functions (Amali, 2020). It is a psychological issue requiring effective coping strategies, as individuals who are anxious about speaking in public are emotionally disturbed, necessitating appropriate coping strategies (Pusvitasari & Jayanti, 2022). Coping involves visible and hidden behaviors individuals use to reduce or eliminate psychological tension in stressful conditions (Maryam, 2017).

To address students' public speaking anxiety, this study employs a responsive service in guidance and counseling, specifically group counseling combined with the thought-stopping technique. Responsive services are provided immediately to students experiencing problems (Hermawan et al., 2019), and the thought-stopping technique aims to enhance the services offered by guidance counselors in addressing students' issues. According to Davis, M., Eshelman, E.R., and McKay, M., thought-stopping is an effective and quick technique to help individuals troubled by negative thoughts and worries often accompanying panic and anxiety disorders. This technique is used to turn negative thoughts into positive ones (Badriyah, 2020). According to Videbeck, S.L., thought-stopping therapy is a behavioral therapy used to help individuals change their thinking processes. Habitual thoughts can lead to behavioral changes, as one thought can trigger other threatening thoughts (Wahyuni Sari & Abdullah, 2021). The advantages of the thought-stopping technique include ease of management, simplicity for the client to understand, and readiness for the client to use in self-regulation (Rofiq, 2012).

Based on the above explanation, it is found that responsive services through group counseling with the thought-stopping technique can reduce students' public speaking anxiety. This is evidenced by several studies showing that the thought-stopping technique effectively reduces anxiety, including public speaking anxiety.

Method

This study employs a quantitative research method, specifically an experimental type. Experimental research methods are used to investigate the effect of a particular treatment. In this research, the researcher utilizes a pre-experimental design, which involves only one group and does not include a control group. The specific design used is the One-Group Pretest-

Posttest Design, meaning that a pretest is conducted before the treatment is applied. This pretest is essential as it allows for a comparison of the participants' conditions before and after the treatment.

Results and Discussion

The total number of students in class VII C at SMPN 1 Abung Surakarta is 30. In this study, the researcher selected 8 students to represent the anxiety of speaking in public among students in class VII C. The subjects were chosen through purposive sampling by administering a public speaking anxiety scale. The stages of this research were as follows:

1. **Pretest:** Conducted to identify students with characteristics of public speaking anxiety.
2. **Formation of Experimental Group:** Comprising students with identified public speaking anxiety characteristics.
3. **Treatment:** Applying the thought stopping technique.
4. **Posttest:** Administering the same test to the experimental group.

Group counseling sessions were conducted six times, adjusting to the students' schedules. In this study, the levels of public speaking anxiety were classified into high, medium, and low categories. These categories were used to place individuals into separate, hierarchical groups based on the measured attributes (Badriyah, 2020). The classification is explained in Table 1:

Table 1. Criteria for Public Speaking Anxiety Scores

Interval	Category
90-120	High
60-90	Medium
30-60	Low

Based on the collected data, the research results were described through pretest and posttest scores. The purpose of the pretest was to determine the level of public speaking anxiety before applying the thought stopping technique, while the posttest was conducted to observe the average anxiety levels after the treatment. The research results are shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Pretest and Posttest Scores for Public Speaking Anxiety

No.	Subject	Pretest Score	Category	Posttest Score	Category
1.	AR	99	High	64	Medium
2.	BA	103	High	57	Medium
3.	CM	101	High	46	Medium
4.	FE	104	High	61	Medium
5.	MW	106	High	56	Medium
6.	MD	99	High	53	Medium
7.	RE	100	High	50	Medium
8.	WPP	101	High	57	Medium

From the table above, it is evident that all 8 research subjects showed a decrease in scores from pretest to posttest after receiving group counseling using the thought stopping technique. To test the effectiveness of the thought stopping technique, the researcher formulated a hypothesis and used the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test on the pretest and posttest data. The results are presented in Table 3:

Table 3. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results for Public Speaking Anxiety

Test	Value
Z	-2.527
Asymp. Sig.	0.012

The table shows that the Z value is -2.527 with an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.012, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the hypothesis is accepted, meaning there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of public speaking anxiety. Therefore, the study concludes that there is an impact of responsive services through group counseling using the thought stopping technique in reducing public speaking anxiety among students.

The thought stopping technique is used in counseling to address negative thoughts that cause problems by redirecting them to neutral, positive, and assertive thoughts. The results of this study also indicate that group counseling with the thought stopping technique is effective in reducing public speaking anxiety among students. The initial high anxiety levels were lowered to medium levels through group counseling with the thought stopping technique, conducted over six sessions. This aligns with previous research findings, which have also demonstrated the effectiveness of the thought stopping technique in managing anxiety.

During group counseling sessions using the thought stopping technique, the researcher aimed to regulate or eliminate negative or disruptive thoughts. The participants, who exhibited symptoms of public speaking anxiety such as trembling limbs, sweaty palms, worry, and difficulty articulating words, received the intervention. Consequently, students with public speaking anxiety were treated using group counseling with the thought stopping technique to reduce their anxiety levels.

The researcher also observed changes in each student throughout the interventions provided in each session. From the students' worksheets to the repeated practice of techniques at home, each student was able to set their own goals for change and showed a willingness to alter their behavior regarding public speaking anxiety.

Conclusions and Suggestions

This study utilized a quantitative, experimental research method. Experimental research methods are designed to investigate the effects of specific treatments. In this research, the researcher employed a pre-experimental design, which involves only one group and does not include a control group. The specific design used was the One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design, where a pretest is conducted before the treatment is applied. This pretest is essential for comparing the participants' conditions before and after the treatment, thereby allowing the researcher to assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

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