

The Implementation of Group Counselling Using Self-Talk Techniques to Reduce Students' Communication Anxiety

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ABSTRACT

Communication anxiety is a psychological problem commonly experienced by junior high school students and has an impact on learning participation, social interaction, and academic development. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of group counselling using the self-talk technique in reducing communication anxiety among eighth-grade students at YPAK PTPN III Gunung Para Private Junior High School. This study employed a quantitative, quasi-experimental design with a nonequivalent control group. The research sample consisted of 16 students who had high levels of communication anxiety, comprising 8 students in the experimental group and 8 students in the control group, selected through purposive sampling. The research instrument was a communication anxiety scale covering mood, cognitive, somatic, and motor aspects. Data analysis was conducted using normality and homogeneity tests and a paired-samples t-test in SPSS version 27. The results showed a significant decrease in communication anxiety in the experimental group after receiving group counselling with the self-talk technique, as indicated by a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$. These findings demonstrate that group counselling using the self-talk technique is effective in reducing students' communication anxiety. This study provides theoretical contributions to strengthen the cognitive-behavioural approach and practical contributions as a reference for guidance and counselling teachers in designing effective group counselling services at the junior high school level.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the basic skills that is very important for students' social, emotional, and academic development. With good communication skills, students can express ideas and feelings and interact effectively with teachers and peers [1]. However, in practice, not all students have the courage and confidence to communicate optimally, especially in a school environment. One problem that often arises among Junior High

School (SMP) students is communication anxiety, which is a psychological condition characterised by feelings of fear, nervousness, and discomfort when having to speak or express opinions in front of others [2].

Communication anxiety in eighth-grade students is at the early adolescent developmental phase, which is vulnerable to social pressure, environmental judgment, and academic demands [3]. This condition can negatively affect participation in learning, class activity, social relationships, and even students' academic achievement. Students who experience communication anxiety tend to avoid speaking in class, feel afraid of making mistakes, and have a negative perception of their own abilities [4]. If this condition is not properly addressed, communication anxiety can develop into more complex psychological problems and hinder the overall development of students' potential.

Based on the results of preliminary observations at YPAK PTPN III Gunung Para Private Junior High School, several eighth-grade students were found to exhibit symptoms of communication anxiety, such as reluctance to ask or answer teachers' questions, nervousness when speaking in front of the class, and a tendency to withdraw during group discussion activities. These conditions indicate the need for a systematic and well-targeted guidance and counselling intervention to help students manage the communication anxiety they experience.

One guidance and counselling service relevant to addressing this issue is group counselling. Group counselling provides students with opportunities to share experiences, learn from group dynamics, and develop social skills in a supportive environment. Through group interaction, students are expected to realise that the problems they face are not solely individual in nature, thereby fostering a sense of safety and self-acceptance.

In group counselling, the Self-Talk technique is one of the cognitive approaches that effectively help individuals transform negative thought patterns into more positive, rational ones. Self-Talk refers to the internal dialogue that occurs within an individual, which has a significant influence on emotions and behaviour [5]. Among students who experience communication anxiety, negative self-talk such as "I am not capable of speaking well" or "I will definitely make mistakes when I speak" often becomes a primary trigger for the emergence of anxiety [6]. Through the Self-Talk technique, students are trained to identify, evaluate, and replace negative thoughts with more adaptive, positive statements, thereby enhancing self-confidence and communication courage.

Research on group counselling services has been widely conducted and has proven effective in helping students overcome various psychological and social problems, such as anxiety, low self-confidence, and barriers to social interaction. As stated in a study by Damayanti, group counselling provides a space for students to share experiences, gain social support, and develop interpersonal skills through structured group dynamics [7]. In the educational context, this service is considered strategic because it can reach a larger number of students efficiently and effectively.

Nevertheless, empirical studies indicate a research gap that needs to be addressed. Previous studies by Permatasari and Sari focused more on academic anxiety or general anxiety, while communication anxiety as a specific psychological construct has received relatively limited attention, particularly at the junior high school level [8]. In fact,

communication anxiety has direct implications for learning participation, social interaction, and the psychosocial development of early adolescents.

Most studies examining the effectiveness of the Self-Talk technique in group counselling have been conducted in public schools or educational settings with relatively homogeneous student characteristics. The context of private schools, especially YPAK PTPN III Gunung Para Private Junior High School, which has students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, has rarely been examined in depth. This indicates that previous research has not fully captured the effectiveness of group counselling services using the Self-Talk technique in private school settings.

Based on this research gap, the novelty of this study lies in its focus and research context. This study specifically examines the implementation of group counselling using the Self-Talk technique to reduce communication anxiety among eighth-grade students in junior high school, a topic that has rarely been investigated comprehensively. In addition, this research is conducted at YPAK PTPN III Gunung Para Private Junior High School, thereby providing new empirical insights into the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in private school environments with unique student characteristics. The use of a quasi-experimental design with a control group also adds value to this study, as it offers a stronger depiction of the effectiveness of the applied intervention.

Thus, this study not only extends previous findings on the application of the Self-Talk technique in group counselling but also offers a new, contextual, applicable, and relevant perspective for the development of guidance and counselling services at the junior high school level. The results of this study are expected to serve as both theoretical and practical references for school counsellors in designing effective interventions to address students' communication anxiety.

2. METHOD

Quantitative research methodology was used in this study. Quasi-experimental research is the type of research employed. This is because the semi-experimental method design includes both control and experimental classes [9]. Nonequivalent control group design. This design consists of two groups: the experimental and the control groups. Before treatment, both groups are given a pretest to assess their initial condition and ensure there are no significant differences between the two. However, the group counselling treatment using self-talk techniques is provided only to the experimental class. A posttest is conducted to determine whether the research subjects experience a decrease following treatment. Meanwhile, the control group does not receive self-talk treatment.

The sampling technique used is Purposive Sampling, which means the research sample is selected based on specific criteria: eighth-grade students of YPAK PTPN III Gunung Para Private Junior High School and students with questionnaire scores indicating high communication anxiety. The population consists of all individuals or objects being studied that share certain characteristics [10]. The study population consisted of all eighth-grade students at YPAK PTPN III Gunung Para Private Junior High School, totalling 95 students. The sample taken consisted of 16 students who had high communication anxiety, divided into 8 students as the experimental class who would receive group counselling

services using the self-talk technique and 8 students as the control class who only received group counselling.

Data collection was conducted using a research instrument, namely the Communication Anxiety Scale. The measurement of students' conditions was carried out through the communication anxiety scale developed according to the theoretical aspects of communication anxiety, namely mood, cognitive, somatic, and motor aspects. The instrument used in this study is an adaptation of the communication anxiety scale, which was previously used in research and draws on the same theoretical sources as this study [11].

The data analysis in this study aims to perform assumption tests, including normality and homogeneity tests. Furthermore, for hypothesis testing, parametric statistics, including the t-test, are used, assisted by SPSS version 27. The t-test is a statistical test used to determine the effect of each independent variable on its dependent variable [10].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Pretest Data Results of Students in the Experimental and Control Groups

The score categories in this study were determined by calculating the value range from a questionnaire comprising 26 statements on a 1–5 Likert scale.

- a. Determining the ideal maximum score obtained by the sample $\text{Ideal maximum score} = \text{Number of items} \times \text{Highest score}$
- b. Determining the ideal minimum score obtained by the sample $\text{Ideal minimum score} = \text{Number of items} \times \text{Lowest score}$
- c. Finding the ideal score range obtained by the sample $\text{Score range} = \text{Ideal maximum score} - \text{Ideal minimum score}$
- d. Finding the score interval $\text{Score interval} = \text{Score range} \div 5$.

Based on the above opinions, the criteria intervals can be determined as follows: the maximum score is 130 (26×5), while the minimum score is 26 (26×1), resulting in a score range of 104. This range is then divided into five categories with an interval of 21. Based on these calculations, the classification is as follows: 26–47 very low, 48–69 low, 70–91 medium, 92–113 high, and 114–130 very high.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Pretest Results

Category	Interval	Experimental Frequency	Percentage	Control Frequency	Percentage
Very High	114-130	0	0	0	0
High	92-113	8	100%	8	100%
Moderate	70-91	0	0	0	0
Low	48-69	0	0	0	0
Very Low	26-47	0	0	0	0

Table 1 shows that students with scores between 92 and 113 fall into the high category for communication anxiety. Thus, the results of the first meeting pretest with 8 students from the experimental class and 8 from the control class were in the high

category, with a 100% score. The results of the pretest on students' communication anxiety in the experimental and control classes before receiving group counselling services at YPAK PTPN III Gunung Para Private Middle School are shown in the following table.

Table 2. Pretest Data in the Experimental and Control Classes

No.	Experimental Class (Student Code)	Score	Category	Control Class (Student Code)	Score	Category
1	BS	95	High	CAS	101	High
2	KK	96	High	SR	106	High
3	IFS	98	High	CCE	98	High
4	FIMS	102	High	KAA	94	High
5	SS	113	High	CCEM	111	High
6	TS	110	High	NDA	92	High
7	NS	94	High	P	93	High
8	KAK	92	High	IAF	97	High
Total		800			792	
Mean		100			99	

The research findings from the pretest are detailed in Table 2, which was conducted on eighth-grade students at SMP Swasta YPAK PTPN III Gunung Para. Eight students in the experimental class obtained an average score of 100. Referring to Table 1.1 above, an average score in the range of 92-113 is categorised as high communication anxiety. Meanwhile, in the control class, 8 students had an average score of 99, which is also considered high. Therefore, all students in both the experimental and control classes exhibit high communication anxiety. The pretest results regarding students' communication anxiety reveal that some students tend to feel nervous, have trembling hands, excessive sweating, a quivering voice, and experience negative thoughts such as fear of making mistakes, fear of being laughed at, and feeling incapable of expressing their opinions.

3.1.2. Posttest Data Results for the Experimental and Control Group Students

Table 3. Posttest Data in the Experimental and Control Classes

No	Experimental Classes			Control Class		
	Code Name	Score	Category	Code Name	Score	Category
1	BS	58	Low	CAS	63	Low
2	KK	55	Low	SR	66	Low
3	IFS	61	Low	CCE	56	Low
4	FIMS	48	Low	KAA	52	Low
5	SS	69	Low	CCEM	68	Low
6	TS	65	Low	NDA	52	Low
7	NS	62	Low	P	54	Low
8	KAK	53	Low	IAF	49	Low
	Jumlah	481			460	
	Mean	60			57	

Table 3 above presents the research findings for eighth-grade students at YPAK PTPN III Gunung Para Private Junior High School. The treatment was given four times after the pretest. After receiving the treatment, the researcher administered a posttest to the

students to determine their level of communication anxiety after the treatment. Students in the experimental class obtained an average score of 60, with 8 students in the low category, accounting for 100% on the communication anxiety posttest, while the control class obtained an average score of 57, with 8 students in the low category, also accounting for 100%. Therefore, it can be said that before the meetings, the students still appeared shy and awkward to talk about their problems, but after receiving services four times, they began to understand communication anxiety, which is evident from the students' posttest results. Thus, it can be said that after 4 sessions of group counselling, students experienced significant changes, especially in the experimental class using the Self Talk technique, where students' scores shifted from the high to the low category. Likewise, the control class also experienced changes, but not as optimally as those in the experimental class.

3.1.3. Normality Test

To ensure the validity of the research data usage, the researcher evaluated the pretest and posttest data using homogeneity and normality tests. The normality of the findings is evident in the decision-making process: if $\text{sig} > 0.05$, the data are normally distributed. If $\text{sig} < 0.05$, the data is considered not normally distributed. The results of the normality test are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Normality Test Results

Class	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk			
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.	
Results	Experimental Pretest	0,227	8	,200*	0,873	8	0,162
Anxiety	Experimental Posttest	0,123	8	,200*	0,992	8	0,998
Communication	Pretest Control	0,185	8	,200*	0,914	8	0,386
	Posttest Control	0,208	8	,200*	0,896	8	0,268

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The pretest and posttest scores of the experimental and control classes were significantly different, as indicated by the Shapiro-Wilk normality test results shown in Table 4 above. The control class obtained a score of 0.386 on the pretest ($\text{sig} > 0.05$) and 0.268 on the posttest ($\text{sig} > 0.05$). While the experimental class in the pretest and posttest had experimental pretest sig value of $0.162 > 0.05$ and the sig posttest value of $0.998 > 0.05$, it can be said that the experimental and control class data are normally distributed.

3.1.4. Homogeneity Test

Testing whether the data distribution in a sample is normal or not requires researchers to conduct a test for the similarity (homogeneity) of several parts of the same sample. Sample homogeneity testing is particularly important when the researcher intends to generalise the results of their study and when the data are collected from separate groups originating from a single population. The results of the homogeneity test analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Homogeneity Test Results

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Results	Based on Mean	0,167	3	28	0,918
Anxiety	Based on Median	0,048	3	28	0,986
Communication	Based on Median and with adjusted df	0,048	3	25,382	0,986
	Based on trimmed mean	0,156	3	28	0,925

The analysis of the data in the table above shows that there is homogeneity or equality between the experimental and control classes, as indicated by the Significance (Sig) value. Based on the Mean of $0.918 > 0.05$, this study is declared homogeneous.

3.1.5. Paired Sample T-Test

To test the validity of this research hypothesis, a paired-samples t-test can be used. This test is conducted to examine the mean difference between the experimental and control classes before and after treatment, to assess the success of the treatment. If the significance score is less than the 5% significance level (significance < 0.05), the data requirement is considered significant. SPSS is used to calculate each test's results. The findings of the paired sample t-test for the experimental and control classes are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Results of the Paired Sample t-Test

		Paired Differences					t	d f	Sig. (2tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PretestEksperimen - PosttestEksperimen	41,12500	6,66414	2,35613	35,55364	46,69636	17,454	7	0,000
Pair 2	PretestKontrol - PosttestKontrol	41,50000	3,11677	1,10195	38,89431	44,10569	37,661	7	0,000

Based on the results in Table 6 above, a Paired Sample t-Test was used with $\alpha = 0.05$. The result found that the sig. value (2-tailed) was $0.000 < 0.05$. For output pair 1, the t-value is 17.454, and the Sig value is 0.000 (2-tailed), which is < 0.005 . Therefore, it can be said that there is a difference in the mean anxiety communication indicators in the experimental class between the pretest and posttest. H_a is accepted, and H_o is rejected.

Meanwhile, for output pair 2, it is known that the Sig value is 37.661 and the sig value is 0.000. Thus, it can be stated that there is a significant difference between the mean communication anxiety indicators in the pretest and posttest (2-tailed), with $0.000 < 0.005$, indicating that H_a is accepted and H_o is rejected. After the implementation of group counselling using the Self Talk technique on communication anxiety, the decrease in the experimental and control classes showed a significant difference. Thus, it can be concluded that H_a is accepted and H_o is rejected, indicating that the implementation of group counselling using the Self Talk technique is effective in reducing communication anxiety among students at YPAK PTPN III Gunung Para Private Junior High School.

3.2. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that implementing group counselling using the self-talk technique is effective in reducing communication anxiety among students at YPAK PTPN III Gunung Para Private Junior High School. This is evident from the significant decrease in anxiety scores in the experimental group compared to the control group, where communication anxiety, which was initially in the high category, shifted to the low category after the intervention. These findings support the research hypothesis that group counselling services using the self-talk technique can reduce students' communication anxiety levels.

These results are in line with the opinion of Sitorus et al., who stated that communication anxiety encompasses aspects of mood, cognition, somatic, and motoric functioning. Through self-talk, students are trained to transform negative internal dialogue, such as fear, nervousness, and pessimistic thoughts, into positive suggestions, thereby making their cognitive and emotional aspects more controlled [12]. Thus, students can display communication behaviour that is calmer and more confident.

The implementation of group counselling using the Self Talk technique was conducted in four sessions designed systematically and progressively, with the main goal of reducing students' communication anxiety. In the first session, the counsellor helped students recognise the forms of communication anxiety they experienced. Students shared their experiences when asked to speak in public, where physical symptoms such as trembling hands, excessive sweating, and a racing heart appeared, along with negative thoughts that reinforced the anxiety. This stage aligns with the theory by Langeroodi et al., which states that communication anxiety involves cognitive, affective, somatic, and motor aspects that influence one another [13].

In the second meeting, students were introduced to the concept of self-talk and its impact on anxiety. They were trained to distinguish between negative self-talk, such as "I must be speaking incorrectly," and positive self-talk, such as "I can try my best." This process fosters awareness that automatic thoughts significantly influence emotions and behaviour. This aligns with the research of Rusfa, Mulawarman, and Sugiyo, which states that self-talk plays a major role in changing self-awareness, making students calmer and more confident when facing communication situations [14].

The third meeting focused on the hands-on practice of transforming negative self-talk into positive self-talk during communication simulations. Students were asked to write down the thoughts that arose when they felt anxious, then replace them with positive affirmations and practice them during the presentation simulation. This exercise showed a tangible difference: students felt more confident, calm, and capable of expressing their opinions. Mulawarman et al. emphasised that positive self-talk can boost students' self-confidence by reprogramming the subconscious mind in a more adaptive direction [15].

In the fourth meeting, students reflected on and evaluated the changes they experienced during group counselling. They shared their experiences of successfully reducing anxiety through positive self-talk and committed to continuing to use it in their daily lives. Evaluation using an anxiety scale showed a significant decrease. This aligns with the findings of Ariani & Darmayanti, which proved that group counselling with self-

talk techniques is effective in reducing speaking anxiety and increasing students' courage to express their opinions [16].

Thus, this series of four meetings demonstrates that self-talk techniques not only help students become aware of the sources of anxiety but also provide concrete strategies to transform negative thinking patterns into positive ones. Furthermore, group counselling with self-talk can enhance students' courage, self-confidence, and communication skills, thereby supporting the goals of guidance and counselling services across personal and social domains. Recent research also supports these findings. One such finding by Iman and Iskandar showed that integrating self-talk can significantly reduce students' communication anxiety [17]. This shows that self-talk is not merely affirmation, but can function as a cognitive restructuring that guides students to think more rationally. In line with this, Yuliyanti, Asih, and Hakim demonstrated that group counselling with self-talk is not only effective in reducing anxiety, but also in increasing academic hardiness, which is students' academic resilience in facing learning pressures [18].

In addition to empirical findings, experts have also presented new perspectives on self-talk. Toyama & Yamazaki emphasise that self-talk is not merely positive affirmations but can be a form of compassionate negotiation between anxious and rational thoughts, so that anxiety is not seen as an enemy but as a sign of alertness that can be constructively managed [19]. Meanwhile, Alnaeem believes that vocal self-talk, or speaking out loud, can slow the flow of thoughts and enhance mindfulness, helping students become more aware of how they manage their anxiety [20].

Thus, the results of this study not only reinforce the effectiveness of self-talk in reducing communication anxiety but also align with recent research that emphasises its role in building academic resilience, enhancing emotional regulation, strengthening self-confidence, and preparing students to face both academic and social demands. Therefore, guidance counsellors are advised to develop group counselling services based on self-talk that are adaptable to technological advancements and the needs of today's students.

Although this study's findings indicate that group counselling using the self-talk technique is effective in reducing students' communication anxiety, several previous studies have reported inconsistent or less consistent results. Some studies suggest that reductions in communication anxiety are not always significant when interventions focus solely on internal cognitive aspects without being accompanied by direct communication skills training. Research conducted by Wilda Rahma et al. found that group counselling approaches based on discussion without behavioural communication practice did not produce a significant impact on students' speaking anxiety, as students still experienced difficulties in transferring cognitive changes into observable behaviour [21].

Other studies argue that communication anxiety is more effectively addressed through behaviour-based approaches rather than cognitive approaches, such as self-talk. A study by Noviza demonstrated that role-playing techniques and repeated presentation exercises had a greater impact on reducing public speaking anxiety than interventions focused on managing internal dialogue [22]. These findings indicate that observable behavioural changes are perceived as influencing students' self-confidence more rapidly than changes in thought patterns.

Furthermore, other research shows that individual characteristics and the learning environment may influence the effectiveness of self-talk. A study by Hidayati et al. revealed that self-talk was less effective when applied to students with severe levels of anxiety accompanied by low social support, as these students tended to struggle to maintain positive self-talk when facing strong social pressure [23]. This finding contrasts with the present study's results, which show that within a supportive group dynamic, self-talk becomes more effective due to social reinforcement among group members.

Differences in findings may also be attributed to variations in intervention design. Several previous studies implemented self-talk on an individual basis and over relatively short periods, resulting in less optimal outcomes. This is consistent with the views of Wahyu, Farabi, and Siregar, who stated that cognitive interventions such as self-talk require a sustained process and a psychologically safe environment, or changes in thought patterns, to be maintained [24]. In this context, the study conducted at YPAK PTPN III Gunung Para Private Junior High School demonstrates an advantage: self-talk was gradually and reflectively integrated into group counselling, allowing students opportunities to practice and evaluate the changes they experienced.

Thus, the inconsistencies between previous research findings and this study's results further strengthen the argument that the effectiveness of the self-talk technique is highly influenced by the counselling approach, group dynamics, and the emotional support developed during counselling. This emphasises that self-talk should not be viewed as a stand-alone technique but rather systematically integrated into group counselling services to significantly reduce students' communication anxiety.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that implementing group counselling using the Self-Talk technique is effective in reducing communication anxiety among eighth-grade students at YPAK PTPN III Gunung Para Private Junior High School. The findings indicate positive changes in students after participating in counselling services, as reflected in a decrease in communication anxiety resulting from improved ability to manage negative thoughts and enhanced self-confidence during communication. Theoretically, this study strengthens the cognitive-behavioural approach, which emphasises the role of self-talk in influencing emotions and communication behaviour. In practice, it provides a useful reference for guiding and counselling teachers in designing effective group counselling services. However, this study is limited by its small sample size and restricted research setting, so the findings cannot be generalized. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve a more diverse range of participants and to examine the long-term effects of the intervention. This study contributes to the broader community by supporting the development of adolescent mental health and improving students' communication skills in educational settings.

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