

## Original Article

## Effectiveness of Transactional Analysis Training on Modifying Communication Apprehension among Individuals with Poor Communication Skills

Mojgan Agahheris<sup>1\*</sup>, Narges Ghavam Masoudi<sup>2</sup>, Enayatallah Yazdanpanah<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. Associate professor of Payam Noor University, Garmsar, Semnan

<sup>2</sup> M.A. in Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Sari Branch.

<sup>3</sup> Ph.D. Associate professor of Payam Noor University, Tehran, Iran.

(\*Corresponding author: Mojgan Agahheris, Email: [m\\_agah@pnu.ac.ir](mailto:m_agah@pnu.ac.ir))

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** this study was carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of transactional analysis training on improving communication apprehension in people with poor communication skills.

**Method:** The method of this research was quasi-experimental with two experimental and control groups and pre- and post-test implementation. The statistical sample was comprised of 28 people with poor communication skills (obtaining score one in standard deviation below the mean score in the communication skills questionnaire). They were selected based on inclusion-exclusion criteria by convenience sampling method. Subjects in both groups in one session responded to all items of communication skills questionnaire and Personal report of communication apprehension before and after training. The data were analyzed using software SPSS-20, ANOVA and MANOVA tests.

**Results:** showed the transactional analysis training reduced communication apprehension but increased communication skills in experimental group compared to the control group ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** It is concluded that transactional analysis training makes a person familiar with his/her personality system, the relationships with others and improve his/her communication skills.

**Declaration of Interest:** None.

**Key words:** Transactional analysis, Communication apprehension, Communication skills .

### Introduction

Humans are fundamentally motivated to create shared realities, allowing them to fulfill various basic needs including the need for having valid and confident beliefs about the world and the need to be connected with others (1). A key arena for shared-reality creation is communication (2). Communication is one of the oldest and best outputs of human that causes life sustaining and getting help from others in the past and present (3). Human beings need social relationships to develop; in this regard social development is one of the important aspects of human growth (4). Positive interpersonal relationships have significant

impact on mental health, so warm and friendly relations with others are the source of trust, safety and comfort. Adequate communication skills are a core competence of healthcare providers, essential for building an optimal interaction and a relationship with others (5). Consequently, it can be effective in the growth of self-esteem and reduce the feelings of worthlessness and shyness of individuals (6). Today, principled and effective communication can be an important factor in prosperity; it can increase mental health and improve the quality of relationships between people. However, ineffective communication is hindering humans from growth and is destroying their relationship

(7). One of the problems in social communication is apprehension. It is a kind of shyness with fear or anxiety features about the communication (8). When a person feels he is evaluated, the anxiety will be experienced. If a person comes to believe it, he would not have competence or confidence for evaluation in a specific field, his arousal is increased and his performance level is reduced. This is called apprehension. Apprehension in psychology is a model of consciousness in which the individual has no certainty or denies objectivity, but mentally he is conscious about his target (9) The concept of communication apprehension (CAPP) was introduced for the first time by Mc-Croskey (10) as “shyness with fear or anxiety characteristics associated with actual relation or predicting this relationship with a person or a group of people”. People with communication apprehension experience severe distress when they are being in different social situations such as talking to important people, speaking in front of audience and even in two-party interactions (11). This disorder is primarily focused on inner experience, which resulted from a distress in response to communication assignments (11). It is associated with physiological responses (heart rate and blood pressure (12) and obvious behaviors (avoidance and social isolation). It forms a relatively stable inner sense of apprehension in a slightly long period (13). Since interpersonal communication is the greatest human achievement, and many people are not able to communicate well, a low level communication may be lead to being away from spouse, children, friends, colleagues and also dysfunction (7). Also, many human relationships can suffer from the lack of communication skills, misunderstandings and misinterpretations, lack of conversation skills, using of incorrect and ironic relationships, learning and formation of false personality in childhood, bad moral characteristics such as pride, how to judge emotions, thoughts and in general in internal characteristics and humans environment (14). Therefore, people should become familiar with a set of skills to get rid of such problems. That means every individual should have necessary knowledge and skills to

communicate with others in a healthy and constructive way. Achieving this goal requires communication skills learning by appropriate modeling (7). Communication skills are specific that enable a person to behave in a good way (15). Hollinger (16) knows communication skills as those one that are essential to have effective communication with others and to gain acceptance from them. Moreover, Matson (17) believes the communication skills such as behaviors that have impact on relations between people on the one hand, mental health as well as useful function in society. Communication skills are a set of capabilities that cause individual's compatibility with others and formation of positive and useful behaviors in social situations. These abilities enable the person to play his appropriate role well in the society, without he harms to himself or others (15). Hence, people can get involved in interpersonal interactions and communication process by teaching communication skills. The process by which people are sharing their information, thoughts and feelings with each other through verbal and nonverbal exchange (15). In this regard, one of the most effective psychological theories focusing on solving the problems of human relations is Berne transactional analysis (TA) theory (18). This theory uses in the fields which people perception, interpersonal relations, communication skills and relationships are needed (19). Transactional analysis is a method for improving communications. In fact, it is a universal theory of communication for a variety of cultures (20). Since the basic foundation of human relations skill is comprised of two categories (human cognition and relationships), in this regard, transactional analysis (TA) presents a coordinate theory about personality and social dynamics. Furthermore, it is a psychotherapy and self-knowledge method; it has applications to improve communication skills and a variety of disorders. According to what is mentioned about transactional analysis is used to growth, changes and relationships of the person (21). Also, Berne (22) believes the relationships of people with each other are addressed in analyzing relations. Thus, if people have healthy, positive and satisfaction

relationships with each other and replaced them by destructive, negative and humiliating relationships, they are able to reduce their mental tensions. Therefore, the importance of TA determine as one of the methods to create communication skills and to improve human relations (14). Thus, applying TA to decrease communication apprehension with others is very essential as a communication disease.

### **Methodology**

The research method was quasi-experimental with pre- and post-test design by experimental and control groups. The study population comprised all young and adult women living in Tehran. Sampling method in this study was convenience. Among volunteers who in response to the call recording, after an initial telephone interview, were referred to health ushered Toloee Salamat counseling center for clinical semi- structured interview that made by professional therapist and their scores on communication skills scale was one standard deviation below the mean score, 28 people who were qualified by inclusion-exclusion criteria contain obtaining score one in standard deviation below the mean score in communication skills questionnaire, Age range from 20 to 50, staying in Tehran, Having Diploma and higher education, Signing moral consent to participate in research and exclusion contain the risk of any significant psychological illness (such as personality disorder, major depression, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive, etc. based on clinical interview and DSM-IV criteria), Get another psychological intervention simultaneously, Manifest or chronic physical ailments like endocrine diseases, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, etc., based on personal report were selected.

Afterwards, these people were assigned in two experimental and control groups randomly (group waiting list), each group included 14 people. Before and after 20 training sessions by clinical therapist on transactional analysis weekly (TA), all subjects in two groups in a session answered to all items of communication skills test-revised questionnaires (23), Personal report of communication apprehension (PRCA-24) (Mc-Croskey, Beatty, Kearney & Plax,

1985) and questions related to demographic features.

Communication skills questionnaire: This test has been developed by Queendom (2004) to assess communication skills and its subscales (determination, insight, understanding the message, emotion regulation and active listening) in adults. It has 34 five-option items and its score ranged from 34-170. Questions scores ranged in a Likert scale from 1-5. In Iran, this scale was implemented on a sample of 733 people by Hossein Chari & Fadakar (24). The reliability of test was calculated by Cronbach's alpha; its numerical value was equal to 0.69. It showed acceptable internal consistency of the test. Moreover, the reliability coefficient of the whole test was achieved as 0.71 using split half method.

### **Personal report of communication apprehension (PRCA-24) (25):**

This questionnaire was self-assessment; it is based on individual's anxiety to communicate in 4 relationship contexts (group discussion, meeting, interpersonal conversations and talking to public). Each context is composed of 6 questions. So, the whole questionnaire has 24 items. The Cronbach's alpha is obtained 0.97 for consistency of items and also indicates high validity. In Harris and Ghavam Masoudi (under publication) research, the entire Cronbach's alpha was reported by eliminating the item number four as 0.512 with an average of 67.37 and standard deviation of 7.481.

Afterwards, transactional analysis training program was performed. The program was a 20-session weekly period, each session lasting 90 minutes at health ushered counseling center that was run by the researcher. Upon completion of the training sessions of transactional analysis, the questionnaire was administered again for experimental and control groups (post-test).

Data collected by software SPSS-20 was analyzed in both descriptive and inferential levels. In descriptive level, the statistical indices of respondents were considered. However, in inferential statistics one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was used to analyze the variables. Also, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test was used

to evaluate the combination effect of correlated variables.

## Results

**Demographic characteristics of the sample group:** A total of 28 undergraduate students were studying in the fields of Humanities, Science, Engineering and Technology and Arts participated in the study. The mean age was 25 years with a standard deviation of 5.12 years; their age range was extended from 21 to 43 years.

The results of descriptive and inferential analysis after considering the validity of basic assumptions such as normality of scores distribution, homogeneity of variances and etc for application of ANOVA analysis (ANOVA), the results for each of subscales, total score for communication apprehension and communication skills for each group are provided in Table 1.

ANOVA test results presented in Table 1 (for significance test of scores difference mean between pre-test and post-test for subjects in

experimental and control groups in subscales of communication apprehension) to suggest the average scores in subscales of apprehension in session presentation and apprehension for interpersonal dialogue in experimental group had a significant decrease compared to control group. Furthermore, there was a significant difference between experimental and control groups in pre-test and post-test ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, transactional analysis training improved apprehension in session presentation and apprehension for interpersonal dialogue among subjects of experimental group compared to control group. On the other hand, the scores of anxiety to speak in the public and anxiety in-group discussion among subjects of experimental group have decreased after training. However, this is not statistically in significant level ( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence, the transactional analysis training has not improved the dialogue apprehension in the public and in-group discussion.

Table1: ANOVA test in communication apprehension subscales between two groups

index	state	M	SD	F	df <sub>1</sub>	df <sub>2</sub>	Level of significance	Effect size
communication apprehension	Pre-test	46.28	16.49	6.23	1	26	0.01	
	Post-test	55	12.96					
Apprehension in group discussion	Pre-test	16.21	4.77	1.46	1	26	0.23	0.05
	Post-test	14.85	4.02					
Apprehension in session presentation	Pre-test	16.21	4.02	6.31	1	26	0.01	0.19
	Post-test	14.85	4.77					
Apprehension in interpersonal dialogue	Pre-test	14.10	5.03	7.02	1	26	0.01	0.21
	Post-test	13.39	3.61					
Apprehension for speaking in the public	Pre-test	15.67	5.54	2.92	1	26	0.09	0.01
	Post-test	14.03	3.99					

The results of ANOVA test for each of the subscales of communication skills are presented in Table 2. As it can see, the results of above table suggest a significant difference in scores of all five subscales in experimental group compared to the control group.

Therefore, all sub-hypotheses are confirmed. That means transactional analysis training significantly enhanced each component of communication skills (i.e. assertiveness in communicating, understanding the type and content of communication, perceive the sent

and received message, regulating emotions during communication and active listening) of

participants in experimental group compared to control group.

Table 2: ANOVA test in subscales of communication skills scale in two groups

Index	state	M	SD	F	df <sub>1</sub>	df <sub>2</sub>	Level of significance	Effect size
Assertiveness	Pre-test	15.58	1.88	21.26	1	26	0.0001	0.45
	Post-test	17.10	2.23					
Insight	Pre-test	14.92	2.49	5.28	1	26	0.030	0.16
	Post-test	15.50	2.54					
Message perception	Pre-test	30.89	3.11	22.35	1	26	0.0001	0.46
	Post-test	32.92	3.77					
Regulating emotions	Pre-test	26.67	3.42	37.08	1	26	0.0001	0.58
	Post-test	28.89	3.75					
listening	Pre-test	24.53	3.37	15.58	1	26	0.0001	0.37
	Post-test	26.07	3.89					

**Discussion and conclusion**

Communication apprehension and its subscales, except anxiety to speak in the public and anxiety in group discussion, in experimental group have reduced compared to the control group (P<0.05). Therefore, two subscales of apprehension in session presentation and apprehension for interpersonal dialogue have been reduced through transactional analysis training. So, this hypothesis is confirmed for total score and these two subscales. This finding is consistent with the findings of Dam-Baggen, Kraaimaat (26); Herbert et al (27) who believe that “communication apprehension”, which is a component of social anxiety, is reduced as a result of communication skills training. In addition, Jeness (28) & Murakami (29) believe the transactional analysis can improve performance, stress tolerance, behavioral and attitudinal changes and can lead to improvement in psychological factors such as anxiety disorders, isolation, denial, anger and hostility. Also, Akbari, Khanjani, Poursharifi, Aliloo and Azimi (30) demonstrated the transactional analysis has been effective in improving emotional breakdown symptoms (anxiety, depression and rumination) in students.

Exposure to social or functional situations, such as attending a meeting or talking to audience almost immediately led to apprehension and anxiety reactions. Social learning theory suggests this disorder is caused by reinforcement and modeling in childhood (13). If the child does not receive positive reinforcement for his communication activities or receive negative feedback when communicating, he would suffer from communication apprehension. So, the individual gets into the habit of these emotional and behavioral reactions through conditioning to response to anxiety and fear because of communication in social situations that he/she is facing in life. On the other hand, the skill acquisition theory suggests this disorder is caused by inappropriate communication skills (10). In fact, learning communication skills by transactional analysis and applying behavioral effective procedures timely through changing ineffective procedures (immature child, obedient/ resistant child or blaming parent with extreme forgiveness) into adult efficient practices can suppress conditioned behavioral and emotional. Therefore, it reduces communication apprehension in this way. Transactional analysis training makes the person place in the position of “I’m OK”. Hence, he can avoid the negative emotions,

such as worthlessness, anxiety, apprehension, helplessness and guiltily. Also, he can deal with social situations by procedural change to the position of participatory child, structuring parent or adult; he can engage in effective social exchanges by adult planning. Therefore, transactional analysis training leads to reduced communication apprehension.

Moreover, according to (11), the person in communication apprehension primarily is distracted by distress in response to the communication assignments and inner experience of this feeling. Based on equilibrium theory that regulating thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors can improve communication and lead to internal consistency of the thoughts and parties ideas to communicate, it can be said the transactional analysis can help this balance by improving the communication methods, adult activation and structuring and caressing parent. Thereby, it can result in individual's emotional stability and reduced apprehension when he is confronting with social situations.

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