

# SELF-COPING STRATEGIES AND PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG UNDERGRADUATES: A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract.** Many undergraduate students experience anxiety when speaking in front of others, which often influences how they perceive themselves and their performance during public speaking. This study explores how students understand and respond to public speaking anxiety by examining their beliefs, expectations, behaviours, and perceived outcomes. It also investigates how these factors interact within the process of self-fulfilling beliefs, where expectations and thoughts shape actual performance and influence behavioural responses. A quantitative approach was employed, and data were collected from 113 undergraduate students through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. The results show significant relationships between coping behaviours and internal perceptions. Students who actively engaged in coping strategies demonstrated stronger self-belief and higher confidence when presenting. Those who reported using more techniques to manage their anxiety were also found to hold more positive expectations about their performance and expressed greater satisfaction with their outcomes. These findings further suggest that both behavioural and cognitive efforts play vital roles in managing fear and building speaking confidence. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into how self-perceptions and coping efforts influence public speaking experiences. It emphasises the importance of fostering positive thinking patterns and developing practical strategies to support students in overcoming public speaking anxiety more effectively.

**Keywords:** *public speaking anxiety, self-coping strategies, self-fulfilling prophecies, undergraduate students*

## Introduction

Public speaking is considered a fundamental skill in the 21st-century education and workplace context (Chen, 2023). It is frequently assessed in academic presentations, debates, project defenses, and even in professional interviews. However, a large proportion of students continue to exhibit symptoms of public speaking anxiety, including rapid heartbeat, trembling, mental blocks, and avoidance behaviors (Arsalan and Majid, 2021). The psychological underpinnings of PSA are often linked to fear of judgment, low self-efficacy, and negative internal dialogues. One psychological phenomenon that may help explain the persistence or overcoming of PSA is the self-fulfilling prophecy. Rooted in social psychology, this theory posits that individuals' beliefs or expectations, either positive or negative, can influence their behaviors in a way that leads those beliefs to become true (Robinson, 2022). In academic contexts, if a student believes they are a poor speaker, this belief can influence their preparation, attitude, and delivery, ultimately resulting in poor performance, which reinforces the belief. On the other hand, by consciously adopting positive self-expectations and using

specific coping strategies, students may reframe their anxiety and improve their performance. Theriana (2023) believed that techniques such as positive self-talk, visualization, incremental exposure, and cognitive restructuring are examples of coping strategies that can counteract the effects of negative self-prophecies. Yet, there is a lack of qualitative exploration into how students themselves perceive and implement these strategies, and how self-fulfilling prophecy plays out in real-life speaking scenarios.

### ***Statement of problem, objective of study and research questions***

Although public speaking is an essential academic and professional skill, a significant number of undergraduate students continue to experience high levels of anxiety when required to speak in public. Traditional classroom approaches often emphasize technical skills of delivery without sufficiently addressing the psychological dimensions of anxiety, particularly the internalized beliefs and self-perceptions that contribute to students' fear. While the role of cognitive and behavioral strategies in reducing PSA is acknowledged, little is known about how students independently cope with their anxiety and how their beliefs may contribute to self-fulfilling outcomes. Moreover, research on the interplay between self-fulfilling prophecy and public speaking anxiety remains limited, especially in the Malaysian or Southeast Asian higher education context. Without understanding how students' expectations influence their public speaking experiences and coping mechanisms, educators may miss opportunities to design more effective, psychologically informed interventions. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring undergraduate students' self-coping strategies through the lens of self-fulfilling prophecy theory. This study is done to explore public speaking anxiety. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions: (1) How do students perceive their beliefs in public speaking? (2) How do students perceive their expectations in public speaking? (3) How do students perceive their expectations in public speaking? (4) How do students perceive results in public speaking anxiety? (5) What is the relationship between behaviour and aspects of self-fulfilling prophecy in public speaking?

### ***Literature review***

#### ***Theoretical framework of the study***

This section lies significantly in relation to the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy theory by Merton (1948) to Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA). Self-fulfilling prophecy alone is defined as 'a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true' (Merton, 1948). This reflects the concept that a person's perceived notions influence both their cognition and behavior, causing them to believe in and act upon those beliefs positively or negatively. For instance, 'I will fail', 'I will forget the script' and many others. As noted by Merton (1948), individuals who experience a self-fulfilling prophecy are not aware that their belief brought about the result either the expected or the feared result at most times (Ackerman, 2025). Such effects may be rooted from individuals due to their personal beliefs about their actions or among individuals whose beliefs about actions of other people. To correlate this theory with PSA, it is comprehended as a form of fear which undermines an individual's self-confidence and influences their self-perception and communicative behaviors, particularly when speaking outside the structured environment of the classroom (Gebre, 2024). Aftab et al. (2025) view PSA as a common social anxiety that can contribute to

physical, emotional, and cognitive symptoms such as heart palpitations, sweating, mental blocks, and fear of being judged that could interrupt communication, confidence, and academic functioning. As a result, these are inextricably linked in the sense that PSA is a common experience that can be impacted by psychological mechanisms like the self-fulfilling prophecy among individuals. Such a framework of self-fulfilling prophecy then investigates how attitudes about public speaking skill can influence outcomes through behavioural and cognitive responses.

### ***Causes of Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA)***

Although students recognize the significant importance of having the ability to speak in the target language, the majority of students still have the tendency to experience fear in speaking in front of a crowd. It is a form of anxiety that has affected students across various academic settings and most often than not, it stems from the fear of negative judgments the presenters might face from the audience. Dated early into the research of Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA), it was first proposed that it stems from the lack of specific skills, then revisited and labelled as an accumulation of one's early life experiences such as being ridiculed, laughed at, or rejected that affected their ability to perform well, and other experts argued later that it is a trait someone born with rather than an impact from past experiences (Arnold, 2018). Nonetheless, public speaking anxiety (PSA) might be caused primarily by the fundamental fear of speaking in front of others (Sikandar, 2017). This can significantly impact the presenters' confidence and overall performance that are caused by the discomfoting fear of being judged by the listeners (Grieve et al., 2021). What seems easy to a student might be a nerve-wrecking act to do for those who might not be confident. An act of standing up and speaking in a different language to a group of people might cause unease and discomfort (Grieve et al., 2021) that later affects their flow of speech and ideas. This echoes the statement by Raja (2017) which emphasizes that the size of the group of audience will impact presenters' level of nervousness and how well they perform in their speech. Undoubtedly, PSA is a multifaceted issue with a variety of underlying factors. Consequently, addressing PSA requires comprehensive research efforts that take into account both the individual's psychological condition and environmental triggers that contribute to the anxiety.

### ***Coping strategies for Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA)***

In overcoming the challenges of public speaking, students tend to practice several coping strategies to manage their anxiety in giving a speech. McWilliam et al. (2025) explored several interventions across studies done previously in dealing with PSA. One of the interventions included Ayres and Heuett (2000) study exploring performance visualization to overcome the fear of speaking in front of an audience. This process involves relaxation exercises, watching a speaker on video, visualizing that speaker, and then imagining themselves giving the speech. Improvements were shown by the participants where they were more in control of the speech and portrayed a more positive self-perception. An improved intervention was later done by Heuett and Heuett (2011) with a virtual reality therapy (VRT) where participants wore a head-mounted display that simulates an auditorium and their voices. A significant reduction in anxiety was reported which improves their communication and speech better. This echoes the finding by Raja (2017) where participants who took part actively in speaking activities

will later assist them to perform better in presentations. In terms of cognitive modification intervention, Brandrick et al. (2021) explored how a defusion technique that involves writing down a negative phrase regarding public speaking, extracting a keyword, and repeating that word quickly for 30 seconds can reduce its emotional impact. Participants, reportedly at the end of the technique, turn the negative thoughts into something positive. It was also reported that these participants later portrayed decreased levels of PSA in an impromptu speech followed. Other studies reflect this technique as additional methods of positive motivation and self-talk. Past research shows that applying self-affirmations and motivational statements can reduce anxiety and enhance confidence (Mokhtar, 2025).

As mentioned above, speaking to a quite large audience may significantly lower a person's confidence. With this in mind, Raja (2017) also emphasizes the need for individuals to begin by presenting to smaller groups. By doing this initial exposure, it will allow them to build a solid foundation of confidence and as their comfort level increases, the size of the audience can be increased, assisting them to adapt without being too overwhelmed. Nonetheless, being well prepared and knowledgeable about the topics to be presented is important. It is a coping mechanism to avoid being at loss during a speech and in ensuring smoother, successful presentations.

### ***Past studies on cause of Public Speaking Anxiety***

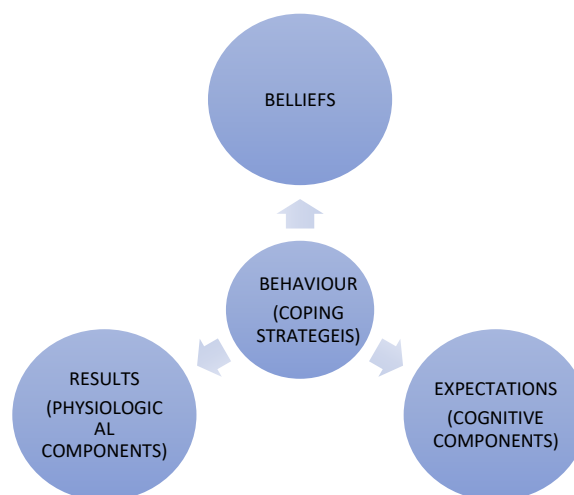
Public speaking anxiety (PSA) is a phenomenon influenced by a complex interaction of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social factors. In recent years, scholars have deepened their investigation into the underlying causes of PSA, particularly among undergraduate students, to identify patterns that can inform more effective pedagogical strategies. One of the most cited causes of PSA is fear of negative evaluation, where individuals experience apprehension due to the possibility of being judged or criticized by an audience. Demir and Khan (2025) believed that this is especially prevalent in academic contexts, where grades, peer comparison, and performance standards add to the pressure. Studies have found that students with high levels of social anxiety often perceive speaking tasks as threatening, which exacerbates their physiological and psychological discomfort (Archbell and Koplan, 2022). Low self-efficacy is another critical contributor. In a study done by Dansieh et al. (2021), students who believe they lack the ability to perform well in public speaking situations are more likely to experience anxiety. This perception often stems from past negative experiences, lack of preparation, or absence of proper feedback. When students internalize these beliefs, they develop negative speaking scripts that undermine their confidence (Boté, 2022). Recent research has also highlighted the role of language proficiency, particularly among non-native English speakers, in amplifying PSA. Aligned with Permatasari (2024) in her study who mentioned that students who are not confident in their language abilities fear mispronunciation, grammatical errors, or limited vocabulary, which can lead to withdrawal from speaking opportunities. In multicultural learning environments, linguistic anxiety often intersects with cultural identity and self-expression challenges.

Perfectionism has also emerged as a modern psychological factor affecting PSA. Students who set excessively high standards for their speech delivery often experience intense anxiety when they perceive a discrepancy between their performance and expectations. Accordingly, perfectionism is closely linked with fear of failure and self-criticism, leading to cognitive distortions that increase anxiety. Furthermore, lack of exposure and practice contributes significantly to PSA. Many undergraduate students

report having had limited opportunities to engage in public speaking prior to university (Chen, 2024). As a result, they lack the experiential learning needed to desensitize themselves to audience attention and stage presence.

### ***Conceptual framework of the study***

Public speaking anxiety is a common condition faced by even experienced speakers. The anxiety is caused by a variety of factors. One common factor is the condition of the environment (Rahmat, 2019). The speaker's environment can either encourage the speaker or in many cases cause anxiety. *Figure 1* shows the conceptual framework of the study. This study is anchored from Self-Fulfilling Prophecy by Merton (1948) combined with the factors for public speaking anxiety by Bartholomay and Houlihan (2016). Merton (1948) theory states that anxiety begins with a learner's belief and expectations. This is manifested in the person's behaviour. This behaviour then influences the result of the activity. In the context of public speaking, this prophecy begins with the speaker having: (a) beliefs and (b) expectations of the oncoming public speaking activity/assessment. The learners believe that they would do well or even not do well. This belief stems from what they expect from themselves or the audience. Nevertheless, this study combines the concept of Merton (1948) (c) behaviour with coping strategies that learners make use of. Learners may rehearse multiple times, use breathing techniques, visualize success, avoid eye contact with the audience or even seek assurance from their teacher or peers. Using these behaviours (successfully) may lead to (d) results of the presentation. In the context of this study, the results may be manifested through cognitive components by Bartholomay and Houlihan (2016). This study explores the relationship of learners' behaviour (through their coping strategies) with their beliefs. This study also looked at the learners' behaviour and their expectations. This study also investigates the relationship between behaviour and results of the public speaking activity.



***Figure 1.*** Conceptual framework of the study: The influence of behaviour (Coping strategies) on self-fulfilling prophecy in public speaking.

## Materials and Methods

This quantitative study is done to explore public speaking anxiety through the theory of self-fulfilling prophecy. A convenient sample of 113 participants responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5 Likert-scale survey. *Table 1* shows the categories used for the Likert scale; 1 is for Never, 2 is for Rarely, 3 is for Sometimes 4 is for Very Often and 5 is for Always. *Table 2* shows the distribution of items in the survey. This study is anchored from Merton (1948) classic theory of self-fulfilling prophecy and the instrument is adopted from Bartholomay and Houlihan (2016) to reveal the variables in table below. Section B has 4 items on Beliefs. Section C has 8 items on Expectations. Section D has 5 items on Behaviour and section E has 5 items on Results. *Table 3* also shows the reliability of the survey. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .892, thus, revealing a good reliability of the instrument chosen (Jackson, 2015). Further analysis using SPSS is done to present findings to answer the research questions for this study.

**Table 1.** Likert scale use in this study.

Category	Description
1	Never
2	Rarely
3	Sometimes
4	Very Often
5	Always

**Table 2.** Distribution of items in the survey.

No	Self-fulfilling prophecy	Variable	Sub-category
B	Beliefs	Beliefs on public speaking	4
C	Expectations	Cognitive	8
D	Behaviour	Coping strategies	5
E	Results	Physiological	5
Total items			22

**Table 3.** Reliability statistics.

Cronbach Alpha	No of items
.892	22

## Results and Discussion

### Demographic analysis

*Table 4* presents the percentage for demographic profile of the respondents. Three prominent aspects were examined inclusive of gender, reflections on their English proficiency and their academic discipline. The majority of the respondents were female students, making up 79 percent of the whole sample. 97 percent of the students reported that they can communicate in English and more than half of them (63%) were enrolled within programmes of the social sciences stream.

**Table 4.** Percentage for demographic profile.

Question	Demographic profile	Categories	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	21%
		Female	79%
2	Self-Rating English Proficiency	Can communicate in English	97%
		Cannot communicate in English	3%
3	Course of Study	Science Stream	37%

### Descriptive statistics

This section presents data to answer research question: (1) How do students perceive their beliefs in public speaking? *Figure 2* shows the mean for beliefs for public speaking. Item 4 (mean=4, SD=0.9) states that encouragement from others helped learners believe they would succeed. Next, Item 1 (mean=3.7,SD=0.9) states that if the learners believed they would do well, they would perform better. Item 2 (mean=3.6,SD=1.0) states that the learners' fear of failure made them perform worse. Finally, item 3 (mean=2.9, SD=0.8) states that the learners perceived what they expected would happen during their speech usually came true. This section presents data to answer research question: (2) How do students perceive their expectations in public speaking? *Figure 3* presents the mean scores and standard deviations for students' expectations in public speaking, revealing a generally moderate to high level of public speaking anxiety and low confidence. The highest mean scores were recorded for the statements "I am afraid that I will be at a loss for words while speaking" and "I am nervous that I will embarrass myself in front of the audience", both at M=3.9, indicating a strong concern among students about losing control and facing judgment during speeches. Similarly, "I am worried that my audience will think I am a bad speaker" scored M=3.8, suggesting fear of negative evaluation is a major source of anxiety. Statements related to internal control, such as "I am not confident when I give a speech" and "If I make a mistake in my speech, I am unable to re-focus", also had moderately high mean scores of M=3.5, pointing to students' low self-efficacy in managing their performance. The lowest mean was observed for "I cannot focus on what I am saying during my speech" (M=3.1), though it still suggests a noticeable level of distraction and self-doubt. Overall, the findings highlight that students generally perceive their public speaking expectations negatively, marked by fear, lack of control, and low self-confidence.

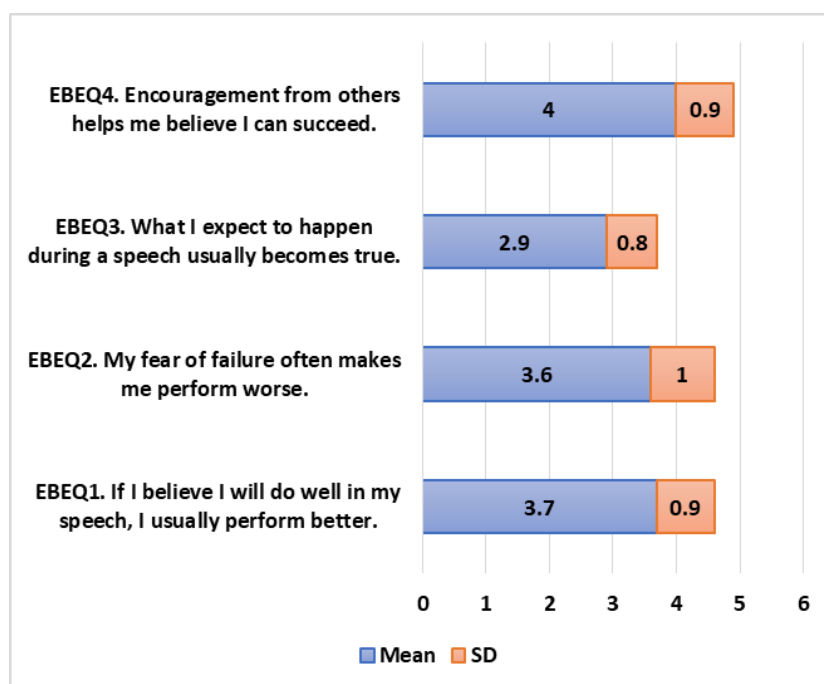


Figure 2. Mean for beliefs.

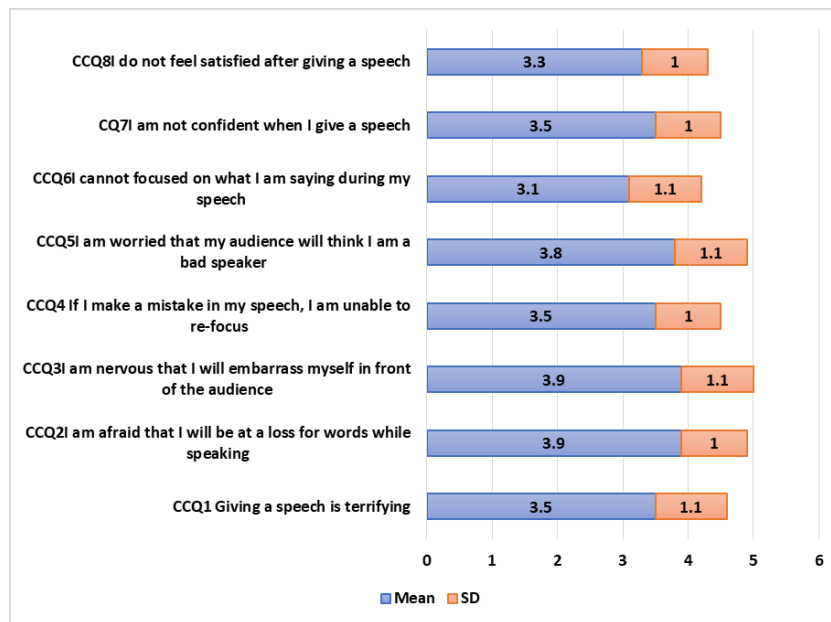
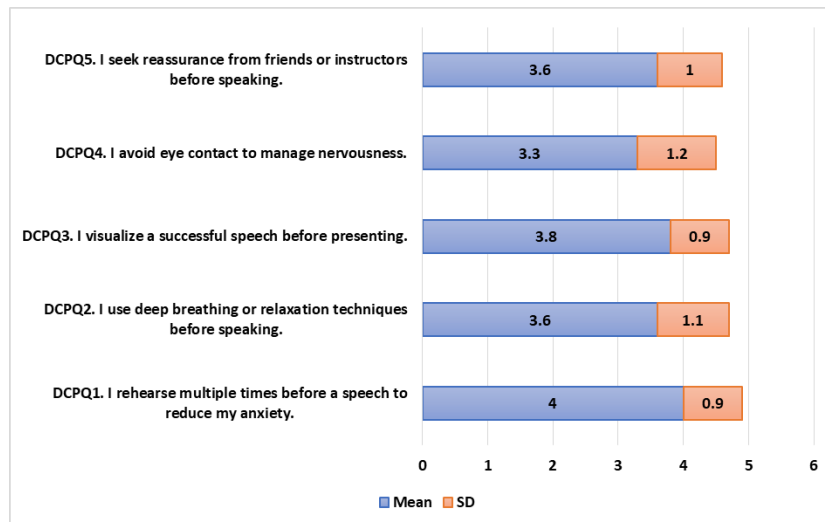


Figure 3. Mean for expectations.

Figure 4 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for students' coping strategies during public speaking. The highest mean score was recorded for the strategy "I rehearse multiple times before a speech to reduce my anxiety" (M=4.0), indicating that thorough preparation is a primary approach employed by students to manage speech-related anxiety. This was followed by "I visualize a successful speech before presenting" (M=3.8), suggesting that visualization techniques are effective in helping students regulate their anxiety. The strategies "I use deep breathing or relaxation techniques before speaking" and "I seek reassurance from friends or instructors before speaking" both yielded a mean score of 3.6, highlighting the positive role of relaxation methods and social support in alleviating anxiety. The lowest mean score (M=3.3) was observed for "I avoid eye contact to manage nervousness". Although maintaining eye contact is widely regarded as an essential component of effective public speaking, these findings suggest that, for some students, deliberately avoiding eye contact may serve as a temporary coping mechanism to reduce anxiety.



**Figure 4.** Mean for behaviour (Coping strategies).

This section presents data to answer research question: (3) How do students perceive results in public speaking anxiety? In the context of this study, the results from learners' behaviour during public speaking is manifested into the results of the speech activity (Figure 5). The mean and standard deviation for the physiological components of public speaking anxiety (PSA) are presented in the table above. It proposes that the respondents experience significant physical symptoms such as increased heart rates, with the highest mean scores ("My heart pounds when I give a speech,"  $M=3.9$ ,  $SD=0.9$ ) and feeling tense ("I feel tense before giving a speech,"  $M=3.8$ ,  $SD=0.8$ ). It is also reported that the respondents experienced a notable lack of relaxation ("I do not feel relaxed while giving a speech,"  $M=3.5$ ,  $SD=1.0$ ). Other symptoms such as feeling sick and sweating, while still existing, had slightly lower mean scores ("I feel sick before speaking in front of a group,"  $M=3.1$ ,  $SD=1.0$  and "I sweat during my speech,"  $M=2.9$ ,  $SD=1.0$ ). These findings indicated that the most common physiological evidence of PSA among these undergraduate students are heightened muscle tension and cardiovascular responses compared to bodily effects like sickness or excessive sweating. Moreover, this data highlights the significant physical distress related to public speaking, which may be the key factor contributing to the negative self-fulfilling prophecies the students may experience.

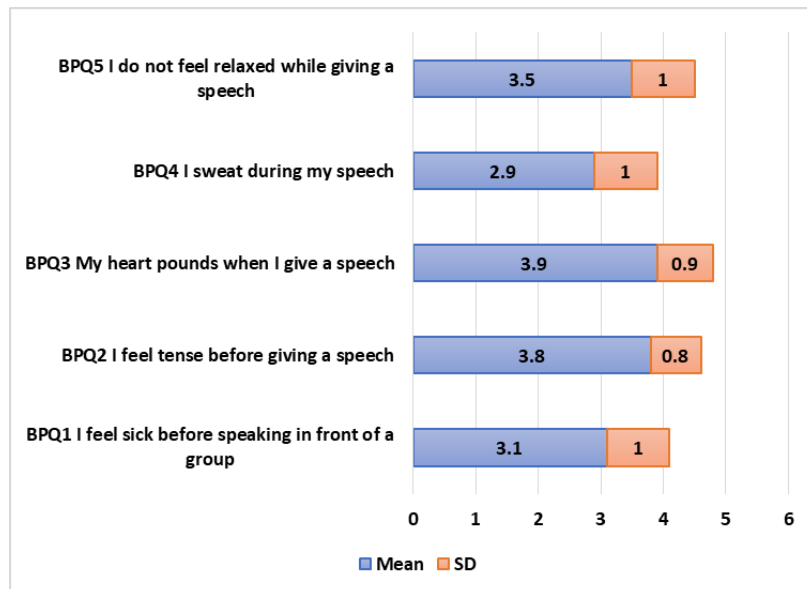


Figure 5. Mean for results (Physiological components).

**Exploratory statistics**

Findings for Relationship between behaviour and all aspects of self-fulfilling prophecy in public speaking anxiety. This section presents data to answer research question: (4) What is the relationship between behaviour and aspects of self-fulfilling prophecy in public speaking? To determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between all aspects of self-fulfilling prophecy in public speaking anxiety, data is analysed using SPSS for correlations. Results are presented separately in Table 5, Table 6 and Table 7. With reference to the conceptual framework in Figure 6, data is analysed to investigate the relationship between Behaviour (Coping Strategies) and aspects of the Self-Fulfilling prophecy.

**Table 5. Correlation between coping strategies and beliefs.**

Category		Coping strategies	Beliefs
Coping strategies	Pearson correlation	1	.505**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.000
	N	113	113
Belief	Pearson correlation	.505**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	-
	N	113	113

Note: \*\*Correlation is significant at the level 0.01(2-tailed).

**Table 6. Correlation between coping strategies and expectations.**

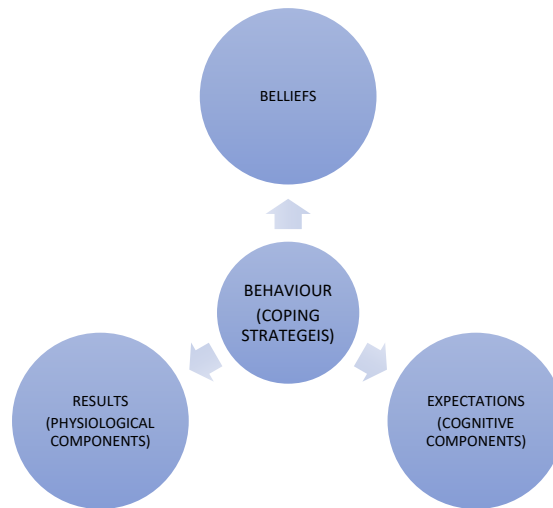
Category		Coping strategies	Expectations
Coping strategies	Pearson correlation	1	.317**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.000
	N	113	113
Expectations	Pearson correlation	.317**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	-
	N	113	113

Note: \*\*Correlation is significant at the level 0.01(2-tailed).

**Table 7.** Correlation between coping strategies and results.

Category		Coping strategies	Results
Coping strategies	Pearson correlation	1	.314**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.000
	N	113	113
Results	Pearson correlation	.314**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	-
	N	113	113

Note: \*\*Correlation is significant at the level 0.01(2-tailed).



**Figure 6.** Conceptual framework of the study:

*The influence of behaviour (Coping strategies) on self-fulfilling prophecy in public speaking.*

Table 5 shows there is an association between coping strategies and beliefs. Correlation analysis shows that there is a high significant association between social coping strategies and beliefs ( $r=.505^{**}$  and  $p=.000$ ). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a strong positive relationship between coping strategies and beliefs. Table 6 shows there is an association between coping strategies and expectations. Correlation analysis shows that there is a moderate significant association between coping strategies and expectations ( $r=.317^{**}$  and  $p=.000$ ). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a moderate positive relationship between coping strategies and expectations. Table 7 shows there is an association between coping strategies and results. Correlation analysis shows that there is a moderate significant association between social coping strategies and results ( $r=.314^{**}$  and  $p=.000$ ). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a moderate positive relationship between coping strategies and results.

This study seeks to evaluate five prominent aspects of public speaking anxiety among students which consist of their beliefs and expectations in public speaking, their behaviours, how they perceive results in public speaking anxiety, and the relationship between behaviour and aspects of self-fulfilling prophecy in public speaking. Students in general believe that affirmations from others and self-belief help them to succeed in public speaking. This finding challenges the claim by Inyai (2024) which states that support by others does not directly influence mindset in public speaking performances. In view of this, this study also reveals that students are concerned about losing control or confidence during public speaking, particularly in situations of being at a loss for words or embarrassing themselves in front of others. This echoes the findings of Ramadhani (2025) which states that anxiety primarily stems from fear of making mistakes and being judged negatively during public speaking. Other factors such as lack of control and low self-confidence are also contributing to public speaking anxiety. This fear of receiving negative evaluations supports by the notion that heightened self-criticism among students can contribute to increased levels of anxiety. The results further indicate that students are generally not easily distracted and do not really experience self-doubt when giving a speech, contrasting to Archbell and Koplan (2022) conclusion that students perceive speaking tasks as inherently threatening.

The findings further highlight that students rehearse their speech multiple times as a behavioral strategy to reduce anxiety. Alongside practice, the students also inculcate positive mindsets in terms of visualising a successful delivery prior to their presentation. These two behaviours reflect that the students not only physically practice but also cognitively internalise a good speech for their presentation. This aligns with the study by Boté (2022) who indicated that self-belief internalisation directly affects speakers' confidence in public speaking. When presenting, students were found to experience cardiovascular responses and physical distress due to like the negative self-fulfilling prophecies. In light of this, Martínez Valera (2024) also indicated that these physiological components are apparent among students within state, trait and social anxiety. This highlights that physiological reactions are closely related to cognitive and emotional conditions. To reflect on the coping strategies, the finding uncovers that there exists a moderate positive relationship between coping strategies and expectations. A study by Dansieh et al. (2021) supports this hypothesis and concludes that students who believe that they lack ability to perform well in public speaking are more likely to experience heightened anxiety.

In sum, this research has uncovered how students manage their beliefs and expectations in public speaking, how they behave in giving presentations, alongside how they perceive outcomes of public speaking anxiety, and the relationship between behaviour and aspects of the self-fulfilling prophecy in public speaking. This study has provided empirical insights and evidence on the correlation between cognitive, behavioral and outcome-related features of public speaking anxiety and how perceptions impact students' performance. The applications of Merton's self-fulfilling prophecy framework and the work by Bartholomay and Houlihan (2016) deliver grounded theoretical perspectives that aid the understanding of how students can manage their beliefs, expectations and eventually their anxiety in public speaking.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study give meaningful contributions to both theoretical understanding and conceptual development in the area of public speaking anxiety and coping strategies among students. Theoretically, the findings align with the core propositions of Self-fulfilling Prophecy theory and Coping Strategies for Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) that evidently show a strong relationship between coping strategies and belief at ( $r=.505^{**}$ ) and ( $p=.000$ ). This further explains that coping strategies like multiple rehearsals which appear to be the highest for a mean score ( $M=4$ ), followed by visualization ( $M=3.8$ ), breathing techniques along with peers' and teachers' support ( $M=3.6$ ) and eye contact ( $M=3.3$ ) can boost positive belief on students' ability when presenting a speech. Meanwhile, the moderate positive relationship between coping strategies and performance expectations shows that expectations operate not only as mental appraisals but also as important factors of coping behaviors. This is again related to students with positive self-expectations who tend to opt for the mentioned coping strategies in turn, reduce anxiety and enhance performance. From a conceptual perspective, the findings of the study contribute to proposing a model of coping strategies that represent students' preferences and effectiveness in managing their public speaking anxiety. The strategies can specifically categorise and focus at five important areas which are preparation (rehearsal), cognitive imagery (visualization), physiological regulation (breathing techniques), social reassurance (peers' and teachers' support), and, lastly, adaptive avoidance behavior (eye contact). This conceptual framework provides an extensive comprehensive of how beliefs, expectations, and coping behaviors interact in shaping public speaking outputs. It also offers practical insights in the discipline of educational psychology and communication studies, particularly in creating suitable interventions that prioritize high-impact strategies while progressively addressing behaviors that hinder long-term competence.

The findings from the research have significant implications pedagogically to educators whose aim is to help students manage their PSA. The results reveal that students experience high levels of cognitive, behavioral, and physiological distress when required to get involved in public speaking activities. Thus, a more multi-faceted approach is needed. Firstly, educators should actively incorporate strategies like rehearsals and visualization into public speaking assignments. Plus, the strong correlation between coping strategies and beliefs ( $r=.505^{**}$ ) suggests that validating these mechanisms may directly influence students' self-perceptions and confidence. This solidifies the idea that helping students with practical preparations can help replace the negative self-fulfilling prophecies with positive ones. As it is in the evidence that negative expectations and physiological symptoms are the main barriers, educators must also include cognitive restructuring and mindfulness into their teaching in which students learn to identify and restructure their negative thoughts. To illustrate, educators may guide students from thinking "I will embarrass myself" to "I am well-prepared, a small mistake is not a failure." This will assist students in times of "at a loss for words" ( $M=3.9$ ) and worrying about audience judgment ( $M=3.8$ ) as revealed by the study.

Lastly, to address physiological issues such as increased heart rate and feeling tense, educators may need to introduce simple breathing exercises at the beginning of the session or the presentation. This technique not only assists them to manage their physical responses in front of the audience but also prepares them for other stressful situations. The study highlights the complexity of PSA as it is driven by cognitive,

physiological and behavioral factors. Based on the results revealed, future research should investigate the long-term effects of the coping mechanisms like rehearsals, visualization, and emotional support, alongside the specific roles of social support and peer mentorship. Going forward with the digitalization of education, future researchers should also adapt these mechanisms into both virtual and hybrid presentations. The combination of the study's quantitative insights with qualitative data on students' experiences might also provide a more thorough understanding of PSA, ensuring a more effective pedagogical approach for educators worldwide.

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### **Conflict of interest**

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

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