The Significant Effects of Communication Activities in the Co-Curricular Towards Reducing Shyness Amongst Elementary School Children

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Abstract. Shy children tend to have verbal communication problems and low self-esteem. However, the confidence and communication skills of these children could not be developed solely through classroom instructions. Ironically, the co-curricular program provides a good medium for communication activities that can improve their confidence and communication skills. Therefore, this study examined children’s communication skills and communication activities during the co-curricular program at their school. The areas of study were the children’s level of shyness, the implementation and the effectiveness of communication activities in the co-curricular program. The quantitative study adopted a non-experimental descriptive research design. The respondents were 357 Grade Six students from elementary schools in Segamat, Johor which was selected from a random sampling. Results showed that most children were having a medium level of shyness and the communication activities were moderately implemented in the co-curricular program at their schools. Almost all respondents viewed communication activities in the co-curricular program as very effective to reduce shyness, enhance their self-esteem and communication skills. Hence, communication skills of shy children can be enhanced through appropriate communication activities conducted during the co-curricular program. Children should be encouraged and trained to speak in public by participating in the debate, public speaking and theatre activities during the co-curricular to reduce their shyness.

1. Introduction

Shyness is a universal problem happens to everyone’s life. In order to develop self-efficacy among children, issues like shyness and low self-esteem are major problems faced by them in their classrooms, especially if they were asked to express their personal opinions individually. They are silent when being asked, and would typically refuse to talk much in groups or class discussions. Even if they do speak out, their voices are not clear and they are unable to construct a complete set of sentence structures. At the same time, they would be demonstrating several signs of nervousness through their body gestures, for example, shaky hands, sweating and trembling and constant stuttering. Shyness is a personality trait that gives a negative self-evaluation towards the behaviour of an individual [1]. [2] defined shyness as the reaction during social interactions that cause individuals to
experience discomfort, overthinking about something, that makes them feel extremely ashamed of their own behaviours. Shy students could be described as having low self-esteem with an anxious feeling in social situations [3] Shy or inactive students demonstrate poor participation, quiet, lack of group skills, and lack of confidence [4].

Shy children tend to feel lonely [5, 6] as they have lower social acceptance together with shortcomings in physical appearance not active in the classroom [7, 8] and also outside the classroom [8]. [9] holds the view that shyness is a negative trait that lowers one’s self-esteem. [10] argued that the success of a classroom instruction largely depends on the activities of ‘talking’. In this case, shy children are typically found to face difficulties in delivering good talk, and having a negative feeling about themselves; the main reason for them to avoid talking [11]. This opinion is similar to the study of [12] on shy students’ participation in a seminar. The researcher found that the problem of shyness among the students was due to several reasons; (i) no idea to express their thinking and feelings, (ii) students feel nervous to speak up, and (iii) students are afraid if they accidentally utter something silly. This affects children’s academic achievements since oral communication is pivotal in the classroom learning [7]. Furthermore, shyness affects the cognitive, affective, and behaviour of a person [13].

2. Literature Review

Previous research discovered that 13% to 15% children are shy. [10] identified 13.3% children as extremely shy with low self-esteem. These findings are almost similar to one finding by [14] who revealed that 14.4% children are shy. [1] found a prevalence of lifetime shyness in 13.3% from their studied population. With regards to the attitude of shy children, [15] argued that they tend to have (i) verbal communication problems, (ii) take a longer time to offer verbal comments, and (iii) avoid joining a conversation [16]. Shy children speak less in conversation because they have poor language skills with a limited amount of vocabularies [17]. This is a worrying scenario because if the children do not utilise the opportunity in such social interaction, their language abilities are at risk and affect their academic learning as well as social competencies [18]. The researchers argued that shyness and poor communication skills lower the self-esteem of an individual. In this case, self-esteem could only be developed through one’s positive experience and enhanced by positive communication activities [11].

2.1. Shyness and communication skill

Communication skill is one of the employability skills in which students need to master during both of their school and university years [19]. However, previous studies found that most of the students today are shy and this affects their communication ability. Communication plays an important role towards achieving goals, and past studies found a close relationship between shyness and communication ability [20]. While most researchers proved that poor communication skills are the primary effect of children’s shyness, some of them also found that poor language skills and fear to communicate might result in students’ shyness [21]. Shy children prefer to just observe, rather than joining the activities in the classroom. When shy children are not active in the class, the learning process would become less effective and teachers face problems to achieve their teaching and learning objectives. Shy children often fail to answer questions, unable to share their thoughts and opinions, or simply ask questions to clarify things that they are not sure of.

However, the level of confidence and communication skills among these shy children could not only be developed through classroom instructions as there are certain negative factors influencing them to remain shy in the class [22]. If no action is taken to overcome this situation, they might not be performing well in their academic. Language, communication, and attention skills are perceived as the root of shyness in children whereby teachers able to observe shy behaviour in them through the way they interact in a formal classroom setting [17]. Lacking in communication skills causes negative self-perception and contributes to the shyness itself [23]. This means that shyness and communication skills are closely related, acting as a causal-effect factor. Because of this, shy children’s social and emotional development could be well developed through communication activities.
[24] stressed that the behavioural problem and skill deficiency of an individual need to be treated. This means that teachers need to eliminate shyness in children at the first place before enhancing their communication skill. In contrast, [25] argued that shyness can be treated through communication activities since the activities may enhance children’s self-esteem and in the same time improve their communication skill. This will then eliminate or at least decrease their level of shyness. Teachers are highly encouraged to integrate beneficial communication activities into a form of language tasks, especially for the purpose of teaching and learning of shy children [26]. Children should be supported through interactive educational activities, which could be further supported by a comprehensive set of co-curricular program, aimed at enhancing their self-esteem and socio-communicative skills [26, 27, 28]. This would gradually help children to progress further into a better state of self-reflection and self-acceptance. So, it is clear that shy children would have a low level of communication skill in which this problem can be treated through communication activities, especially during the co-curricular program.

2.2. Communication apprehension (CA)

Previous authors have reported that shyness is strongly related to communication apprehension [29] [30, 31, 32]. Communication apprehension (CA) is an experience of anxiety when individuals are communicating and have the feeling of fear in social situations [33]. McCroskey added that a high level of CA causes problems such as extreme anxiety and avoidance of direct communication whereby the negative thoughts could make a person feels restless, prevented him or her from speaking and tend to have low self-esteem [24]. Individuals with a high level of shyness will also have a higher level of CA. This makes them feel bad and nervous when communicating in front of others. Thus, shy children would also have the problem of communication apprehension that causes them to feel fear and nervous to communicate in front of others.

2.3. Communication activities

Besides developing a healthy relationship with other individuals that mainly help children to cope with their problem of shyness, the theories of emotion and self might also be created through the execution of educational language activities [26]. According to [34], shyness could be reduced through efforts taken to develop communication skills by having sufficient practices in educational language activities. Encouraging children to speak in certain situations helps them to be more open up in other situations. They would gradually realise and embrace the fact that there is nothing that they should be scared of [10]. Cooperative learning is a type of learning approach that encourages the spirit of togetherness or cooperation. This approach is essential in developing children’s communication and social skills to overcome the shyness related problem. Cooperative learning could be achieved through the involvement in clubs and societies at the school. Cooperative learning, along with collaborative learning and interactions are three common pillars of communication activities [35]. It is also used as the platform to provide mutual support, enhance students’ speaking abilities, improve their communication skills and foster students’ motivation [36]. Cooperative learning is more structured and more directive whereby children learn how to work together in groups. This way, it will be easier for the children to eliminate their shyness, especially when they are getting the chances to interact and communicate with group members.

There are several types of cooperative learning that are suitable to be integrated into the co-curricular program such as drama, theatre, choral speaking, discussion, debate, choir and public speaking or speech presentation. The cooperation and support from other members are important for speech presentation [37, 38]. This will create an encouraging ambiance that stimulates shy children to speak confidently. Besides speech, debate is typically used by facilitators to improve students’ verbal communication and critical thinking skills [39, 40], enhance teamwork skill and confidence level, and also adding their knowledge and overcoming their stage fright [40]. [41] recommended drama as an effective communication activity for shy students because it incorporates spontaneous verbal and non-verbal expressions which stimulate both cognitive and affective domains. Therefore, the drama could
maximize the process of speaking and thinking. Through drama, students’ motivation is able to be stimulated whereby it fosters self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-confidence. [42] examined the effectiveness of the Pyramid After-School Club in improving children’s socio-emotional health and self-esteem. Children’s confidence was developed through series of social and communication activities such as ice-breaking, morning circle, simulations, and cooperative games. Therefore, the activities might enhance children’s communication skills and self-esteem.

[43] argued that teachers play a vital role and responsibility to provide self-concept support, encouragement, and opportunities to develop shy children’s confidence and improve their communication skills. In response to this situation, [44] stressed that communication activities and skills could be conducted and acquired everywhere at any time, without necessarily being classroom-bounded. Co-curricular program is therefore a good alternative to help improve students’ language and communication skills. This program had proven to be successful in decreasing the level of negative emotions within children [45]. [11] in his study highlighted that the schools need to plan co-curricular activities, especially for shy and emotional students. This deems important to develop self-esteem. Interesting co-curricular activities might result in active children’s participation and contribute to a high level of motivation, which then increases their self-confidence and improve self-esteem. Co-curricular activities are believed as the program that can eliminate shyness amongst students, due to the reason that the activities carried out during the program include various types of communication activities that help the students bring down the level of their communication apprehension and shyness. Keeping in view with the damaging impact of shyness, the present study was undertaken to:

a) Identify the level of shyness among year six students.
b) Identify the implementation’s level of communication activities in the co-curricular program.
c) Identify the effectiveness of communication activities in the co-curricular program towards shy children.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample
Respondents in the present study were 357 Grade Six students (156 boys, 201 girls). The sampling procedure included a random selection from elementary schools in Segamat, Johor. Since there is no debate, public speaking, choir or theatre club for elementary schools, these participants were involved in the clubs that have the highest chances for the implementation of communication activities during the co-curricular program. Thus, participants were involved in English Club (107), Malay Language Club (116) and Culture Club (134) at their respective school.

3.2. Measures
A questionnaire consists of 34 items had been developed and approved by four experts in terms of construct validity and face validity. Students were asked to rate the questionnaire based on 5-point Likert Scale (very low = 1, very high = 5). The questionnaire is divided into three part items; the level of shyness (10 items), the implementation of communication activities in the co-curricular program (14 items), and the program’s effectiveness (10 items).

4. Results and Findings

4.1. Level of Children’s Shyness
Level of shyness: Results indicated that 27.03% children are having a high level of shyness. 48.65% children are having the medium level of shyness and only 24.32% children reported the low level of shyness. Overall, children have a moderate level of shyness (M = 3.49, SD = 0.76). “Shy during individual oral presentation” showed the highest mean score items, whereas “shy to get involved in group activities” is the lowest mean score result. Table 1 below shows the level of children’s shyness.
Table 1. The level of children’s shyness

| Level of Shyness                                      | Mean (SD)   |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| shy during individual oral presentation              | 3.89 (0.99) |
| shy to deliver ideas                                 | 3.59 (0.90) |
| speak in low voices                                  | 3.47 (0.89) |
| shy to answer when being asked                       | 3.46 (0.87) |
| shy to give a try                                    | 3.46 (0.90) |
| shy to go to the front                               | 3.46 (1.19) |
| shy to raise a hand                                  | 3.43 (0.93) |
| shy to ask a question                                | 3.41 (1.07) |
| passive during discussions due to shy                | 3.38 (1.01) |
| shy to get involved in group activities              | 3.35 (0.86) |
|                                                      | 3.49 (0.76) |

4.2. Implementation of communication activities in the co-curricular program at schools
The result from the current study indicated a medium overall mean score ($M = 3.50, SD = 0.67$) for the implementation of communication activities in the co-curricular program at schools. Overall, students reported that among the communication activities conducted, communicative games are the most implemented activities at the schools during a co-curricular program ($M = 4.24, SD = 0.72$), compared to speeches ($M = 2.92, SD = 0.95$) which showed the lowest score result. Table 2 shows the implementation of communication activities in the co-curricular program at the respective schools.

Table 2. Communication activities in the co-curricular program

| Communication activities                      | Mean (SD)   |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|
| communicative games                           | 4.24 (0.72) |
| singing                                       | 4.20 (0.66) |
| group activities                              | 4.06 (0.48) |
| discussions                                   | 3.90 (0.62) |
| on stage activities                           | 3.81 (0.62) |
| story telling                                 | 3.78 (0.83) |
| poems                                         | 3.50 (0.77) |
| debates                                       | 3.45 (0.42) |
| on stage competitions                         | 3.27 (0.73) |
| involved all students, including the quiet ones| 3.02 (0.40) |
| acting                                        | 2.97 (0.87) |
| simulation                                    | 2.95 (0.63) |
| presentation                                  | 2.93 (0.39) |
| speeches                                      | 2.92 (0.95) |
|                                               | 3.50 (0.67) |

4.3. The effectiveness of communication activities in the co-curricular program
The main goal of this analysis was to explore whether communication activities in the co-curricular program bring good impacts to reduce shyness in children. Majority of the respondents found that communication activities in the co-curricular program are very effective in reducing their level of shyness. “Raise a hand more frequently” item shows the highest mean score among all items, followed by “become braver to try”. Item “answer questions voluntarily” shows the lowest mean score result. Table 3 shows the effectiveness of communication activities in the co-curricular program.
5. Discussion

The result indicated that children experienced the highest level of shyness when they need to do oral presentation individually. This supports the theory from [24] who defined CA as having fear in a social situation, resisting individuals to orally communicate with others, especially in a classroom setting. This is due to the action of internalising certain unavoidable negative thoughts as well as the fear of making mistakes and being dishonoured. These have resulted to low self-esteem [46] holds the view that in any learning situation, the attitude of a student is related to the emotion that would determine his or her behaviour. Shyness at schools also demonstrates that children have a high level of neuroticism and low level of extraversion which cause them to become emotional, sad, inhibited, quiet, inactive, shy and refuse to participate in any discussions and classroom activities. Children were having the lowest level of shyness when they need to get involved in group activities. This is because they already knew their peers, so that they feel more comfortable, especially in a smaller group setting. This analysis supported by the study of [47] who found that students were having critical problems in a few situations such as when they need to deliver a speech or presentation and when they are in a large group, compared to a small group setting. Furthermore, students feel shy mostly when they are the focus of attention, whereby this is normally happens in a large group setting [47].

Next, findings from this research indicated that beneficial communication activities are not being widely implemented during the co-curricular program. According to [48], co-curricular activities are structured activities under adult supervision which focus on developing skills, have scheduled meetings, and have their own rules and expectations. In this case, each organisation or club and societies is shown to have its own specific activities and goals [48, 49] which do not include communication activities in specific. However, communicative games are found to be the most implemented activities in this study due to the activities do not take much time to be planned by the teachers. [50] argued that language activities are highly motivating and children naturally get their full satisfaction, pleasure, and excitement from communicative games. Communicative games are also meaningful, playful, fun, and able to increase children’s interest and curiosity [50]. Besides that, shy children would not feel scared of making mistakes through communicative games as well as willing to volunteer and eager to talk more [45].

Meanwhile, it has been previously agreed that co-curricular program brings good impacts for children development. Results from this study do not differ from the previous research. Communication activities in clubs and societies provide formal and informal opportunities for children to develop their interests and talents, practice new skills, and get a sense of personal recognition or groups which could ultimately increase their confidence level and enhance their self-esteem [49]. Children tend to be more motivated to learn and this results in the increase of self-efficacy and

Table 3: The effectiveness of communication activities in the co-curricular program

| Impact of communication activities in the co-curricular program | Mean (SD) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| raise a hand more frequently                                  | 4.22 (0.63) |
| become braver to try                                          | 4.16 (0.87) |
| become more active                                            | 3.95 (0.62) |
| become more confident                                         | 3.89 (0.57) |
| often ask questions                                           | 3.89 (0.77) |
| involved actively in group activities                         | 3.86 (0.48) |
| able to do the individual oral presentation                   | 3.86 (0.79) |
| easily mix with others                                        | 3.84 (0.60) |
| give more response to discussions                             | 3.81 (0.62) |
| answer questions voluntarily                                   | 3.78 (0.63) |
|                                                             | 3.93 (0.51) |
participation, causing children to be more active both in class (for academic purpose) and during co-curricular activities [51]. These would automatically able to overcome their shyness. Children in this study found that communication activities in the co-curricular are less effective in motivating them to answer questions voluntarily. This might be due to the reason that when answering questions, a student will be the focus of attention. When this happens, the student will be evaluated by the teachers and friends. This makes them become shy and afraid that they will give wrong, inaccurate or stupid answers [52, 53, 12].

6. Conclusion
The level of shyness in children is at a medium level and the communication activities are not widely implemented during the co-curricular at schools. However, children found that communication activities in the co-curricular program benefit them in terms of increasing their self-esteem and reducing their shyness. Teachers should encourage all children, including the quiet ones to talk in front of others by planning various communication activities during the co-curricular program such as speech, debate, and drama. Finally, this research is among the first to explore the role of communication activities in the co-curricular program for shy school children. It is hoped that the findings will help school administrators in planning the appropriate communication activities during the cocurricular program. Future studies should consider a more specific communication activity in the co-curricular program, for instance, debate club in order to further explore this issue.

7. Acknowledgement
This research work is supported by the Centre for Graduate Studies, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia.

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