



Psychological Interventions to Overcome Public Speaking Anxiety

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Abstract

Public speaking anxiety is a common issue faced by employees across various sectors, including PT Telkomsel Area Papuaska. The ability to speak in public is crucial for effective communication, particularly in product presentations and work reports. Public speaking training, coupled with psychological interventions such as mindfulness and cognitive restructuring, was selected to address this anxiety. The method used was service learning, where public speaking theory was applied through simulations and performance evaluations. The results indicated significant improvements in confidence, speaking skills, and the ability to manage anxiety during presentations. The average post-test score increased from 71 to 85, indicating the effectiveness of the intervention. The significance of these results highlights that psychological interventions are effective in enhancing public speaking abilities and can be widely applied to improve productivity and communication effectiveness in the workplace.

Keywords: *Anxiety, public speaking, psychological intervention, mindfulness, cognitive restructuring.*

1. Introduction

Communication skills are one of the most important skills in many aspects of life, both in personal and professional contexts. In an increasingly global and connected world, the ability to convey ideas, information, and feelings clearly and effectively becomes more crucial. One form of communication that is often considered challenging is public speaking, which is speaking in front of an audience. Many people, even those with good technical knowledge and skills, often face difficulties when it comes to public speaking. This can be caused by various factors, such as nervousness (García-Monge et al., 2023a), lack of self-confidence (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012), worried (Li, 2020) or inability to compose and convey messages effectively (Ebrahimi et al., 2019a). As a result, the message delivered becomes unclear, unconvincing, or even misunderstood by others. In the workplace, public speaking skills are essential for various activities such as presentations, meetings, and negotiations. Effective public speaking skills can have an impact on one's career advancement, as Garber said (2019), effective public speaking skills can enhance one's career by improving communication skills, which are key factors in professional success. In addition, it also helps to achieve success and work effectiveness (Mikkola & Valo, 2020). A teacher who is able to explain the material well will make it easier for students to understand the lesson (Bambaerero & Shokrpour, 2017). A lawyer who is skilled at speaking in court has a greater chance of winning a case (Perdue & Wallace, 2020).

In the business world, public speaking skills are key to successful presentations, whether to clients, business partners, or internal teams. These skills can improve negotiation skills, influence decisions, and motivate teams. Research shows that managers with good communication skills tend to be more effective in leading and achieving organizational goals (García-Monge et al., 2023a). This public speaking ability is required by almost all fields of work. Poor public speaking skills can result in decreased performance (Petry, 2016). This could be due to anxiety and fear so that individuals forget important points, stutter, and appear unprepared, which ultimately reduces their credibility and effectiveness (Prentiss, 2021). Anxiety when speaking in public can lead to decreased performance due to memory impairment and inability to convey messages effectively. This reduces the individual's credibility in the eyes of the audience and colleagues (Ebrahimi et al., 2019b). The inability to convey a message well can reduce a person's performance. The existence of obstacles and negative impacts of the ability to speak in public is a concern in the work environment and for professionals. This is experienced by one of the telecommunications business companies in Indonesia, namely PT. Telkomsel. Telkomsel is a leading telecommunications company in Indonesia founded in 1995. Telkomsel is part of the Telkom Group, Telkomsel focuses on providing mobile telecommunications services, including mobile phone services,



fixed broadband, internet, and business solutions for individual and corporate customers throughout Indonesia. With a wide reach, Telkomsel has built a strong infrastructure that includes the widest 4G LTE network in the country, connecting millions of customers with leading technology. Telkomsel is active in developing the latest technology to improve user experience, including investment in 5G networks and digital solutions that enable digital transformation in various economic sectors. Strong support from Telkomsel provides excellence in providing reliable and comprehensive services for the people of Indonesia. Observation and direct interviews were conducted with two participants who work at Telkomsel Pamasuka, namely the first with the Household Performance & Analytics Staff for the Pamasuka area who has worked for 5 years at Telkom Group and 1 year at Telkomsel. The second participant is the Household Performance & Analytics Officer for the Pamasuka area who has worked for 7 years at Telkomsel. The results show that employees often experience nervousness, anxiety, lack of confidence, are less able to convey information clearly and in a structured manner, attract the attention of the audience, and handle feedback in public speaking. Some things that need to be considered when speaking in public include understanding the audience and the purpose of the presentation, how to visualize, practice and provide feedback in order to improve the quality of message delivery (Dolan, 2017; Schneider et al., 2016). The work they often do related to public speaking is presenting Telkomsel products in front of potential and/or consumers and presenting work or sales reports in front of managers.

Thus it can be concluded that Telkomsel requires training for employees to improve public speaking skills, especially in the Household Performance & Analytics and Officer Performance Household divisions that are in accordance with the organization's vision and mission. This is also supported by gaps in special skills or knowledge that need to be improved by employees. In addition, employees also need public speaking skills in completing work that requires interpersonal relationships, such as presenting ideas or concepts and providing input to coworkers. Public speaking is the art of conveying a message to an audience directly and orally. This skill is important in various fields such as business, education, government, and social organizations. In today's global context, public speaking plays a key role in building effective communication Garber (2019) states that good public speaking skills can increase the chances of career success, considering that good communication influences decision-making and leadership. There are several things to consider in public speaking, including, first, self-confidence. As an important psychological aspect, self-confidence determines the effectiveness of message delivery. Research has found that those with high self-confidence tend to be more successful in conveying their ideas persuasively and clearly (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012). Second, preparation of materials. Thorough preparation is the key to successful public speaking. This includes research, presentation structure, and repeated practice (Mikkola & Valo, 2020). Third, understanding the audience. Effective public speaking involves not only delivering a message but also the ability to understand the needs and characteristics of the audience. Understanding the audience can increase their engagement and attention.

Some public speaking techniques that can be done to increase confidence and skills are visualization. Visualization helps speakers prepare themselves mentally. Visualization involves imagining yourself being successful in a public speaking situation. This technique increases confidence and reduces anxiety (Dolan, 2017). Anxiety is a psychological or emotional reaction resulting from fear about something in the future, where the object being feared is not real (Kring et al., 2018). Unlike fear, individuals experiencing anxiety cannot identify a real threat directly. Biologically, anxiety involves psychological arousal in the sympathetic nervous system, where anxiety can increase blood norepinephrine levels through stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system, causing physical symptoms, such as headaches, difficulty breathing, digestive problems, increased heart rate and so on (Kring et al., 2018). In addition to physical symptoms, anxiety also involves mental and emotional symptoms experienced by the individual. These emotional symptoms can include fear, shame, panic, worry, and lack of self-confidence (Khrisinta, 2022). The presence of emotional symptoms often has an impact on cognition in the form of attention and memory disorders, causing individuals to have difficulty remembering and thinking, which results in pronunciation errors when speaking. (Kasyfillah & Susilarini, 2021; Lukasik et al., 2019; Vytal et al., 2012). This anxiety can be divided into two dimensions, namely performance anxiety and social anxiety. Performance anxiety refers to an individual's concerns about their ability to perform in front of an audience, while social anxiety refers to concerns when interacting with others in social situations (Munz et al., 2024). This anxiety often affects an individual's cognitive abilities, such as concentration and memory, which can result in interference in conveying messages effectively (Toubot et al., 2017).

Anxiety can be treated with psychological interventions such as cognitive restructuring. This is an approach used in cognitive therapy to help individuals identify and replace negative or dysfunctional thoughts with more adaptive and realistic ones (Wieman et al., 2020). In the context of public speaking, cognitive restructuring aims to help individuals overcome the anxiety they experience when having to speak in public by changing the thought patterns that trigger fear. cognitive restructuring derived from the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approach, first developed by Aaron T. Beck in the 1960s. Cognitive restructuring focuses on the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behavior. In the context of public speaking anxiety, irrational thoughts often lead to feelings of fear, which can then influence behavior,



such as avoiding public speaking situations or having difficulty speaking. The main steps in cognitive restructuring include (Rodebaugh & Chambless, 2004). Identifying Negative Thoughts: Recognizing automatic thoughts that arise when one thinks about a public speaking situation, such as “I will definitely fail” or “Everyone will judge me.” Next, challenging the thought. Asking critical questions to evaluate whether the thought is realistic. Questions such as, “Is there any real evidence that I will fail?” or “Will everyone judge me?” help reduce the validity of the negative thought. Finally, replacing the thought with a more realistic one. Replacing the negative thought with a more supportive thought, such as “I am prepared, and I will most likely be fine.”

In addition, other psychological interventions provided are mindfulness techniques. Mindfulness is a concept that emphasizes paying full attention to the present moment, intentionally, and without judgment (Zinn, 2017). Mindfulness practice aims to help individuals accept their experiences, both positive and negative, without overreacting. In the context of public speaking and anxiety, mindfulness aims to help individuals manage the negative thoughts and emotions associated with the fear of public speaking, by bringing focus to the present moment rather than worrying about the future or feeling afraid of others' judgment (Elahemer et al., 2022). Previous research has shown that training *public speaking* by providing psychological intervention can reduce anxiety and increase self-confidence. Cognitive restructuring given to participants can help them improve irrational thoughts that cause feelings of anxiety and fear (Ebrahimi et al., 2019b; Elahemer et al., 2022; García-Monge et al., 2023b; Kimani et al., 2019).

This psychological intervention also needs to be practiced so that they understand how it is in real life. Therefore, the training participants are given the opportunity to do simulations during training. Simulations can be very important in overcoming anxiety. By doing simulations, participants face their fears or worries and have the opportunity to overcome them. Thus, training participants can face or overcome limitations in real life, and can be an effective approach to developing complex skills (Chernikova et al., 2020). The general objective of this training is to overcome anxiety, increase self-confidence, and improve public speaking skills. Thus, they can increase their productivity in the workplace. The specific objectives of this training are first, cognitive domain. Participants understand the structure and basic techniques in public speaking. Second, affective domain. Participants show decreased anxiety and increased confidence to practice public speaking skills. Third, behavior & skill-based domain. Participants are able to do presentations using effective public speaking techniques.

2.Method

Participant

The participants of this public speaking training were employees of PT. Telkomsel Area Pamasuka (Papua Maluku, Sulawesi, Kalimantan), Indonesia, consisting of 133 participants. Employees who have worked for less than 5 years. This length of service was chosen because they still need to be equipped with several skills, especially public speaking. Employees who have worked longer are considered better at making presentations to potential customers and when reporting their work results compared to employees who have worked for less than 5 years. Telkomsel is a provider of cellular telecommunications services, including cellular telephone services, fixed broadband, internet, and business solutions for individual and corporate customers throughout Indonesia. This company has many customers spread across Indonesia so that skills are needed that can help them present their products and services through public speaking.

Procedure

This activity includes several stages, the first stage, conducting observations on Telkomsel employees. This observation is related to issues experienced by employees when presenting products and work or sales reports. After that, conducting interviews. Interviews are conducted to obtain further information and strengthen the phenomena observed from the observation stage. Finally, conducting discussions to map the problems and needs desired from the training. The second stage is the implementation of the training. The third stage is conducting an evaluation. Evaluation is conducted through observation, interviews, pre-tests, and post-tests.

Intervention

The interventions carried out in this training are: public speaking training and psychological intervention consisting of mindfulness and cognitive restructuring. The training is divided into 5 sessions consisting of Public Speaking Skills, Cognitive restructuring, Mindfulness, Group Discussion, and Role Play. The training involves presentation of materials, videos, group discussions, simulations, and role play.

Measuring instrument

The survey questionnaire in this training was developed to measure the extent to which participants understand the basic structure and techniques of public speaking, capable overcome anxiety and increase self-confidence, and able to do



presentations using effective public speaking techniques. The questionnaire is provided in the form of googleform and given to participants before and after the training. In addition, the assessment of training effectiveness also uses observation and interview techniques. Observations are made by observing the behavior of participants who are doing role play. While interviews are conducted by taking a sample of 2 people who have done roleplay.

Table 1. Training Structure and Content

Session	Topics	Objective
Session 1	Public Speaking Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding public speaking - Who does public speaking? - When and where to do public speaking - What are the problems of public speaking? 	<i>Cognitive Domain.</i> Participants understand the basic structure and techniques in public speaking.
Session 2	Cognitive restructuring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behavior - Identifying Negative Thoughts - Asking critical questions to evaluate whether the thought is realistic - replace thoughts with more realistic ones 	<i>Cognitive Domain.</i> Participants understand the basic structure and techniques in public speaking. <i>Affective Domain.</i> Participants are able to overcome anxiety and increase self-confidence.
Session 3	Mindfulness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relaxation - The present moment 	<i>Affective Domain.</i> Participants are able to Overcoming Anxiety.
Session 4	Group Discussion	<i>Behavior & skill-based Domain.</i> Participants are able to conduct presentations using effective public speaking techniques.
Session 5	Role Play	<i>Behavior & skill-based Domain.</i> Participants are able to conduct presentations using effective public speaking techniques.

3.Results and Discussion

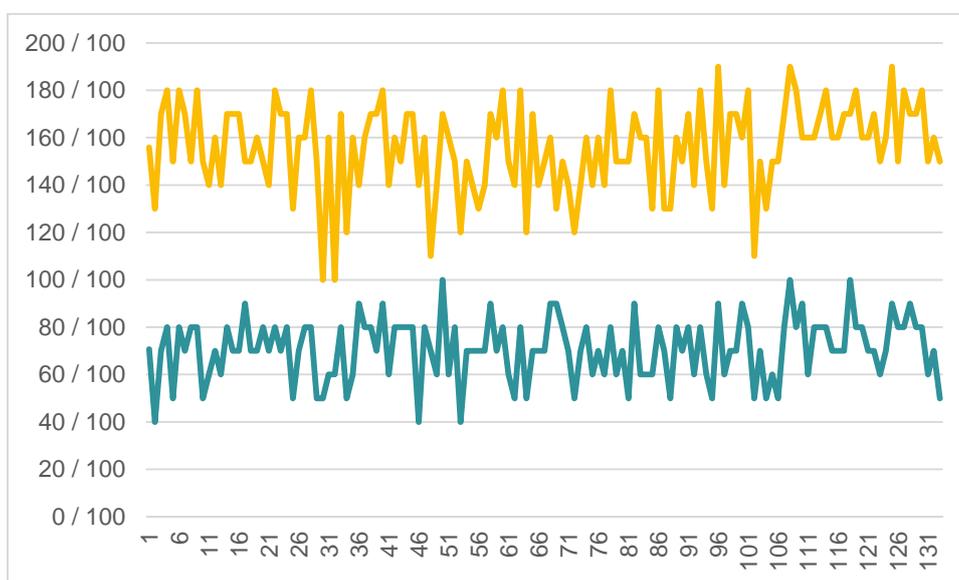
Table 1. Demographic

Gender	Amount	%
Man	113	85
Woman	19	15
Age		
25-30	88	66
31-36	34	26
37-41	10	8

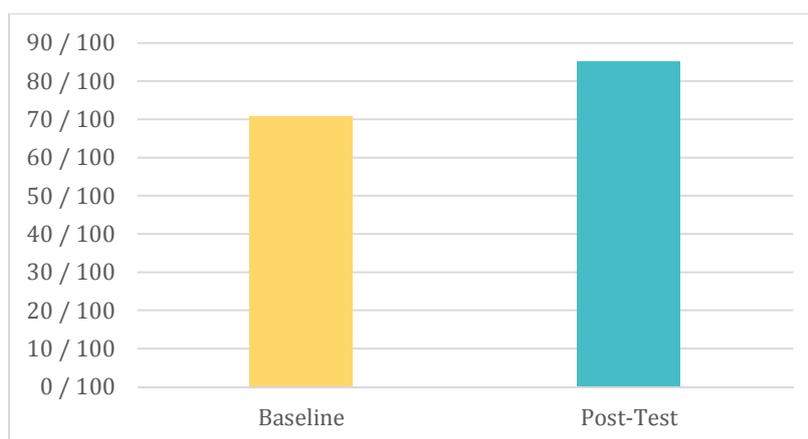
Based on the data, the training participants were dominated by men, namely 113 people (85%), while female participants only numbered 19 people (15%). This proportion shows that the majority of employees at Telkomsel Area Pamasuka who participated in public speaking training came from the male group. This gender inequality may reflect the composition of the workforce in the sector. or it may also reflect the trend of male participation preferences in professional training activities. This factor needs to be considered to ensure that future training is more inclusive of women, considering that gender differences can affect public speaking anxiety (Kring et al., 2018). According to Toubot et al. (2017), women are more prone to public speaking anxiety due to differences in social perceptions and



gender role expectations. Therefore, in training design, it is necessary to consider how intervention methods can cover the psychological needs of both groups so that women can feel comfortable and motivated to participate more actively. Participants in this training were aged between 25 and 41 years, with an average of 30,16. The majority of participants were in the 25-30 age group (88 people, 66%), followed by the 31-36 age range (34 people, 26%) and 37-41 years (10 people, 8%). This is consistent with Mikkola & Valo's research(2020)that younger employees tend to need more improvement in interpersonal and communication skills to support their career development. This age group often experiences a transition from junior positions to more strategic roles, so improving public speaking skills becomes crucial. On the other hand, older participants, although fewer in number, need skills strengthening to stay relevant to job demands. According to Garber's study (2019), public speaking skills play a significant role in career success, for both younger and older employees. This age difference may also influence response patterns to interventions. The proportion of participants who are predominantly young shows that this training is right on target, because this age group is more open to developing new skills. However, the differences in age range and gender composition require facilitators to adopt a flexible approach so that the training remains relevant and effective for all participants (Ebrahimi et al., 2019b). In addition, implementing simulations in diverse groups will help participants learn from each other and adapt to various communication styles.



Graph 1. Baseline score results before and after training



Graph 2. Average Baseline and Post-test Scores

To see the effectiveness of this training, an evaluation was conducted consisting of observation, interviews, and questionnaires. At the stage of public speaking training in Telkomsel Area Pamasuka, simulation and practice in front of all participants is an important part in evaluating whether the training objectives have been achieved. Observations were conducted to observe the development of the participants' speaking skills, both in overcoming anxiety and in the ability to convey messages effectively. Observation results showed that participants experienced significant increases in



self-confidence and decreased anxiety. In the initial simulation session, many participants appeared nervous, avoided eye contact, and spoke in a rushed or shaky tone. After several sessions and mindfulness and cognitive restructuring interventions, they showed improvements in aspects of mental calmness. Participants reported that mindfulness techniques helped them direct their focus to the present moment, so as not to get caught up in negative thoughts about future failures (Zinn, 2017). This has been proven effective in reducing the tension often experienced before and during speaking in front of an audience. This intervention also helped participants change irrational thought patterns—such as “I will fail” or “People will judge me”—into more realistic and adaptive ones, such as “I am well prepared” (Rodebaugh & Chambless, 2004). In addition to mental calm, participants reported that physical symptoms of anxiety such as heart palpitations and excessive sweating decreased after exercise. According to Kring et al. (2018), cognitive and mindfulness techniques are effective in reducing sympathetic nervous system activation, which triggers physical responses to anxiety. The observation results showed that most participants experienced a significant increase in self-confidence. In the initial simulation, many participants looked nervous, less fluent in speaking, and tended to avoid eye contact with the audience. However, after several simulations, most participants began to be more confident in conveying their messages. Some participants who initially seemed very anxious and hesitant in speaking in front of all participants, were eventually able to speak more fluently and confidently. This shows that psychological interventions such as mindfulness and cognitive restructuring provided during the training have had a positive impact in reducing their anxiety.

In terms of the preparation and delivery of the material, the participants were seen to have experienced significant development. At the beginning of the simulation, most participants had difficulty in organizing the flow of their presentation. The messages delivered were often not well structured, and some participants spoke too fast or too slow. After receiving feedback from the facilitator and their peers, participants were able to improve the structure of their presentations better. At the end of the simulation, many participants were able to organize their presentations systematically, with a logical sequence and clear use of language. They also began to understand the importance of emphasizing key points so that the message is easier for the audience to understand. Feedback from the facilitator and other participants during the simulation session was very helpful in the process of improving the participants' skills. Participants were given input on how to improve intonation, use of appropriate pauses, eye contact, and how to handle questions from the audience. The facilitators also provided examples of good presentations as references for the participants. Through repeated simulations and constructive feedback, participants were able to improve their weaknesses and show improvement in their public speaking skills. According to the results of the pre-test and post-test, there was a significant increase in participants' abilities after the training, with the average score increasing from 71 to 85. This shows that cognitive restructuring and mindfulness techniques have succeeded in reducing anxiety and increasing participants' self-confidence. This finding is in line with the results of the study (Ebrahimi et al., 2019a), who found that psychological interventions, such as cognitive restructuring, were effective in reducing fear of public speaking by helping participants change irrational thoughts to more realistic and adaptive ones.

Mindfulness-based training has also been shown to improve participants' focus by shifting attention from future worries to the present moment. This is in line with research (Elahemer et al., 2022), which states that mindfulness can help students overcome anxiety in academic contexts and improve their public speaking skills. Verbal feedback from participants is also an indicator, with the majority stating that the training provided real benefits in helping them overcome nervousness and improve their public speaking skills. Participants who were initially unstructured in delivering messages showed improvement in the use of logical flow after several simulations and feedback. Repeated practice and simulations were important elements in helping participants feel more comfortable and practiced when speaking in front of an audience, as identified by Chernikova et al., (2020) in a study of simulation in higher education. In addition, increased self-confidence plays a significant role in more effective delivery. Dwyer & Davidson's research(2012) also showed that high self-confidence is directly related to the ability to influence the audience more persuasively and clearly. In addition, success is also determined by the ability of participants to apply the skills they have acquired in their daily work presentations. Good public speaking not only enhances individual credibility but also strengthens interpersonal communication and team collaboration. Mikkola and Valo(2020)emphasizes that strong communication skills contribute directly to organizational effectiveness. With more thorough training, Telkomsel employees can improve their negotiation and presentation skills, which are essential for interacting with clients and superiors.

4. Conclusion

Public speaking training for PT Telkomsel Pamasuka Area employees successfully achieved its goal of improving public speaking skills and reducing anxiety when speaking in front of an audience. Based on the observation results, there was a significant increase in aspects of self-confidence, structure and delivery of material, and interaction with the



audience. Psychological intervention techniques such as mindfulness and cognitive restructuring helped participants overcome anxiety, so they could be calmer, more confident, and more effective in speaking. The feedback given during the simulation also helped participants improve weaknesses and show improvements in presentation quality. Overall, this training not only provides technical skills but also the psychological aspects needed in public speaking, so that it can increase employee productivity and communication effectiveness in the work environment.

Sustainable Intervention

Ongoing mentoring and evaluation after training is also important to ensure the skills acquired remain relevant in real-world work situations. This strategy can address challenges related to participants' initial skill gaps, identified in this training.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, these findings support the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) model that links thoughts, feelings, and behavior. It confirms that changes in negative thought patterns can lead to more adaptive behaviors and improve public speaking performance. In addition, the application of mindfulness shows that this skill can be applied across contexts, both academic and professional. In practice, such training contributes significantly to increasing employee productivity and organizational communication effectiveness. Similar training can be applied to other work sectors that require public communication as a core competency.

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