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Self-Esteem as A Predictor of Public Speaking Anxiety Among Postgraduate Students in Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Public speaking skills are essential for postgraduate students, thus, many individuals still face challenges with anxiety when it comes to presenting their ideas or research findings in public settings. Therefore, this study investigates the relationship between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. A descriptive survey design was employed, with data collected from 96 postgraduate students which were properly filled out of the 100 administered. The results revealed that 56.3% of the students experience low levels of public speaking anxiety, 29.2% moderate levels, and 14.6% high levels. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to analyze the relationship between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety. The findings indicated a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.109$) between the two variables, with a p-value of 0.290, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis was not rejected, confirming that there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the university implement public speaking training workshops and provide counseling services to support students with high levels of public speaking anxiety.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Public speaking is an essential skill for both educational and professional achievement, especially for postgraduate students who must present their research findings and participate in scholarly conversations. Many postgraduates, however, encounter nervousness while giving presentations, which might impede their performance and academic advancement. The nervousness encountered by postgraduates when speaking in public is referred to as public speaking anxiety (PSA), sometimes known as Glossophobia.

Public speaking anxiety is characterised by the apprehension and concern individuals experience when delivering speeches. The severity of the symptoms varies from experiencing mild nervousness to experiencing panic attacks. An individual may also experience anxiety when delivering a speech or preparing to address an audience (Tacheva, 2022). Individuals experiencing Public Speaking Anxiety frequently encounter various side effects in a speaking environment, including palpitations, sweating, gastrointestinal discomfort, diarrhea, muscle tension, and confusion. Students experiencing an abnormal level of public speaking anxiety may later exhibit avoidant behaviors (Gallego, et al., 2021). A significant number of students possess talent, yet they lack the confidence to demonstrate it or present it before an audience. They possess knowledge, yet when it comes to demonstrating their abilities, they often experience fear or anxiety, fearing that others may ridicule them for any mistakes made (Ismail, 2021).

Public speaking anxiety (PSA) is a common type of anxiety disorder, impacting around one in five individuals. Individuals experiencing elevated levels of social anxiety often perceive that others form unfavorable impressions of them. Approximately 80% of the population experiences some level of public speaking anxiety. A national survey conducted by Giabani (2019) indicated that PSA is a prevalent social fear encountered by individuals throughout their lives, affecting 21% of the sample population. A study conducted on Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) postgraduate students indicated significant anxiety levels experienced during presentations at international conferences (Wei, 2022).

A study carried out at University of Ilorin, Nigeria revealed that 70% of students reported experiencing a high level of information seeking anxiety; however no significant difference was found in the information seeking anxiety between males and females. Demographic characteristics such as gender and age did not influence post-graduate students' information seeking anxiety, while programme of study had the strongest contribution to their information seeking anxiety (Oluyinka, 2022). This anxiety can greatly impact students' academic performance and future employability. Considering its widespread occurrence, it is evident that social anxiety remains a significant issue that requires focus.

Self-esteem relates to an individual's comprehensive assessment or judgment of their own value. Emler (2020) suggests that there is a lack of consensus regarding the definitions in studies of self-esteem. Nonetheless, it has stayed relatively aligned with the dictionary or conventional understanding of an individual's self-perception. The primary distinction lies in whether this opinion is predominantly a general sentiment (either positive or negative) or a collection of assessments regarding the extent to which an individual possesses the desired attributes, such as physical appearance, moral integrity, social skills, artistic abilities, and intellectual competencies.

The overall sense of self-worth and personal value significantly influences an individual's confidence and capacity to confront challenging situations. In the realm of public speaking, diminished self-esteem can lead to heightened anxiety, while elevated self-esteem may act as a buffer against this anxiety. However, a study has pointed out a strong negative

association between attitude (which can be related to self-esteem) and public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students (Hamzah and Alsaleem, 2023).

Studies have examined numerous elements that contribute to this anxiety, with self-esteem standing out as a notable factor. The role of self-esteem is crucial in mediating the connection between mindfulness-based interventions and public speaking anxiety (Kumar et al., 2018). This indicates that enhancing self-esteem may play a crucial role in alleviating anxiety associated with public speaking. Nonetheless, different findings have been reported in various other investigations. For example, Faria and Vijaya (2019) discovered that there was no significant correlation between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among teachers, whereas distress was identified as being related to public speaking anxiety. The empirical evidence indicates that public speaking anxiety represents a unique subtype of social phobia, differing both qualitatively and quantitatively from other subtypes (Blöte et al., 2008). Nonetheless, additional studies indicate that behavior modification techniques may effectively alleviate public speaking anxiety while also enhancing self-esteem (Jangir and Govinda, 2018).

Despite the fact that public speaking skills are essential for postgraduate students; numerous individuals still face challenges with anxiety when it comes to presenting their ideas or research findings in public settings. This anxiety can greatly affect academic performance, restrict involvement in scholarly discussions, and possibly obstruct career opportunities. The relationship between public speaking anxiety and self-esteem is influenced by multiple factors, yet it has not been thoroughly explored, especially in the context of postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University in Ilorin.

Studies indicate that self-esteem can greatly influence a student's capacity to manage stress and anxiety (Onivehu, 2022). Nevertheless, the degree to which self-esteem influences public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University is still not well-defined. The absence of thorough investigation into this particular group creates a void in comprehending the connection between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety, as well as whether this relationship varies from results observed in different academic environments or cultural backgrounds. Given the essential of effective communication in academic and professional settings, it is crucial to examine the factors contributing to public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University. The existing knowledge gap hampers the creation of focused interventions and support mechanisms aimed at assisting students in managing their anxiety and enhancing their public speaking abilities. This study aims to look into the relationship between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin.

The primary objective of the study is to investigate the correlation between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among postgraduates at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. Specifically the study aims to determine: 1) the extent of anxiety associated with public speaking among postgraduates at Al-Hikmah University in Ilorin; 2) the link between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among postgraduates at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. Research question of his research is to what extent do postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, experience anxiety related to public speaking.

2. METHODS

Based on the research purpose, this null hypothesis was formulated: *There is no significant correlation between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students in Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin.*

Descriptive survey design of correlational type was employed in this study to explore the correlation between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety in postgraduate students of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. The population for this study consists of all postgraduate students in Al-Hikmah University while the targeted population consists of one hundred postgraduates in two faculties in Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. To facilitate the purpose of this investigation, a multistage sampling procedure was utilised. The preliminary phase included employing a purposive sampling method to select two faculties within the postgraduate school. The study utilised a simple random sampling technique to choose two departments from each of the aforementioned faculties, resulting in the random selection of 25 postgraduate students from each department. A total of one hundred postgraduate students participated in this study.

The instruments utilised for this study consist of two adopted questionnaires. The initial instrument is referred to as the "Public Speaking Anxiety Scale (PSAS)," designed by Yaikhong and Usaha in 2012. The second instrument utilised is the Self-esteem Scale (SS) developed by Bagley and Mallick in 2001. The instruments were used to assess self-esteem as factors influencing public speaking anxiety in postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. The instrument comprised two divisions, A and B. The sections comprise 6 items and employ a four-point Likert-Type structure. This allows participants to express their degree of agreement or disagreement with the statements. The scale extends from a minimum rating of 6 to a maximum rating of 24.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Findings

Out of One hundred questionnaires administered, only 96 were properly filled and used for data analysis. The results were presented below.

Research Question: What is the level of public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students in Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin?

Table 1. Descriptive statistics showing the level of public speaking anxiety experienced by postgraduate students in Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin.

Level of public speaking anxiety among postgraduate student	Range of score	Frequency	Percentage %
Low level	6-12	54	56.3
Moderate level	13-18	28	29.2
High level	19-24	14	14.6

The result in **Table 1.** shows the level of public speaking anxiety experience by postgraduate students in Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. From the result, the majority of postgraduate students 56.3% (54) have a low level of experience in public speaking anxiety, 29.2% (22) have a moderate level of public speaking anxiety experience, while 14.6% (14) have a high level of public speaking anxiety experience, respectively.

Research Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students in Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin.

Table 2. PPMC showing the relationship between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students in Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin.

Variables	Mean	SD	Df	N	R	P	Remark
P. Anxiety	13.10	4.18	94	96			
Self-esteem	21.59	3.43	94	96	0.109	0.290	Not significant

The analysis of the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) provided in Table 2 reveals a negative relationship between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety. The correlation coefficient (r) is -0.109, indicating a weak relationship. The p -value is 0.290, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05, confirming the presence of a significant relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected, leading to the conclusion that there is no significant correlation between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students in Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin.

3.2 Discussions

This study investigated self-esteem as a predictor of public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students in Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. The outcome of the research question revealed that the majority of the students 56.3% (54) have low level of public speaking anxiety experience, 29.2% (28) have a moderate level of public speaking anxiety experience, while 14.6% (14) have high level of public speaking anxiety experience, This finding contradicted the findings of [Oluyinka \(2022\)](#), who reported a high level of information seeking anxiety among postgraduate students in University of Ilorin.

The research hypothesis revealed a negative correlation between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students with r -value of -0.109 and p -value of 0.290 which is found to be greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This demonstrates that there is no significant correlation between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students in Al-Hikmah University. This is in support with the findings of Faria and [Vijaya \(2019\)](#) that discovered that there was no significant correlation between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among teachers, whereas distress was identified as being related to public speaking anxiety. This study investigated self-esteem as a predictor of public speaking anxiety among postgraduate students in Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. The outcome of the research question revealed that the majority of the students 56.3% (54) have low level of public speaking anxiety experience, 29.2% (28) have a moderate level of public speaking anxiety experience, while 14.6% (14) have high level of public speaking anxiety experience, This finding contradicted the findings of [Oluyinka \(2022\)](#), who reported a high level of information seeking anxiety among postgraduate students in University of Ilorin.

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postgraduate students in Al-Hikmah University. This is in support with the findings of Faria and Vijaya (2019) that discovered that there was no significant correlation between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among teachers, whereas distress was identified as being related to public speaking anxiety.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, it was concluded that the majority of postgraduate students at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, experience low levels of public speaking anxiety which means most postgraduate students in the university feel relatively comfortable speaking in public, though a significant portion still experiences moderate to high anxiety. A postgraduate student with high self-esteem tends to have lower level of public speaking anxiety because self-esteem does not have a meaningful impact on the level of public speaking anxiety among the postgraduate students sampled.

The following recommendations were made based on the findings:

- a. The university counsellors should organise workshops or seminars to help those with moderate to high levels of public speaking anxiety. These programmes can focus on building confidence, communication skills, and coping strategies for managing anxiety in public speaking situations.
- b. Since no significant relationship was found between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety, future initiatives might focus on enhancing self-esteem through mentorship, peer support, and leadership training. Although self-esteem was not a strong predictor of anxiety in this study, these interventions may still contribute positively to students' overall well-being and confidence.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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