

The Efficacy of Neuro Linguistic Programming Intervention for Social Anxiety in Young Adults

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Abstract

The present research study was conducted on 30 young socially anxious literate people ranging from 18 to 30 years who were selected via purposive sampling method and randomly allocated into the experimental and control group. The intervention techniques of anchoring and swish pattern were conducted on the experimental group and the wait list control group underwent a similar kind of intervention provided by another NLP expert. Both the groups were tested for pretest and posttest using the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS) scale and the scores were compared. The results showed a reduction in social anxiety from pre-test (Mean = 118.27) to post-test (Mean = 48.8) in the intervention group. There was a slight increase in social anxiety for the control group which can be attributed to the elapsed time.

Keywords - Neuro linguistic programming, social anxiety, intervention, anchoring, swish pattern

1151. Introduction

NLP is a technique of restructuring an individual's perception towards their life. It helps to change an individual's style of thinking. The technique is practical in its approach. It includes various techniques that are used to improve our attitude towards life. The motive of NLP is to create different alternatives, to make an individual's perception of their quality of life better. NLP practitioners work with socially anxious individuals to comprehend their reasoning and behavioral patterns, emotive state, and urges. By analyzing an individual's map, they can help them locate and consolidate the skills that serve them best and help them in cultivating new strategies to replace unproductive ones. Supporters of NLP claim that this approach produces quick long-term results by improving comprehension and awareness of cognitive and behavioral patterns. NLP also seeks to foster efficient communication between conscious and unconscious mental processes to help individuals to increase innovativeness and critical thinking abilities. Some NLP trainers compare the approach to cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) but emphasize that positive change can be brought about using NLP in lesser time.

NLP states that any bad feeling from unpleasant memory comes from the way you are remembering it. The simplest way to re-experience the bad feelings of a past event is to visualize it as an associated picture. Thinking back on a memory in a dissociated way by looking at oneself in the situation reduces the feeling in the present and hence it maintains the emotional distance. If his physiology starts to collapse into the phobic state, he is asked to change the sub modalities of the picture on the screen, for example, making it darker, smaller or further away in order to decrease the intensity of the negative feelings. Then he is asked to imagine himself stepping into the screen and he tends to integrate the intense changes that have taken place. This would allow the individual to erase the bad feelings associated with past events (Connor & Seymour, 1993).

Social anxiety has been universally explained as having bodily mechanisms (e.g. perspiring, blushing), mental mechanisms (e.g. idea that people would be judgmental) and behavioral mechanisms (e.g. staying away from crowded places). The very meaning of social anxiety is the person's apprehensiveness and irrational beliefs that they will be evaluated negatively by other people around them. The theory states that a socially anxious individual is motivated to make a good impression or a good image about himself, but at the same time he is not being able to believe in his own ability to create that impression.

II. Review of Literature

A research study was carried out on thirty participants to comprehend if NLP strategies were viable in decreasing the social anxiety in participants. The researcher devised an intervention study method using NLP techniques such as switch system, meta model and modeling for a period of ten sessions. When the results were measured using the Liebowitz social anxiety scale, there was a notable contrast identified between the experimental and control groups and it was concluded that NLP was viable in decreasing social anxiety (Abdivarmazan & Sylabkhor, 2016).

A study was conducted on a 24 year old female to understand her feelings of guilt caused due to her past encounters. The researcher devised an intervention study method for duration of five weeks using NLP techniques such as relaxation anchoring, swish pattern: auditory digital processing, reframing, neuro hypnotic repatterning and timeline technique. The research findings indicate that the NLP based techniques offer fast and viable interventions for managing guilt induced anxiety, depression and stress (Sheoran, 2016).

A study was carried out to comprehend if NLP was compelling in decreasing language anxiety among sixty six Iranian pre intermediate participants. The researcher did an intervention study using various brain gym NLP techniques such as brain buttons, cross crawl, hook ups, and the alphabet. The research findings as measured by the language anxiety inventory taken from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) showed that the NLP interventions did not have any remarkable impact on language anxiety for the experimental group, but NLP helped the experimental group to increase their self-esteem (Alamdar & Karbalaei, 2015).

A pilot study was conducted to comprehend if NLP techniques are compelling in reducing the symptoms of PTSD in participants from the Military and Emergency Services. The researchers selected 29 participants from an initial sample of 106 participants and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) was administered to them for pre and post test data. The interventions provided consisted of many NLP techniques that addressed the self-reported symptoms of PTSD. The research findings indicate that the participants experienced reduction in distressful symptoms when NLP was used for the overall DASS scale scores and also for the sub categories of DASS scale (Depression, Anxiety and Stress) (Wake & Leighton, 2014).

A study was conducted on 50 participants to understand if NLP is effective in decreasing the requirement for anesthesia in claustrophobic patients undertaking the MRI scan. The researcher provided the NLP intervention of collapse anchoring for duration of 20 days scattered over a 6 month period. The level of anxiety was measured using Spielberger's State-Trait Anxiety Inventory questionnaire for the pretest and posttest condition. The research findings indicated that there was a significant reduction in the level of anxiety and also 38 participants underwent the MRI scan without making use of the general anesthesia (Bigley, et al., 2009).

III. Research Design

Statement of Problem: This research study would help in determining whether there is any significant change in participants with social anxiety after the NLP intervention. A review of existing literature brings to the forefront that NLP techniques in treating social anxiety haven't been given much attention in the Indian

context, particularly in the young adult population and the studies have focused on other interventions.

Objectives: To evaluate if NLP brings about reduction in social anxiety from pre intervention to post intervention and to evaluate if reduction in social anxiety from pre intervention to post intervention is greater in NLP group as compared to wait list control group.

Data Collection Source: Based on the purposive sampling method, the participants who visited the Quantum wellness center to seek treatment and who were found to be high on social anxiety voluntarily participated in the research study. They were randomly allocated into two groups namely, experimental and wait list control groups. The exclusion criteria specified that it excludes individuals who are presently under psychiatric medications. The number of participants screened in Phase 1 were 150, based on the severity of the symptoms using the LSAS total cut off score, i.e., above 90. The number of participants in Phase 2 (Intervention) were 15 in the experimental and 15 in the wait list control group.

Hypotheses:

H1 - There will be a significant decrease in social anxiety between pre test scores and post test scores when treated with Neuro Linguistic Programming.

H2 - There will be no significant change in social anxiety between pre test scores and post test scores for the control group.

H3 - There will be greater significant pre post change in the experimental group as compared to the control group.

Data Analysis Tools:

As the sample size was small (n=30), non-parametric statistics were computed to analyze the research data. The Wilcoxon Signed Rank test via SPSS software (16.0 version) was used to test Hypothesis 1 (H1) and Hypothesis 2 (H2). The Mann-Whitney U test via SPSS software (16.0 version) was used to test Hypothesis 3 (H3) in order to compare the pre post change in the experimental group as compared to the wait list control group. The data acquired was represented by means of tables wherever necessary.

Limitations:

As the sample size was limited to 30 participants (15 in the experimental group and 15 in the control group) it might not be possible to generalize the results to the whole population. The researcher didn't follow the same intervention technique for all the 15 participants in the intervention group. The first 10 participants underwent only the anchoring intervention conducted by the researcher. The NLP expert asked for a feedback from the 11th participant which led to the incorporation of another NLP technique, called the swish pattern.

Further scope of research:

1. A larger sample with proportionate representation of males and females would be able to produce better generalization of the results.
2. To conduct studies focusing on the efficacy of various other intervention techniques of NLP.
3. To conduct follow up studies to be able to evaluate if there has to be an incorporation of more NLP techniques or an increase in the duration of the NLP intervention provided (the number of sessions).

IV. Data Analysis and Interpretation

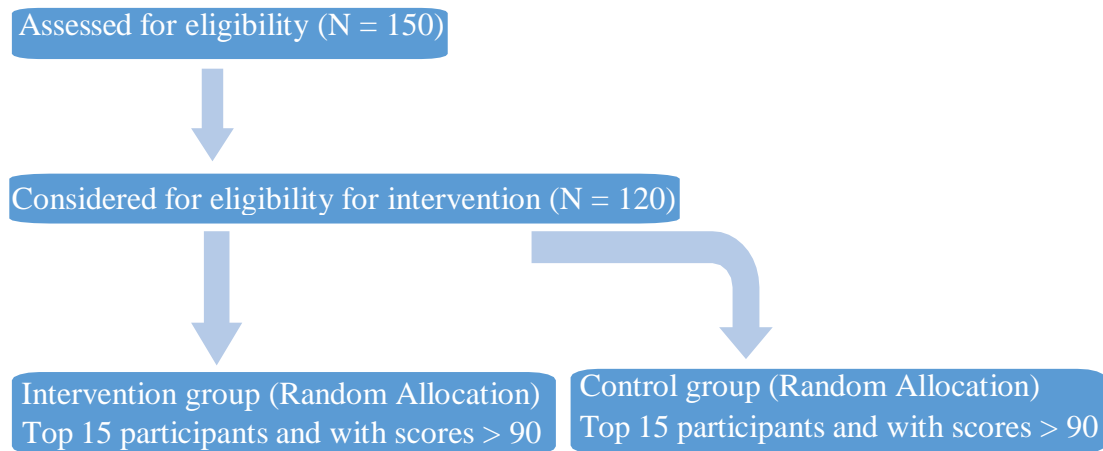


Figure 1. Flow of participants

Table 1. Comparison of the mean, standard deviation and median on social anxiety for intervention and control groups (pre-test and post-test)

Group	Mean		Standard deviation		Median	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Intervention	118.27	48.8	12	18.83	121	51
Control	115.27	122.73	7.61	6.98	114	122

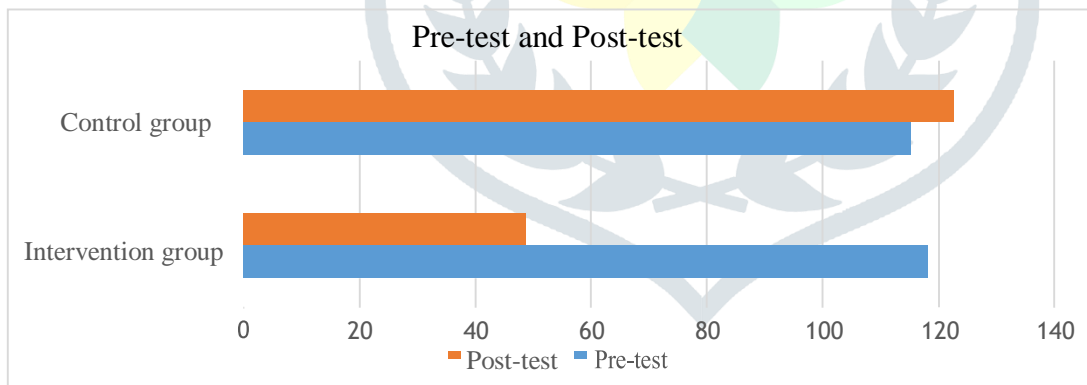


Figure 2. Pre-test and post-test comparison for the intervention group and the control group

Table 2. The following table shows the results for the difference between post-test and pre-test scores obtained from the Wilcoxon signed ranks test for social anxiety (LSAS)

Group	Mean	Median	Wilcoxon Z	p	Effect size
Intervention	69.47	70	-3.408	0.001	0.23
Control	7.47	8	-2.272	0.023	0.15

The non-parametric Wilcoxon signed ranks test shows a significant reduction in social anxiety from pre-test to post-test following the neuro linguistic intervention. Furthermore, the pre post change was significant ($p = 0.001$; $p < 0.05$) for the intervention group with median at pretest ($Md = 121$) and decreasing at post-test ($Md = 51$). The pre post change was not significant ($p = 0.23$; $p > 0.05$) for the control group.

Table 3. The following table show the results obtained for the pre-post change for both the groups obtained from the Mann Whitney U test for social anxiety (LSAS)

Group	N	Mean rank	U	Wilcoxon Z	P	Effect size
Intervention	15	23	0.00	120	0.00	4
Control	15	8				

An observation of the above table shows the results of the non-parametric Mann Whitney U test with a medium effect size of 4 and significant values ($p = 0.00$) for social anxiety. The test reveals a significant reduction for social anxiety in pre post change in the intervention group (Mean rank = 23) as compared to the control group (Mean rank = 8), $Z = 120$, $p = 0.00$.

The present research study accepts hypothesis 1 which states that, “There will be a significant decrease in social anxiety between pre-test scores and post test scores when treated with Neuro Linguistic Programming”. This is evident from the table 1, which shows the reduction in social anxiety from pre-test (Mean = 118.27) to post-test (Mean = 48.8).

The present research study accepts hypothesis 2 which states that, “There will be no significant change in social anxiety between pre-test scores and post test scores for the control group”. It is evident through the table 2 which shows that the pre post change was not significant ($p = 0.23$; $p > 0.05$) for the control group.

The present research study accepts hypothesis 3 which states that, “There will be greater significant pre-post change in the experimental group as compared to the control group”. It is evident through the table 2 which shows that the pre post change in the intervention group (Mean = 69.47, $Md = 70$ and effect size = 0.23) is greater than the control group (Mean = 7.47, $Md = 8$ and effect size = 0.15).

V. Findings and suggestions

The findings of the research study was that there is significant reduction in social anxiety from pre-test to post-test following the NLP intervention, and the pre post change in the intervention group is greater than the control group. There was a slight increase in social anxiety for the control group. Merely one single session of NLP (Anchoring and Swish Pattern) proved to be effective for reducing social anxiety in young adults. The NLP intervention produced faster results in comparison to the age old traditional psychotherapeutic and cognitive behavioral techniques, as NLP gives more attention to the physiology of an individual. Whereas the psychotherapeutic techniques focus more on the behavioral aspects of the individual.

The NLP intervention can be used as a single session cure for social anxiety & other related symptoms and it also serves to be cost effective. It helps in promoting an individual’s mental health level of functioning when he/she is provided with NLP intervention techniques. It also increases the level of self-awareness and has a positive effect on the various dimensions of human life by bringing about a generative change in the individual. It promotes general health condition of the individual by lowering the levels of anxiety, depression, and hence helps in preventing mental and physical disorders.

VI. Conclusion

NLP is primarily experiential, and therefore the individual has to take part in the intervention in order to actually learn from the experience. It facilitates understanding of an individual's personal map of reality and hence they can analyze what is effective in achieving their goals and what is not. They can then analyze the perspectives of others. It also provides a deeper sense of relaxation. NLP brings about a change by improving one's understanding of his/her cognitive and behavioral patterns. It also builds effective communication between the conscious and unconscious mental processes. It can be used to promote health and self-healing. The individuals try to restructure their maladaptive thought processes when the NLP techniques (Anchoring and Swish Pattern) are administered to them. They feel empowered and tend to view themselves from a completely novel perspective by engaging in self-introspection. Individuals can also overcome addictions, distressing habits and phobias through this way.

VII. References

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