



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Reduction of Social Anxiety and Increase in Academic Adjustment through Motivational Enhancement Therapy in Freshmen College students in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Academia in college is different from high school because college students will meet people who have different cultures, personalities, points of view, and interests. Personal adjustments are essential for these college students in this different scenario. Not only can it boost social interaction but it will help how to be persistent and resilient in their academic life. Failure in developing personal adjustments could turn the college students into anxiety in their social interaction which the freshman students may encounter when they face the changes in their environment and culture. An attempt to increase personal adjustment and decrease social anxiety through Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET) is possible. There are five stages used in MET, that are pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. This study used an experimental method with one group of pretest and post-test design which included 100 freshman college students. This research aims to know the effect of MET treatment to reduce social anxiety and increase personal adjustment in freshman college students in Indonesia. The instruments are the Social Anxiety Scale (La Greca & Lopez, 1998) consisting of 18 items, and the adjustment scale (Haber & Runyon, 1984) consisting of 25 items. The analysis in this study is a paired sample t-test that examines decrease in social anxiety and increase in personal adjustment before and after being given MET treatment. The results revealed that MET significantly reduced social anxiety and increased personal adjustment in freshman college students in Indonesia. The results have been discussed and recommendations are given.

College students are individual in the age range 18 to 25 years old which are in the identity exploration stage. Arnett (2000) stated that college students which predominantly in the emerging adults stage, mostly do not see themselves as adolescents nor entirely as adults. In this stage, college students take many roles as students, employee (part-time or full-time) and try to live separately from their family.

As the environmental interaction expand widely in emerging adulthood, college students participate and carry out their duties, as community members in university and they required social interaction that can later assist them in self-development (Rageliene, 2016). Also, college students should be shifting their point of view when

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dealing with problems from one point of view to other from multiple perspectives (Sackl-Pammer et al., 2019). College students will experience different situations in the new place, such as new social circles and behavior, new life perspectives, new friendships, new academic and cultural identities, and social exclusion (Clark, 2005). From these new experiences, freshmen students must be able to adapt to their new environment (Akram et al., 2020).

Since mostly college students live separately from their family, Beck, Taylor, and Robbins (2003) stated that they could experience depression and homesickness as there is a disruption of their social network. Previously Ainsworth (1979) stated that homesickness could be occurred when an individual left their social support network and subsequently difficult to adapt in a new environment and as a sign of separation anxiety. Align with that, Dyson and Renk (2006) also stated that college students may have difficulty in transition to university life, so it would be beneficial for the institution to assessed their gender role, the stress level during the first year of university, the coping strategies they used, and their depressive symptomatology levels.

Kessler et al., (2007) conducting research about age of onset of mental disorders. The results revealed that from 18 to 25 years of age is the stage which is considered to be a vulnerable time for mental ill health onset whereas their age range is when they attend the university. The results was confirmed by Laidlaw, McLellan, and Ozakinci (2016) who stated that university students experienced stressful event in the transition to adulthood. College students aware that they have two identities that are as student and an adult who were expected to be responsible for their own welfare and life in general. Nevertheless, they still do not know how to manage their life since most of their needs were provided by their family before they enrolled to the university.

Based on Nunn (2015) anxiety is the most frequently mental health condition which experienced by university students. Furthermore, according to Farokhi and Tahmassian (2017) one of the most anxiety types which mostly experienced by university students is social anxiety. Social anxiety could appeared by symptoms such as sweating or blushing as an individual feel an intense fear and worries in social conditions (Dalbudak et al., 2013). Social anxiety also could occurs when college students meet new friends, lecturers, or university rules, then they tend to worry and have negative perceptions of the environment towards them (Mutahari, 2016). In anxious situation, socially anxious individuals tend to be shy and withdrawn, and might get ineffective in social interactions. Social anxiety will interfere with the normal state of development related to social and personal relationships and will result in avoidance or rejection (Teachman & Allen, 2007).

Although study conducted by Richardson (2015) revealed that not most of students with mental health difficulties have low achievement in their college. The difficulties have impact on their social activities, emotional problems and social adjustment (Bulathwatta et al., 2017). Similarly, Raymond (2019) also stated that that there is a strong relationship between loneliness, anxiety, and adjustment in newcomers in the first year.

Research in recent years in Indonesia has mostly discussed that social anxiety is one of the factors that affect the adjustment of new students. The research conducted by Arjanggih and Kusumaningsih (2016) found that student adjustment is influenced by social anxiety and this study recommend that there should be the appropriate interventions to overcome social anxiety in new students. Then, research conducted by Suryaningrum (2021) also analysed the problem of social anxiety among new and old college students and showed that 76.9% of students experienced social anxiety, and this study recommend to design interventions to overcome these social anxieties (Suryaningrum, 2021). Another study using the systematic review method, which examines the factors behind the adjustment of higher education among first-year students from 18 studies published between 2011 and 2021, found important points for future research to be able to adopt the interview method to gain more insight into the adjustment of new students in higher education (Purnamasari et al., 2022). Therefore, there is an idea to fill the gaps which are recommended by previous studies. Thus, this study will examine and intervention to improve the adjustment ability of students who experience social anxiety.

One of intervention which has been shown to be effective in reducing anxiety disorders is Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET). Buckner, Ledley, Heimberg, and Schmidt (2008) conducted study with 33 year

old man who diagnosed as social anxiety disorders and alcohol used disorders. The results showed that MET successfully reduced anxiety in the patients with social anxiety disorders and alcohol used disorders even after six months of follow up. Korte and Schmidt (2013) conducted a study with 80 individuals with mean age range 18.66 years old which divided into experiment and control group. Results revealed that individuals who were in the MET condition (experimental group) showed a significant reduction in anxiety in comparison to the control group.

MET is a systematic intervention to generate behavioural changes. It is based on motivational psychology principles designed to produce rapid and internally motivated change. MET assumes that the responsibility and ability for change reside with the client. The researcher's job creates a series of conditions that will enhance the client's motives and commitment to change. These conditions help effective personal adjustments, such as correct perception of reality, ability to cope with individual anxiety and stress, realizing an interest in dealing with others, positive self-image, ability to express feelings, and good interpersonal relationships. Some of this can be achieved through five stages, which are pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance (Miller et al., 1999),

These five stages support intrinsic motivation for change, which will lead clients to initiate, survive, and comply with behavior change efforts. This behavioural change will make individual to socially adapt whereas there are two needs i.e., survival and personal adjustments which encourage humans to interact with other humans (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In anxious situations, a person tends to carry out self-defence mechanisms (fight) or escape (flight) as a form of adjustment to the anxiety. Through the five stages of MET, freshman students are aware of their needs and make decisions to achieve harmony and balance with the new environment. So, freshman students can interact socially well, develop their potential, and are not anxious about all the changes that may occur in the future (Miller et al., 1999). MET focuses on exploring uncertainty and increasing internal motivation to increase readiness to change behavior (Westra & Norouzian, 2018). The goal is to identify and increase individual motivation about consistent change in self for the adjustment. Individuals must face challenges, cope with pressures, become a socially individuals, and adjust well to a new environment. So, we assume that increasing personal adjustment in first-year students will reduce social anxiety through MET.

Methodology

Study Design

The design used in this study was an experimental in which motivational enhancement therapy was used as an independent variable while social anxiety and personal adjustment were used as the dependent variables. The design experiment used in this study is one group experiment with pre-test and post-test. The researcher used this type design of experiment because the aim of this study is want to increase personal adjustment and reducing social anxiety for students with social anxiety through motivational enhancement therapy. The inclusion criteria of participants included in this study is students who were in middle and high category of social anxiety.

Population and Sample

Population in this study was freshman students of state Islamic University of Raden Intan Lampung class 2022 and 100 students being as a purposive sample were taken. Purposive sampling were conducted by distributed the information about calling participants to join in this study and we distribute the social anxiety and personal adjustment as screening for the subjects. The inclusion criteria for the subjects in this study were an individual who categorized in low criteria of personal adjustment and high criteria of social anxiety based on descriptive statistics of mean hypothetic of the data. We used social anxiety which developed by La Greca and Lopez (1998) also personal adjustment scale developed by Haber and Runyon (1984) to screen the participants based on the criteria to join this study and also as a pre-test session of this study.

Instruments

Social anxiety scale which developed by La Greca and Lopez (1998) was used to measure social anxiety. This scale consisted of 18 items with three aspects which are fear of negative evaluation (2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, & 14),

social avoidance (1, 3, 4, 8, 10, & 16), and distress (12, 15, 17, & 18). Responses are marked on four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The composite score was calculated by summing all responses, higher score indicated higher level of social anxiety and vice versa. The scale has good internal consistency with Cronbach’s alpha 0.93 and internal validity of each item was more than 0.3.

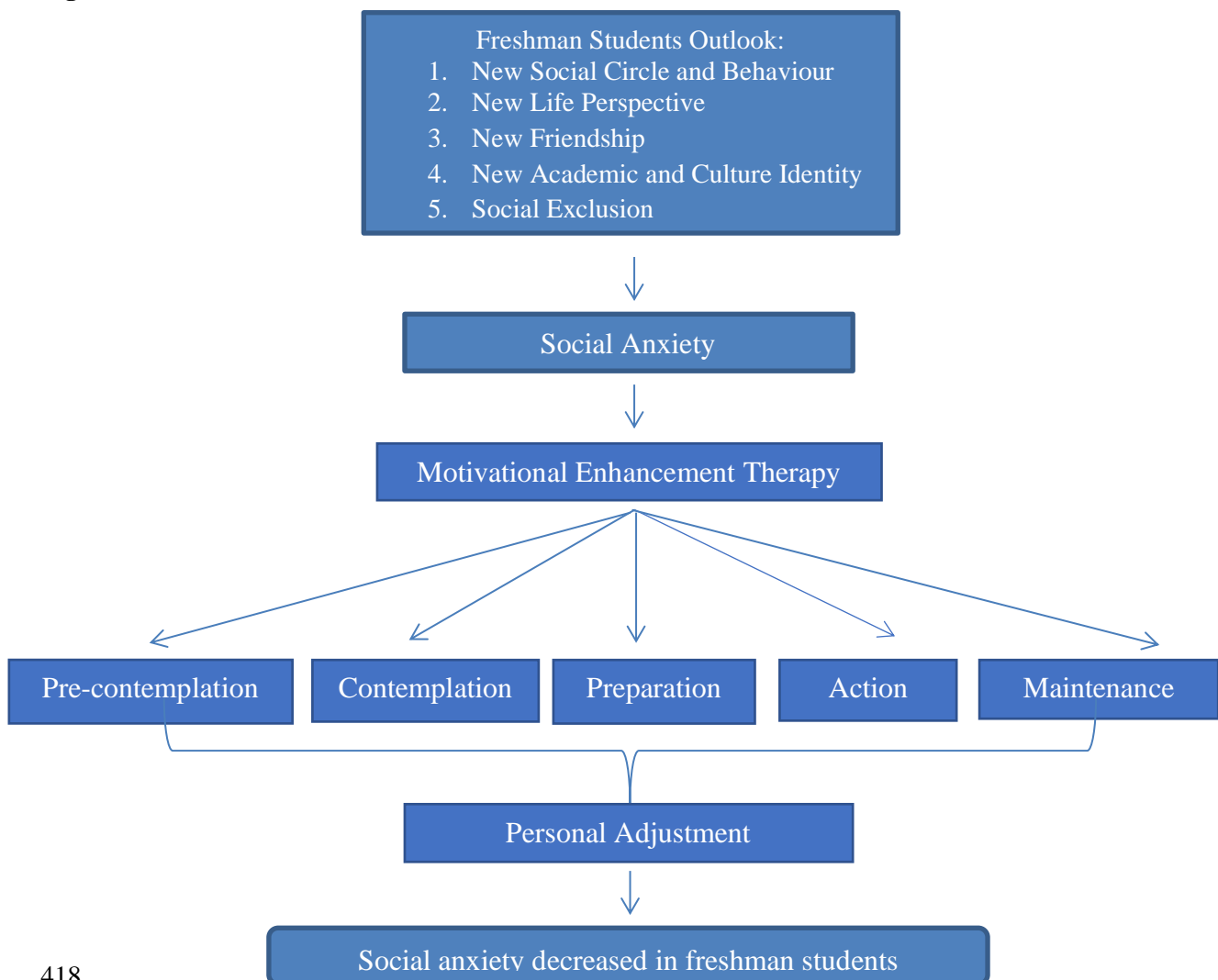
Personal adjustment was measured by personal adjustment scale which based on theory of Haber and Runyon (1984). This scale consisted of 25 items with five aspects which are the perception of reality (1, 6, 10, 17, & 22), the ability to deal with stress and anxiety (2, 7, 11, 15, 18, & 23), a positive self-image (3, 12, 19, & 24), the ability to express emotions well (4, 8, 13, 20, & 25), and good interpersonal skills (5, 9, 14, 16, & 21). Eleven items (6, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24, & 25) were reversed items. Responses are marked on four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The composite score was calculated by summing all responses, higher score indicated higher level of personal adjustment and vice versa. The scale has good internal consistency with Cronbach’s alpha 0.96 internal validity of each item was more than 0.3.

Social anxiety and personal adjustment scale used in pre-test and post-test section which we’ve been formulated to reduce testing bias. We’ve randomized the item in post-test to avoid the participant learnt and remembered the item in pre-test.

Procedure

The intervention given was motivational enhancement therapy, which has five stages which are pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance to increase the personal adjustment and decreasing social anxiety of freshmen students. The trainer which brings the motivational enhancement therapy is two psychologists who conducted the treatment in a classroom which has been conditionally controlled such as light, sound, amenities, and the equipment we used.

Figure 1. Framework



1. Pre-contemplation. At this stage, participants did not consider changes in behavior. The researcher builds communication with participants, accepts participants as they are, and building trust with the participants. Researcher also avoids communication that implies a superior/inferior relationship between the researcher and the participants. The role of the researcher is a supportive companion and a knowledgeable consultant. The researcher seeks to motivate the participants to move into contemplation, describes the forms of social anxiety, the participants then react with surprise, denial, distrust, and eventually give the acceptance. Building relationships and trust are very important at this stage. Here the researcher simply asks participants for permission to discuss some topics as researcher showed respect for the client's autonomy.

Next, the researcher tells the participants about how this treatment operates and how the researcher and the participants can work together. The researcher states how long the session will last and what you want to achieve now and within the specified time. In this case, the researcher does not burden the participants with all the rules and regulations of the program. assessments or formal arrangements are adjusted as needed. At this stage, the researcher did not tell the participants each step of the sessions instead the researcher will ask the participants to provide their perspective on what happened and how they felt about that, also ask the participants' point of view about their hope and goal.

2. Contemplation. In this stage participants have to consider that they have a problem and desire to change their behavior. Researcher expressed empathy (consider praising rather than condescending, building rather than destroying, listening rather than telling, soft, subtle persuasion, assuming that the change in behavior is on client dependent)

In the counselling session, it was expected that several freshman students will be able to solve all their problems. Whatever their expectations, the researcher emphasized their courage and willingness to attend the counselling session by saying "I am very impressed and enthralled that you are trying to join this counselling session." Researcher increase their confidence that behavioural changes can occur, increased confidence in them about the bad effects of social anxiety and personal adjustment inability can raise their concern and awareness.

At this stage, the researcher encourages participants to find beliefs through motivating dialogue. The dialogue presented by the researcher eliciting self-motivational statements which could participants believe that there will be changes. The researcher seeks to get statements from participants who confirm how valuable they are, to motivate themselves. One of the way is to ask it directly, through open-ended questions, such as:

"Assume that you are here, that you have some concerns or difficulties related to your social interactions. Tell me about it. "

"Tell us about habits in social interactions. What happens to you when you withdraw from the social environment? What are your concerns about the social environment? "

"Tell me what you have noticed about your habitual behaviour when avoiding social interactions. How has it changed over time? What things have you noticed that worried you, which you think could be a problem?"

"What do other people say about your behaviour? Why are other people worried about you? What makes you think that maybe you need to change your behaviour about personal adjustment? "

After that, the researcher summarizes the participants self-motivated statements. The summary enables the participants to hear their own self-motivated statements, following the participants' initial statement and the researcher's reflection about it.

3. Preparation. It is a decision stage in which decision should take and make the participants ready for a behavioural change. here the participants develop a strong determination and the researcher enhances the focus on individual attention about disparities related to social anxiety. honest discussion is taken place about changing options to reduce disparities and recover the emotional balance. The researcher does not try to prove or convince with some arguments but the researcher uses strategies to help participants to see the consequences of their behavior and begin to evaluate the positive aspects which felt when they engage in social avoidance.

The change process occurred in this stage is self-liberation, participants make a strong commitment to change. The researcher guides individuals to make plans for behavioural change, such as when to change or reduce the behaviour that is an indicator of social anxiety, Further, the participants begin to think about the strategies to resolved it. The researcher guides individuals, asking them to consider the effects of inability of their personal adjustments. For example, by asking, "How do personal adjustments affect your studies? How do your habits in social interaction affect your life in society?"

Also, the researcher explores the impact of inability of personal adjustment in participant's life and identifies concrete and emotional barriers to change. The participants begin to prepare physically and mentally to act to initiate change. The process of change that occurs at this stage includes consciousness-raising (learning new ideas for effective personal adjustments to support behavioural change), dramatic relief (which are negative feelings, such as fear or anxiety about the risk of social anxiety), Environmental re-evaluation (which is positive influence on the environment of the individual) and Self-re-evaluation (which is realizing that behavioural change is important as part of self-identity).

4. Action. Here Participants apply strategies to change problematic behaviour by changing their habits in adapting to the new environment. The researcher provides Change Plan Worksheets (CPW) in which participants can take notes for their plan. The Change Plan Worksheet (CPW) is used through motivational dialogue in which participants state their needs and what they can do. The researcher did not define plans for how individuals should change or teach specific skills to do so. The researcher simply asks questions like, "How do you think you could do that? What do you think would help?" Change Plan Worksheet (CPW) serves as a guide to ensure that the objectives cover aspects of the participants' plan.

This stage also involves several processes of behaviour change, which are contingency management, namely increasing appreciation for new, better behaviours and reducing appreciation for unhealthy behaviour related to social anxiety. Helping relationships, seeking and using social support for healthy behaviour change, in which the researcher tells them the importance of their significant to other. Counterconditioning, which is replacing irrational thinking and behaviour with alternative behaviours that support behavioural change. Stimulus control, namely removing reminders that can lead participants to engage in wrong behaviour and adding reminders that lead to better behaviour.

5. Maintenance. At this stage, the individual has to sustain the change. The researcher provides a broad summary of what has happened, such as repeated reasons for anxiety, new information obtained during the session, the roles of important people in life. It is the stage, where researcher and participants plan the follow-up for ongoing commitments. The participants compare the benefits they have obtained from effective personal adjustments, with a desire to return to the inability of personal adjustments. The behavioural change process at this stage is the same as the action stage. If the participants have had effective and consistent personal adjustments for more than six months, the participants are assumed to have been in the maintenance stage with reduced social anxiety.

Results

Data analysis was conducted through a paired sample t-test. To test the normality of the data, the Shapiro-wilk test was conducted through which it was found that the data are normally distributed with $p > 0.05$.

Table 1. Descriptives of Pretest and Post-test of Personal Adjustment

	N	Mean	SD	SE
Pre-Test	100	73.740	6.240	0.624
Post Test	100	78.480	4.869	0.487

Table 1 showed the descriptives of personal adjustments in which there are differences in the mean scores of the pretest and post-test. The mean score of pretest was 73.740, while the mean score of post-test was 78.480. In this case, there was an increase in test scores before and after MET which concluded that MET could enhance freshman students' personal adjustments.

The further inferential results of the pretest and post-test of personal adjustment are described as follows:

Table 2. Paired Samples T-Test of Personal Adjustment

Measure 1	Measure 2	t	Df	P	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Cohen's d
Pre-Test	- Post Test	-12.100	99	< .001	-4.740	0.392	-1.210

Note. Student's t-test.

Table 2 above showed the results of pretest and post-test of personal adjustment with values $t = -12.100$ and $p = < .001$ ($p < 0.05$), this can be interpreted that there is a significant difference related to the personal adjustment of freshman students before and after get motivational enhancement therapy with an average difference of -4.740. While Cohen's $d = -1.210$ states that the effect of motivational enhancement therapy has large effect on improving the freshmen's personal adjustment.

Table 3. Descriptives of Pretest and Post-test of Social Anxiety

	N	Mean	SD	SE
Pre-Test	100	57.450	4.518	0.452
Post Test	100	48.580	6.759	0.676

Based on Table 3, it can be concluded that there are differences in the mean scores of the pretest and post-test of social anxiety. The pretest mean score was 57.450, while the post-test mean score was 48.580. In this case, there was a decrease in test scores after MET is given. These descriptive findings lead to the conclusion that MET is effective in reducing social anxiety of freshman college students in Indonesia.

Table 4. Paired Samples T-Test of Social Anxiety

Measure 1	Measure 2	t	df	P	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Cohen's d
Pre-Test	- Post Test	13.193	99	< .001	8.870	0.672	1.319

Note. Student's t-test.

Based on Table 4 above, there are differences between social anxiety's pretest and post-test are $t = 13.193$ and $p = < .001$ ($p < 0.05$), this can be interpreted that there is a significant difference of social anxiety among freshman college students in Indonesia before and after MET with mean difference of 8.870. While Choen's $d = 1.319$ states that the effect of MET treatment has a large effect on reducing social anxiety in freshman college students in Indonesia.

Discussion

The results at each stage show that participants at the pre-contemplation stage tend to be aware of what they are feeling but cannot get out of uncomfortable feelings in a new environment. Environmental factors (Akram et al., 2020) influence problems related to personal adjustment to freshman students, but there are several other factors such as physical conditions, developmental factors, maturity, psychological factors, and cultural factors (Akram et al., 2022). Participants feel less pleasant in their social environment, are not physically attractive, and do not understand what their new environment wants (LaMorte, 2022). These factors bring inability to adaptation in individuals or groups, the adaptation process can increase compatibility between individuals and their environment (Spielberger, 2004).

Furthermore, at the contemplation stage, the researcher tries to present empathy and invites participants to imagine the reality that occurs and its relation to their behaviour. At this stage, participants begin to argue about the inaccuracy of their perceptions of reality; participants can also recognize the consequences of each

action so that they can direct the action to be carried out. Also, participants recognize an interest in dealing with other people. At the preparation stage, the participants stated a need or desire to change and has plans to be carried out. At this stage, the participants also communicating free choice; the researcher gives responsibility to the participants and the freedom to choose a plan according to the consequences they already know (Corey, 2013).

This result is in accordance with study conducted by Asale, Ayalew, and Kibret (2021) which revealed that when an individual accept their problem, thoughts, and feelings that cannot be controlled, then they have committed to living a life with the their values they can adapt with the new environment their faces. Study conducted by Huang et al., (2015) also confirmed that motivational enhancement therapy could increase psychological adjustment. Through contemplation, individuals know their self, values, and problems more deeply and this session becomes a life evaluation stage, then they make planning through preparation and action, also building commitment to change in maintenance stage.

At the action stage, participants who are initially unable to express emotions freely are seen to express feelings according to the needs of the adjustment process to the environment. Change Plan Worksheets (CPW) are used by dialogue sessions to motivate participants to systematically change their habits, which are written in a Change Plan Worksheet (CPW). Furthermore, in the Maintenance stage, participants are motivated to commit to continuous change. At this stage, participants' interpersonal relationships increase, and a positive self-image is present. Participants with good personal adjustment able to achieve the right level of familiarity in their interpersonal relationships (Miller et al., 1999). Besides that, a positive self-image is also very necessary to eliminate the reality of themselves so that participants recognize and realize their weaknesses and strengths, with that the participants able to achieve the full source of strength from himself (Haber & Runyon, 1984).

The results of this study proved that motivational enhancement therapy could increase personal adjustment with $t = -12.100$, $p < 0.001$. Although the results revealed that there is a significant result, the negative value of t interpreted that the mean sample of the results of this study were lower than the mean value of the population. It could be explained also by the results of Crane and Eckhardt (2013) study with a different sample which showed that men who are abusive and do violence to their partner. The study used motivational enhancement therapy with experimental design to reduce the violence behaviour. Although the motivational enhancement therapy is not directly associated with reduction of violence behaviour, the results showed that motivational enhancement therapy increased the participants' adjustment to their partner.

On the five stages in MET, the contemplation and preparation stages are the most critical stages because these two stages aim to help participants' focus on considering two fundamental problems. The first problem is how much trouble the ineffective personal adjustment creates for them; the second, how does the personal adjustment affects them (both positively and negatively). The balance of the pros and cons of personal adjustment to change is essential for the movement from contemplation to preparation. At the contemplation stage, participants assess the possibilities and benefits of problematic behaviour changes. Participants consider whether they will be able to make changes and how those changes will affect their lives. In the preparation stage, which can also be called the determination stage, the participants a strong determination and the researcher provides self-efficacy support. This is important because self-efficacy is a critical determinant of behaviour or change. Participants who are convinced that they have serious problems will still not move towards change unless there is hope for success (Miller et al., 1999). According to Bandura (1997) the participants who have self-efficacy include having a commitment to themselves, believing that they are able to face problems, focusing on tasks, and also thinking of strategies that must be used when experiencing failure or threats, and having confidence that participants able to deal with them.

The application of motivational enhancement therapy proven in reducing social anxiety of freshman college students with value of $t = 13.193$, $p < 0.001$. The positive value of t indicated that the mean value of the research sample was bigger than the mean value of the population. With a different sample, a study conducted by Stapinski et al., (2020) confirmed that motivational enhancement therapy could reduce social anxiety of the persons who experienced alcohol use disorders. After 6 months of follow-up the results revealed that the participants in the experimental group achieved greater improvements in decreasing social anxiety, confidence, and quality of life.

The results of this study also could be explained by the results of study conducted by Korte and Schmidt (2013). Motivational enhancement therapy proved in reducing social anxiety by the confidence to change which can be concluded that motivational enhancement therapy effect the cognitive change of the persons with social anxiety. In the session psychoeducation which the trainer give a psychoeducation about social anxiety, discussing how social anxiety impacts daily life may have altered social anxiety related cognitions, thereby resulting in a reduction in social anxiety.

Conclusion

This study has proven that motivational enhancement therapy could reduce social anxiety and increase personal adjustment of freshman students. Motivational enhancement therapy could be contribute to reducing social anxiety symptoms by addressing barriers to change and enhancing motivation for seeking help and making behavioural changes. Motivational enhancement therapy also can play a significant role in personal adjustment by helping individuals identify their motivations, set goals, and develop strategies for making positive changes in their lives.

This study has a limitation which used only an experimental group rather than used a control group also which could decreasing the internal validity of this study.

Author Contributions: Andi Thahir, S.Psi., M.A., Ed. D is the first author who designed the research, conducted the research and supervised the whole research. Siti Zahra Bulantika, M.Pd who conduct and manage the research intervention, and also collects the data. Citra Wahyuni, M.Si as the author who analyzes the data, manages the literature, and provides the latest findings that could support this research. Dr. Muhammad Kamran is the author who gives the insight about the latest researchs and relevant literature to maximize the research results.

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Data Availability: Data available within the article and any supplementary data are available on request from the authors

Ethical Disclosure: The researcher already gave the informed consent to the participant and the participant already gave an agreement before they fill the questionnaire.

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