

# A study to Evaluate Anxiety of Public Speaking in Young Adults

<sup>1</sup>Huma Naz, <sup>2</sup>Dr Nazia Ali, <sup>3\*</sup>Dr Saba Aziz

<sup>1</sup>Occupational Therapist, <sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor (Occupational Therapy), Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi, India

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor (Occupational Therapy), Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi, India

<sup>1</sup>Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi, India

<sup>1</sup>huma9666@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>alinazia786@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup>dr.azizsaba79@gmail.com

\*Corresponding Author-

**Abstract-** Public speaking anxiety is a situation specific social anxiety. The main objective of this study was to evaluate the prevalence of public speaking anxiety among young adults of age 18 to 25 years. This is an observational cross-sectional study. This study was conducted on 100 regular students of jamia hamdard. Out of total students, 50 were males and 50 were females. They were further divided in groups based on their age i.e., 18 to 21 years and 22 to 25 years. All participants were asked to fill in the personal report of public speaking anxiety (prpsa) (mccroskey 1970 ; mccroskey and richmond 1998) according to what they experience while they engage in any public speaking situation. According to prpsa 76% students falls under moderate levels, 19% under low and 5% under high levels of public speaking anxiety. Majority of both male and female participants falls under moderate levels. From the results of this study it can be concluded that females have higher prevalence rate of public speaking anxiety as compared to males.

**Keywords—Public speaking anxiety, Anxiety, PRPSA, Young adults, College Students.**

## I.INTRODUCTION

Public speaking is one of the essential skill which is vital for professional communication. Public speaking not only includes the ability to from social conversational skills but mental and physical presentations are also required. R.Fujishin (2009) reported that, “An effective speaker requires physical coordination, mental coordination, content organization, skill practice and a great deal of experience”. [1] However, it is seen that public speaking anxiety is one of the most frequently occurred challenge while mastering public speaking skills (J.a devito, 2009). [2]

Anxiety is defined as a state of uneasiness and apprehension of fear caused by the anticipation of something threatening. Kirkwood and Melton (2002) stated that anxiety disorders are the most common mental disorders confronted by public speakers. [3]

Bodie (2010) defined public speaking anxiety as “a situation-specific social anxiety that arises from the real or anticipated enactment of an oral presentation”. [4] Burnley et al.(1993) reported that, “Approximately 85% of the general population report experiencing some level of anxiety about speaking in public”. [5]

Ashlock et al.(2015) stated that public speaking anxiety increases when an individual goes beyond the elementary communication to delivering public speeches. [6] Oftentimes individuals who are suffering from public speaking anxiety have a constant dread that they might speak in a way that is mortifying or

embarrassing and the audience will judge them negatively (David-Paul, 2002).[7] Hence, these individuals will try their best to escape any situation that requires speaking publicly, but when inescapable, these individuals undergo severe anxiety or distress (Moir-Kostic).[8]

Individuals with public speaking anxiety experience a variety of symptoms which can be categorized into: Physical, verbal, and non-verbal. As far as the physical symptoms are considered the sympathetic part of the Autonomic nervous system(ANS) plays an essential role. It accounts for 'fight or flight' response of body. Responses like 'all or nothing' of Sympathetic nervous system(SNS) produces symptoms which acts in order to prepare the body for agitation and havoc. The symptoms include increased heart beat, dilated pupils, enhanced sweating, increased oxygen intake, spasm of upper back muscles and neck rigidity. The verbal symptoms include tense and shaky voice, vocalized pauses. The non-verbal symptoms include-insomnia(prior to social event), dizziness, changes in behaviour, irritability, addictive behaviour, diarrhea, increased urination etc (Dr. F. Khan et al., 2015).[9] Along with these symptoms four types of public speaking anxieties are present as well.[10]

**Trait-like anxiety:** It is experienced in most situations where speaker communicates with others. It could be in one on one interviews and conversations, in small groups, in public or in almost every situation, but not with family members or several close friends.

**Generalized-context anxiety:** It is only present when an individual is in a particular context. The individuals who experiences this type may feel anxious in some settings but not in others. For instance, a speaker could be anxious in public speaking context, but not in meeting or discussion context.

**Person-group anxiety:** It is enduring if orientation towards communication with a given individual or group of people. Someone may feel this type of anxiety whenever he speaks to professors at college, supervisors, or particularly acquaintance.

**Situational anxiety:** It is an emotional response of anxiety while interacting with other individual in the given time. It is usually in a short duration, when time is over, the anxiety disappears too. It occurs, for example, when an individual faces an oral exam or job interview. When the interview is done, the individual will not feel any anxiety again.

Bodie( 2010) reported that in students, public speaking anxiety may be experienced as a trait like or state-based anxiety. Students who feel anxious about the idea of public speaking are said to have trait-based public speaking anxiety while students who experience severe levels of anxiety during some particular point in the process of public speaking are considered to have state-based anxiety. Although, these anxieties may be present independently or can occur concurrently with one another.[4]

Due to public speaking anxiety students might avoid certain courses or examinations where oral presentations are mandatory. They might as well avoid speaking in classrooms, will not pursue certain careers because that would require public speaking occasionally. And those who have high levels of public speaking anxiety might avoid attending social events they would wish to attend or avoid talking to classmates they would wish to get to know or be friends with.[8] Not only students, professionals who are in business, politics or even in entertainment industry experiences high levels of anxiety and might face difficulties while speaking in front of a large audience. This dread becomes so huge that it starts disrupting the performing capabilities of an individual and shatters his morale entirely.[9]

In some cases, anticipatory anxiety occurs few days or even weeks before in advance of the actual situation requiring public speaking. Individuals with these type of anxious responses identifies that their fear is unexplainable and outrageous, they, however, still fail to cope up with these responses without any assistance given to them .[8]

Since, anxiety of public speaking have so many deleterious effects on scholastic performance and so many negative impacts on subsequent career growth (Russel G. Shaw, 2009).[11] It becomes highly important to identify individuals with anxiety of public speaking. A lot of studies have been conducted in the past on anxiety of public speaking evaluating signs and symptoms. But this paper focuses entirely on the prevalence of anxiety of public speaking in young adults.

**II. PROCEDURE**

This study was conducted to examine the prevalence of public speaking anxiety. The subjects were divided into two groups consisting of 50 male and female students in each group. Then both the groups were further divided into sub-groups based on their age I.e.,

- Group A- Female students(25%); Age group(18-21 years)
- Group B- Female students(25%); Age group(22-25 years)
- Group C- Male students(25%); Age group(18-21 years)
- Group D- Male students(25%); Age group(22-25 years)

The subjects who participated in the study were screened according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. All the subjects were informed that these questionnaires would be used for research purpose, and that their participation was voluntary and they have the right to deny from participation. After that the subjects, if willing, were asked to sign the informed consent form. At first the demographic data of subjects was taken up and then subjects were informed about the procedure on how to fill in the questionnaires provided to them. The students were asked to fill out the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety(PRPSA) (McCroskey, 1970; McCroskey & Richmond, 1992).[13] [14]

**III. RESULTS**

**TABLE 1: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONAL REPORT OF PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY (PRPSA)**

PRPSA (mean±SD)	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD	SEM
	108.62±13.05				
Low	19	19%	90.4	9.10	2.08
Moderate	76	76%	111.4	8.28	0.950
High	5	5%	134.6	1.35	0.606
Total	100	100%	108.63	13.05	1.305

TABLE 1 shows frequency distribution of Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA). According to the scoring of PRPSA, 19% (n=19) students displayed low levels, 76% (n=76) students

displayed moderate levels and 5% (n=5) students displayed high levels of public speaking anxiety with mean PRPSA being 108.62±13.05.

**TABLE 2: ASSOCIATION OF PERSONAL REPORT OF PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY (PRPSA) WITH DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS – GENDER & AGE.**

Variable	LOW					MODERATE					HIGH				
	Frequency	Percent age	Mean	SD	SEM	Frequency	Percent age	Mean	SD	SEM	Frequency	Percent age	Mean	SD	SEM
GENDER															
Female	7	14%	84.57	12.44	4.70	39	78%	112.48	8.10	1.29	4	8%	134.25	1.29	0.64
Male	12	24%	93.91	2.95	0.85	37	74%	110.35	8.33	1.37	1	2%			
AGE															
18-20 years	10	20%	88.21	11.71	3.70	36	72%	109.44	8.03	1.33	4	8%	134.5	1.5	0.75
22-25 years	9	18%	93	3.23	1.07	40	80%	113.25	8.08	1.27	1	2%			

TABLE 2 demonstrates the association of Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) with demographic factors, gender and age. Out of total females, majority of them 78% (n=39) exhibits moderate levels of public speaking anxiety and out of total males, majority 74% (n=34) also exhibits moderate levels. Among the two age groups, majority of students falls under the moderate levels as well, 80% (n=40) being highest number from the age group 22-25 years.

**IV. DISCUSSION**

In today’s world , oral communication is a critical tool for professional survival. People value it and welcome job applicants who, among other skills, are capable of speaking competently in public.[15] [16] Public speaking is considered an anxiety-generating factor that leads to fear and has a negative impact on personal and academic achievement.[17] [18] [19] [20] Not only anxiety of public speaking can be socially debilitating, but also referred as primary reason why someone is unable to advance in his career.[21] [22]

In present study a great number of young adults reported anxiety of public speaking. As per PRPSA most of the students 76% (n=76) falls in moderate levels of public speaking anxiety followed by low 19% (n=19) and high 5% (n=5) levels. Among Brazilians, a study showed that anxiety of public speaking afflicted 32% of population of the largest Brazilian capital.[17] Another survey stated that approximately one-third of their university sample endorsed a high or very high level of public speaking anxiety.[23]

Our research estimates that public speaking anxiety among female students is more common than male students (Table-2). In addition it has also been found out that most of the females & males have moderate levels of public speaking anxiety. However, it is seen that low levels of public speaking anxiety are majorly exhibit by male students and high levels are majorly exhibited by female students. According to the Andrew & YauHawTse (2012),[24] the results of their study exhibited that the levels of public speaking

anxiety were equal among males and females. On contrary our study indicates that the prevalence of moderate and high levels of public speaking anxiety are higher in females than males. However, the low levels are high in males than females. As noted in other studies, percentually, fear of speaking to an audience was more prevalent among females.[17] [25] Even though some studies noted that anxiety of public speaking is independent of sex, ethnicity, and age; yet in some studies, like the present study, it has been more associated with females.[9] [12] [25] [26]

Also, among the two age groups, moderate levels of public speaking anxiety are majorly exhibited by the age group (22-25 years) (Table-2). Interestingly, both low and high are exhibited by age group (18-21 years) in majority. Our study also shows a drop in low and high levels of public speaking anxiety in the age group 22-25 years as compared to 18-21 years. This could be due to passage of time as students gain maturity and confidence. But again, the moderate levels are higher in the age group (22-25 years).

#### V. CONCLUSION

Anxiety of public speaking is a very common form of social phobia. Individuals who fear speaking in public may find their career choices limited and avenues for promotion far away from them, resulting in considerable personal distress, frustration, and depression. These individuals may underachieve at college or at work because of anxiety and often avoid speaking publicly.

This study provokes the idea about the prevalence of public speaking anxiety among the young adults of mean age  $21.5 \pm 1.57$  years. Literature was reviewed in order to throw light on previous researches that have been conducted in the same area to validate the present study. This study also provided ample results in favour of the fact that prevalence of public speaking anxiety is very common in young adults.

To summarize, the results highlighted that majority of the individuals experienced public speaking anxiety. Most of the participants experienced moderate levels of anxiety. The results also showed that public speaking anxiety is more prevalent among female students than male students.

#### VI. REFERENCES

- [1] R.Fujishin. *The Natural Speaker*. Boston: Pearson, 2009.
- [2] J.A. DeVito. *The Essential Elements of Public Speaking* (3rd ed.). Boston: Pearson, 2009.
- [3] Kirkwood, C. K., & Melton, S. T. (2002). Anxiety disorders. In J. T. Dipro, R. L. Talbert, G. C. Yee, G. R. Matzke, B. G. Wells, L. M. Posey. *Pharmacotherapy: A pathophysiologic approach* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- [4] Bodie, G.D. 2010. A racing heart, rattling knees, and ruminative through: defining, explaining, and treating public speaking anxiety, *Communication Education*.
- [5] Burnley, M., Cross, P., and Spanos, N. (1993). The effects of stress inoculation training and skills training on the treatment of speech anxiety. *Imagination, cognition and personality* 12:355-366.
- [6] Ashlock, Maryz.; Brantley, William A.; and Tylor, Katherine. B. (2015) "Comparisons of speech anxiety in basic public speaking courses: Are Intensive or Traditional Semester Courses Better?", *Basic Communication Course Annual: Vol.27. article 13*.
- [7] David-Paul Pertaub, M. Slater, C. Barker *Teleoperators & Virtual Environments*, 68-78, 2002.
- [8] Moira Kostic-Bobanovic and Marsa Bobanovic. Coping with Public Speaking Anxiety. *Creative Organisation*, 2007:840-847.

- [9] Dr.F Khan, S. Ismail, M.S. Shafique, K. Ghous, S.A. Ali(2015).*International Journal of Research* vol-2 109-115.
- [10] www.arxiv, 2004:21
- [11] Russel, G., & Shaw, S. (2009). a study to investigate the prevalence of social anxiety in a sample of higher education students in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Mental Health*, 18, 198-206.
- [12] T. Furmark, M. Tillfors, P-O. Everz, I. Marteinsdottir, O. Gefvert Mats Fredrikson. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 34(8), 416-424, 1999.
- [13] McCroskey, J. C. *Measures of communication bound anxiety. Speech monographs*, 1970, 37:269-277.
- [14] McCroskey, J. C., Richmond, V. P. Communication apprehension and shyness: Conceptual and operational distinction. *Central States Speech Journal*, 1992, 33:458-468.
- [15] Lucas SE. *A Arte de Falar em Publico*. Rio de Janeiro: LTC Editora S.A; 2003:Falando em Publico, 1-21.
- [16] Mercatelli C. Expressividade e Relacoes Publicas. In: Kyrillos LR, ed. *Expressividade: Da teoria a practica*. Rio de Janeiro: Revinter: 2005, 238-254.
- [17] D'El Rey GJF, Pacini CA. Medo de Falar ao Publico em uma Amostra de Populacao: Prevalencia, Impacto no Funcionamento Pessoal e Tratamento. *Psicologia: Teoria e Pesquisa*; 2005;21 (2):237-242
- [18] Osorio FL, Crippa JA, Loureiro SR. Instrumentos de avaliacao do transtorno de ansiedade social. *Rev Psiq Clin*. 2005, 32.; 73-83.
- [19] Kessler RC, Stien MB, Berglund P. Social phobia subtypes in the national comorbidity survey. *Am J Psychiatry*. 1998, 155, 613-619.
- [20] D'El Rey GJF. Fobial Social: Mais do que uma simples timidez. *Arq Cienc Saude Unipar*, 2001, 5, 273-276.
- [21] Cunningham V, Lefkoe M. & Sechrest L. Eliminating Fears: An Intervention that permanently eliminates the fear of public speaking. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 2006,13:183-193.
- [22] Nazia Ali & Ruchi Nagar. *The Indian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 2013, 45(3):21-25.
- [23] Elliot J, Chong JL. Presentation anxiety: A challenge for some students and a pit of despair for others. In *Challenging education: Socio-cultural, economic and academic outcomes: Proceedings of the 15th ISANA International Conference 2004 Nov (Vol. 30)*.
- [24] Andrew, Yau-hawTse (2012) Glossophobia of University Students in Malaysia., *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 2 (11), 2061-2073. ISSN 2226-5139.
- [25] Stein MB, Walker JR, Forde DR. Public-speaking fears in a community sample. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*, 1996,53: 169-174.
- [26] Geer JH. The development of a scale to measure fear. *Behav Res Ther*. 1965;3;416-424.