



Public Speaking Anxiety among College Students at St. Paul University Surigao

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ABSTRACT: Public speaking is the act of making speeches in public or the art of effective oral communication with an audience. Fear of public speaking is common among students and the general population. The National Institute of Mental Health Report stated that public speaking anxiety is considered a social anxiety disorder (Brewer, 2001). This research aimed to find out the public speaking anxiety among college students of St. Paul University Surigao. It sought to answer the participants' anxiety levels as Trait Anxiety, Context Anxiety, Audience Anxiety, and Situation Anxiety. The data were tested for the significant difference when grouped according to their profile. The researchers utilized the quantitative descriptive survey design using a researcher-made questionnaire that was subjected for validity and reliability checking and was administered to 81 education students. The findings revealed that students experienced very high Audience Anxiety while only high Trait, Context and Situation Anxieties. Furthermore, the findings found no significant difference in the participants' level of anxiety when grouped according to profile. This means that anxiety level remains the same regardless of age, sex, and year level. Hence, it is recommended that public speaking should be offered as a subject to all degree programs at the tertiary level especially for teacher education programs. Also, the school administrators should encourage more public speaking activities in and out of the school where students would participate in such public speaking events to hone skills, thus, minimizing public speaking anxieties.

KEYWORDS: Audience Anxiety, Context Anxiety, Public Speaking Anxiety, Trait Anxiety, Situation Anxiety, St Paul University Surigao, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Public speaking as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary is the activity of speaking on a subject to a group of people. It is considered an essential tool in the various fields of endeavor that will be carried on in our inexorable march toward a better life (Gupit, 2011). Gregory (2005) stressed that college students found public speaking the most valuable knowledge in college. Students cited important reasons such as: 1-learning how to speak to a public audience; 2-learning skills that apply to one-on-one communication; 3-developing efficient oral communication needed in the job market; 4-learning experience gained; 5-developing self-confidence, and 6-improving self-esteem among students.

Many people are terrified of public speaking. Sellnow and Verderber (2011) described the open speech as a formal facilitated introduction between a speaker and a community of onlookers, which is one of the communication modes of humans; therefore, learning to be an excellent open speaker would also help to become more convincing in other communication environments and a step for certainty, speaking fashion, pitch, and style. Because most people are not born public speakers, they need to be trained to improve their speaking skills.

Raja (2017) in her study on "Anxiety Level in Students of Public Speaking: Causes and Remedies" revealed that lack of confidence was the most common reason among many students experiencing fright of public speaking rationalizing that meek nature and feeling distressed and uncomfortable while speaking in front of others.

Most research studies showed that students and even professionals experienced public speaking anxiety, however, this can be treated and improved by proper training. Teachers in the school play a very essential role in providing support, especially in the building up of self-trust, and self-confidence, enhancing self-esteem, and the feeling of competence. These are the essential components in defining self-concept during the training process to help them overcome public speaking anxiety. Akin and Kunzman.



(1974) formulated a program designed to behaviorally reduce symptoms of public speaking anxiety in university student subjects. The results of the program evaluation showed that a "mixed behavioral format emphasizing practice situations produces results similar to traditional operant or desensitization formats, with less attrition in attendance. Statistically significant changes in fear inventory scores are the measurable objective outcome of the program." Abdeldaiem, et. al (2020) in their anonymous cross-sectional survey of 400 students from different Egyptian faculties revealed that a significant percentage of students (78.8%) reported suffering from public speaking anxiety and about 26% admitted having experienced extreme fear (public speaking phobia). Public speaking anxiety was high among female students but much higher than that among males. A large percentage (70%) of students recognized that speaking skills are a very necessary requirement for study and work life. The study findings confirm the high prevalence of public speaking anxiety among Egyptian student participants that has been the basis of proposing some approaches to overcome public speaking anxiety such as training, good preparation, and practicing.

Citing the above patterns of research findings revealing the common experience of public speaking anxiety among students that eventually would impact their respective lives in the practice of their future careers, the researchers prompted to conduct this present study to determine the level of public speaking anxiety among college students in the university, mindful of the students' fear and distress in public speaking if there maybe. Hence, this study, the end view of proposing recommendations for approaches to improve students' public speaking skills.

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

The objective of this study is to find out the level of public speaking anxiety among college students of St. Paul University Surigao. It sought to answer the following specific questions:

1. What is the profile of the participants in terms of:
 - 1.1. age,
 - 1.2. sex; and
 - 1.3. year level?
2. What is the level of public speaking anxiety among college students of St. Paul University Surigao as to the following types:
 - 2.1. trait anxiety;
 - 2.2. context anxiety;
 - 2.3. audience anxiety; and
 - 2.4. situation anxiety?
3. Is there a significant degree of difference in the participant's level of public speaking anxiety when grouped according to profile?
4. Based on the findings of the study, what recommendations may be proposed?

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized the quantitative descriptive survey method using a researcher-made questionnaire to find out the level of public speaking anxiety among college students at St. Paul University Surigao as to Trait Anxiety, Context Anxiety, Audience Anxiety, and Situation Anxiety. The questionnaire was pilot tested and was subjected to validity testing. The paper was further reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee of the University Research Center.

The researchers used the purposive random sampling technique in the gathering of the data. Only the student participants from the College of Education of St. Paul University Surigao was considered. There were eighty-one (81) college of education students who were distributed as follows: First year 14(17.28%), Second year 8 (9.87%), Third Year 49 (60.5%). Informed consent was sought from the prospected participants to manifest their willingness to participate in the study.

The level of anxiety is measured using the 4-point Likert scale shown below

The parameters:

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation	Qualitative Description
4	3.25-4.00	Strongly Agree (SA)	Very High (VH)
3	2.50-3.24	Agree (A)	High (H)



2	1.75-2.49	Disagree (D)	Low (L)
1	1.00-1.74	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Very Low (VL)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data presented in table 1 below showed that audience anxiety was rated the highest. Respondents, in this type of anxiety, manifested fear that the audience might judge if they commit mistakes when delivering a speech. Another highlighted indicator of audience anxiety is that students appearing nervous in front of the audience. While, trait anxiety, context anxiety, and situation anxiety were rated high. Context anxiety highlights one indicator with a very high rating; that students felt anxious when being scolded in front of their classmates.

The Level of Public Speaking Anxiety among St Paul University Surigao College Students

Table 1- The Mean and the Standard deviation showing the Level of Public Speaking Anxiety among College Students As to Trait Anxiety, Context Anxiety, Audience Anxiety, and Situation Anxiety

Indicators	M	SD	VI	LOA
Trait Anxiety				
1. I got apprehension anxiety when the teacher calls me to participate in an oral recitation.	3.01	0.64	Agree	High
2. I got apprehension and anxiety during reporting in front of my classmates.	2.88	0.68	Agree	High
3. I got apprehension and anxiety during sharing of ideas in a group discussion.	2.70	0.78	Agree	High
4. I get apprehension and anxiety when participating in a classroom debate.	3.14	0.67	Agree	High
Average:	2.93	0.69	Agree	High
Context Anxiety				
1. I got apprehension anxiety when talking to experts, teachers, office heads, and top administrators.	3.12	0.73	Agree	High
2. I got apprehension anxiety whenever I feel uncertain about a certain topic I am tasked to deliver.	3.11	0.65	Agree	High
3. I got apprehension anxiety when being scolded in front of my classmates.	3.27	0.71	Strongly Agree	Very High
4. I got apprehension anxiety when being assigned as a speaker during school events.	3.22	0.69	Agree	High
Average:	3.18	0.69	Agree	High
Audience Anxiety				
1. I'm fine talking to smaller groups but get anxious in a large audience.	3.23	0.58	Agree	High
2. I got apprehension anxiety because of the fear that the audience might judge me if I commit mistakes when delivering my speech.	3.31	0.65	Strongly Agree	Very High
3. I got apprehension anxiety because of the fear of appearing nervous in front of the audience.	3.28	0.64	Strongly Agree	Very High
4. I got apprehension anxiety every time I deliver a speech unprepared.	3.41	0.63	Strongly Agree	Very High
Average:	3.31	0.62	Strongly Agree	Very High
Situation Anxiety				
1. I got apprehension anxiety when introducing myself in front of my classmates during the first day of school.	2.86	0.70	Agree	High
2. I got apprehension anxiety when tasked to synthesize specific topics on behalf of my group mates.	2.94	0.62	Agree	High



3. I got apprehension anxiety when being asked to explain in front of my classmates.	2.93	0.63	Agree	High
4. I got apprehension anxiety when being asked questions about a topic I am uncertain of.	3.07	0.57	Agree	High
Average:	2.95	0.63	Agree	High
Over-all Average:	3.09	0.66	Agree	High

Legend: Verbal Interpretation (VI) Strongly Disagree (SD) Disagree (D) Agree (A) Strongly Agree (SA); Level of Anxiety (LOA) Very High (VH), High (H), Low (L), Very Low (VL)

The findings of this study are consistent with a post from a "knowledge, awareness, and self-improvement" site that finds the fear of public speaking occupying the #3 slot among the listed causes as cited in "10 Causes of Speech Anxiety that Create Fear of Public Speaking". In this list, a dread of loneliness and death edges out our social phobia but fear of speaking reliably remains one of the great waking nightmares (Genard, 2019).

The significant difference in the participant's level of anxiety when grouped according to profile

Table 2. The significant difference in the participant's level of anxiety when grouped according to profile

Profile	Dependent	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	Decision
Sex	Trait Anxiety	0.35	1	0.35	1.18	0.280	Accept
	Context Anxiety	0.00	1	0.00	0.01	0.926	Accept
	Audience Anxiety	0.01	1	0.01	0.04	0.836	Accept
	Situation Anxiety	0.24	1	0.24	0.83	0.364	Accept
Year	Trait Anxiety	0.14	2	0.07	0.23	0.792	Accept
	Context Anxiety	0.11	2	0.05	0.17	0.840	Accept
Level	Audience Anxiety	0.12	2	0.06	0.20	0.823	Accept
	Situation Anxiety	0.57	2	0.29	1.01	0.369	Accept

The findings of the study, as shown in the table above, found no significant difference in the participant's level of anxiety when grouped according to profile. The above findings particularly on sex variable negate the findings of Abdeldaiem, et. al (2020) in their anonymous cross-sectional survey among Egyptian students where it revealed that public speaking anxiety was high among female students but much higher than that among males. However, prevalence of a significant percentage of students (78.8%) reported suffering from public speaking anxiety and about 26% admitted having experienced extreme fear (public speaking phobia) concurred with the results of this present study.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The data showed that respondents' level of anxiety is not significantly influenced by their age, sex, and year level. Regardless of age, sex, and year level, they were consistent in their respective ratings in all the dimensions; and
2. The college student respondents experienced very high audience anxiety in public speaking which is highlighted by respondents' fear of being judged by the mistakes committed when delivering the speech and likewise appearing nervous in front of the audience, while context anxiety, situation anxiety, and trait anxiety were rated at high levels. Context anxiety likewise highlighted students' feelings of anxiety when being scolded in front of their classmates.

Guided by the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are the recommendations:

1. Public Speaking subject should be offered to all the degree programs at the tertiary level;
2. School Administrators should encourage public speaking activities for all departments and provide support to participating students;
3. Teachers should integrate public speaking activities into their syllabi in the absence of subject offerings in their degree programs; and



4. For the students to participate inside and outside of the campus activities in speaking contests like oration, debates, singing contests, and other public speaking-related activities to hone their public speaking skills thus minimizing anxieties.

IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. **For College Students.** By knowing their level of public speaking anxiety they will exert much effort to treat the feeling of distressful fear of anxiety.
2. **For Teachers:** As frontline mentors of the students in the classroom, they should apply different learning theories and appropriate strategies to help build up students' self-confidence and learn to fight their fears in public speaking.
3. **For Administrators.** To revisit the curriculum as well as the co-curricular plans and programs so that appropriate measures can be formulated for the holistic development of the students.

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