

Gender Consideration Effects of Group Counselling on Communication Apprehension among University Students

Nor Hernamawarni Abdul Majid¹, Nor Shafrin Ahmad¹, Rahimi
Che Aman¹ & Nur Hikmah Mubarak Ali²

¹Pusat Pengajian Ilmu Pendidikan (USM), ²Pusat Pengajian Dan Perkhidmatan Kaunseling &
Psikologi (UniSHAMS), Malaysia

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i1/20643>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i1/20643

Published Date: 16 January 2024

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of group counselling intervention among students of higher institution in reducing communication apprehension based on genders. A total of 30 students, 15 females and 15 males, were selected from one of the universities located in the northern part of Malaysia. The approach used is group counselling, in combination with solution-focused brief therapy and cognitive-behavioral theory. Personal Report Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) was used to measure the changes of communication apprehension before and after the intervention between the male and female subjects. Meanwhile, Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance was used to compare the mean values of communication apprehension (group discussion, meeting, interpersonal communication, and public speaking) and gender, before and after the intervention. Results showed that, there was a significant difference between time test and gender for communication apprehension, group discussion, and interpersonal communication. Nonetheless, the results showed no significant difference between the male and female subjects in meeting and public speaking. In summary, it can be inferred that the incorporation of group counselling sessions holds promise in effectively alleviating the levels of communication apprehension encountered by university students.

Keywords: Group Counselling, Communication Apprehension, Gender, University Student

Introduction

Communication apprehension has been studied in various fields including communication, psychology, and education. The study of communication apprehension was pioneered by McCroskey and Richmond in early 1970. Communication apprehension is commonly known as stage fears (McCroskey, 2001). Subsequently, communication apprehension is also known as speech anxiety, anxiety, shame, silence and reluctance to communicate (Hartman & LeMay, 2004). Communication apprehension has become the most common label for anxiety related to oral communication (Alley-Young, 2005). Besides that,

Horowitz (2002) describes communication apprehension as the anxiety or fears experienced by groups or individuals that affect their oral communication, social skills, and self-esteem. Hence, the term communication apprehension is used to emphasize the experience of feelings rather than behaviour that causes communication to be ineffective, the meaning of communication is incomprehensible and failure to communicate.

Thus, higher communication apprehension may cause individuals to lose control, dislike challenges and lack emotional maturity, as well as become introverts with low self-esteem, less innovation, lack of assertiveness (Richmond et al., 2009). Besides, the effects of fear, anxiety, trembling, and horror can hinder individuals from performing well in the classroom environment (Richmond et al., 2009). According to Rafada and Madini (2017), students who experience high levels of communication apprehension perceive teachers as a source of threat, leading them to actively avoid engaging in conversation with instructors and maintaining distance from them. When students overcome their fear of communicating with other students during the learning process, they feel comfortable sharing their opinions, reducing their anxiety and stress levels (Cooper & Brownell, 2020).

Communication apprehension also differs by gender. Researchers such as Frantz, Marlow and Wathen (2005) have found and proven that female students experienced communication apprehension more than their male counterpart and that girls have higher level of reluctance to engage in communication and place more importance on communication. For these reasons, the tendency of female students to experience the level of communication apprehension is higher if the communication does not provide them with satisfaction. Female students also experience the highest level of communication apprehension in public speaking and meetings (Pearson & Child, 2008). In a study conducted by Rafeq et al (2014), it was observed that female students exhibited a greater degree of communication apprehension in comparison to their male counterparts. According to the findings of Faridizad and Simin (2015), it was demonstrated that women tend to exhibit higher levels of communication apprehension compared to men. According to Tran et al (2012), there exists a gender disparity in the level of anxiety between female and male students. Specifically, females tend to exhibit higher levels of worry compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, females may exhibit a reluctance or fear when it comes to engaging in class debates, as they harbour concerns about potential ridicule from their peers. Dogan and Tuncer (2016) demonstrated that male students exhibit a higher level of communication fear in language classes compared to their female counterparts.

The study of communication apprehension has allowed researchers in the field of communication research to examine the physiological, cognitive, and behavioral consequences that individuals experience. Moreover, scholars have endeavored to address communication apprehension by employing various interventions such as relaxation techniques and skill development (Rombalski, 2021). To maintain positive mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual circumstances, clients with anxiety require cooperation and, perhaps, mentoring (Spilsbury, 2012).

The use of cognitive behavioral theory is relevant for those who encounter anxiety in social contexts, encompassing conditions such as social phobia, agoraphobia, or public speaking apprehension. Various therapeutic techniques can be employed in the treatment of anxiety, including anxiety management, social skills training, exposure treatment, and a mix of cognitive therapy with self-exposure. According to Wells (2019), treatment can be administered in either an individual or group manner. The counsellor will guide the client on how to differentiate between disrupted identities and cognitive dysfunctions during the

evaluation procedure. Through the process of collaboration, the client receives guidance in the ability to distinguish between thoughts and situations, as well as cognitive effects caused by feelings, behaviors, and their surroundings. The authors Mustafa, Ahmad, and Ramli (2007) assert that clients receive guidance in the process of identifying, observing, and monitoring negative occurrences, as well as forming their own preconceptions.

Solution-focused brief therapy was useful to develop calmness, increase confidence, and improve performance (Aime, 2011). The intervention results also found miracle question techniques to be very helpful in controlling anxiety during music performances. Therefore, counselling or psychotherapy approaches can be helpful in developing self-esteem and the ability to reduce apprehension among students (Velayudhan et al., 2010). Hetteme, Prescott and Kendler (2011) who stated that the solution focused brief therapy could help clients replace anxious thoughts and reduce feeling of helplessness. The principle behind this therapy is that clients are not encouraged to think deeply about the problems and their primary focus is on solutions to reducing their anxiety (Ash & Gallettly, 2009). This approach in counselling emphasis that when the solution is effective, performance will be better. For immediate action, however, the clients do not need to stop. This study included various counselling approaches, including cognitive behavioural therapy and solution-focused brief therapy, with the aim of mitigating communication apprehension.

Gender plays a role in intervention because there are disparities in communication apprehension symptoms between genders, influencing diagnosis, treatment selection, treatment duration, and, ultimately, therapeutic outcome (Nadelson & Notman, 2005). The efficacy of counselling is contingent upon the congruence between the counsellor and the client, with gender being a significant factor in establishing such congruence (McLeod, 2003; Palmer, 2010). The consideration of gender is a crucial factor in the assessment and management of many psychological symptoms and mental disorders, as outlined by the American Psychiatric Association (2018). The American Psychological Association (2018) underscores the significance of gender as a crucial element in therapy. According to Turk et al (1998), gender variations in anxiety, whether general or specific, have an impact on the outcomes of therapeutic interventions. In a study conducted by Felnhofer et al (2012), the researchers examined the influence of gender on the effectiveness of treatment involving visualization and imagination approaches for enhancing presentation skills in public speaking scenarios. The findings definitely prove that male students exhibit more proficiency in employing visualization techniques compared to their female counterparts.

Counsellor might employ various techniques depending on the symptoms of their clients, which may differ between male and female clients with anxiety issues. In the context of client presentations, it has been observed that female individuals tend to exhibit a greater emphasis on somatic symptoms that impede various aspects of daily functioning, such as exhaustion, digestive issues, and sleep disturbances. In contrast, male individuals predominantly manifest symptoms that are primarily cognitive in nature. Counsellor are tasked with assisting female clients by providing clarification that the somatic symptoms observed in cases of anxiety disorders serve as mere markers of psychological conditions, rather than physiological ailments necessitating pharmacological intervention. Hence, it is imperative for counsellor to possess an understanding of the varying impacts of communication apprehension on male and female clients, as these distinctions need the implementation of distinct therapeutic approaches.

Consequently, the present study employed group counselling as an intervention strategy, integrating solution-focused brief therapy and cognitive behavioral theory, with the

aim of mitigating communication apprehension among university students. Specifically, the intervention targeted four distinct scenarios: group discussions, meetings, interpersonal communication, and public speaking. The present discourse will centre on the impact of group therapy intervention on disparities in student gender.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the impact of group counselling on female university student communication apprehension and dimension of communication apprehension (group discussion, meeting, interpersonal communication, and public speaking) over a period of time (pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test).
2. To investigate the impact of group counselling on male university student communication apprehension and dimension of communication apprehension (group discussion, meeting, interpersonal communication, and public speaking) over a period of time (pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test).
3. To investigate the impact of group counselling on between female and male university student communication apprehension and dimension of communication apprehension (group discussion, meeting, interpersonal communication, and public speaking) over a period of time (pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test).

Literature Study

Various factors contribute to communication apprehension, including distinct components of an individual, such as gender. The variables of gender and communication fear have been extensively examined in many studies. Several research has indicated that female students may exhibit a greater degree of communication apprehension compared to their male counterparts (Frantz et al., 2014). Several studies have indicated that there is a lack of substantial gender disparities in relation to communication apprehension (Rafada & Madini, 2017). According to a study conducted by Anacleto de Arajo et al. et al (2021), a group of 644 health students enrolled in pharmacy and medical schools had a significant level of communication apprehension. The results of the study indicated that male participants had considerably lower scores on the PRCA-24 scale compared to their female counterparts.

Prior research has emphasized the significance of gender in ascertaining the extent of foreign language anxiety (Geçkin, 2020). Siahpoosh et al (2022) have emphasized the significance of potential gender disparities as a determinant of communication apprehension levels in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. A study by Loureiro et al (2020) on 345 students in different programs reveals that students struggled with and were afraid of communication, particularly oral communication as opposed to written communication. Moreover, the findings suggest that female students exhibited elevated levels of anxiety in relation to both oral and written communication in comparison to their male counterparts.

The study conducted by Kumar et al (2017) encompassed a sample size of 300 individuals, comprising students from both secondary schools and colleges, ranging in age from 14 to 28 years. The study aimed to examine gender differences, variations across different age groups, disparities in public speaking anxiety among different educational streams, socioeconomic levels, residential areas, and family structures. The study's results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in public speaking anxiety based on gender, age, educational stream, residential background, or family type among the students. Nevertheless, there exists a notable disparity in the degrees of public speaking anxiety experienced by pupils of varying socioeconomic backgrounds.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Liang (2018) examined the phenomenon of communication apprehension specifically within the context of the English language. The research focused on a sample of 200 Chinese college students who were enrolled in English classes. The results obtained from the T-test analysis indicate that there is not a statistically significant disparity in communication apprehension levels between female and male pupils. A study conducted by Abood and Abu-Melhim (2015) investigated the efficacy of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) in the context of group therapy for Jordanian individuals learning English as a foreign language, with the aim of reducing anxiety levels. The results indicate that there is no discernible disparity between genders in terms of communication apprehension, and furthermore, it is possible to mitigate communication apprehension.

In a study conducted by Hsu (2012), the researcher investigated the influence of gender on the duration of presentation preparation. The findings unequivocally demonstrate that female students require a greater amount of time for preparation in comparison to their male counterparts. Nevertheless, it is evident that female students continue to exhibit elevated levels of anxiety in comparison to their male counterparts. Female students may experience heightened levels of anxiety when delivering a presentation under certain circumstances. These circumstances include unfamiliarity with the audience, an increasing crowd size, the presence of individuals of the opposite sex within the audience, and the audience possessing authority and status.

Methods

Research Design

This study is quantitative study that employed a quasi-experimental design to examine the effects of intervention counselling group in reducing the level of communication apprehension among respondents in the treatment and control groups.

GENDER	COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION	PRE TEST	- GROUP COUNSELLING	POST-TEST	FOLLOW-UP TEST
FEMALE	Dimension:				
MALE	a. Group Discussion	O ₁	X	O ₂	O ₃
	b. Meetings				
	c. Interpersonal Communication				
	d. Public Speaking				

Diagram 1: Pre-Post Test Design Single Treatment

X = Treatment

O= Observation

Diagram 1 represents a quasi-experimental design, namely a Pre-Post design with a single treatment. The intervention counselling groups employed a combination of solution-focused brief therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy techniques for the purpose to mitigate communication apprehension. This design determines the different results in reducing score means for communication apprehension in a pre-test, post-test and follow-up test between male and female students. This study involved three times of questionnaires administration at pre-test, post-test and follow-up tests respectively. The same questionnaires were used for the pre-test, post-test and follow-up tests.

The group counselling is a guidance module with a manual handbook to help students of higher institutions who are experiencing communication apprehension. The group counselling has six sessions which were conducted with the target students. The group counselling has high content validity of .80 percentages and the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was .949. The validity of the module was also conducted and evaluated by six experts in the fields of psychology, psychometric, and guidance and counselling. Therefore, the group counselling has good content validity and higher reliability (Noah & Ahmad, 2005) to be used as a tool in the intervention group counselling in reducing communication apprehension among tertiary students.

Sampling Technique

In total, 30 students (15 males and 15 females) involved in this study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select samples from one university in the Northern part of Malaysia. All of the samples chosen have experienced issue with communication apprehension. The samples of this study were selected based on the scores obtained from the Personal Report Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24). The samples should have communication apprehension score above 18 for each dimension of communication apprehension, while the overall score of communication apprehension should exceed 72.

The samples were selected from various programme backgrounds such as Pharmacy, Accounting, Industrial Technology, Chemical Science, Biological Sciences, Quantitative Science, Information Technology, Mathematical Science and Engineering. It is important to note that this study involved only first-year students pursuing a Bachelor's degree. The reason for choosing first-year students in this study is the fact that most students are still in the early stages of university education who appear to experience a variety of language and communication problems that limit their career opportunities. Furthermore, most first-year students have reported feeling anxious and facing intense emotional, social and academic challenges (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005).

Instrument

The questionnaire used was the Personal Report Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) developed by (McCroskey, 1982). This questionnaire contained 24 items that examined the level of communication apprehension in four situations, namely group discussion, meeting, interpersonal communication, and public speaking. Each dimension of communication apprehension has a start score from 6 to 30 scores (McCroskey, 1982). Scores over 18 on each component of communication apprehension are indicative of heightened levels of anxiety in communication.

Table 1

The Reliability of Communication Apprehension and its Dimensions

No.	Variable	Value of Alpha Cronbach
1	Communication apprehension	.923
2	Group discussion	.789
3	Meeting	.805
4	Interpersonal communication	.757
5	Public speaking	.824

The reliability findings indicate that the PRCA-24 (McCroskey, 1982) survey could be used as a tool in this study. Researchers took the initiative of meeting the subject in pioneering studies to make sure that the questionnaire is appropriate for usage in the Malaysian academic and cultural environment

Data Analysis

Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance was used to compare the mean values between the dependent variables; communication apprehension (group discussion, meeting, interpersonal communication and public speaking) and independent variables (gender and group counselling).

Findings and Discussion

The objective of this study is to examine the decrease in scores related to communication fear and various facets of communication apprehension among college students in four distinct situations: group discussions, meetings, interpersonal communication, and public speaking. The primary emphasis will be focused on examining differences in gender subsequent to the student completion of a group counselling session.

Table 2

Mean Scores among Genders between Communication Apprehension and Dimension Communication Apprehension

Variable	N	Gender	Mean scores pre-test (SD)	Mean scores post-test (SD)	Mean scores follow –up test (SD)
Communication apprehension	15	Male	82.266 (6.284)	69.066(13.677)	67.866(11.855)
	15	Female	82.400(6.208)	54.400(15.656)	54.533(13.710)
Group discussion	15	Male	19.066(1.099)	16.600(3.641)	15.600(3.246)
	15	Female	19.733(1.579)	12.933(4.861)	13.000(4.140)
Meeting	15	Male	20.666(2.663)	17.066(4.199)	17.000(3.380)
	15	Female	21.000(2.390)	14.266(4.026)	14.666(4.169)
Interpersonal Communication	15	Male	20.000(1.812)	17.400(4.272)	17.600(2.898)
	15	Female	19.933(1.980)	12.533(3.943)	12.066(3.825)
Public speaking	15	Male	22.533(3.020)	18.000(4.720)	17.666(4.820)
	15	Female	21.733(2.604)	14.666(4.064)	14.800(4.279)

Table 3

Analysis of Repeated Measures Anova among Female Participant

Variable	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Partial eta squared(η^2)
Communication apprehension	7802.844	2	5660.673	34.196	.000	.710
Group discussion	457.911	2	228.956	21.603	.000	.607
Meeting	428.044	2	214.022	19.251	.000	.579
Interpersonal Communication	584.311	2	292.156	30.867	.000	.688
Public speaking	490.133	2	343.180	24.636	.000	.638
Communication apprehension	3194.489	28	165.534			
Group discussion	296.756	28	10.598			
Meeting	311.289	28	11.117			
Interpersonal Communication	265.022	28	9.465			
Public speaking	278.533	28	13.930			

Significant at $p < .05$ level

Table 3 presents the results of the first objective, which sought to investigate the variations in communication apprehension scores and dimensions among female students after participating in group counselling sessions. The results showed a significant difference in the pre-test, post-test and follow-up test for communication apprehension ($F [2,28] = 34.196$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.710$), group discussion ($F [2,28] = 21.603$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.607$), the meeting ($F [2,58] = 19.251$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.579$), interpersonal communication ($F [2,58] = 30.867$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.688$), and public speaking ($F [2,58] = 24.636$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.638$). The partial eta squared value indicates the extent to which the intensity of the association between time tests and female participants is unified in relation to communication apprehension and its dimensions.

There was a decrease in communication apprehension score after attending the group counselling for six sessions and also maintaining the change within the following (three) months. In summary, it was observed that female participants exhibited a reduction in their levels of communication apprehension subsequent to their participation in group counselling sessions.

Table 4

Analysis of Repeated Measures Anova among Male Participant

Variable	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Partial eta squared (η^2)
Communication apprehension	1915.200	2	957.600	15.079	.000	.519
Group discussion	95.511	2	47.756	8.545	.001	.379
Meeting	132.044	2	66.022	10.627	.000	.432
Interpersonal Communication	62.800	1.420	44.229	4.086	.045	.226
Public speaking	221.733	2	110.867	12.813	.000	.478
Communication apprehension	1778.133	28	63.505			
Group discussion	156.489	28	5.589			
Meeting	173.956	28	6.213			
Interpersonal Communication	215.200	19.878	10.826			
Public speaking	242.267	28	8.652			

Significant at $p < .05$ level

The results pertaining to the second objective, which sought to investigate the variations in communication apprehension scores and dimensions among male students subsequent to their involvement in group counselling sessions, are displayed in Table 4. The results showed a difference in the pre-test, post-test and follow up-test among male participants for communication apprehension ($F [2,28] = 15.079$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.519$), group discussion ($F [2,28] = 8.545$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.379$), the meeting ($F [2,58] = 10.627$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.432$), interpersonal communication ($F [1.420,28] = 4.086$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.226$) and public speaking ($F [2,58] = 12.813$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.478$). The partial eta squared value shows that the link between time tests and male respondents in relation to communication apprehension and its dimensions has a small effect size.

There was a decrease in communication apprehension score after attending the group counselling for six sessions and also maintaining the change within the following (three) months. In summary, it can be observed that male participants similarly exhibited alterations in their communication apprehension scores subsequent to their participation in group counseling sessions.

Table 5

The results of the Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) conducted on male and female participants

<i>Variable</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Partial Eta Square (η^2)</i>
<i>Communication Apprehension</i>	1005.422	1.750	574.428	5.661	.008	.168
<i>Group Discussion Meeting</i>	76.467	2	38.233	4.724	.013	.144
<i>Interpersonal Communication</i>	42.867	2	21.433	2.474	.093	.081
<i>Public Speaking</i>	133.422	1.563	85.372	7.779	.003	.217
<i>Communication Apprehension</i>	27.276	1.539	17.719	1.466	.241	.050
<i>Group Discussion Meeting</i>	4972.622	49.008	101.465			
<i>Interpersonal Communication</i>	453.244	56	8.094			
<i>Public Speaking</i>	485.244	56	8.665			
<i>Communication Apprehension</i>	480.222	43.759	10.974			
<i>Public Speaking</i>	520.800	43.088	12.087			

Significant at $p < .05$ level

Table 5 presents the results pertaining to the third objective, which sought to investigate the variations in communication apprehension scores and dimensions among male and female participants subsequent to their involvement in group counselling sessions. The results showed a significant difference between time test and gender for communication apprehension was observed indicating communication apprehension ($F [1.750, 49.008] = 5.661$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.168$), group discussion ($F [2,56] = 4.724$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.144$), interpersonal communication ($F [1.563, 43.759] = 7.779$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.217$). The partial eta squared value shows that the link between time tests and gender respondents in relation to communication apprehension and its dimensions has a small effect size.

Nonetheless, the results showed no significant difference between the male and female subjects in meeting ($F [2,56] = 2.474$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.081$) and public speaking ($F [1.539, 43.088] = 1.466$; $P = 0.000$; $\eta^2=0.050$). From the results, communication apprehension between genders was different. However, when tested by the dimension of communication apprehension in meetings and public speaking experienced a score of equal or no difference in gender.

Table 2 presents the average disparity in communication apprehension between genders during the post-test and follow-up assessments across all variables of communication fear. While both genders exhibited a decline in communication apprehension, it was observed that female students shown a comparatively greater average reduction in this phenomenon when compared to their male counterparts. In a similar vein, it is worth noting that while no substantial disparity was observed between genders in terms of meetings and public speaking, there was a discernible discrepancy in the levels of communication apprehension exhibited by female students compared to their male counterparts.

The results of this study indicated the intervention of the counselling module consisting of a variety of counselling techniques to assist the female subjects to reduce anxiety in communication. The finding of this study is also supported by Patton & Goddard (2006) who studied treatment anxiety and showed that female students could reduce the level of anxiety higher than male students. Similarly, the study by Nilforooshan, Ahmadi, Abedi and Ahmadi (2006) found that female subjects experienced lower anxiety higher than the males after participating in both the counselling intervention using cognitive behavioral therapy. Similarly, the result of Nilforooshan et al (2006) indicated that the female subjects had higher interest in and were more likely to join the counselling session and dominate the process of counselling intervention than the male subjects.

The female subjects also reported to have higher motivation to reduce their problem of anxiety in their communication. This is supported by Yildirim and Karacay (2012) who stated that female students are more likely to respond positively whenever they are given any kind of treatment to reduce general anxiety level. It is proven in Yildirim and Karacay (2012) study that looked at the effects of gender on an exercise programme designed to reduce anxiety and anti-social behavioral. The result showed that female students are better than male students at reducing the level of anxiety and anti-social behaviour.

According to Yalom (2005), female subjects are more likely to be friendly in the counselling group and reduce their problem. This is because counselling group promotes a sense of belonging and close relationship with other motivated women in the counselling process. The support and warmth shared among the group members have created strong psychological attachment and promoted group self-awareness (Yalom, 2005). This is also reported by Hussong (2000) who indicated that females are more friendly when they are together, have a more positive identity that relates to the method of communication and are more prepared to face a new encounter. The female subjects stated that the miracle question technique to be very useful in reducing anxiety, especially in the task that involves a presentation. The respondent explains that it is not necessary to think about the result of presentation but to place more focus on content of the presentation instead. The miracle question technique used is very similar to the '*tawakal*' concept which means the miracle will come. At the same time, the technique can help to reduce anxiety level and more focus on the important thing. This statement is supported by Mc Kenna and Jones (2004) who have researched on women with conflict in a dual conflict, stating that the miracle question technique encourages and helps women to have a positive mind set towards changes and career achievement by reflecting on their goals. The technique can help users to focus more on various experiences, belief, passion, happiness, peace, powerful, tolerance, energy and healing. Moreover, the treatment of solution focused brief therapy can assist in finding new or better solution rather than focusing on solving the problem.

Conclusion

The findings showed that the combination of these theories could help female students, as compared to the male students, in reducing communication apprehension. This is because female students showed higher apprehension than male students (Bitsika, Sharpley, & Melhem, 2010). The results of this study proved that the combined result of the concepts and techniques in solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) with cognitive behavioral theories (CBT) underwent positive changes. The SFBT approach has adopted the fundamental principles and techniques in short therapy solution such as not exploring client issues in detail, primary focus only on addressing communication apprehension, using miracle questions to solve problems,

scale questions aiming at self-esteem, praise for encouragement as well as a brief break to summarize what has been discussed. In addition, the basic concepts and techniques of CBT are to provide psychological education regarding communication apprehension, cognitive restructuring, relaxation techniques, self-exposure and training skills.

Corresponding Author

Nor Hernamawarni Abdul Majid, Malaysia, Malaysia
Pusat Pengajian Ilmu Pendidikan, Universiti Sains Malaysia
Email: norhernamawarni@usm.my

References

- Abood, M. H., & Abu-Melhim, A. R. (2015). Examining The Effectiveness Of Group Counseling In Reducing Anxiety For Jordanian EFL Learners. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 6(4), 749-757.
- Alley-Young, G. (2005) An Individual's Experience: A Socio-Cultural Critique of Communication Apprehension Research. *Online Submission, Texas Speech Communication Journal* v30 n1 p36-46.
- American Psychological Association. (2018). Stress in America: Gen Z.
- Ash, D., & Gallettly, C. (2009). Challenges in Psychiatric Classification: The Case of Generalized Anxiety Disorder. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 17(6), 484-487.
Doi:10.1080/10398560902964594
- Bien Aime, J. K. (2011). Managing Performance Anxiety in Music Students: Using a Solution Focused Approach (dissertation). Retrieved from Proquest (3520545).
- Bitsika, V., Sharpley, C. F., Melhem, T. C. (2010). Gender Differences in Factor Scores of Anxiety and Depression among Australian University Students: Implications for Counselling Intervention. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 44(1), 51–64.
- Byrd, K. L., & Macdonald, G. (2005). Defining College Readiness from The Inside Out: First-Generation College Student Perspectives. *Community College Review*, 33(1), 22–37.
- Dogan, Y., & Tuncer, M. (2016). Relationships Among Foreign Language Anxiety, Academic Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Metacognitive Awareness: A Structural Equation Modelling. *International Journal of Learning and Development*, Vol. 6, No. 2.
- Faridizad, A., & Simin, S. (2015). Exploring The Relationship Between Learners Gender Differences and Communication Apprehension Considering the Class Participation in Iranian EFL Context. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*. ISSN: 2300-2697, Vol. 48, Pp 91-99
- Felinhofer, A., Kothgassner, O. D., Beutl, L., Hlavacs, H., & Kryspin-Exner, I. (2012). Is Virtual Reality Made for Men Only? Exploring Gender Differences in The Sense of Presence. *Proceedings of The International Society for Presence Research Annual Conference. October 24–26, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.*
- Frantz, J., Marlow, A., & Wathen, J. (2005). Communication Apprehension and its Relationship to Gender and College Year. *Journal of Undergraduate Research*, MSU-Mankato, 5.
- Geçkin, V. (2020). Do gender differences affect foreign language anxiety and preferences for oral corrective feedback? *Journal of Theoretical Educational Science*, 13(3), 591-608. doi: 10.30831/akukeg.647447
- Hartman, J., & LeMay, E. (2004). Managing presentation anxiety. *The Delta Pi Epsilon Journal*, XLVI (3), 145-153

- Hettema, J., Prescott, C., & Kendler, K. (2011). A Population-Based Twin Study of Generalized Anxiety Disorder in Men and Women. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 189, 413-420.
- Hortwitz, B. (2002). *Communication apprehension: Origins and management*. Albany, NY: Singular/Thomson Learning.
- Hsu, C. (2012). Treatment Assessment of Communication Apprehension. In J. Daly, J. Taiwan and Americans, *Communication Quarterly*, 52(4), 370-89.
- Hussong, A. M. (2000). Distinguishing Mean and Structural Sex Differences in Adolescent Friendship Quality. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 17, 223-243.
- Kumar, P., Kaur, J., & Thakur, N. (2017). Public Speaking Anxiety in Relation to Different Demographic Factors. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Vol. 4, (4), DIP:18.01.024/20170404, DOI:10.25215/0404.024
- Ying, L. (2018). *Gender, Academic Achievement and Communication Apprehension in English Classroom Among Chinese College Students*. Dissertation, The Graduate School of Bangkok University.
- McCroskey, J. C. (2001). *An Introduction to Rhetorical Communication*. 8th. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- McCroskey, J. C., & Richmond, V. P. (2006). Understanding the audience: Students' communication traits. In T. P. Mottet, V. P. Richmond, & J. C. McCroskey (Eds.), *Handbook of instructional communication: Rhetorical and relational*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- McCroskey, J., Richmond, V., & McCroskey, L. (2009). Willingness to communicate, communication apprehension, and self-perceived communication competence: Conceptualizations and perspectives. In J. Daly, J. McCroskey, J. Ayres, T. Hopf, D. Ayres Sonandre, & T. Wongprasert (Eds.), *Avoiding communication: Shyness, reticence, and communication apprehension* (3rd ed., pp. 97-128). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.
- Mcleod, J. (2003). *An Introduction to Counselling* (3rd Ed.). Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Mckenna, J., & Jones, W. M. (2004). How Solution Focused Support Helps Women Through Work-Home Conflict. *Health Education* 104(3):132-142.
- Mustaffa, M. S., Ahmad, R., & Ramli, J. (2010). *Kaunseling & Psikoterapi: Teori, Teknik Dan Amalan*. Penerbit Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Press.
- Nilforooshan, P., Ahmadi, A., Abedi, M. R., & Mahdi, A. (2006). *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research; Islamabad* Vol. 21, Iss. 3/4, 95-103.
- Noah, S. M., & Ahmad, J. (2005). *Pembinaan Modul. Bagaimana Membina Modul Latihan Dan Modul Akademik*. Penerbit Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang.
- Patton, W., & Goddard, R. (2006). Coping with Stress in The Australian Job Network: Gender Differences. *Journal of Employment Counselling*. Volume 43, Issue 3. Pages 135-144
- Pearson, J. C., & Child, J. T. (2008). The gentle art of persuasion: The influence of biological sex, previous experience, and preparation time on classroom public speaking grades. *Basic Communication Course Annual*, 20, 101-137.
- Rafada, S. H., & Madini, A. A. (2017). Effective Solutions for Reducing Saudi Learners' Speaking Anxiety in EFL classrooms. *Arab World English Journal*, 8 (2), 308-322
- Rafek, M. B., Ramli, N. H. L. B., Iksan, H. B., Harith, N. M., & Abas, A. I. B. C. (2014). Gender and language: *Communication apprehension in second language learning*. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 123, 90-96.

- Richmond, V. P., Wrench, J. S., & Gorhan, J. (2009). *Communication, Affect, & Learning in The Classroom* (3rd edition). United States of America.
- Rombalski, B. L. (2021). "Communication Apprehension: A Pressing Matter for Students, A Project Addressing Unique Needs Using Communication in The Discipline Workshops" *Electronic Theses, Projects, And Dissertations*. 1304.
- Velayudhan, A., Gayatrivedi, S., & Bhattacharjee, R. R. (2010). Efficacy of behavioral intervention in reducing anxiety and depression among medical students. *Ind Psychiatry J.*; 19:41-6
- Siahpoosh, H., Varghaei, E., & Khodadadi, G. (2022). Gender difference in foreign language speaking anxiety and enjoyment in online classes: The case study of Azari-Persian bilingual context. *International Journal of All Research Education and Scientific Methods*, 10(2), 1512-1520.
- Spilisbury, G. (2012) Solution-Focused Brief Therapy for Depression And. Alcohol Dependence. *Clinical Case Studies*, 11:4, 263–275.
- Tran, T. T. T., Moni, K., & Baldauf, R. B. (2012). Foreign Language Anxiety and Its Effect On Student's Determination On Study English: To Abandon or Not to Abandon. *TESOL in Context* (5). Pp. 1-14.
- Turk, C. L., Heimberg, R. G., Orsillo, S. M. (1998). An Investigation of Gender Differences in Social Phobia. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*. May-Jun;12(3):209-223. DOI: 10.1016/S0887.
- Velayudhan, A., Gayatrivedi, S., Bhattacharjee, R. R. (2010). Efficacy of Behavioral Intervention in Reducing Anxiety and Depression Among Medical Students. *Ind Psychiatry J.* 19(1):41-6. Doi: 10.4103/0972-6748.77636
- Wells, A. (2019). Breaking The Cybernetic Code: Understanding and Treating the Human Metacognitive Control System to Enhance Mental Health. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 2621. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02621>.
- Yalom, I. D. (1995). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy* (4th ed.). New York: Basic Books.
- Yildirim, E., & Karacay, S. (2012). Evaluation of Anxiety Level Changes During the First Three Months of Orthodontic Treatment. *Korean J Orthod.* Aug;42(4):201-6. Doi: