

## **Cognitive Behavioral Group Therapy for University Students with Social Anxiety Disorder: The Development of a Culturally Valid Treatment**

**De Silva B G R<sup>1</sup>, de Zoysa P<sup>2</sup>, Williams S S<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Department of Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Health Sciences,  
Open University of Sri Lanka

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychological Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo

<sup>3</sup>Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya  
bgsil@ou.ac.lk

University students in Sri Lanka seem to display high prevalence rates for Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) according to preliminary studies. Yet, only few specific psychological services are available and accessible to this population. The development of a culturally valid group therapy for SAD in university students would address this dearth in mental health services.

The gold standard Cognitive Behavioral Group Therapy (CBGT) for SAD and other psychological interventions that had been modified to suit the university student sample were reviewed. An intervention plan was created considering cross-cultural therapy adaptation methods. The intervention program was then subjected to a three-step protocol; The therapy series was assessed for content by a panel of clinical psychologists. The layout and activity sheets were translated to Sinhala and English for accuracy, and re-evaluated by a panel of mental health experts for consensus.

A twelve-session plan with activities were put forward to the panel for review. The CBGT series was reduced to eight sessions and the activities were modified to suit the Sri Lankan university student population. Language inaccuracies were identified at the translation stage and rectified. Changes were made to the therapy plan and to the worksheets until consensus were reached by the panel of experts. The result was piloted with the study sample, and changes made to structure and content where considered necessary.

A culturally valid series of cognitive behavioral group therapy sessions were developed for social anxiety disorder among university students.

**Key words:** *Cognitive behavioral group therapy, Social anxiety disorder, Psychological Intervention, Cross cultural adaptation, Anxiety disorder*