

# The Effect of Guided Imagery Techniques to Decrease Students' Anxiety in Group Counseling Activities

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**Abstract**—Relaxation techniques such as guided imagery has been used to treat a variety of student anxiety-related problems. The purpose of this study was to describe effect influence of guided imagery techniques to decrease the level of student's anxiety in group counseling activities. This research was quasi-experiment with one group pretest-posttest design. The samples, taken by purposive sampling, were eight junior high school students who had high anxiety level when participating in group counseling. The results analyzed by z test indicated that there was declining level of the student's anxiety in following group counseling activities, the value of  $z = -2.521$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). This finding explains that there was effect of the use of guided imagery techniques to the level of student anxiety in following group counseling activities. Therefore, guide imagery technique can be used effectively in group counseling for Junior High School Students.

**Keywords**—student anxiety; group counseling; guided imagery

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential process to achieve individual goals and aspiration [1]. Students are individuals who are in the process of developing towards maturity or independence. To reach maturity, students need guidance, because they still lack understanding or insight about themselves and their environment, as well as experience in determining the direction of life [2]. The implementation of education in schools will not be successful if it is not supported by the implementation of good guidance [3]. Guidance and counseling in schools conduct various services to help students achieve self-maturity. One of the programs is through counseling service.

Counseling is the process of giving assistance by an expert (counselor) to individuals who experience a problem (counselee) which leads to the eradication of the problems faced by the client individually or in groups. When in a counseling situation, especially in group counseling, the client feels anxious; and tense when starting to discuss the problems of each group member. Anxiety is an affective feeling that is not pleasant (feeling of worry and anxiety) accompanied by physical sensations that warn people of impending danger [4]. Anxiety is the embodiment of various mixed emotional processes, which occur when a person experiences various

stresses such as feelings of frustration and inner conflict [5]. Student's anxiety in group counseling activities can occur because of feelings of discomfort because students are afraid that they are judged bad impolite or embarrassing by others. This make the students to always judge themselves negatively and consider their current or future conditions will always suffer, and assume that other people are always better than they are [6].

Anxiety arises because of danger that threatens a person [7]. Anxiety can take the form of fear of other people's negative views on us or other feelings that make us worry. In group counseling activities, the students showed a tendency to be less open to the problems they faced. Students assume that the things they face will be known by their friends if they deal with counselors at school. Anxiety was experienced by students in participating in group counseling activities needs to be overcome so that it does not become another problem. Overcoming student's anxiety problems when participating in group counseling activities is useful in helping students to become more open and they can share their stories or problems with others through group dynamics. Anxiety occurs as a result of threats to self-esteem that are fundamental to an individual's existence [8].

Some symptoms of anxiety based on the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS), are namely: (a) Psychological symptoms, includes restless, concentration disorder, irritability, feeling of danger signs, insomnia, decreased libido and irritability, (b) Physical symptoms, includes palpitations, sweating, shortness of breath, sleep disturbances, fatigue, frequent urination, and dry in mouth and throat [9].

A simple and effective way to manage symptoms of anxiety or stress is through relaxation techniques. Guided imagery is a non-pharmacological relaxation technique that is useful for reducing anxiety, muscle contraction, and facilitating sleep. Guided Imagery is an easy and simple relaxation technique that can help overcome stress quickly and easily and reduce tension in the body [10]. Guided imagery is a mind-body exercise based on prompting client to formulate meaningful mental pictures to achieve relaxation and reduce anxiety; guided imagery is an anxiety reduction technique [11]. This technique

can help better access one's inner wisdom [12]. The research results show that guided imagery techniques can reduce anxiety levels in clients with insomnia of people aged 20-25. After the guided imagery technique was obtained, 81% of the research subjects experienced a decrease in anxiety levels and 19% of the research subjects had a constant level of anxiety [13]. Research concerning the effectiveness of Guided Imagery Relaxation Techniques on Fulfillment of Patients' Average Sleep Hours in Surgical Inpatients showed that guided imagery relaxation techniques affect the average increase of sleep hours in hospitalized patients [14].

Applying guided imagery to children or adolescents must use every day concrete examples that can be understood, such as they imagine that they are playing kites or enjoying delicious ice cream. When they are in the situation that they are afraid of something, they can be taught as if they have the power what like superman or black steel knight has, who are able to overcome their fear [15]. In addition, setting a comfortable position for the client is important in helping them to make positive imagination, for example to imagine white sand beaches, waterfalls, flower gardens and mountains). Previous studies investigating relaxation using guided imagery session techniques found that this technique is effective in reducing state-like anxiety and improve performance [16].

Guided imagery helps fight rigid, automatic, and hopeless thoughts. This understanding helps strengthen self-esteem and personal transcendence. Self-esteem and transcendence contribute to a more positive experience. Imagination creates a bridge between mind and body, connecting perception, emotion, and psychological, physiological, and behavioral responses [17]. The problem that can be formulated in this research is whether by applying relaxation techniques with guide imagery techniques can reduce the client's anxiety level in participating in group counseling activities?

The purpose of this study was to describe the effect of guided imagery on the anxiety level of students participating in group counseling activities.

## II. METHOD

This study used a quasi-experimental with the one-group pretest-posttest; First, a pre-test was conducted to measure the level of anxiety of students, then given guided imagery techniques, at the end of the intervention a post-test was taken, with the same questionnaire as used in the pre-test. The questionnaire was used to detect symptoms of anxiety by some aspect adapting from the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS) [9].

The questionnaire was developed using a Likert scale: a scale that has a level from very positive to very negative by means of a check-list or by checking one of the answers that corresponds to the situation felt by the respondent. The questionnaires measured the physical aspects with indicators of anxiety consisting of (1) sweating, (2) heart pounding, (3) mouth feeling dry, (4) hands feeling cold, and (5) digestion difficulty; and psychological aspects with indicators of: (1) low self-esteem, (2) emotional feeling, (3) fear, (4) nervousness, and (5) disturbed of concentration. The questionnaire used 5 answer choices from: very often until never. After empirically

tested, the questionnaire of this study was found to have a very good level of reliability (Cronbach Alpha = 0.921) with the corrected item-total correlation index of 0.389 -0.651, with valid items of 30 items. This shows that the questionnaire used in this study had very good quality.

The population of this study were 28 students of class VII H of SMP N 5 in Bengkulu City. The sample was determined by purposive sampling. The sample were 8 people taken based on the highest anxiety score levels. The study consisted of dependent variables of students' anxiety levels following group counseling activities and guided imagery was an independent variable.

During the guided imagery and control sessions, participants sat in a large, reclining chair and were instructed to make themselves comfortable. Participants in the guided imagery intervention condition listened to a pre-recorded guided imagery session via headphones. The session was recorded by the first author, including visualization of a variety of relaxing images (e.g., the beach, a meadow etc.). The guided imagery script was prepared by researchers. The recording lasted for 20 minutes. Participants in the control condition were asked to close their eyes, but to remain awake for 20 minutes.

Relaxation treatments used in this study used stages: (1) conducting group counseling in a quiet place, free from disturbances, asking students to lie on a chair, asking students to put their hands in their arms or on the armrests, (2) Asking students to take a little breath slowly, take a deep breath into the diaphragm which can make students relax further, (3) When feeling relaxed, students are asked to close their eyes gently. Then asked to imagine that he was lying on a beautiful secluded beach, imagining soft white sand around the coast and crystal clear waters with gentle waves encircling the beach, trees swaying in the wind, (4) Asking students to breathe the scent of the oceans and trees soft and beautiful, noting the sound of the waves rolling softly to the beach and the birds on the tree with their melodious voice, "don't just imagine that scene, feel and smell as much of your imagination as possible. (5) Stay in this Scene as long as you like it, notice how relaxed and calm your feelings are. Enjoy a relaxed feeling when it spreads throughout your body, from head to toe. Notice how far you feel anxious when you follow group counseling. Continue at this guided imaging process as long as you want. You should slowly pay attention to how calm and relaxed your feelings are, (6) when you are ready, Count Down slowly from 10, open your eyes, relax but be alert. You have returned to your environment, but calm will replace the anxiety or anxiety that you initially felt. Now, try to translate this calm into the rest of your day.

The study was conducted for five sessions with selected samples. Activities were carried out with a series of stages: (a) the formation stage, (b) the intermediate stage, (c) the activity phase, (d) the termination phase. After that an evaluation and follow-up for the next meeting were held.

Levels of Student anxiety were measured using an anxiety scale questionnaire; this instrument has very high item quality with a corrected item-total index between 0.389-0.664, with a Cronbach alpha index = 0.921. The anxiety variable measurements were carried out before and after treatment.

The analysis for testing hypotheses used the z test; this was used to find out the effect of using guided imagery techniques on students' anxiety levels following group counseling activities. To test the hypothesis, non-parametric tests were used with the Wilcoxon Signed Rank formula with program SPSS 23 Version.

**III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The description of the results of preliminary-test on the student population can be seen in Table I showing the frequency distribution of preliminary test of anxiety levels of students participating in group counseling activities. Out of 28 students who were given questionnaires, 2 student (7.14 percent) got very low category, 6 student (21.43 percent) got low category, 12 student (42.86 percent) medium category and 8 student (28.57 percent) high category. From these results it can be said that the average anxiety level of students participating in group counseling activities is in the medium category.

Group counseling with guide imagery techniques was carried out by inviting 8 students who have high anxiety level scores. Treatment in the form of group counseling and guided imagery was given to assist students in reducing their anxiety levels following group counseling activities. Each meeting of counseling activities for groups of students revealed the problems they experienced and then followed by providing guided imagery techniques to help reduce students' anxiety levels following group counseling activities.

Guided imagery for anxiety involved the use of visualization techniques to help the body enter a relaxed state. In other words, student close their eyes and imagine the sights and sounds of a place that find relaxing. A student with performance anxiety could visualize giving a presentation without anxiety in group counseling activity.

After 5 meetings, the anxiety level of students following the group counseling activities was measured to see the results of the post-test.

TABLE I. FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF PRELIMINARY-TEST OF STUDENT ANXIETY

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Very High (> 130)	0	0
Height (105 – 129)	8	28.57 %
Medium (80 – 104)	12	42.86 %
Low (55 – 79)	6	21.43 %
Very Low (30 – 54)	2	7.14 %
<b>Total</b>	28	100 %

Furthermore, a comparative analysis was carried out on the results of students' anxiety level scores before and after treatment. As shown in Table II, the comparison of pre-test scores and post-test scores of students' anxiety in participating in group counseling activities. It can be seen that there is a decrease in students' anxiety level which is indicated by a mean score of 113.5 before the treatment becomes 75.0 after treatment.

TABLE II. STUDENT ANXIETY SCORE (COMPARISON BETWEEN PRE AND POST TESTS)

No	Student	Pre-test Score	Category	Post-test Score	Category
1	RC	100	Medium	67	Low
2	DN	122	Height	86	Medium
3	CA	113	Height	69	Low
4	RD	124	Height	81	Medium
5	DA	119	Height	68	Low
6	AA	108	Height	78	Low
7	RB	107	Height	78	Low
8	DT	115	Height	73	Low
<b>Mean</b>		113,5	Height	75	Low
<b>Highest</b>		124		86	
<b>Lowest</b>		100		67	
<b>Mean</b>		113.5	Height	75.0	Low

Comparisons made on anxiety scores before and after treatment showed significant results. To see the effect of the treatment given in reducing the level of anxiety students can be seen in the results of the analysis using test in Table III.

TABLE III. COMPARISON OF STUDENT ANXIETY LEVELS BEFORE AND AFTER TREATMENT USING Z TEST

	Pos-test – Pre-test
Z	-2.521 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.012

Based on the results of the z test obtained the value of  $z = -2.521$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . It can be concluded that there is an effect of the use of guided imagery techniques on the anxiety level of students in participating group counseling activities in SMP N.

The mechanism of decreasing student anxiety levels during guided imagery begins by inviting respondents to reveal problems that disturb them, which are then discussed in the group counseling process. After that the respondent is given a comfortable and quiet room and then guided to relax and empty the mind. Respondents were asked to position themselves in positions that made respondents comfortable and then closed their eyes. The researcher will guide the respondent to feel relaxed with a deep breath and give direction to imagine the things that the respondent likes in providing a sense of comfort and relaxation. Respondents were asked to keep their breathing patterns in order to stay relaxed and feel comfortable.

The researcher gave motivation through the process of imagining something that the respondent likes, after being given guided imagery respondents are asked to express their feelings and impressions after being given treatment. In several meetings and implementation, the following were carried out by several students after being given guided imagery techniques: *"I feel more relaxed after carrying out the journey of imagination"*. *"Being on the journey of my imagination feels calm and enjoys a relaxed atmosphere"*. Then the expression of students after giving guided imagery techniques with the addition of instrumental music: *"My feelings this time are more real because there is additional instrumental music, so the*

*imagination I did was a little more pronounced. Compared to the first beach atmosphere that is now more pronounced".*

The two-final treatment for each student who participated in the group counseling activity was asked to imagine themselves various places that could make him comfortable, and ask them to share their experiences. Here are some students' expressions: "*Feel the morning atmosphere on a snowy beach. Now I feel calmer and more relaxed*"; "*I imagine I was in a tea garden, enjoying the atmosphere of the garden, running and picking tea leaves. I feel happy*"; "*I enjoyed the atmosphere of the sea and was on a boat that did not know the direction. But I was with other groups on the ship. My feelings are now happy*"; "*I imagined being on a beach that if the water held out the light. I feel very happy to be in that place. I go with my sister.*

Based on the expressions, students can feel relaxed and feel happy when they are in their most comfortable condition. The pleasant experiences they feel make their condition even better. The next thing to do after the evaluation is to determine the commitment of students to be able to remember this session and be able to return at any time to conditions that make them feel comfortable and relaxed. The guided imagery is continuously felt by students in helping them to reduce the level of anxiety they feel. The meetings that were held 5 times showed the development of behavior from students where they were more active and began to dare to open themselves in expressing the problems, they faced related to the anxieties they experienced.

Based on data analysis, it is known that the results of students' anxiety level following group counseling activities decreased after being given treatment. Eight students experienced a decrease in their level of anxiety. Watanabe et al [18] mentions that guided imagery improves positive mood and significantly reduces individual negative mood. The decrease in students' anxiety level can be seen from the results of the pre-test and post-test which experienced a decrease in score. Based on the results of hypothesis testing, the use of guided imagery techniques shows that every student who is given treatment in the form of guided imagery has a decreased level of anxiety. This study confirmed that guide imagery helps the student to decrease the anxieties (physiologically or psychologically) and could seeking wellness feeling and became opened in group counseling activities [19-21].

Anxiety in following group counseling activities have symptoms, such as physical factors (sweating sweat, palpitations, rapid heart rate, rapid breathing, cold hands, disturbed digestion) and psychological factors (low self-esteem, emotional, fearful, nervousness, feelings of danger, difficulty focusing or thinking clearly about anything). This condition will affect the effectiveness of the process and the results of group counseling [22].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Guided imagery is effective in helping to reduce students' anxiety levels following group counseling activities. This is indicated by the results of descriptive analysis, the mean score before treatment 113.5 then becomes 75.0 after treatment. From the z test results obtained the value of  $z = -2.521$  and

significance ( $p < 0.05$ ). This shows that there is an influence of the use of guided imagery techniques on the level of anxiety of students following the group counseling activities at SMP N 5 Kota Bengkulu.

For students, it can help them in reducing the level of anxiety by way of imagination-imagination that can make conditions relaxed and calm, guided imagery as a relaxation technique that is easy to use. For teachers, to be able to carry out group counseling services more routinely and in accordance with the problems experienced by students, in a relaxed atmosphere to be able to support the optimal implementation of guidance and counseling services in schools. For further research can use this research as a reference material to develop further research to add other variables that can expand research.

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