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# A Quantitative Study of the Association Between Self-Efficacy and Public Speaking Anxiety in Students

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## INTRODUCTION

- Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's beliefs about their capacity to execute a necessary plan of action in potential situations (Bandura, 1977).
- According to Byrne and colleagues (2012), research has indicated that fear of peer evaluation can lead to increased anxiety in individuals who have higher levels of oral communication anxiety. They discovered that in relation to public speaking anxiety, students who are more comfortable with the speaking material and feel more prepared have lower anxiety in those situations.
- Individuals with higher self-efficacy expect a positive outcome from their effort versus individuals with low self-efficacy who expect that they will do poorly, even with effort (Bradley et al., 2017).

### Research Question:

- Is self-efficacy related to public speaking anxiety?

### Hypothesis:

- Self-efficacy will be negatively associated with public speaking anxiety in students.

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

- 44 college students recruited through the UMW general psychology subject pool
- Mean Age = 19.00 ( $SD = 1.57$ )
- Predominantly female (72.7%)
- Predominantly Caucasian (68.2%)

### Procedure

- Participants completed the General Self-Efficacy Scale, the assigned anxiety inducing speech task, and the Public Speaking Anxiety Scale.
- The study was conducted on Qualtrics on a personal device with audio and video recording capabilities.

### Measures

- General Self-Efficacy Scale** (Schwarzer, 1995): Higher scores reflect higher levels of self-efficacy.
  - 10 Likert questions
  - Belief in capabilities
- Public Speaking Anxiety Scale** (Bartholomay, 2010): Higher scores reflect greater public speaking anxiety.
  - 17 Likert questions
  - Questions 6, 7, 8, 16, 17 were reverse coded
  - Anxiety experienced during speech

## ANXIETY INDUCING TASK

Participants were assigned to record themselves giving a speech from the following excerpt of *Finnegans Wake* (Joyce, 1939). The purpose of this task was to induce speaking anxiety.

"Thus the unfacts, did we possess them, are too imprecisely few to warrant our certitude, the evidencegivers by legpoll too untrustworthily irreperible where his adjudgers are semmingly freak threes but his judicandees plainly minus twos. Nevertheless Madam's Toshiwus waxes largely more lifeliked (entrance, one kudos; exits, free) and our notional gullery is now completely complacent, an exegious monument, aerily perennial. Oblige with your blackthorns; gamps, de grace! And there many have paused before that exposure of him by old Tom Quad, a flashback in which he sits sated, gowndabout, in clericalease habit, watching bland sol slithe dodgsomely into the nethermore, a globule of maugdleness about to corrugitate his mild dewed cheek and the tata of a tiny victorienne, Alys, pressed by his limper looser."

### TABLE 1

Correlations Between Public Speaking Anxiety and Self-Efficacy

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2
1. Self-efficacy	44	28.93	5.37	-	
2. Public speaking anxiety	35	45.37	13.37	-.47**	-

Note: \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

## RESULTS

- There was a significant negative correlation,  $r(33) = -0.47$ ,  $p = 0.004$ , between self-efficacy and public speaking anxiety.
  - As self-efficacy increased, public speaking anxiety decreased.
  - 22.09% of the variance in public speaking anxiety can be explained by self-efficacy.
  - We supported our hypothesis that the participants' anxiety toward public speaking was related to their levels of self-efficacy.

## DISCUSSION

- The results suggest that there is a relationship between a person's level of self-efficacy and their levels of anxiety related to public speaking situations.
- These results suggest that the average university student may benefit from self-efficacy building activities in order to improve their public speaking and communication skills.
- These results should be interpreted in the context of several limitations, such as the homogenous sample (predominantly 18-20 year old, Caucasian, female college students).
- Future research could be done to expand upon our findings, including conducting an in-person design, which is more realistic for most public speaking situations.

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