

The Improv Self-Efficacy and Skills Programme (ISESP)

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Abstract

Public speaking fear and anxiety are commonplace both in occupational and educational settings. Although numerous treatments are available to reduce both fear and anxiety, the problem persists, particularly in university environments. Actor and improvisation theatre training involves the development of verbal and non-verbal communication skills, along with the regular exposure to social performance situations in a graded format. Previous research has demonstrated its potential to reduce the negative impact of anxiety and fear on individuals and performance outcomes and warrants further investigation. The purpose of the present study, therefore, was to determine the effectiveness of the Improv Self-Efficacy and Skills Programme (ISESP), an innovative intervention rooted in the principles of acting and improvisational theatre training on university students. The experimental group ($n = 11$) received 12 hours of training over three weeks (6×2 h) and the waitlist control group ($n = 11$) received a ½ day version of the programme (3 h) after the 6-month follow-up. The results indicated that participation in the ISESP led to statistically significant reductions in public speaking anxiety compared to the wait-list control group. Results were maintained at 6-month follow-up.

Keywords: public speaking anxiety, fear of public speaking, self-efficacy, theatrical improvisation