

# Functional assessment training to improve psychology students' skills in assessing clients' experiential avoidance

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# BACKGROUND

- Experiential Avoidance (EA) is a functional class defined by the elimination of unpleasant experiences (Hayes et al, 2011), and is associated with development and maintenance (Chawla & Ostafin, 2007).
- 2. EA assessment requires *Functional assessment* from therapists to detect the functions of clients' behaviors (Törneke, 2021).
- 3. We investigated the effect of Functional Assessment Training on improving EA assessment skills.

# METHODS (Figure 1)

 Participants were 30 undergraduate students (7 male and 23 female) from the Department of Psychology at Doshisha University.



We conducted the control experiment with two groups. The experimental group 2. (17 participants) were trained on the ABC analysis of clients, using simulated counseling and verbatim records. Conversely, the control group (13 participants) was asked to freely imagine the scenes in the photographs of everyday scenery. Participants' skills were evaluated through psychotherapy videos-based tasks 3. (Assessment Task) and Questionnaires (FFMQ [Sugiura et al, 2012]; TSSQ [Yanagihara et al, 2015]). In the Assessment Task, participants were asked to describe as many specific examples as possible of avoidance targets (external: e.g., time, situations; internal: e.g., emotions, thoughts) and avoidance behaviors (Luoma et al., 2011) related to the clients in the simulated counseling videos. In addition, we asked participants to summarize the individual avoidance targets (stimulus class) and avoidance behaviors (response class). We conducted these effect measurements at pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up after one week.



# RESULTS

A two-way ANOVA was performed with time and group as factors (Table 1, 2).
There were no significant differences in the rate of correct answers for the summary of either avoidance targets or behaviors.

# DISCUSSION

- The results indicate that functional assessment training is effective as an assessment training instrument for experiential avoidance (especially, identifying avoidance behaviors).
- 2. However, functional assessment training needs to include more intensive training to detect the internal stimuli (emotion, thought, etc.).

# **Functional Assessment Training**

# improved the assessment skills for detecting Experiential Avoidance.

Table 1

ANOVA of assessment task correct answer rate

	Pre		Post		FU		Main effect		Latono ation	
	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control	group	time	- Interaction	- Multiple comparison test
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	$F (\eta_p^2)$	$F \\ (\eta_p^2)$	$F \\ (\eta_p^2)$	
Overall	.20	.23	.31	.21	.30	.23	1.14	2.30	3.79*	Experimental: Pre < Post*, Pre < FU**
	(.12)	(.15)	(.15)	(.15)	(.15)	(.16)	(.04)	(.08)	(.12)	Post: Control < Experimental <sup>†</sup>
External avoidance targets	.18	.24	.31	.19	.34	.24	.75	2.08	3.19*	Experimental: Pre < Post*, Pre < FU*
	(.14)	(.25)	(.22)	(.15)	(.25)	(.19)	(.03)	(.07)	(.10)	Post: Control < Experimental <sup>†</sup>
Internal avoidance targets	.27	.22	.33	.24	.33	.28	.76	.37	.06	
	(.28)	(.24)	(.34)	(.30)	(.38)	(.28)	(.03)	(.01)	(.00)	
Avoidance behaviors	.33	.33	.53	.33	.51	.33	2.48	$2.44^{\dagger}$	$2.44^{\dagger}$	Experimental: Pre < Post*, Pre < FU*
	(.26)	(.23)	(.27)	(.26)	(.27)	(.27)	(.08)	(.08)	(.08)	Post, FU: Control < Experimental <sup>†</sup>

 $\ddot{p} = .1, *p < .05, **p < .01$ 

Table 2ANOVA of questionnaires

### FU Main effect Pre Post Interaction Experimental Control Experimental Control Experimental Control group time Multiple comparison test FFMMMMMM(SD) $(\eta_p^2) \quad (\eta_p^2)$ (SD)(SD)(SD)(SD)(SD) $(\eta_p^2)$ TSSQ Active and flexible approach 35.12 30.15 34.47 29.00 35.82 7.13\* 1.04 29.85 .19 (3.37)(5.09)(8.12)(.20) (.01) (6.18)(4.31)(9.13) (.04) to the environment .56 Conceptualized self 27.88 28.62 28.15 29.41 26.23 3.30\* 29.18 .61 FU: Control < Experiment (4.27)(4.43)(.02) (.02) (.11) (4.31)(5.86)(4.35)(5.86)9.03\*\* 13.71 14.06 10.92 14.88 .67 Perspective taking 10.92 10.85 .51 (.24) (3.60)(3.90)(3.34)(3.64)(2.45)(3.93)(.02) (.02) 1.57 17.29 15.00 18.12 2.70 Awareness of this moment 17.47 15.69 14.46 .33 (5.29) (4.00)(3.86)(.09) (.05) (6.24)(.01) (3.36)(4.96)FFMQ 24.82 22.46 23.65 21.69 25.00 1.56 .33 Observing 21.92 1.09 (5.56)(5.80)(.05) (.01) (4.48)(5.55)(5.18)(8.10)(.04) 19.23 21.00 18.77 20.18 18.92 20.41 .97 .24 .66 Nonreactivity (4.58)(4.17)(5.20)(.03) (.02) (4.78)(3.59)(4.63)(.01) 23.77 24.38 23.29 24.35 23.65 25.08 .52 .07 .95 Nonjudging (.02) (6.47)(6.86) (7.58)(7.03)(.00) (.03) (5.97)(8.56) .96 Describing 22.65 21.15 23.12 20.08 21.88 19.69 1.96 .89 (5.00)(5.63)(6.57) (7.30)(7.29)(.03) (.07) (.03) (6.90)26.53 23.31 22.69 25.82 2.72 Acting with awareness 26.65 22.62 .30 .83 (7.81)(.09) (.03) (.01) (4.93)(5.05)(6.79)(4.43)(6.92)

## Table 3

Participants data and their subjective evaluation of the intervention

	Experimental	Contorl			
	(3 male; 14 female)	(4 male; 9 female)			
	M	M			
	(SD)	( <i>SD</i> )			
	18.82	19.15			
Age	(.71)	(1.03)			
Intervention	(Low) 1~5 (High)				
Difficulty	3.76	3.46			
Difficulty	(.44)	(.52)			
Subjective effectiveness on	4.76	4.23			
Assessment Task	(.44)	(.60)			
Subjective recommendation	4.59	4.62			
level	(.51)	(.51)			

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 $^{\dagger}p = .1, *p < .05, **p < .01$