

Effectiveness of Badal Sircar's Third Theatre Workshop Method in Improving Intrinsic Motivation and Reducing Communication Barriers: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract:

This paper analyzes the effectiveness of Badal Sircar's Third Theatre workshop method in improving the internal motivation and overcoming communication barriers among the participants of the workshops surveyed for this study. I have used here the feedback of postgraduate students of two organizations – Rishi Bankim Chandra College, and West Bengal State University situated at North 24 Parganas, West Bengal. Third Theatre and its workshop model have a lot of impact on social and political conscience of human life. There has been very little empirical work on its pedagogic potential that is beneficial in the teaching-learning process. It has a broader influence in understanding human values of cooperation building of a society. This study analyzes the impact of a Third Theatre workshop method that was conducted with eighty-three postgraduate students of these institutes. This workshop is being conducted by the Satabdi Third Theatre group for the last seventeen years in these institutes, following the core principle 'No Shame No Blame; No Competition, Only Cooperation'. I have conducted an empirical study to collect and study the data regarding the before and after impact of the workshop.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired-sample z-tests to examine differences between pre-workshop and post-workshop responses. After the workshop, all measured variables showed improvement that was statistically significant. The results suggest that the Third Theatre workshop method can reduce psychological communication barriers as well as has the potentiality to improve intrinsic motivation among the participants. This study has been done with the help of critical concepts of technical communication barriers, intrinsic motivation, and the theory of Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner.

This paper provides an empirical evidence for the educational use of the Third Theatre workshop, and also suggests that there can be relevance for language teaching and communication skills through an interdisciplinary curriculum approach.

Keywords: Third Theatre, Intrinsic Motivation, Communication Barriers, Embodied Pedagogy, Experiential Learning, Badal Sircar

Introduction:

The ability to participate, express, respond, and relate is integral to human development making wider participation in different sectors very important worldwide. Still, many people do not participate because of low confidence, discomfort with groups, lack of body awareness, difficulty with feelings, and unwillingness to remain emotionally open with others, as it has been found in many contexts, including learning contexts that one is often expected to perform, respond, or even interact in a pre-structured system of judgement and evaluation. These elements in the environment can actually lead to a sense of fear and inhibition that force people to withdraw from participating even when they are physically present. Theatre-based workshop processes have been used by many communication teachers in this context as an alternative mode of human development because these methods can engage the participants through body, movement, rhythm, and interaction in collective and cooperative presence beyond just verbal instruction.

Badal Sircar was one of the leading twentieth century dramatists who contributed significantly to the modern Indian theatre. Sircar's intention was to provoke the audience to think and confront the harsh truths of life

through the different realms of third theatre ([Mukherjee, 2021](#)). The Third Theatre rejects the inflexibility of commercial proscenium theatre, and it highlights the importance of face-to-face interaction, real life experiences, active participation, and introduces a participatory workshop, which is an example of a non-hierarchical framework. One of the key strengths of the Third Theatre workshop process is that it can give rise to a great reduction of fear and shyness without putting the individual under any pressure to perform, as the activities in Third Theatre workshops frequently include games, movement, rhythm, trust, and improvised interactions to create conditions where the participants slowly become aware of themselves and of others. According to Badal Sircar, spontaneous teamwork, community feeling, cooperation are the basis of Third Theatre workshops, and these are also necessary values one must develop as a human being ([Bandyopadhyay, 2017](#)). The workshop does not require quality acting skills or a desired finished product but it encourages participants to enter a space where bodies and minds of the participants unite and respond to each other. Despite Third Theatre's popularity in theatre studies for its political and socio-cultural impact, an empirical study on its effectiveness as a workshop-based transformative process has not been explored yet. In this study, I have analyzed the answers of participants before and after the workshop, along with their demonstration at the end of the workshop to find whether the workshop made a difference in their overall development.

Badal Sircar wanted the Satabdi group to be the heart of a workshop that would endeavor to develop the theatre of synthesis he was thinking about ([Debnath, 2023](#)). The workshop consists of many games that eliminate social hierarchies and inspire empathy among the participants. Through these games, the participants start unmasking themselves by reaching towards a state of conscience where mind and body meet each other ([Sarkar et al., 2003](#)). Priti Dutta, a veteran theatre worker of Satabdi Third Theatre group, said, "Third Theatre workshops train the performers to use their mind and body in front of the audience. The workshop actually deducts the psychological barriers like peeling off an onion to get the essence. Joygopal Chakraborty, a veteran member of Pathasena Third Theatre Group, observed "Internal workshop was the only space where he felt 'free from performance anxiety'. Badal Sircar always said there is nothing to do with the theatre. It is all about the preparation. We have to be good human being. Third Theatre workshop helps to believe on one's own self as well as others' self through internal and external games". According to Manas Das, a senior theatre worker from *Ayna Natogosthi*, "The very first statement of Badal da was 'No shame, No blame', and it changed my thought. Theatre is actually for developing confidence levels. The trust games allow someone to rely on each other. The circle in the workshop helps everyone to become equal."

Literature Review:

Badal Sircar's theatre workshop can truly lead to long-term change through empowerment of self-esteem, cooperation, and self-expression abilities ([Katyal et al., 2015](#)). Manujendra Kundu highlights Sircar's workshop process as a technique-oriented, psycho-physical journey that employed games like "mirroring" to develop a communal environment of trust. Sircar used these games as a way to dismantle the "urban sophistication" of his performers. Trowsdale also mentions a few games of the workshop. They are 'Circle Making', 'Mirroring', 'Forming Shapes and Letters', 'Human Sculptures', 'Creating Frozen Images', 'Slow Motion', 'Developing Rhythm', and 'Play-Making' ([Trowsdale, 1997](#)).

Sandip Debnath in his 'Internal Workshop: The Third Theatre Methodology of Embodying Hunger', focuses on the Internal Workshop, a pedagogical method where participants use physical games and storytelling to embody hunger and social suffering rather than simply imitating them. He attended three separate Third Theatre workshops in West Bengal as a participant from 2016 to 2018 ([Debnath, 2023](#)). The first workshop he attended took place from 25 to 31 December 2016 in Halishahar and was conducted by Lopa Sircar and Dulal Kar. His second experience was at a workshop in Santiniketan held between 18 and 23 July 2018, which was facilitated by Debashis Chakraborty and Debashis Mondal. Finally, he participated in a workshop in Kalyani from 26 to 29 July 2018 that was led by Sumit Biswas. According to Debnath, the most important games are 'Passing the Energy', 'Mirroring', 'Space Covering', 'Embodying the Narrative', and so on.

Research Gap and Research Questions:

The previous works show qualitative documentation of the effects of Third Theatre workshops, and these give a very limited empirical research that can measure the impact of the workshop in educational institutes. Most of these workshops are historical (1992 at Warwick) or from a specific time in the past (2016–2018 in West Bengal). There is a lack of contemporary data that examines the impact of Satabdi's workshops in the current scenario of 2026. The present paper provides quantitative empirical data that has been shared after a thorough analysis of structured questionnaire to track the developmental changes experienced by participants following their participation in Third Theatre workshops. The research question is:

1. To what extent does Third Theatre workshop method reduce communication barriers and improve intrinsic motivation among English postgraduate students of Rishi Bankim Chandra College and West Bengal State University?

Theoretical Framework:

This study relies on three important theoretical studies: technical communication barriers, intrinsic motivation, and the theory of Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner. The concepts collectively clarify how Third Theatre workshop method may improve motivation and assist learners in overcoming the challenges.

1. Barriers to Communication:

The word 'communication' has come from the Latin word 'communicare', meaning sharing information. It is a dynamic interactive process that involves the effective transmission of facts, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and values (Rizvi, 2009). In today's fast-paced, interconnected world, effective communication is more vital than ever before (Pramanik, 2025). But in many cases, it has been found that there is a difference between what is being shared by the sender and what is being understood by the receiver of the message. Even Technical Communication is a central factor in the emerging knowledge society, where technocrats and professionals from different areas face new communication challenges (Patel, 2013). Several types of barriers prevent us from transmitting our ideas meaningfully (Sharma. R C et al., 2017). There are many types of communication barriers i.e. linguistic barrier, physical barrier, cultural barrier, psychological barrier, and so on. The most important barrier tends to be psychological than linguistic. A common problem faced by learners is the fear of making errors, hesitation, low confidence, and anxiety at the time of giving a presentation in front of the audience.

2. Internal Motivation:

A performance is not just a reflection of knowledge but a result of how that knowledge is applied, which is often influenced by the individual's state of mind (Hymes, 1972). Motivation can either be internal or external. External motivation is defined as the reason to act in a way that comes from outside the self. Intrinsic motivation reflects the motivation of an individual to do something for the sake of doing it rather than for an external reward. Participants who are intrinsically motivated will willingly participate and show engagement regardless of any external rewards, such as grades, as it is driven by the innate psychological needs for competence and self-determination (Deci et al., 2001). In many traditional classrooms, external motivation decides learning. Students study so they can pass or secure high grades. Such results often create low engagement and feeling of failure. Cognitive abilities should not be separated from affective elements like motivation, for several specific non-cognitive capacities that function as types of competency include Courage and Gameness, Gallantry and Composure, Dignity and Stage Confidence, and Presence of Mind (Hymes, 1972).

2. Multiple Intelligences:

There are many kinds of minds, labeled as multiple forms of intelligence (ALTAN, 2002). According to Gardner, 'an intelligence is a bio-psychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture (Gardner, 1983). The original seven intelligences proposed by Gardner are Linguistic Intelligence, Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, Musical Intelligence, Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, Spatial Intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence, and Intrapersonal Intelligence (Gardner, 1983). In his later work, Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st

century, he proposed another three types of intelligence. They are Naturalist Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence, Existential Intelligence, and also predicted that Moral Intelligence is going to be the most valued intelligence for the 21st century because it is the combination of intelligence and morality that can work together to create a better world (Gardner, 1983). In terms of this perspective of learning, activity that engages more than one faculty of intelligence is more meaningful and effective than any other which focuses predominantly on linguistic or logical capacities

The present study identifies that these theoretical foundations lead to the identification of ten capacities that are believed to affect communicative competence and intrinsic motivation of the participants: (i) sense of self-confidence, (ii) comfort in group participation, (iii) awareness of body and movement, (iv) ability to express emotions, (v) control over anxiety and hesitation, (vi) sense of inner freedom, (vii) emotional openness, (viii) spontaneous response, (ix) trust in group members, and (x) sensitivity towards others. These variables are related to cognitive, emotional, physical and interpersonal aspects that are crucial to the success of collaborative learning environments.

Method of Study:

The present study is designed as quantitative descriptive research, and a retrospective pre and post survey approach has been used to investigate the effectiveness of Badal Sircar's Third Theatre workshop on the reduction of the communication barriers and enhancement of the intrinsic motivation among the post-graduate students. Eighty three students from Rishi Bankim Chandra College (twenty six students) and West Bengal State University (fifty seven students) took part in the study. The data was collected by a structured questionnaire on the last day of the workshop, and participants filled the questionnaire on the final day of the workshop. The questionnaire consisted of close ended questions that allowed the participants to share their responses on predefined areas. To examine whether participation in the Third Theatre workshop resulted in significant improvements in the measured dimensions, the following hypotheses were tested using paired-sample z-tests:

Null Hypothesis (H_0): $\mu_{\text{before}} = \mu_{\text{after}}$

There is no significant difference between participants' pre-workshop and post-workshop mean scores.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): $\mu_{\text{before}} < \mu_{\text{after}}$

Participants' post-workshop mean scores are significantly higher than their pre-workshop mean scores.

Case Study 1:

Name of College: Rishi Bankim Chandra College, Naihati, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal

Date: 11.02.2026 to 14.02.2026

No of Participants: 26 Students

Class: Post Graduate in English

Age Group – 22-23 Years of Age

Workshop Conducted by: Mr. Sourav Adhikary and Mr. Sombit Mukherjee, members of Satabdi Third Theatre Group, and Dr. Shubh Brat Sarkar, Professor of English, Rishi Bankim Chandra College



Figure 1: Workshop Demonstration

The group of participants attended the Third Theatre workshop with their academic knowledge of English literature with no prior experience of attending this type of theatre workshops. As no observer is allowed in the Third Theatre workshop, feedback through a questionnaire was taken on the final day, just before their demonstration in front of the audience. The questionnaire was structured based on psycho-analysis pattern. It includes questions on level of self-confidence, comfort in group participation, awareness of one's own body and movement, ability to express emotions (affective domain), emotional openness, control over anxiety or hesitation in performance situations, sense of inner freedom, ability to respond spontaneously, and so on. All participants gave their feedback by their perceptions before and after attending the workshop. Regarding the workshop at Rishi Bankim Chandra College, Ms. Tamalika Das, SACT 1, said, "This is one of the many unique components of any curriculum in any Indian University or college, and this was the 17th Third Theatre workshop with Satabdi Third Theatre group at Rishi Bankim Chandra College. The workshop was designed entirely by Badal Sircar. This workshop was not only a means of teaching how to create the theatre but also about the philosophy of life which reflects upon the conditioning of any human being in the social framework of the changing society. This workshop is incorporated in the syllabus as an important component of 'Understanding Drama beyond the Classroom'. The participants learn many things which they try to incorporate in their daily lives". Dr. Shubh Brat Sarkar, Professor of English, Rishi Bankim Chandra College, said, "This year we are celebrating the centenary year of Badal Sircar. This workshop helps someone to become a good human being by understanding self and others, and it also helps the participants to identify their hidden talents. The workshop has been continuing for the last seventeen years with virtual workshop in the Covid year. The inaugural Third Theatre workshop at our college was conducted by Sumit Biswas and Kalyan Ghosh, both esteemed members of Satabdi Third Theatre group. Though they are not with us, their legacy is being continued by present members of Satabdi Theatre group. Prof. (Dr.) Jayati Gupta and Prof. (Dr.) Sipra Mukherjee of the West Bengal State University were there in the Board of Studies of Rishi Bankim Chandra College, and they contributed significantly to include the workshop in the curriculum."



Figure 2: Workshop Demonstration

Case Study 2:

Name of University: West Bengal State University, Barasat, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal

Date: 08.04.2026 to 11.04.2026

No of Participants: 57 Students (Three participants were from Sarada Ma Girls' College, Barasat)

Class: Post Graduate in English

Age Group – 22-23 Years of Age

Workshop Conducted by: Mr. Sourav Adhikary and Mr. Sombit Mukherjee, members of Satabdi Third Theatre Group



Figure 3: Participants at WBSU campus

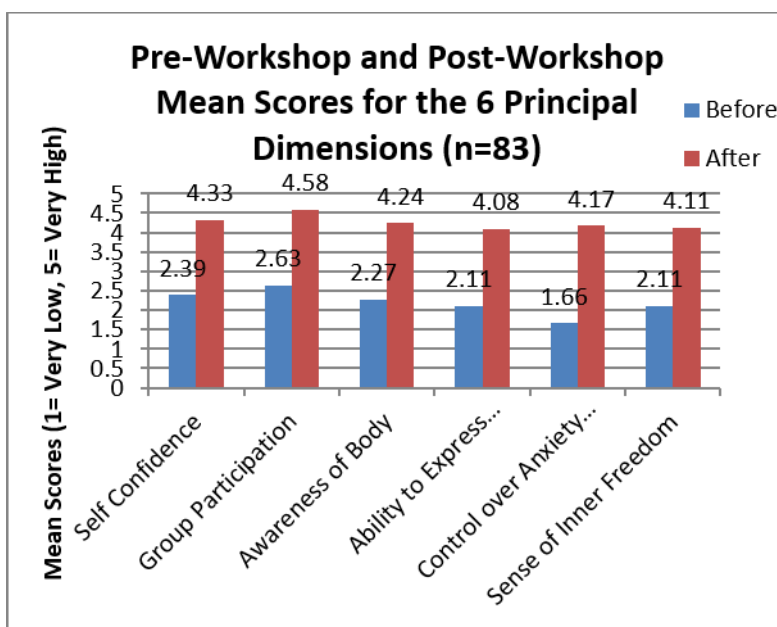


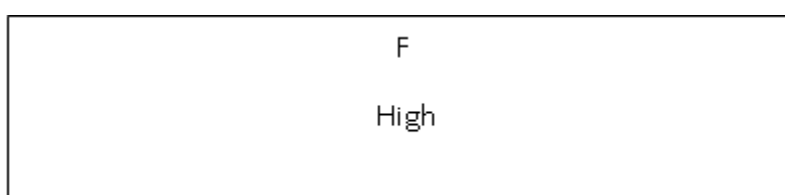
Figure 4: Pre-Workshop and Pos-Workshop Mean Scores for Six Principal Dimensions

Score: 1=Very Low, 2= Low, 3= Moderate, 4= High, 5= Very

Fifty seven students of PG English of the university attended a similar type of workshop conducted by the Satabdi Third Theatre group. They also shared their feedback through a questionnaire. Prof. (Dr.) Sipra Mukherjee of West Bengal State University said, “We began the workshop in 2009 which is also the year when

we began the Department of English at West Bengal State University. Hearing about the workshop, our then head of the department, Prof. Jayati Gupta suggested that we could include this in our syllabus. The reason why that suggestion was enthusiastically accepted was that, as we move into modern pedagogy, we realized that simple book learning and the kind of one-sided lectures we take in the classroom are not sufficient to bring about the holistic education that we aspire to. Therefore, this kind of participatory workshop, which encourages experience in learning in students, was felt to be very necessary. It has been a part of Masters in English syllabus since 2009. It has always been a resounding success, not just with the students but also with the teachers because we see the kind of difference in the students with their increased level of confidence and participatory skills. We will be keeping this workshop in future also.”

In both workshops, the most liked games by the participants are Mirroring, Trust Game, Sculpture Making, Sound Rhythm Movement, Point Game, and Improvisation In and Out. All the participants were informed about the purpose of this present study. Participants’ names have been kept confidential.



Data Analysis:

The questionnaire was developed following psychometric principles. The responses of two workshops were merged and worked out to study the level of change resulting from the participation in the Third Theatre workshop. The feedbacks were measured on a 5 point Likert scale from Very Low (1) to Very High (5). The six areas evaluated were: sense of self-confidence, comfort in group participation, awareness of body and movement, ability to express feelings, control over anxiety and hesitation, and sense of inner freedom. Responses were scored numerically to have descriptive statistical analysis, paired-sample z-tests and Cohen's d effect size analysis. The distribution of participants' responses before and after the Third Theatre workshop is shown in Figure 4. Overall in all six dimensions a significant move has been seen from the lower response categories (Very Low, Low, and Moderate) to the higher response categories (High, Very High). At the very basic level, these visual scenes show signs of increased confidence, active engagement, body awareness, emotional expression, anxiety management and a feeling of freedom by participants after the workshop. In addition, these visual trends are supported by paired-sample z-tests and effect sizes as shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Variable	Mean Before (SD)	Mean After (SD)	Mean Difference $(\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x_i}{n})$	Standard Deviation $(\sigma = \sqrt{\frac{(x_i - \bar{x})^2}{n}})$	Standard Error of Difference $(SE = \frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{n}})$	Z $(z = \frac{\bar{x}}{SE})$	p-value
Sense of Self-confidence	2.39 (0.96)	4.33 (0.63)	+1.94	0.93	0.10	19.03	< .001
Comfort in Group Participation	2.63 (1.28)	4.58 (0.57)	+1.95	1.09	0.12	16.28	< .001

Awareness of Body and Movement	2.27 (1.07)	4.24 (0.64)	+1.98	0.87	0.09	20.71	< .001
Ability to Express Emotions	2.11 (1.19)	4.08 (0.61)	+1.98	1.08	0.19	16.64	< .001
Control over Anxiety and Hesitation	1.66 (1.27)	4.17 (0.82)	+2.50	1.28	0.14	17.81	< .001
Sense of Inner Freedom	2.11 (0.98)	4.11 (0.75)	+2.00	1.27	0.14	14.36	< .001

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Paired-Sample z-Test Results (n = 83)

Mean scores were calculated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High). All comparisons were statistically significant at $p < .001$.

Variable	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Sense of Self-confidence	2.09	Very Large
Comfort in Group Participation	1.79	Very Large
Awareness of Body and Movement	2.27	Very Large
Ability to Express Emotions	1.83	Very Large
Control over Anxiety and Hesitation	1.95	Very Large
Sense of Inner Freedom	1.58	Very Large

Table 2 Effect Sizes (Cohen's d)

Paired-sample z-tests were used to test for statistical significance of these changes. The data are shown in Table 1. Participants reported significantly higher levels of self-confidence after the workshop $M = 4.33$ ($SD = 0.63$) than before the workshop $M = 2.39$ ($SD = 0.96$), $z = 19.03$, $p < .001$. Comfort in group participation increased from $M = 2.63$ ($SD = 1.28$) to $M = 4.58$ ($SD = 0.57$), $z = 16.28$, $p < .001$. Awareness of body and movement improved from $M = 2.27$ ($SD = 1.07$) to $M = 4.24$ ($SD = 0.64$), $z = 20.71$, $p < .001$. Similarly, the ability to express emotions increased from $M = 2.11$ ($SD = 1.19$) to $M = 4.08$ ($SD = 0.61$), $z = 16.64$, $p < .001$. Participants also showed a lot more of control over anxiety and hesitation following the workshop. The mean score increased from $M = 1.66$ ($SD = 1.27$) before the workshop to $M = 4.17$ ($SD = 0.82$) after the workshop $z = 17.81$, $p < .001$. Likewise, sense of inner

freedom improved from $M = 2.11$ ($SD = 0.98$) to $M = 4.11$ ($SD = 0.75$), $z = 14.36$, $p < .001$. These results suggest that there were significant gains in the psychological and communicative aspects studied associated with participation in the Third Theatre workshop.

These changes were then further explored using a Cohen's d effect size analysis. In the case of paired sample comparisons, Cohen's d (d_z) was obtained by dividing the mean difference by the standard deviation of the difference scores. The effect sizes for all six variables were very large. Most significant was the awareness of body and movement ($d = 2.27$), self-confidence ($d = 2.09$), Control over anxiety and hesitation ($d = 1.95$), ability to express emotions ($d = 1.83$), comfort in group participation ($d = 1.79$), and sense of inner freedom ($d = 1.58$). The effect sizes obtained with the participation of the workshop are larger than 0.80 according to Cohen's guidelines, which means that the observed values show very strong positive correlations between participation in the workshop and psychological and communicative development of the participants.

Participants reported large improvements on several related variables that belong to the overall experience of the Third Theatre workshop. Emotional openness improved from $M = 2.36$ ($SD = 1.11$) to $M = 4.10$ ($SD = 0.82$), $z = 15.07$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.65$, while spontaneous response increased from $M = 2.49$ ($SD = 1.09$) to $M = 4.19$ ($SD = 0.77$), $z = 16.35$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.79$. There were also notable improvements in collaborative and interpersonal aspects. Trust in group members improved from $M = 1.38$ ($SD = 1.16$) to $M = 4.42$ ($SD = 0.63$), $z = 22.97$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.52$. Sensitivity towards others increased from $M = 2.17$ ($SD = 0.88$) to $M = 3.99$ ($SD = 0.87$), $z = 16.55$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.82$. These results indicate that the workshop not only gave confidence and emotional expression to the participants, but also improved the cooperation, interpersonal trust, collective learning and the role of Third Theatre workshop method as a tool of self-exploration and human development.

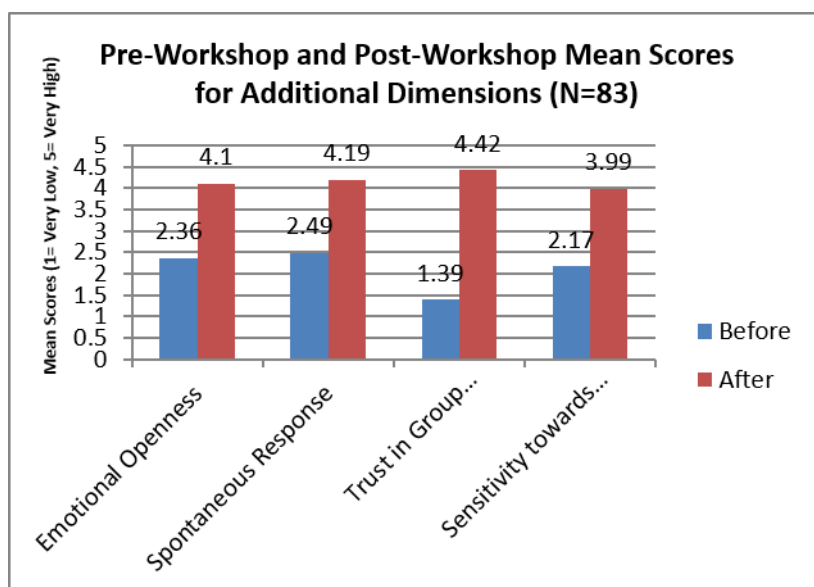


Figure5: Pre-Workshop and Post-Workshop Mean Scores for Additional Variables

Score: 1=Very Low, 2= Low, 3= Moderate, 4= High, 5= Very High

Conclusion:

The present study has examined the power of the Third Theatre workshop in developing capacities that are associated with multiple intelligences of the participants with increased level of self-confidence, group participation, awareness of body and movement, ability to express effectively, control over anxiety and hesitation, and sense of inner freedom. This has also helped the participants to reduce the communication barriers and improve their intrinsic motivation. It provides an anxiety free and non-judgmental atmosphere

where the participants start exploring themselves, like peeling off an onion to get the essence. The findings support the pedagogic value of Third Theatre workshops as an instrumental to value based humanitarian development. Null Hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and Alternative Hypothesis (H_1) is established.

The Third Theatre workshop cancels rote learning by stressing on cognitive development so that the participants improve their problem solving capabilities to have strong situational responses. The findings of the present study also suggest the integration of this type of workshop in language teaching so that the learners get an anxiety free and task based lesson to develop their linguistic competence.

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