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Exploring Psychological State and Performance Within the Speech Contest EFL Competitors

[*1]I Ketut Wardana, [2]I Nyoman Adi Susrawan, [3]Ni Luh Sukanadi
[1,2,3]Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar
Bali, Indonesia
*[1]ketutwardana71@unmas.ac.id; [2]adisusrawan@unmas.ac.id;
[3]luhsukanadi@gmail.com

Abstract. Research into the mental well-being of students participating in English speech competitions and its influence on their performance is limited. Thus, this investigation aimed to analyze and compare the mental conditions, including depression, anxiety, and stress, among English speech contestants. Using a quantitative approach with a correlational design, the research included a sample of 60 participants. from 60 schools in Badung Regency. Given the population size was under 100, all participants were included, though 21 were later disqualified, resulting in 39 eligible competitors. Research tools encompassed a 7-minute English speech test and a Depression Anxiety Stress (DAS) questionnaire. Analysis entailed descriptive techniques, including correlation and simple regression t-tests. Initial findings revealed that 54% of participants experienced "mild" depression, 95% encountered "moderate" anxiety, and 59% underwent "mild" stress. Moreover, 58% performed "very well," while 43% presented "well" in their speeches. Notably, a significant correlation existed (depression (r= 0.661), anxiety (r= 0.867), stress (r= 0.929)) between psychological pressure and speech performance. The findings emphasize the need to bolster participants' confidence and alleviate apprehension as lower levels of anxiety and stress were associated with better speech performance.

Keywords: psychological condition; speaking skill; achievement

Introduction

English speech contests often held by educational institutions during language months or other national events provide participants with opportunities to demonstrate their English-speaking skills. Although English speech contests can serve as indicators of speaking proficiency, these outcomes do not necessarily reflect participants' real abilities (Linck et al., 2014). This is because English speaking skills are not about memorizing monologues on specific topics but rather about expressing personal ideas in the context of real-life phenomena. However, at the very least, English speech contests can test participants' mental resilience and

*Corresponding author: *I Ketut Wardana, ketutwardana71@unmas.ac.id*

basic speaking skills (Connaughton et al., 2008). In other words, these outcomes can provide a concrete picture of each participant's level of fluency, pronunciation, comprehension, and communicative skills (Salamonson et al., 2019). Achieving the target of winning the contest often hinders students due to psychological pressures, such as depression, anxiety, and stress, alongside various symptoms. The emotional disturbances can indeed serve as barriers to students' achievement targets, but they can also be challenges to overcome through a positive attitude.

Depression, anxiety, and stress are inherent aspects of behavior in any language learning and mastery endeavor. While these emotional disturbances may pose challenges and act as barriers to students' achievement targets, they also present opportunities for growth and resilience (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). By fostering a positive attitude and adopting effective coping strategies, according to Lee et al., (2020), learners can navigate through these challenges and emerge stronger. Recognizing and addressing these emotional factors as a natural part of the language learning journey is essential for promoting mental well-being and facilitating overall academic success (Gueldner et al., 2020). All these disturbances occur due to internal and external factors of the participants (Tran & Moni, 2015). Internally, participants may struggle to convert negative energy from their thoughts and desires into positive outcomes, leading to feelings of fear of failure, pre-competition defeatism, and worry about ridicule if their desired targets are not met. Externally, teachers, institutions, and peers may burden participants with performance expectations according to their targets, thus leading to varying degrees of psychological pressure.

Nevertheless, numerous studies have delved into the emotional challenges encountered during English language acquisition and proficiency in Indonesia. For instance, Wahyuni (2018) sheds light on anxiety levels among university students learning English, demonstrating its significant impact on academic achievement and language proficiency. Additionally, Dajuela et al., (2024) found that students at Sulangon National High School exhibited moderate English learning, with high motivation positively influencing language skills. Similarly, Han et al.,2022) revealed the detrimental effect of anxiety on academic success, while also highlighting the mediating role of emotional intelligence communication in mitigating this impact.

Theoretical underpinnings from previous research integrate psychological theories, emphasizing the substantial role of psychological pressure, including depression, anxiety, and stress, in language learning (Han et al., 2022).. Studies have consistently shown how these factors influence various facets of language acquisition, such as motivation, proficiency, and performance. For instance, Gardner (2010) states that socio-educational model underscores the influence of affective variables like anxiety and motivation on language learning outcomes. Similarly, Horwitz (2017) highlighted the inhibiting effect of anxiety on language acquisition and performance. Furthermore, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) emphasized the relationship between psychological factors and language anxiety, advocating for interventions to alleviate anxiety and promote effective language-learning strategies. Hence, recognizing and addressing psychological pressure in language learning is pivotal for enhancing learners' language acquisition and performance.

Even though previous research on the correlation between anxiety or stress and English language learning outcomes has been conducted, investigations into psychological conditions before, during, and after speech competitions, and how they correlate with performance, remain unexplored. Consequently, the objectives of the study are (1) to provide evidence about the psychological conditions of participants and their speech performance; (2) to determine the significance of the relationship between psychological pressure and speech performance, and (3) to explain the influence of psychological pressure on the quality of participants' speeches. These findings contribute to the psychological examination of EFL learners in language skill acquisition and validate the relationship between psychological burden and student learning outcomes, allowing teaching strategies to be tailored based on learning experiences, achievement goals, and contextual language interactions.

Psychological State

This study synthesizes and summarizes theories and previous studies regarding depression, anxiety, stress, and speaking achievement. Depression, anxiety, and stress are recognized as significant factors that can adversely affect language proficiency among learners. High levels of psychological pressure can impede various cognitive processes crucial for language acquisition and proficiency. For instance, research by Zheng and Cheng (2018) highlights the detrimental impact of anxiety on concentration, memory recall, and information processing, all of which are fundamental for effective language learning. Moreover, anxiety and stress often lead to avoidance behaviors, as elucidated by studies such as that of Feng and Mohd Rawian (2023) who mention that earlier researches tend to reveal a negative association between learners' anxiety and working memory. Anxiety constrains the control system of attention, leading to detrimental effects on learners' searching memory. It can be stated that learners may shy away from challenging language tasks or situations that trigger their anxiety, thereby reducing their exposure to language input and opportunities for practice, consequently hindering their language development.

Furthermore, psychological pressure can directly interfere with language production skills, such as speaking and writing. Horwitz et al., (1986) suggest that individuals experiencing anxiety or stress may struggle to articulate themselves effectively, resulting in decreased fluency and accuracy in spoken and written language. This is consistent with findings by MacIntyre (2007) which suggest that psychological pressure can impair language performance during assessments or communicative tasks, leading to underachievement and lower proficiency scores. Strategies such as implementing stress-reduction techniques, fostering a positive and encouraging classroom atmosphere, and providing resources for learners to cope with anxiety and stress effectively are essential, as emphasized by studies (Mercer, 2019).

Depression, as highlighted by studies such as those by Buist-Bouwman et al., (2008) and Post and Warden (2018), is associated with emotions, such as unhappiness, hopelessness, and diminished interest or drive-in activities and also applies to the process of language learning. Learners experiencing depression may struggle to engage with language materials, leading to decreased motivation and performance in language tasks. Anxiety, on the other hand, is a common phenomenon in language learning contexts, as illustrated by research by Denkci

Akkaş et al.,(2020)) and MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012). Language anxiety, specifically, can manifest as fear or apprehension when using or learning a second language, inhibiting learners' ability to communicate effectively. This can result in avoidance behaviors and hinder language acquisition and proficiency development.

Stress, as studied by Biggs et al., (2017), is another significant factor affecting language learning. Stress can arise from various sources, such as academic pressure, social interactions, or personal challenges, and can impact learners' cognitive functioning and emotional well-being. High levels of stress can impair concentration, memory recall, and information processing, all of which are essential for effective language learning.

This study believes that depression, anxiety, and stress in language learning underscore the importance of addressing learners' emotional well-being and providing support mechanisms to mitigate psychological stressors. Educators and language instructors should be cognizant of the influence of these psychological aspects on language acquisition and mastery, and devise tactics to establish a nurturing and favorable learning atmosphere. The strategy includes promoting learner autonomy, fostering positive attitudes toward language learning, and providing opportunities for stress reduction and relaxation techniques.

English Speaking Acquisition

A notable theory within the realm of language acquisition is the Input Hypothesis, advanced by Krashen (1993, 1994). This theory posits that individuals acquire language abilities by being exposed to understandable input, which refers to language input that is marginally more advanced than the learners' current proficiency level. In the context of English speech acquisition, learners benefit from exposure to spoken English that is comprehensible and engaging, facilitating the development of oral proficiency over time. Similarly, the Interactionist Perspective, as discussed by Long (2017), underscores the significance of social engagement and communication in the process of language acquisition. Pica (1987) asserts that learners develop language proficiency through meaningful interactions with native speakers of the target language, enabling them to hone and enhance their speaking skills. In English speech acquisition, opportunities for authentic communication and interaction with native or proficient speakers play a crucial role in developing oral proficiency.

Furthermore, Cognitive Theories of Speech Acquisition, inspired by the Cognitive Learning Theory of Piaget (1952), underscore the importance of cognitive processes in the acquisition of language. According to this theory, learners engage in the active construction of their language understanding through cognitive mechanisms like assimilation and accommodation. In the context of English speech acquisition, according to Kormos (2014), learners engage in cognitive processes to internalize linguistic structures and develop oral communication skills. The integration of theories related to English speech acquisition with the understanding of psychological factors such as depression, anxiety, and stress provides a comprehensive framework for addressing challenges in language learning. Educators and language instructors can utilize these theoretical insights to design effective language teaching methodologies and interventions that promote the development of oral proficiency in English while addressing learners' emotional well-being.

This study confirms that examining theories related to English speech acquisition alongside theories of psychological factors enriches our understanding of the complexities involved in language learning. By integrating theoretical insights from both domains, educators and language instructors can create holistic and effective approaches to support learners in achieving success in English speech acquisition.

1. How do the levels of depression, anxiety, stress, and speech performance vary among competition participants, and what factors contribute to these psychological conditions?
2. Is there a notable correlation between the levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among participants and their performance in the competition?

Method

To describe the psychological state of English speech contest competitors and investigate the correlation between depression, anxiety, stress, and speech performance, the study utilized a quantitative methodology with a correlational design. This design allows for the exploration of potential links between various factors, providing valuable insights into the interplay between language acquisition and psychological health. This approach aimed to assess the presence and strength of any relationship between these variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The population was Middle High School students taken from 60 schools in Badung Regency with each school represented by one participant. As the population size is below 100, all participants were included in this study. However, due to the disqualification of 21 participants, only 39 participants qualified for the speech contest selection process. This sampling approach ensures a comprehensive representation of the target population while addressing practical constraints. The participants performed a 7 minutes speech in English choosing 1 of 10 provided topics. After the speech, each participant was obliged to answer a question from one of three Judges.

The research instruments utilized in this study include speech performance tests as well as a non-test instrument in the form of the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress (DAS) questionnaire. These instruments are designed to measure participants' language proficiency and psychological well-being, providing comprehensive data for analysis. Before analyzing the participants' responses to 21 statements about depression, anxiety, and stress, the individual mean scores were tested for validity and reliability using SPSS software.

The depression questionnaire underwent validation using the Pearson product-moment correlation test for all its items. An item is deemed valid if its correlation coefficient (r) exceeds the critical value from the r-table or if the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is less than 0.05 and positive. Based on the validity test results, the calculated correlation coefficients for items 1 through 7 are 0.669, 0.666, 0.475, 0.697, 0.582, 0.656, and 0.367, respectively. All correlation coefficients exceed the threshold, and all items have a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Thus, all items are declared valid as data collection tools.

In reliability testing, decision-making entails that if Cronbach's Alpha value exceeds 0.60 (Goss et al., 2007), or surpasses the critical value from the r-table (Ardini, 2021), then all items within the questionnaire are considered reliable or

consistent. Hence, in this study, since the Cronbach's Alpha value for depression is 0.687, surpassing both the threshold of 0.60 and the r-table value of 0.316, all items within the depression questionnaire are deemed reliable, trustworthy, and consistent as data collection tools for this research.

The research procedure involves multiple stages, including participant recruitment, data collection, and analysis. Initially, participants were chosen from the school population in Badung Regency and underwent screening to ensure eligibility for participation in the speech contest. The participants performed the speech for only 7 minutes. Three judges assessed the performance with a 0 -100 scale. Four components of speech assessment were referred to, such as pronunciation, fluency, comprehension, and expression. Each score from the judges was then calculated to rank the winners. After the show, the participant was requested to respond to the questionnaire sent by links. Data were then classified and analyzed.

Correlation tests were carried out to investigate the connection between psychological pressure and participants' speech performance with the significance level set at $\alpha = 0.05$ (Field, 2024). The correlation test output is interpreted based on the significance value (Sig, 2-tailed), the asterisk (*) value in SPSS with a significance level of 1%, and the Pearson correlation coefficient (r). A simple linear regression t-test was also utilized to examine the impact of independent variables (depression, anxiety, stress) on the dependent variable (speech performance) at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. Two hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

1. H0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant correlation between participants' levels of depression, anxiety, stress, and their speech performance.
2. H1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant correlation between participants' levels of depression, anxiety, stress, and their speech performance.

Findings and Discussion

There are two sets of data analyzed to prove the hypothesis and research objectives. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using DASS to explain the psychological conditions of participants in an English speech competition before, during, and after the competition. The second data set consists of raw and mean scores of participants' speeches, accumulated from three judges based on evaluation criteria. Thus, there are two research findings based on the two data analysis results: the explanation of the levels of psychological state among competition participants and the presence of any significant relationship between participants' psychological conditions and their performance.

Findings

This study identified four sets of mean values for depression, anxiety, stress, and competition scores. Each variable's mean value was calculated by dividing the total score by the number of participants and then multiplying by 100%. These mean values were subsequently translated into categories representing various levels of psychological condition or performance. For depression levels, categories include "normal" (0–9), "mild" (10–13), "moderate" (14–20), "severe" (21–27), and "extremely severe" (28+). Anxiety levels are categorized as "normal" (0–7), "mild" (8–9), "moderate" (10–14), "severe" (15–

19), and "extremely severe" (20+). Stress levels are categorized as "normal" (0–14), "mild" (15–18), "moderate" (19–25), "severe" (26–33), and "extremely severe" (34+). Speech proficiency levels are categorized as "very poor speech" (0–19), "poor speech" (20–39), "fair speech" (40–59), "good speech" (60–79), "very good speech" (80–89), and "excellent speech" (90–100). The distribution of mean scores for depression, anxiety, stress, and speech performance can be observed in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean Score for Depression, Anxiety, Stress, and Contest Score

measurement	Depression	Anxiety	Stress	Contest score
total	456	495	587	3160
mean	12	13	15	81
category	mild	moderate	mild	very good

The data overview provided in Table 2 presents a thorough representation of the general mental pressure levels and performance among speech participants. Participants demonstrated "mild" signs of depression, "moderate" indications of anxiety, and "mild" manifestations of stress. Aligning with these less severe levels of psychological pressure, the English speech performance is characterized as "very good." The percentage breakdown for depression, anxiety, stress, and competition scores can be depicted in Table 3.

Table 3. **Percentage of Distribution for Depression, Anxiety, Stress, and Contest Score**

Measurement	Depression	Anxiety	Stress	Measurement	Contest score
Normal	18 (46%)	2 (5%)	16 (41%)	Excellent	-
Mild	10 (26%)	2 (5%)	19 (49%)	Very good	28 (72%)
Moderate	10 (26%)	26 (67%)	4 (10%)	Good	12 (28%)
Severe	1 (2%)	9 (23%)	-	fair	-

The results of this study reveal that 46% of the participants in the competition reported not experiencing symptoms such as difficulty concentrating, feelings of hopelessness, mood swings, changes in energy levels, decreased performance, negative thoughts, or even sleep disturbances before the competition. Conversely, only 1 (2%) participant experienced all of these symptoms, potentially impacting their performance. Meanwhile, most participants experienced symptoms of anxiety. Only 2 (5%) did not experience anxiety symptoms such as physical tension, muscle tension, trembling or shaking, excessive sweating, restlessness, negative thoughts, inability to concentrate, panic feelings, and rapid heartbeat, while 5% experienced some anxiety symptoms, 67% experienced nearly all symptoms, and 23% experienced all of these symptoms. Regarding stress, 41% of participants did not experience stress symptoms. However, 49% experienced increased anxiety symptoms and time pressure, while 1% felt unable to relax, worried about judgment, felt pressured, and had difficulty concentrating. As for speech proficiency, 28% of participants were able to deliver messages, coherently, and confidently. They demonstrated a solid understanding of grammar and pronunciation, but there is still room for improvement. Meanwhile, 72% of

participants exhibited strong abilities in delivering messages, coherently, and engagingly. Their use of grammar and pronunciation was excellent. A graph depicting the level of the competitor's psychological pressure can be seen in Figure 1.

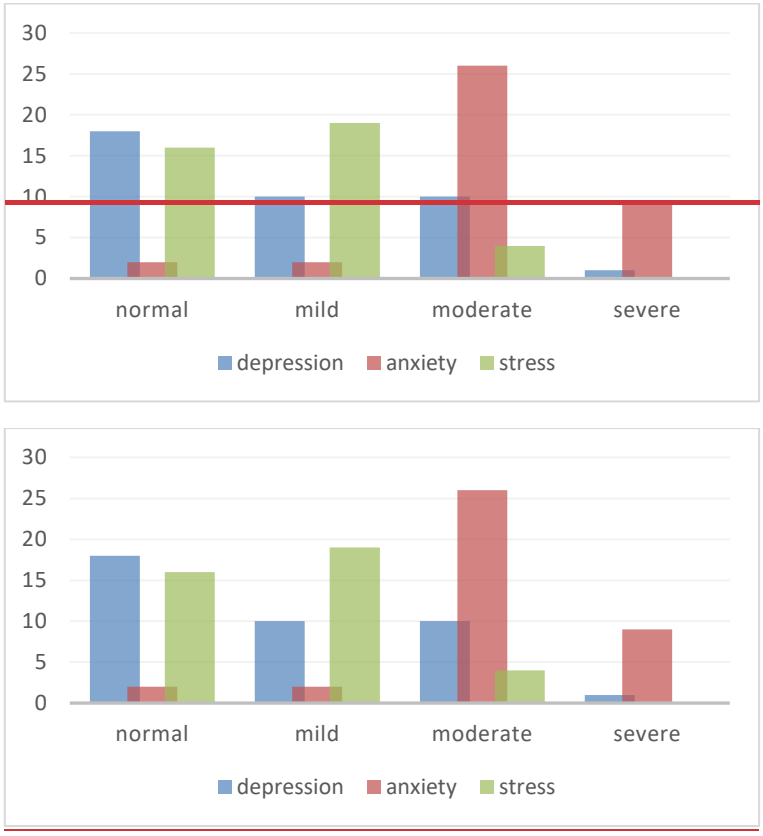

Figure 1. Graph Depicting the Level of Competitor's Psychological Pressure

Figure 1's bar chart illustrates the distribution of depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms among participants. The majority of participants experience symptoms of anxiety at a moderate level (67%), with a small portion experiencing severe symptoms. In contrast, the number of participants experiencing symptoms of depression or stress at moderate or severe levels is relatively low, with the majority falling into the mild category. Symptoms of anxiety appear to be the most common among participants, while symptoms of depression and stress tend to be fewer and at lower levels.

To analyze the correlation between variable X (depression, anxiety, stress) and variable Y (speech performance) using parametric statistical methods, the data need to exhibit homogeneity and follow a normal distribution pattern. Homogeneity testing is a crucial aspect of statistical analysis, particularly in correlation and t-tests. It serves to ascertain whether the variances across different data groups are consistent, thus guaranteeing the reliability of t-tests in assessing the significance of differences between groups. The outputs of homogeneity testing of speech performance are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4. **The Outputs of Homogeneity Testing of Speech Performance**

Test of Homogeneity of Variances					
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
speech contest	Based on Mean	.933	1	37	.340
	Based on Median	.873	1	37	.356
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.873	1	35.892	.356
	Based on trimmed mean	.948	1	37	.337

From the data provided, it is observed that the values of df2 differ across the methods, reflecting the total sample size used in the analysis. The significance values (Sig>0.05) associated with each method exceed 0.05 (e.g., 0.340, 0.356, 0.356, and 0.337), indicating a lack of significant evidence supporting variations in variance among speech performance, as determined by different measurement methods. As a result of the findings from the Levene test, it can be concluded that the variations among these groups do not show significant differences, indicating homogeneity. Conversely, the normality assessment evaluates whether the data conforms to a normal distribution, which is crucial for parametric analyses like t-tests and correlations. Considering the sample size is below 50, the Shapiro-Wilk test is utilized for the normality evaluation, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Group	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
speech contest	Group A	.153	20	.200*	.927	20	.138
	Group B	.144	19	.200*	.970	19	.783

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The Shapiro-Wilk normality test was performed on the speech contest dataset, yielding a statistic of 0.927 with 20 degrees of freedom and a significance value of 0.138. Similarly, for the second group, the Shapiro-Wilk test statistic is 0.970 with 19 degrees of freedom, and the significance value is 0.738. In both instances, the results of the normality tests indicate values exceeding the significance level of 0.05 (Sig>0.05), suggesting that the datasets adhere to a normal distribution. Following this, a Pearson correlation test was conducted to determine the presence and strength of correlations between depression, anxiety, stress, and participants' speech contest scores. The results of the Pearson correlation test are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. **Output of Pearson correlation Product Moment**

Correlations					
		depression	anxiety	stress	Speech score
depression	Pearson Correlation	1	.659**	.683**	.661**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	39	39	39	39
anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.659**	1	.847**	.867**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	39	39	39	39

stress	Pearson Correlation	.683**	.847**	1	.929**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	39	39	39	39
contest score	Pearson Correlation	.661**	.867**	.929**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	39	39	39	39

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

Firstly, the Sig. (2-tailed) value between the level of depression (X1) and speech score (Y) is 0.000 < 0.05, indicating a significant relationship between the level of depression and speech score. Similarly, the relationship between anxiety (X2) and speech score (Y) has a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 < 0.05, signifying a significant relationship between anxiety levels and speech score. Thirdly, the relationship between stress (X3) also exhibits a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 < 0.05, suggesting a significant relationship between participants' stress levels and their speech scores. The asterisk (*) values in SPSS indicate that the Pearson correlation coefficient between each variable (depression, anxiety, and stress) related to the speech score has two asterisks (**), denoting a correlation significance level of 1%.

Considering the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) value for the relationship between depression (X1) and speech score (Y), which is 0.661 > r table 0.316, it can be concluded that there is a strong and positive relationship between depression and speech score. Similarly, the Pearson correlation coefficient value for the relationship between anxiety (X2) and speech score (Y) is 0.867 > r table 0.316, indicating a strong and positive relationship between anxiety and speech score. On the other hand, the Pearson correlation coefficient value for the relationship between stress (X3) and speech score (Y) is 0.929 > r table 0.316, suggesting a strong and positive relationship. This implies that students with lower levels of stress among competitors demonstrate better speech performance. To assess the influence of participants' psychological pressure on their English speech scores, this research utilizes a simple linear regression t-test. The output of the simple regression t-test can be presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Distribution of Mean Score Depression

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	95.871	.957		100.220	.000
	depression	-.010	.089	-.009	-.107	.915
	anxiety	-.296	.115	-.283	-2.572	.014
	stress	-.729	.121	-.683	-6.022	.000

a. Dependent Variable: speech score

The results of a simple linear regression t-test for depression, as depicted in Table 3, show that the Sig. value is 0.915 > 0.05 and the t-value is smaller than the t-table (0.107 < 2.026). Thus, it can be deduced that depression does not have a significant impact on participants' speech performance. This finding suggests that

depression alone does not directly affect the quality of speech performance, as mood fluctuations may occur unpredictably. It is only when emotions remain stable and consistent that they may influence other variables. In contrast, the output of the simple linear regression t-test for anxiety indicates that the Sig. value is 0.014 < 0.05 and the t-value exceeds the t-table (2.572 > 2.026). Consequently, it can be inferred that anxiety does affect participants' speech performance. Similarly, the output of the simple linear regression t-test for stress demonstrates a Sig. value of 0.000 < 0.05, with the t-value surpassing the t-table (6.022 > 2.026). This suggests that stress does indeed influence participants' speech performance. These findings imply that psychological pressure experienced during competitions or examinations, stemming from demanding objectives, insufficient practice, limited experience, restricted knowledge, and minimal proficiency, can have a significant impact on speech performance.

Discussion

The outcomes of this research offer a detailed overview and important information about the psychological burden of participants before, during, and after the English speech competition. All data analysis results are aligned with the research objectives, which include explaining the psychological pressure and performance of participants in the English speech competition, as well as analyzing whether There exists a notable correlation between the levels of depression, anxiety, and stress with speech performance. Additionally, this study also illustrates the influence of psychological pressure on the quality of participants' English speeches. The data analysis results reveal two main findings from this research.

The results of the first study indicate a varied psychological pressure condition among participants, ranging from no symptoms or normal to severe symptoms, alongside varying qualities of English speech performance among participants, ranging from "good" to "very good." Participants experienced mild depression before, during, and after their speeches. According to the DASS criteria, participants experienced "mild depression" with scores ranging from 10–13, indicating symptoms of "difficulty concentrating" during the performance and "feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt" after the performance. Participants experienced "moderate" anxiety with scores ranging from 10–14. Common anxiety symptoms reported by participants included excessive feelings of restlessness or tension, difficulty controlling continuous worrying, and sudden panic or anxiety attacks. The psychological pressure experienced during speeches manifested as stress. Participants experienced "moderate stress" with scores ranging from 15–18. Mild stress symptoms observed included feeling slightly tense or anxious before or during the speech, increased heart rate or breathing, difficulty concentrating or focusing on other things due to continuous thoughts about speech preparation, and slight cold sweats or trembling before or during the speech. Meanwhile, the quality of the speeches presented was categorized as "very good." Participants demonstrated strong abilities in delivering clear, organized, and engaging messages, with few grammatical errors but excellent pronunciation. Therefore, these findings suggest that participants' psychological conditions during speeches correspond to their achievement levels; the lighter the psychological pressure, the better the quality of their speeches.

To ascertain the significance of these initial findings, this research synthesizes and compares them with several previous studies sharing similar topics and focus. While supporting the investigation by Docena et al., (2023) who examined anxiety experiences and coping mechanisms among freshman English major students enrolled at a higher educational institution in the Philippines during oral presentations, identifying key themes such as apprehension, resource scarcity, fears of the speaking, language disruptions, and struggles with well-being, this present study delves deeper into specific symptoms. Additionally, echoing Milan (2019), English-speaking anxiety, this study underscores the impact of students' self-perception, language proficiency, teacher interactions, and learning environments on language anxiety and its effects on emotional, mental, behavioral, and physical well-being. Furthermore, building upon Anandari (2015), identification of primary factors contributing to foreign language anxiety including fear, shyness, and discomfort, this study highlights the role of self-reflection in helping students cope by recognizing strengths and weaknesses, problem-solving, and building confidence. Similarly, (Mahmudi & Anugerahwati, 2021), identifying trait, situational-specific, and state anxiety in public speaking classes, aligns with this study's emphasis on psychological pressure stemming from demanding goals without considering the context as solely mental challenges in expressing ideas in a different language.

The second main finding of the study demonstrates a significant relationship between psychological pressure (depression (r= 0.661), anxiety (r= 0.867), stress (r= 0.929), and participants' speech performance in the competition. Pearson correlation coefficients reveal strong positive relationships between depression, anxiety, stress, and speech performance, surpassing the critical threshold. These findings affirm that lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress are associated with higher speech performance scores among participants. The impact of psychological pressure symptoms on the quality of participants' English speeches has been examined and presents various compelling evidence. Data analysis indicates that depression does not significantly affect participants' speech performance, as evidenced by non-significant Sig. values and t-values below the critical threshold. Conversely, anxiety and stress significantly influence speech performance, supported by significant Sig. values and t-values surpassing the critical threshold, implying that higher levels of anxiety and stress correlate with decreased speech performance among participants. Therefore, this study suggests that depression, anxiety, and stress felt by EFL learners before, during, and after the speech contests are psychological and physical representations of weak confidence, unstable self-belief, and fears of unfulfilled demands. Since English speech contests are considered a “weak” representation of real proficiency in English, psychological effects will always occur.

To determine whether these subsequent findings illustrate similarities and distinctions in illustrating the phenomenon of pressure in speech contests, this investigation references several prior studies. According to (Said & Weda, 2018), there was a significant association between heightened anxiety levels and decreased academic performance among English students. Hence, the outcomes of this study align with the current research, albeit focusing solely on anxiety, whereas it's ideal to incorporate psychological facets with other symptoms. Conversely, Oflaz (2019) identified a notable positive correlation between students' language

learning strategies and their academic accomplishments. Additionally, there is a moderately positive correlation between rigidity and foreign language anxiety, with rigidity increasing alongside speaking anxiety, as observed by Gregersen & Horwitz (2002). They propose that anxious and non-anxious learners differ in their personal performance standards, procrastination tendencies, fear of evaluation, and concerns over errors. However, (Woodrow, 2006) unveiled that speaking anxiety significantly predicts oral achievement, highlighting two categories of anxious language learners: those affected by retrieval interference and those with skills deficits. Drawing from these earlier discoveries, this study affirms that depression, anxiety, and stress may manifest across various severity levels in English speaking performance, contingent upon individuals' experiences with public speaking, knowledge, proficiency, and mental preparedness

These findings imply that the psychological condition of participants during speeches significantly impacts the quality of their speeches. The lighter their psychological pressure, the higher the likelihood of producing quality speeches. Therefore, EFL learners and speech contest organizers must pay attention to and manage the psychological conditions of participants, including depression, anxiety, and stress, to ensure they can perform optimally in the contest. Additionally, these findings underscore the importance of strengthening participants' confidence and belief in themselves, while reducing fears of unfulfilled demands, as part of their preparation for facing English speech contests. By understanding the psychological impact that can affect speech quality, steps can be taken to assist participants in overcoming these challenges and enhancing their likelihood of success in speech contests.

Conclusion

The research has provided strong evidence of the psychological pressure faced by participants in the English speech competition. This pressure significantly impacts the quality of the speeches they deliver. The first study's findings indicate that participants experience mild symptoms of depression, moderate anxiety, and mild stress, which directly correlates with their speech performance. Both internal and external factors greatly contribute to the occurrence of this pressure. Internal factors for participants include limited experience speaking English in public settings, reliance on memorized speeches, and choosing topics beyond their expertise. External factors, such as the expectation to win from teachers and the school's institutional pressure to excel, can also create psychological burdens that affect participants' emotions. The second finding demonstrates a significant positive relationship between psychological pressure and participants' speech competition achievements. This suggests that the lower the level of psychological pressure, the fewer symptoms exhibited, and the better their performance.

The implications of this study suggest that participants' psychological conditions during speeches significantly impact the quality of their speeches. Therefore, it is essential to pay attention to and manage participants' psychological conditions, including depression, anxiety, and stress, to ensure optimal performance in speech competitions. These findings can be applied more broadly in the context of either EFL or ESL learning, indicating that psychological conditions can affect participants' English performance, not only in speech contests but also in general English learning contexts. Future studies should delve deeper

into additional factors that may affect participants' psychological conditions and speech performance quality. Additionally, deepening the understanding of the interaction between psychological pressure and English speaking abilities can provide deeper insights into efforts to assist participants in overcoming challenges in speech contests.

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