



# The Usability and Effectiveness of the Solution Focused Brief Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Theories (SFBCB) Module on Communication Apprehension among Higher Education Students

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v12-i4/19527> DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v12-i4/19527

Published Online: 14 December 2023

## Abstract

The presence of communication apprehension may impede the development of proficient communication abilities among students when they transition into the professional realm. Therefore, the primary aim of this research is to evaluate the usability and efficacy of the Solution-Focused Brief Therapy and Cognitive Behavior Theories (SFBCB) module in managing communication apprehension among students enrolled in higher education institutions (HEI). The present study utilizes a mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research tools. A sample of 11 counsellors was selected for interviews, utilizing thematic analysis technique. A group comprising 30 undergraduate students participated in a quasi-experimental study employing pre- and post-tests to evaluate the efficacy of the SFBCB module. The Personnel Report Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) questionnaire was used to look at changes in people's fear of communication in four different settings: group discussions, interpersonal conversations, meetings, and public speaking. The research data was analyzed using SPSS software version 23.0, utilizing a paired T-test. The study showed that the SFBCB module had a statistically significant effect on the treatment, as shown by the fact that the mean score dropped from 82.33 to 61.73. Based on the interviews conducted with counsellors, it is evident that the SFBCB module possesses well-defined objectives, a concise time frame, a congenial environment, and a methodical framework, which proves to be advantageous. In conclusion, the implementation of the SFBCB module holds promise for reducing anxiety levels related to communication and improving the psychological well-being of students.

**Keywords:** Communication Apprehension, Solution Focuses Brief Therapy, Cognitive Behavioural Theories, Higher Education Students

## Introduction

Currently, oral and written communication skills are regarded as essential soft skills in the job market for assessing an employee's accomplishments and capabilities. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the majority of individuals who obtain a degree and pursue a career in this field encounter challenges when it comes to effectively acquiring proficiency in the communicative components of both settings. Given the recognition by numerous educators and employers of the significance of enhancing communication skills for both academic achievement and professional advancement, it can be inferred that higher education institutions are compelled to enhance students' communication abilities to facilitate their future success in the workforce (Miller & Stone, 2009). Effective communication skills are crucial in an academic setting, particularly in situations that require spoken engagement, such as presentations, role-plays, practicum exercises, and field studies involving interviews. The presence of nervousness and low self-confidence when initiating a discussion can indirectly impede the academic process and therefore impact learning outcomes (Mustary, 2020).

Research conducted in Indonesia examined a sample of 234 students, and findings indicated that 36% of the 63 students expressed apprehension towards presenting during lectures. Additionally, 14% of the 63 students reported experiencing anxiety when giving instructions, while 2% of the 63 students identified conducting group discussions as the most anxiety-inducing situation (Amir & Witriani, 2019). There exists a strong correlation between communication abilities and communication apprehension. Communication apprehension is a significant hindrance that arises during educational endeavors at the university, particularly in the context of group discussions, meetings, interpersonal communication, and public speaking (McCroskey, 2009). Amiri and Puteh (2017) suggest that communication apprehension represents a distinct subset of communication-related challenges. Communication apprehension hinders individuals' inclination to engage with others and limits their capacity to cultivate proficient communication abilities.

James McCroskey initially proposed the notion of communication apprehension in 1981. According to McCroskey (2002), communication apprehension is the experience of fear and worry around the process of communicating with others in a social setting. Furthermore, individuals have a sense of unease regarding verbal communication in various contexts, such as face-to-face interactions, small group deliberations, participation in meetings, and delivering presentations. Furthermore, communication apprehension can be characterized as the subjective experience of experiencing heightened levels of anxiousness, fear, and worry in the context of verbal communication (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998). Thus, the phrase communication apprehension refers to a heightened focus on the emotional experience rather than actions that result in poor communication, unclear communication, or non-communication. Students who exhibit a significant level of communication apprehension can attribute this issue to two primary factors: the apprehension of receiving unfavorable evaluations from peers and a deficiency in exposure to or proficiency in the target language, which is the language utilized within the specific communication setting. Both of these circumstances contribute to their experiencing anxiety, which in turn leads them to exhibit avoidance or withdrawal behaviour in communication settings due to their decreased readiness to interact. Conversely, those who exhibit low levels of communication anxiety demonstrate positive conduct and active engagement within the classroom setting.

Furthermore, their strong command of the language being utilized enhances their confidence to actively participate in their surroundings (Armawangsa, Sukmayadi, & Yahya, 2020). Numerous therapy interventions have been implemented, yielding favorable outcomes in the reduction of communication apprehension. Taylor (2011) conducted a study

examining a sample of 183 students, aged 18 to 30 years, who were enrolled in public speaking courses at Public University, Alabama. The researcher enrolled these students in public speaking courses at Public University, Alabama. The researcher's findings have demonstrated that both self-assessment and external evaluation have the potential to mitigate anxiety levels associated with public speaking. Students who actively participate in public speaking activities and receive assessments from external evaluators tend to interact with unfamiliar individuals, namely those responsible for conducting evaluations. Hence, the utilization of peer assessment techniques or feedback from others can be a valuable strategy for mitigating anxiety during the process of delivering a performance or presentation. People who get nervous when they have to talk, usually because they are shy in new social situations (McCroskey, 2001), might benefit from looking at things from other people's points of view because it can help them improve their relationships with new people (Smith & Frymier, 2006).

Numerous research studies have documented the efficacy of employing strategies derived from cognitive behavioural theory to mitigate communication apprehension. Schmidt (2006) demonstrated the validity of this assertion through the utilization of visualization techniques in conjunction with self-touch therapy. The touch therapy approach involves the application of massage to several regions of the body, including the shoulders, arms, back, and legs, with a duration of approximately 15 minutes. The utilization of visualization techniques involves the substitution of negative mental imagery with positive mental imagery, thereby facilitating the conceptualization of desired outcomes. Honeycutt's (2003) study demonstrated that implementing cognitive modification techniques effectively mitigates communication apprehension. The study demonstrates the substantiation of this assertion through the examination of a hypothetical exchange within a communicative context. Researchers gain understanding by investigating approaches that involve shadowing interactions. According to their assertion, it is posited that individuals can manage anxiety through the utilization of imaginative techniques, namely by envisioning forthcoming or anticipated social interactions.

Furthermore, the application of the cognitive behavioural theory method to mitigate communication apprehension is complemented by the efficacy of brief counselling in addressing behavioural issues stemming from anxiety (Gingerich & Eisenbart, 2000). According to Kim (2006), the implementation of a concise counselling strategy might facilitate the expeditiousness of the treatment process by prioritizing the attainment of certain goals. Brief counselling is frequently referred to in academic literature as short-term treatment or solution-focused brief therapy (Littrell, 1998). In contemporary times, the solution-focused brief counselling technique has gained prominence among counselors across diverse problem contexts. The rationale behind the utilization of the solution-focused brief method is its time efficiency and limited frequency of client treatment sessions. Hence, the utilization of the solution-focused brief counselling technique is highly conducive to enhancing the caliber of counsellor services. Furthermore, several studies have demonstrated the efficacy of solution-focused short therapy in addressing anxiety, social skills, self-esteem, and socio-emotional difficulties (Franklin et al., 2001). BienAime (2011) documented the efficacy of solution-focused brief therapy in addressing performance anxiety among music majors. The findings of the interview indicate that the implementation of solution-focused brief treatment has proven to be effective in fostering a sense of tranquilly, enhancing self-confidence, and elevating an individual's level of performance.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the implementation of a strategic approach or intervention is necessary to address the challenges faced by university-level students with communication apprehension issues. The examination of communication apprehension can assist the counsellor in formulating an appropriate module-based strategy to mitigate the issue. Hence, it is imperative to develop and implement a counselling module that employs a suitable approach to address the issue of communication apprehension. Counselors across various educational institutions, including universities, colleges, polytechnics, and schools, should universally adopt this module. Implementing this module can effectively facilitate the intervention process for students, leading to a reduction in the prevalence of communication apprehension.

Hence, the primary objective of this study is to assess the efficacy of the Solution Focused Brief Therapy and Cognitive Behavioural Theories (SFBCB) module. The present study has formulated the following objectives: the identification of the usability of the Solution Focused Brief Therapy and Cognitive Behavioural Theories (SFBCB) module, which serves to mitigate communication apprehension among students in higher education institutions (HEI); evaluating the efficacy of the Solution Focused Brief Therapy and Cognitive Behavioural Theories (SFBCB) module in mitigating communication apprehension among students in higher education institutions (HEI).

### **Methodology**

This study incorporates a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The design employed in this study is a sequential explanatory design. The process of selecting the design type for an explanatory sequence involves initiating a qualitative investigation, which is subsequently followed by a quantitative study. The first objective was addressed using a qualitative approach, while the second target was addressed using a quantitative technique.

### **Qualitative approach**

The case study design was selected for the qualitative study due to its ability to provide a comprehensive examination of a specific scenario or phenomenon under investigation (Merriam, 2002). The utilization of the qualitative research method aligns with the primary objective of this study, which is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the inherent nature of the value exhibited by counsellors during the process of conducting counselling sessions. The participants in this study comprised 11 counsellors who work in the field of Counselling at the Northern Institution of Peninsular Malaysia. The participants were provided with a comprehensive overview of the methodology and protocol employed in this study and were also presented with an informed consent document. The data collected through semi-structured interviews was transcribed by identified themes, subsequently classified, and then condensed. The data is further analysed by category to identify themes and patterns that are relevant to the usability evaluation of the SFBCB module. Subsequently, it is possible to establish subcategories and proceed with the coding process for both the main categories and their respective subcategories. The data is subsequently restructured into distinct categories and further subdivided into subcategories. The analysed data will be presented in the form of a model that depicts the primary themes and sub-themes generated.

### Quantitative approach

The study employed a pre-post-test group design within the framework of quantitative research. This study has selected a sample size of 30 participants to undergo the SFBCB module, exclusively focusing on the experimental group without including a control group. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of implementing the SFBCB module as an intervention on the reduction of communication apprehension among students. This research entails the distribution of questionnaires on two occasions, specifically during the pre-test and post-test periods. Statistical significance of the difference between the mean scores of overall communication apprehension and its different parts, as measured on the pre-test and post-test, was checked using a paired t-test. The chosen methodology involved doing a repeated administration of the same questionnaire to a single study participant at different time intervals. This approach aimed to assess both the overall score of communication apprehension and the individual's communication apprehension dimension. The sample methodology employed in this study is purposive sampling. The participants included in this study were chosen based on their scores derived from the completion of the Personal Report Communication Apprehension (PRC-24) questionnaire (McCroskey, 1982). The PRCA-24 questionnaire consists of 24 items and assesses the degree of communication apprehension across four distinct scenarios: group discussions, meetings, interpersonal communication, and public speaking. The participants in the study exhibited a communication apprehension score over 18 for each category of communication apprehension, with a total communication apprehension score beyond 72. A pilot study was undertaken to ascertain the reliability coefficient of the PRCA-24 questionnaire and the validity coefficient of the SFBCB module.

**Table 1:**

*Reliability value of the PRCA-24 questionnaire*

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha Value
Communication apprehension	.923
Group discussions	.789
Meetings	.805
Interpersonal communication	.757
Public speaking	.824

Table 1 displays the reliability coefficient exceeding a threshold of .70. Sekaran (2000) posits that a dependability coefficient value ranging from 0.70 to 1.0 is considered trustworthy and steady. A reliability coefficient of 1.0 is indicative of a high level of dependability, whereas a coefficient below 0.6 is often regarded as indicating weak reliability. Researchers consider a coefficient of 0.7 as acceptable and a coefficient of 0.8 as indicative of good reliability. The findings about the dependability of the Personal Report Communication Apprehension questionnaire, PRCA-24 (McCroskey, 1982), indicate its suitability as an instrument for utilization in this particular research endeavor. To ensure the appropriateness of this questionnaire for implementation within the academic and cultural context of Malaysia, the researcher proactively conducted interviews with participants as part of a pilot study. The interview findings indicate that the participant comprehensively understands each element articulated by the given context. The participant also emphasized the necessity of encountering all scenarios presented in the questionnaire during their tenure as Higher Education Institutions (HEI) students.

**Table 2:***Content Expert Evaluation SFBCB Module*

No	Statement	The percentage of agreement among experts
1	The content of this module meets its target population, which is students of higher education institutions.	86%
2	The content of this module can be implemented perfectly.	80%
3	The content of this module corresponds to the time allotted.	83%
4	The content of this module can reduce students' communication apprehension.	76%
5	The content of this module can change the attitude of students towards being braver and more positive.	80%

The researcher assessed the content validity of the constructed module using a questionnaire developed by Ahmad (2002). The researcher engaged six experts to assess the content validity for the two courses. The individuals who participated in this study are professionals who have positions as lecturers in the disciplines of psychology, psychometric, and guidance and counselling. The expert evaluation analysis conducted on the SFBCB module presents the subsequent findings. Table 2 presents the outcomes of the content evaluation conducted on the SFBCB module. The data indicates that this module possesses content validity features that exceed the threshold of 70%. The analysis of qualitative data addresses the initial purpose, which is to ascertain the effectiveness of the SFBCB module in mitigating communication apprehension among Higher Education Institutions (HEI) students.

**Result and discussion****Qualitative data analysis**

The analysis of qualitative data is conducted to address the initial purpose, which is to ascertain the effectiveness of the SFBCB module in mitigating communication apprehension among Higher Education Institutions (HEI) students. The formation of sub-sub themes in the study is derived through the process of thematic analysis.



**Table 3:***Background of informants*

Respondent	Gender	Level of education
Respondent 1	Female	Master
Respondent 2	Female	Master
Respondent 3	Female	Master
Respondent 4	Female	Master
Respondent 5	Female	Master
Respondent 6	Male	Doctor of Philosophy
Respondent 7	Female	Master
Respondent 8	Female	Master
Respondent 9	Female	Master
Respondent 10	Female	Master
Respondent 11	Female	Doctor of Philosophy

The participant information for interview data collection is presented in Table 3. There is a collective of 11 individuals who have been identified as Registered Counsellors. All participants possess a Master's Degree in Counselling. Three themes are observed about the usability of the SFCBC module: the features of the SFCBC module, the suitability of solution-focused brief treatment and cognitive behavioural theory, and counselling strategies.

**Table 4:***The features of the SFBCB module*

Respondent (R)	Sub-theme
R1: "every session that I see has a philosophy and goal in helping students to deal with communication concerns... aa... every activity that is carried out has its own goal.. okay, every activity that is carried out, I see that there are goals that help to reduce communication problems, okay".	Goal
R2: "In my opinion, this module emphasis behavior..which is easy to measure and evaluate..when the client undergoes a session"	
R9: "Consequently, the change will be effortless; the client himself will be capable of detecting and assessing the change."	
R11: "What is the underlying issue that this individual is facing? They consistently receive feedback regarding their weaknesses in this area and their contribution in this particular aspect. Moreover, it appears that we have already addressed this issue previously, as it was identified and evaluated during the initial report."	Evaluate
R2: "Furthermore, it is apparent that this module places emphasis on the client, although for a limited duration."	Time-efficient
R8: "The implementation of this module has the potential to reduce student anxiety due to its direct and time-efficient nature."	
R2: " ..and focus directly on the client's problem."	

R8: "...For me the client will focus more on how to overcome communication apprehension.." R9: "This module also helps clients by focusing on..." "Pay attention to ways to solve problems and shift your emotions and thoughts."

R4: "I think this SFBCB module can help HEI students feel less anxious about talking to others because it focuses on the problem's root cause." Focus directly situation

R5: "...this approach..at least makes the counselor more clear and focused guidelines..in conducting guidance or counseling sessions."

R11: "aa.. what, public speaking first, then to the communication between the two, aa.. aa.. what SFBCB means is to go to the one, the one, the big one first..public speaking, then to the small one, right..interpersonal communication, aa.. aa.. interesting,"

R3: "...thus, this module serves as a self-improvement activity."

R7: "...In this module, students receive instruction in the use of exception questions as a means of fostering critical thinking and promoting effective oral communication skills."

Exploration

R5: "...In this context, it is essential to possess effective communication skills in order to effectively transmit information and articulate one's ideas."

R10: "The student exhibits increased confidence in engaging with individuals in their immediate environment. Additionally, they demonstrate a willingness to actively participate in various program and meetings."

R6: "Cognitive structuring techniques have the potential to enhance the efficiency of the search for alternative solutions to a given problem. "

R10: "Each activity possesses a specific methodology that can effectively reconfigure a student's cognitive processes. By strategically organizing the structure of thinking, an important change in behaviour can be achieved." Structure of thinking

R7: "This module aims to assist students in developing their communication skills by fostering a shift in their mindset, encouraging them to overcome fear and actively participate in discussions."

R9: "In the counselling process, the counsellor will provide consistent encouragement to the client as a means of fostering support and motivation. This encouragement is intended to be present throughout the entirety of the counselling sessions."

Encouragement

R11: "The good thing is that it goes after two things: behaviour and thinking." That means they can both move. "Oh, he changed how he acted and how he thought."

In phases

R8: "After that, I think the client will feel closer and calmer when the client feels that the problem is reduced little by little."



Table 4 presents a comprehensive review of the data about the elements of the SFBCB module and their potential to mitigate communication apprehension. The efficacy of the SFBCB module is evident in its provision of sessions and activities that possess distinct objectives and philosophies, thereby serving as a valuable point of reference for both the counsellor and the client. The subsequent aspect is evaluation, wherein each activity is subject to assessment through a quantifiable measurement, typically employing a scale ranging from 1 to 10. This facilitates the establishment of goals in a straightforward manner. Furthermore, the participants concurred that this module maintains its emphasis on the implemented modifications, including training and shifts in mindset. The utilization of this module is observed to be effective in mitigating communication apprehension, as it entails the counsellor encouraging the client to foster motivation. Finally, the module gradually diminishes the aspect that makes it easy to carry out actions due to variations in worry, namely, phrase. In summary, the counsellor asserts that the attributes present in the SFBCB module possess the capacity to mitigate anxiety and discomfort in the context of communication scenarios.

**Table 5:***Suitability of Counselling Theories*

Respondent (R)	Sub-theme
R1: "I see aa.. the theory used is very appropriate because this theory focuses on solving problems and aa.." R7: "..this therapy only focuses on solutions." R8: "The client will focus on cognitive and then quickly apply it in behaviour."	Problem-solving
R1: "According to the idea being employed, the process does not require a significant amount of time". R8: "The phrase "what if" is used to express hypothetical scenarios within a limited timeframe". R7: "Students will not expend time in a non-productive manner." R8: "The duration of the session is brief and will not require a significant amount of time". R10: "Individuals possess cognitive abilities that enable them to engage in critical thinking, and acquiring common sense is a straightforward process."	Brief
R10: "... err, in this cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), our emphasis is on structuring the student's thoughts. By doing so, the client will motivate the student to exhibit the desired behavior; this is evident in the client's increased confidence to communicate." "In order to address his anxiety, he desires to engage in communication." R-11: "so.. the client is taught and aa.. given aa.. aa.. the client will do reframing, how, what will happen, if the client succeeds in overcoming this, what will it be like." R2: "..in individual thinking and focus on changing thoughts and feelings." R6: "CBT can refute thoughts.." R7: "..the counsellor changes the client's thinking by telling about the benefits of communication.."	Cognitive Restructuring

R8: "If the cognitive behaviour theories, the client will focus on the cognitive and then quickly apply it in the behavior."

R10: "aa.. this university student has reached a level of thinking that, aa.. is able to think"

R10: "this technique can encourage the student's behavior,"

Encourage  
behaviour

R5: "..able to produce insight for students.."

R7: "..students will be faster at solving problems..students are trained to think about the goals of life.."

Insight

R 10: "and it's easy to get insight."

R2: "..appropriate for individuals experiencing communication anxiety."

R3: "In my perspective, the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) approach appears to be highly applicable in addressing issues related to anxiety."

Appropriate

R4: "The theories employed in this study are deemed suitable for the research objectives."

R6: "The term "appropriate" is used to describe something suitable or fitting in a given context."

R8: "appropriate"

R9: "Indeed, highly appropriate."

R10: "Aa.. and we say, aa.. the level of thinking, and, with the theory used that is appropriate, aa.. yes- to tackle the issue of anxiety aa.. communication."

Table 5 provides evidence supporting the effectiveness of integrating two counselling theories for addressing communication apprehension among students in higher education institutions (HEIs). Solution-focused brief therapy is characterized by its emphasis on focusing on the solution rather than dwelling on past events. Moreover, empirical evidence has demonstrated the efficacy of cognitive behavioral theory in alleviating symptoms of anxiety. However, no investigation has been conducted on the application of this idea in Malaysia. Therefore, it can be inferred that counselling services have the potential to assist students in alleviating distressing emotions before engaging in training or communication courses.

**Table 6:***Counselling techniques*

Respondent (R)	Sub-theme
R1: "It is evident that this intervention has the potential to enhance students' skills and alleviate any negative attitudes or barriers that impede their self-belief and willingness to engage in public speaking or communication".	Encourage to Communicate
R2: "In my opinion, it is deemed suitable." R3: "The utilization of this technique is deemed appropriate for implementation among students." R4: "It is evident that the techniques employed in the SFBCB module are suitable." R5: "The statement suggests that the subject under discussion is highly appropriate." R9: "expressed agreement with the proposition, stating that it is indeed highly appropriate." R10: "The techniques employed in this module are deemed appropriate for the intended purpose."	Appropriate for implementation
R5: "..the results of acting and training.t hat I have seen given and made..will give a strengthening that is attached to the students' thinking." R8: "..make it easy for the client to take the next action.." R8: "..the techniques carried out can help the client to think and change." R10: "So, reach a level of thinking that.. is mature and able to think."	Engage in proactive change
R8: "..then, the session will be run by application..." R10: "Our roleplay consists of scenarios in which the client gains communication experience. Indeed, practise! "However, practise."	Exposure
R11: "Indeed, this technique is deemed appropriate due to the individual's state of relaxation. "What this means is that the counsellor and the client both enjoy having aa.. aa.. that session."	Relaxation

Table 6 describes the characteristics of strategies used to alleviate communication apprehension. Counsellors who completed this SFBCB module agreed that the strategies utilized are very appropriate for application. This is because it can give an appropriate setting for students to talk while also assisting students' thinking, and students can take action after feeling calm. The training is conducted in a relaxed manner to ensure that the student have fun and remain with the counsellor until the end of the session.

**Quantitative data analysis**

The quantitative data analysis examines inferential analysis regarding significant differences in the pre-test and post-test measurements of various dimensions of communication apprehension, including group discussion, meetings, interpersonal communication, and public speaking. The selection of the paired t-test analysis was based on conducting two tests at different intervals on the same study subject. The paired t-test analysis assessed both the

overall score of communication apprehension and the various dimensions of the subject's communication apprehension. This analysis aimed to determine the effectiveness of the SFBCB module in reducing communication apprehension among HEI students.

**Table 7:***Respondent information*

		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	15	50
	Female	15	50
	<b>Total</b>	30	100
Age	19 years	11	36.6
	20 years	19	63.4
	<b>Total</b>	30	100
Programme	Pure science	10	33.3
	Accounting	5	16.6
	Computer Science & Mathematics	5	16.6
	engineering	5	16.6
	Physical science	5	16.6
	<b>Total</b>	30	100

Table 7 presents the demographic distribution of research participants, categorised by age, gender, and degree programme. The study consisted of a sample size of 30 participants, evenly divided between males and females. The age groups of the study participants are 19 (n = 11) and 20 (n = 19). In the area of programme background, the study subjects were enrolled in five different types of Degree programmes: Pure Science (n=10), Accounting (n=5), Computer Science & Mathematics (n=10), Engineering (n=5), and Science Physics (n=5).

**Table 8:***Normality test*

		Statistics	Std Error
SFBCB module	Mean	82.33	1.123
	Skewness	.922	.427
	Kurtosis	.793	.833

According to DeCarlo (1997), to meet the variance equation, it is required that the statistical values of skewness and kurtosis fall within the range of +2 to -2. Hence, the skewness and kurtosis values demonstrate conformity with the condition of equal variance.

**Table 9:***Mean value and standard deviation of communication apprehension*

Variable	Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communication apprehension	Pre-test	30	82.3333	6.13825
	Post-test		61.7333	16.25642
Group discussion	Pre-test	30	19.4000	1.37966
	Post-test		14.7667	4.61395
Meeting	Pre-test	30	20.8333	2.49252
	Post-test		15.8333	3.91358
Interpersonal communication	Pre-test	30	19.9667	1.86591
	Post-test		14.8333	4.36351
Public speaking	Pre-test	30	22.1333	2.80066
	Post-test		16.2333	4.71010

**Table 10:***Paired t-test analysis*

Variable	Mean	Std Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Upper Lower	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Communication apprehension	20.60000	17.09729	3.12152	14.21577 26.98423	6.599	29	.000
Group discussion	4.63333	4.73056	.86368	2.86691 6.39975	5.365	29	.000
Meeting	5.00000	4.66092	.85096	3.25959 6.74041	5.876	29	.000
Interpersonal communication	5.13333	4.82617	.88113	3.33121 6.93546	5.826	29	.000
Public speaking	5.90000	5.11489	.93385	3.99007 7.80993	6.318	29	.000

Significant at the  $p < .05$  level

Table 10 shows that there is a significant difference for the communication apprehension ( $t = 6.599$ ,  $df = 29$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with the difference in the mean score of the pre-test ( $M=82.3333$ ) and the post-test ( $M=61.7333$ ), the group discussion ( $t = 5.365$ ,  $df = 29$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with the difference in the mean score of the pre-test ( $M=19.4000$ ) and the post-test ( $M=14.7667$ ), the meeting ( $t = 5.876$ ,  $df = 29$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with the difference pre-test mean score ( $M=20.8333$ ) and post-test ( $M=15.8333$ ), interpersonal communication ( $t = 5.826$ ,  $df = 29$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with the difference between pre-test mean score ( $M=19.9667$ ) and post-test ( $M=14.8333$ ), and the public speaking ( $t = 6.318$ ,  $df = 29$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with the difference in the mean score of the pre-test ( $M=22.1333$ ) and the post-test ( $M=16.2333$ ).

Students who engage in a counselling session utilizing the SFBCB module demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of the module's content, encompassing the ability to enumerate objectives, provide suggestions upon request, alleviate apprehension, diminish unfavorable assessments, effectively assume a role, proficiently express their thoughts, undergo a cognitive transformation, and effectively resolve issues. The suitability of the SFBCB module for university students is evident. The SFBCB module incorporates strategies for cultivating positive thinking, eliminating negative evaluations, and fostering a sense of tranquility. The content of the SFBCB module emphasizes a straightforward approach, centered around

problem-solving and goal-setting techniques. These techniques include the use of magic questions, scale questions, exception questions, positive reinforcement (praise), direct solution-oriented strategies, goal development, thought structuring, relaxation techniques, visualization exercises, behavioral training, and exposure therapy. Solution-focused brief therapy has the potential to facilitate and maintain positive changes in students, enhance their self-assurance, enhance the quality of their performance, and yield various advantages throughout the therapy session.

Cognitive modification can also be implemented through the instruction of students to recognize and validate their assumptions regarding public speaking. Bullock et al (2016) also elaborated on this approach, stating that students can gain control over their concerns by developing an awareness of irrational emotions. Beck and Dozois (2011), who stated that the cognitive behavioral theory approach is more effective for certain anxiety disorders, concur with the results of this study. This is because the objective of this theory is to mitigate anxiety and other adverse emotions through the client's support in recognizing irrational thoughts and substituting them with constructive assertions. Several prevalent strategies employed in this theory include establishing a solid therapeutic alliance, developing behavior modification strategies, implementing cognitive restructuring methods, altering fundamental beliefs, and averting recurrences of problems (Beck & Dozois, 2011). An intervention has been developed by integrating the two theories, which is well-suited for university students afflicted with communication apprehension. Integrating these two theories allows for the development of a well-organized, straightforward, efficient in time management, solution-oriented module that includes measurable objectives and changes, as well as training components for the participants.

By integrating solution-focused brief therapy techniques with cognitive behavioral theory, counsellors may find it more manageable to structure each session around client-attainable objectives. Bitran and Barlow (2004) explained that the primary treatment for reducing social anxiety and performance anxiety is behavioral exposure to fearful situations and a brief treatment based on cognitive theory. Daki and Savage (2010) found that incorporating the magic question technique into solution-focused brief therapy assists clients in reducing anxiety, enhancing self-perception, and developing a positive attitude. Additionally, the results indicate that the intervention has a greater influence on the client's cognitive functioning than on their emotional and social functioning. This result aligns with the outcomes of a study conducted by Roger and King (2012) that sought to compare the efficacy of medication versus counselling. The results of this study indicate that counselling is a more effective treatment for communication apprehension than medication.

The efficacy of the SFBCB module in mitigating communication anxiety aligns with the findings of Green, Grant, and Rynsaardt's (2007) study. Green et al. (2007) conducted a study that focused on implementing educational interventions rooted in solution-focused brief therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy. These interventions aimed to address academic anxiety, student stress, and challenges related to discipline management. The findings indicate a decrease in academic anxiety, student stress, and challenges in discipline management as compared to the control group. The present study's findings align with the research conducted by Bor, Parker, and Papadopoulos (2001) on solution-focused short treatments for addressing the fear of flying. According to a study conducted by Bor et al. (2001), the integration of solution-focused brief therapy and cognitive behavioral theory is effective in reducing costs and streamlining therapies for psychological issues, particularly those related to anxiety. According to the findings of Kelch and Demmit (2010), it is observed



that, while being categorized as brief therapy, solution-focused brief therapy and cognitive behavioral theory encompass abilities and strategies that can be effectively employed over an extended duration. Genc et al. (2016) also found that Turkish students who were very nervous about social situations were able to get over their fears by practicing methods for relaxation and peer-seeking, getting ready, and thinking positively. Zaccarin et al. (2019) also reported that individuals engaged in breathing exercises while using virtual reality. even though they said the intervention helped the people who took part in it feel less anxious around other people.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the study, it can be inferred that the implementation of a counselling method has the potential to improve communication skills by mitigating student fear over their communication abilities. Given the current situation, there is a need for a cognitive-based approach, which is highly relevant and appropriate. This method is known for its ability to facilitate quick and efficient action, provide fair and straightforward guidance, and reduce costs. Therefore, it is up to individuals to address the challenges related to communication apprehension to prevent ongoing distress from hindering effective communication. In summary, individuals, especially first-year students, might experience communication apprehension or nervousness. Therefore, the authors argue that it is crucial for the counselling approach to provide positive support to students while creating an environment that promotes constructive behaviours. This involves helping students develop skills to foster a more positive mindset and encouraging gradual skill enhancement.

Contextually, the research contributes by addressing a significant concern in higher education institutions (HEIs) - communication apprehension among students. The proposed module recognizes the unique challenges faced by students in HEIs and tailors an intervention strategy to their specific needs. By doing so, the study not only acknowledges the practical relevance of the issue but also provides a tangible solution that can be universally adopted by counsellors across various educational institutions. The significance of this research lies in its potential to enhance the effectiveness of counselling interventions for communication apprehension, thereby fostering a more conducive learning environment for students in HEIs. As communication skills are crucial for academic success and future professional endeavours, the proposed module holds promise in contributing positively to the overall well-being and development of students.

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