

Distress, Self-esteem and Public Speaking Anxiety among Teaching Faculty

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ABSTRACT

Teachers engage in public speaking on a daily basis. However, this could be a source of anxiety to them. The present study aims at examining the relationship between distress and self-esteem on public speaking anxiety among the teaching faculty. The study comprised of a total sample of 100 teaching professionals including both males and females from schools or colleges. For this purpose Subjective Unit of Distress (Wolpe, 1969), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (McCroskey, 2013) was administered on the sample. The relationship between the three variables was understood through Spearman Rho's Correlation. The results revealed that there exists a relation between distress and public speaking anxiety as opposed to self-esteem and public speaking anxiety. The current study would help them in identifying the role of distress and self-esteem on the anxiety level of public speaking. Awareness in this regard would help the teacher population to create strategies, either through self-development or organizational trainings, thus, enabling them to be more efficient and effective in their profession.

Keywords: *Distress, Self-Esteem, Public Speaking Anxiety, Teaching Faculty*

Public speaking is considered as a universal fear. Beatty and Valencic (2000) through their findings designate, that the anticipation of public speaking acts as a major role in experiencing anxiety level as compared to giving a speech. It involves the transmission or communication of information that is purposeful, aims at informing, impacting or entertaining a group of listeners. It is an outcome of critical thinking, well-organized narrative, reasoning, research and preparation. Burnley et al. (1993) pointed that, approximately 85 percent of the common population experienced some amount of apprehension while speaking in public. Public speaking anxiety initially known as communication apprehension is defined as, 'the level of fear or anxiety of an individual related to either anticipated or real communication with another person(s)' (Mc Croskey, 1978). Another definition of public speaking anxiety was given by Jangirand and Govinda (2017) which is defined as, 'a state of nervousness and apprehension or fear caused by the anticipation of something threatening during the performance of an individual'.

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Public speaking is an integral part of teaching profession. Classrooms of developing countries continue to be overcrowded due to which teachers face serious verbal communication issues (Schuck, 2012). The delivering of lectures in class by school teachers or college professors is viewed as public speaking. They hardly receive any formal training to develop their public speaking skills. In fact, they develop a certain level of competence on public speaking as they begin their teachers training. According to Francis and Miller (2008), people with high public speaking anxiety will most likely avoid public speaking situations, and are thus, likely to have insufficient opportunities to improve it. Eventually such a person would have a tendency to withdraw themselves from such situations which would lead to the development of a negative attitude. Teachers are the ones who are accountable for helping the students enhance their public speaking ability. However, if they themselves have high public speaking anxiety then nothing can be accomplished. Therefore, teachers need to have a certain level of public speaking ability in order to be effective and efficient within class.

Individuals with public speaking anxiety or social anxiety experience significant level of distress. School teachers face increased amounts of stress during teaching and handling students. Teacher trainee students who are pursuing Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree mentioned the experience of training as quite distressing (Lakshmiathy & Easvaradoss, 2018). Many researchers in their researches mention that such conditions are characterized by increased physiological arousal within social environment, apprehension about being viewed as incorrectly, heightened probability of negative expectations about the ability to interact and mingle with others and conscious avoidance of distressful situations (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). Hence, distress is a sense of uneasiness and feeling of unsettledness, which often hampers one's daily living activities such as work, school, etc. Mirowsky and Ross (1989) added that distress is the unpleasant subjective form of depression and anxiety which includes being tense, restless, worried irritable and afraid.

The reasons behind teacher distress could be numerous. One of the reasons among them is the psychological and emotional manifestation such as anxiety. The level of distress one undergoes does hamper both the quantity and quality of communication of an individual (Allen & Bourhis, 2009). In accordance with Maslow's theory, threat to one's self-esteem is viewed as a source of distress among an individual (Maslow, 1954). Mental health researchers state that distress has a direct effect on one's self-esteem (Aneshensel 1996; Ensel and Lin 1991; Chang et. al 2005). However, individuals with high self-esteem levels are less susceptible to distressing condition as compared to those with low self-esteem levels (Thoits, 1994). In fact, they are protected from distress and ensure more resilience to stressful situations (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) found that individuals who evaluate a negative event as stressful tend to perceive it as threatening to their self-image. This might affect their self-esteem, thus, influencing psychological distress.

Difficulties related to the lack of self-esteem have been found to occur on teachers as a practitioner of teaching (Arifin, 2017). There are quite a few studies that explains the relationship amongst self-esteem and public speaking anxiety (Mansell & Clark, 1999). There are infinite reasons for communication apprehension. McCroskey (1977) identified multiplicity of causes for anxiety such as alienation, low self-esteem, and introversion. Thus, individuals with high level of self-esteem are more likely to experience reduced speech anxiety. However, this study tries to understand the association between distress and self-esteem and to determine its effect on public speaking anxiety in teachers.

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Rationale

Public speaking involves addressing a large audience, which is a core part of the teachers' job profile. Burnley et al. (1993) pointed out that, approximately 85 percent of the common population experienced some amount of apprehension while speaking in public. This indicates that teachers' might be subjected to this apprehension. This can also be termed as public speaking anxiety among the teaching faculty. Public speaking anxiety might be caused due to several factors that might be personal or professional, and be prevalent amidst various other professions. Some of the antecedents of public speaking anxiety among teaching faculty could be poor command over language, reduced communication skills, low self- confidence, and forgetting of the teaching content. All these factors act as a major component of the teaching profession which is associated with their personal and professional accomplishment. Mansell and Clark (1999) indicated the existence of a relationship between self- esteem and public speaking anxiety. In addition, a study by Chang et. al (2005) exhibited that self- esteem and distress levels of an individual are interrelated. Therefore, in line with the aim of the present study, investigating the relationship among these variables in the teaching profession would provide a new insight in this direction.

Significance

This study intends to determine the relationship between distress, self- esteem and public speaking anxiety among teachers. Teachers engage in public speaking on a daily basis. However, this could be a source of anxiety to them. The current study would help them in identifying the role of distress and self- esteem on the anxiety level of public speaking. Awareness in this regard would help the teacher population to create strategies, either through self- development or organizational trainings, thus, enabling them to be more efficient and effective in their profession.

METHODOLOGY

Objective

- To examine the relationship between distress, self- esteem and public speaking anxiety among teaching faculty

Sample

This study was conducted on teachers as a sample who are working in schools as well as colleges, located in urban areas. The sample population for this study comprises of 100 teachers. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, as the sample was selected based on certain criteria's while keeping in mind the objective of the study.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Teachers both male and female who are either in school or colleges

Exclusion Criteria

1. Teachers working in rural areas

Research design

Quantitative method was used for this study, within which correlational analysis was conducted, in order to understand the relationship between the variables. This helped in determining the link between distress, self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among teachers.

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Variables. The present study involves three variables which are distress, self-esteem and public speaking anxiety. The operational definition for these variables is:-

Distress. Distress is a sense of uneasiness and feeling of unsettledness, which often hampers one's daily living activities (e.g. work, school, etc). Mirowsky and Ross (1989) supplemented that distress is the unpleasant subjective form of depression and anxiety which includes being tense, restless, worried irritable and afraid.

Self-Esteem. It may be defined as an individual's subjective affective evaluation of his/her self-worth. It is the affective response of how an individual's view themselves and their belief of how others view them (Rosenberg 1979, Rosenberg et al., 1995).

Public Speaking Anxiety. Public Speaking Anxiety is defined as a state condition of nervousness and apprehension or fear caused by the anticipation of something threatening during a performance (Jangir & Govinda, 2017).

Instruments

The research tool used to measure distress level is Subjective Units of Distress Scale (SUDS) by Wolpe (1996). It is a self-report measure that ranges from 0 to 10 to measure the subjective intensity of distress that the individual is presently experiencing. The Personal report of public speaking anxiety (PRSA) by McCroskey was used to measure public speaking. The scale is highly reliable with alpha estimates greater than .90. It is a 34- item scale based on a 5-point rating likert scale that ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scores on each of the items are added and substituted into the formula provided to obtain the final PRSA score. The score determines the person's public speaking anxiety level as high, low or moderate. To measure self- esteem the Rosenberg Self- Esteem Scale (RSE) was used which is developed by Rosenberg (1965) it provides a global measure of one's self worth. The reliability of the scale is found to be 0.77. It is a 4-point likert scale ranging from strongly agrees to strongly disagree with only 10-items.

Procedure

The participants were approached on a personal level, rather than, through institutions. Before filling the consent form the participants were provided with adequate information about the study. Following which a form requiring demographic details were filled by participants. Then the participants were asked to complete the three scales:- Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety, Subjective Unit Distress Scale and Rosenberg Self- Esteem Scale and. The three measures required approximately 10-15 minutes for completion.

RESULTS

The total sample size (N) for the present study was 100 school teachers comprising of 73 females and 27 males with an average age of 35.74 years located in urban areas. The Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety Scale showed high reliability as compared to Rosenberg Self- Esteem Scale which are 0.88 and 0.108 respectively. Moreover the normality tests showed that PRSA scores were positively skewed and SUDS and RSE scores were negatively skewed.

Table 1: Reliability of PRSA

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.880	.856	34

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Table 2: Reliability of RSE

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.108	.084	10

Table 3: Mean & Standard Deviation of the PRPSA, RSE and SUDS

Mean	86.36 (PRSA)	24.61 (RSE)	2.51 (SUDS)
S.D	13.21	2.76813	1.85739064

The mean calculated for the teachers on the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRSA), Subjective Unit of Distress Scale (SUDS) and Rosenberg Self- Esteem Scale (RSE) Scale were 86.36, 2.51 and 24.61 respectively. The mean scores for PRSA Scale was evidently high with the standard deviation for it being 13.21, indicating that the data values deviate or are different. However, the standard deviation for Rosenberg Self- Esteem Scale was 2.77 and Subjective Unit of Distress Scale was 1.86 which reveals that the data values are more consistent as compared to Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety Scale.

Table 4: Spearman Rho's Correlation

		PRSA	SUDS	RSE
PRSA	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.325**	-.100
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001	.324
	N	10	100	100
SUDS	Correlation Coefficient	.325**	1.000	-.136
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.	.177
	N	100	10	100
RSE	Correlation Coefficient	-.100	-.136	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.324	.177	.
	N	100	100	10

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

According to the Spearman's Rho Correlation, there exists no significant relation between public speaking anxiety and self- esteem at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance. Similarly, there is no significant relation between subjective unit of distress scores and self-esteem scores. However, there exists a significant relation among distress and public speaking anxiety at 0.01 level of significance.

DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to understand the relationship between distress and self-esteem on public speaking anxiety among the teaching faculty. The objective assessments used for examining the variables namely distress, public speaking anxiety and self- esteem were Subjective Unit of Distress Scale developed by Wolpe (1969), Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety - 34 (PRPSA) developed by McCroskey (1970; 1992) and Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale developed by Rosenberg (1965).

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The present study consisted of three null hypotheses: a) there is no significant relationship between distress and public speaking anxiety among teaching faculty is not significant, b) there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and public speaking anxiety among teaching faculty and is not significant c) there is no significant relationship between distress and self-esteem on public speaking anxiety among the teaching faculty is not significant.

Public speaking anxiety is common problem among the general population. Often people with public speaking anxiety refrain themselves from entering in an anxiety provoking situation. However, when it becomes inescapable these circumstances are managed with feelings of profound apprehension and distress. Nonetheless, when it becomes intense it impedes with the performance ability of an individual.

The Spearman's Rho Correlation indicates to the existence of a significant relationship between distress and public speaking anxiety among the teaching faculty. Numerous researchers point out that individuals with certain level of distress are likely to experience public speaking anxiety. Such conditions are marked by increase in physiological arousal, concern that others are judging, dissatisfaction with one's own abilities and avoiding distressful situations due to fear of appearing nervous (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). Mirowsky and Ross (1989) mentioned some of the physiological effects that are caused by distressful events such as people becoming tensed, restless, fearful and anxious.

The Spearman Rho's Correlation reveals that self- esteem and public speaking anxiety are negatively correlated, i.e., reduced level of self- esteem results in increased public speaking anxiety and vice versa. Some of the factors that cause lowered self-esteem among teachers include inability to control the classroom, fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, poor understanding of the subject matter and reduced belief on his/her individual competence which ultimately effects their classroom interaction (Arifin, 2017). However, a study by Philips, Smith and Modaff (2004) directed towards a different view point. The results highlighted that even people with high levels of self- esteem are quite likely to be inhibited by their fear of speaking though they are familiar with the topic of discussion or interested in the topic and well motivate to contribute to the discussion.

Spearman Rho's Correlation exhibits that self- esteem and distress are also negatively correlated. Low self- esteem is found to be associated with increased distress levels (Carter & Garber, 2011). In fact, Self- esteem and distress might indirectly contribute to increased feelings of anxiety (Nima, Rosenberg, Archer, & Garcia, 2013). However, successfully managing distressing situations or anxiety, contributes to higher levels of self-esteem. In a study by Reilly et al (2014) teachers having high self- esteem experience reduced stress levels at work. Moreover, reduction in teacher's stress level could be attained by building their self-esteem.

To summarize, the present study proves that teaching faculty experiences public speaking anxiety due to increased levels of distress which affects their teaching. Teachers with high self-esteem are more likely to face reduced level of public speaking anxiety but might be inhibited due to fear of speaking in public. However, those with reduced self- esteem are likely to face increased distress levels, thus, hampering their speaking ability.

Implications

Teachers engage in public speaking on a daily basis. However, this could be a source of anxiety to them. Teacher trainee students who are pursuing Bachelor of Education (B.Ed)

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degree mentioned the experience of training as quite distressing. Hence, resolving their issues at the initial stage is better than after they become teachers. This will help them to handle distressing situations in a more effective manner (Lakshmipathy & Easvaradoss, 2018). The current study would help teachers identify the factors causing distress and self-esteem on the anxiety level of public speaking. These understandings could further, enhance the quality of school life for educational environments. Awareness in this regard would help the teacher population to create strategies, either through self-development or organizational trainings, thus, enabling them to be more efficient and effective in their profession. Moreover, there is a dearth of researches on public speaking anxiety among the teaching faculty, hence, the need of this study.

Limitations

The present study holds a few limitations. First, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale has been criticized for viewing self-esteem in terms of a unitary construct. It does not differentiate between positive and negative self-esteem. Second, the present study does not aim at identifying the factors behind the positive correlation between distress and public speaking anxiety among teaching faculty. Third, teachers are not provided with adequate time for teaching practice to develop their communication skills. Increasing the time period for the teaching program and then conducting a research would help in understanding its effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

Public speaking anxiety is a universal concern and so is it for the teaching faculty as well. The review of literature brought to light the numerous researches conducted in this area that validate the current study. Therefore, from the present study it is concluded that the teaching faculty experiences public speaking anxiety due to distress which hinders their teaching.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors carefully declare this paper to bear not conflict of interests

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