

Investigating the Roots, Symptoms and Coping Mechanisms of Public Speaking
Anxiety

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Abstract

Public speaking anxiety is a fear that is faced by the majority of people. It is important to understand and dive deep into the root causes, signs, and mechanisms to cope with this anxiety. The research that has already been done and is present on social media gives examples of how to overcome anxiety, however, there are not enough sources about the psychological part of this phenomenon. This capstone project which contains a video and a reflective paper, includes interviews with experts, people who have experienced public speaking anxiety, do's and don'ts, and illustrations of several situations that happen during public speaking.

Investigating the Roots, Symptoms and Coping Mechanisms of Public Speaking Anxiety

In parallel with every heartbeat and the silence that predates spoken words, there is a deeper struggle- public speaking anxiety. This is a phenomenon that affects people of various spheres and professions. During many situations in their lives, people are obliged to speak in front of the public eye, therefore, public speaking becomes not only an important skill, but also a way to achieve personal growth, professional success and social impact. Nevertheless, many people experience anxiety or even fear while performing in front of others. Since anxiety and fear are phenomena that are controlled by human's unconscious mind, it is crucial to explore the causes of this feeling, at what point it converts into fear and becomes a phobia called "Glossophobia" and what are some effective mechanisms people use to overcome these unpleasant feelings before or during their performances. To get a profound understanding of that causes this phenomenon it is vital to take into consideration the social, psychological, cognitive and physiological aspects of a human. Moreover, it is also quite crucial to dive into the mechanisms that are helpful with overcoming this fear and anxiety. The methodology used in this research is going to be not only theoretical but also practical. Several researchers have conducted surveys and different types of experiments to understand the most common cause of public speaking anxiety. There have been several quantitative researches where people of different race, age, social backgrounds, professions, genders, hobbies participated. The research that has already been done includes all that data. However, an important aspect that is going to be explored in this paper is "What aspects in human psychology make them feel anxious because of other people's presence during their speech and at which degree this feeling of anxiety can become a phobia which is much more difficult to overcome?" As we disclose the complexities of this phenomenon by interviewing psychologists, conducting discussions with people who

perform in front of public quite often and distributing a survey to students across several universities, it will be easier to understand the links between public speaking anxiety and glossophobia and to offer valuable strategies for educators, students, politicians and other individuals who are seeking to handle their feelings in the situations where they have to speak in front of the public depending on their level of anxiety or whether it has already been converted into a more deeper issue as glossophobia. The information gathered during this process needs to be accessible to the public, and in this case, the best way to conduct it is to prepare a video about those valuable strategies. That way people will be able to access these materials in YouTube and learn about the topic quicker and easier.

Literature review

Before getting to the main causes of public speaking anxiety, it is important to understand and analyze what public speaking is. According to Swargiary K & Roy K.'s (2022) book called “Communication and Public Speaking”, it is the act of performing, delivering a speech or giving a live presentation before an audience. This is quite a formal and simple definition of the term. Besides giving the definition and basic overview of public speaking, the authors speak about the modern relevance and the historical background of public speaking. This text also considers the academic nature describing it as a type of fine art that includes communication skills and the ability to catch different audiences’ attention. The authors compare “The art of communication” with science where the main concern is knowing, and in case of public speaking, the main concern is doing. This is quite an interesting comparison between science and art using public speaking, since when digging deeper into the psychological aspect, it becomes more scientific and concentrates on research and collected data. The authors mention that the relationship

between the speaker and the audience should be direct, reciprocal and sincere. This part of the source is closely related to the information given in the article called “Overcome the fear of speaking in public” by Winslow E.H (1991) where the author claims that the best strategies to overcome public speaking anxiety are making connections with the audience, being sincere and bringing examples to make the interaction easier. Swargiary K & Roy K speak about the purposes of public speaking, which include informing the audience, enlightening, persuading, impressing, acting, and entertaining. Taking this part into consideration helps understand the surveys that have been conducted in other sources included in this research such as “Exploring the level and primary causes of public speaking anxiety among English Department students.” by Sugiyati, K., & Indriani, L. (2022) where participants of the survey were asked to choose which of the five factors was causing anxiety for them. Then, they explain why each of these aspects is important and how they work while someone is trying to do a presentation in front of an audience. Next, the authors introduce the components of public speaking which are illustration, voice modulation, the power of the pause, visual aids, sense of humor, and articulation. Again, each component is described and the authors mention the power of each of these. The source also includes the principles of effective public speaking (clarity, consciousness, completeness, adaption), and types of public speaking (informative, persuasive, motivational, and delivery). This source also has chapters about the importance of public speaking, and problems associated with public speaking (fear, depression, panic attacks, insomnia, post-traumatic stress, etc) which will be a perfect addition to the other sources such as as “Exploring the level and primary causes of public speaking anxiety among English Department students.” by Sugiyati, K., & Indriani, L. (2021) again.

After understanding what public speaking is, it is also important to get general information about what anxiety is, since a lot of times anxiety, depression, stress, and fear are misunderstood. Since all of the above-mentioned phenomena are problems that are very common in public speaking, it is a good idea to investigate what anxiety is. The profound understanding of this is very helpful while also understanding how it turns into a fear. The article “Glossophobia in training of speech” by Nahliah, & Rahman (2018), F and this article by Strongman K seem to be compliments for each other because one describes and gives background knowledge on anxiety and the other one on Glossophobia. Strongman K. T. in his article called “Theories of Anxiety” gives an idea about the six theories which are learning/behavioral, psychoanalytic, phenomenological/existential, cognitive, physiological, and the one that derives from the feelings of uncertainty. In the first theory, anxiety is a compelling aspect of managing a threatening environment and is crucial for the evolution of neurotic behavior. Next, learning/behavioral theory, suggests that organisms learn to escape the noxious stimuli with their behavior (mechanisms) (Strongman, 1995). This theory is again closely related to “Overcome the fear of speaking in public” by Winslow E.H. Another suggestion in this theory is that individuals can learn to be anxious, and it comes from past traumas. In physiological theory, the author suggests that this physiological and neurological anxiety is mostly a result of the exposition of several parts of the nervous system and how they are related to the cause of anxiety. The phenomenological/existential theory suggests that anxiety is a normal state in human behavior and development. It occurs when an individual starts recognizing the ideas of freedom, responsibilities, etc. In the cognitive theory, the author brings examples of several studies and experiments. This paragraph concentrates more on the different types of emotions that humans experience and which ones can cause anxiety. Lastly, the uncertainty theory

suggests that anxiety is caused when a person does not know what will happen in the future and what might be others' reactions. (Strongman, 1995)

Now that there is a basic understanding of public speaking and anxiety, we can move on to that are about the combination of these two. The article by Raja, F. U. (2017) called "Anxiety Level in Students of Public Speaking: Causes and Remedies" differs from other sources such as "Overcome the Fear of Speaking in Public" by Winslow E. (1991) (where the author analyzes the body reactions and gives daily examples on how to avoid the public speaking anxiety) since it is based on quantitative research. The study includes an experiment where 50 students from a private school in Karachi participated. 75% of the students confessed their fear and 95% of them said that with the help of several strategies, they can overcome the fear. They were given a questionnaire and the results of answers to each question are analyzed in this article. The first question was about the audience, and whether students were more anxious depending on whether they were familiar or unfamiliar with the audience they had to present to. The second question was about the lack of confidence and the student's answers were analyzed based on their confidence level. The third one is about the size of the audience and 82% of the students admitted that the size has a direct impact on their performance and anxiety. The fourth question is about their past experience and involvement in public speaking events. Lastly, the fifth question investigates students' thoughts on seeking help from professionals when it comes to their anxiety while performing in front of the public. (Karachi, 2017) This research is quite connected with "Exploring the level and primary causes of public speaking anxiety among English Department students." written by Sugiyati, K., & Indriani, L. (2021) where the participants of the survey are students for whom English is a second language. These two create

a variety in the participants and while analyzing the results, there is much in common when it comes to the causes and coping strategies.

In their article “What do people think causes stage fright?: Naïve attributions about the reasons for public speaking anxiety.” Bippus, A. M., & Daly, J. A. (2009) write about people’s beliefs about what can be the possible cause of public speaking anxiety. The main purpose of the source was to find out when people are watching

a nervous speaker, what are they thinking? What are their assumptions about the anxiety of the speaker? All of these were turned into the following research questions “What reasons do "naive" individuals give as to why people experience stage fright?: What are the underlying factor structures of these reasons for stage fright?: What are the most common and least common explanations for stage fright? Do high- versus low-communication, apprehensive individuals make different attributions about the reasons for stage fright? How does previous experience with public speaking affect what people regard as reasons for stage fright?” (Bippus, A. M., & Daly, J. A., 2009).

These questions, especially the last one, are quite similar to the ones asked in the previous source by Raja, F. U. (2021) called “Anxiety Level in Students of Public Speaking: Causes and Remedies”. However, the difference between these two is that in this source the number of people is much bigger, the experiment has been done in several stages and the participants are not only students who are enrolled in public speaking classes but also individuals who do not have any previous experience in it. The results showed that some factors contributing to public speaking anxiety are humiliation, physical appearance, rigid rules, personality traits, mistakes, preparation, negative results, and the interest of their audience. This source is vital for the practical part of the project because it will be strongly linked to the interviews conducted with

actors, showmen and singers. Those people are going to be asked about stage fright during the time they were first starting their career, and the in-depth analysis of their answers is going to be very much connected to the information provided in this source.

In the article “Exploring the level and primary causes of public speaking anxiety among English Department students” Sugiyati, K., & Indriani, L. (2021) have done research which is more concentrated on the public speaking anxiety among students who are learning English as their second language. This one is a very specific case and is related to a quite narrow circle. The answers are unique in their way as well. However, some answers combined with the research done in previous two sources, can give a general answer to the question of what causes public speaking anxiety. In this article as well a quantitative method of research has been done. This one is different from the previous two since the concentration is on a specific group of people (EFL students), so the anxiety causes can be different from the students who have been speaking English since their early childhood. Combining the results of this research with the others can result in very interesting conclusions. In this study, the Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) by Yaikhong & Usaha was used and 58% of students said that they experienced a medium-level of anxiety during their presentations. Moreover, they said that the major reason for their anxiety is the fear of negative evaluation. 34 third-semester students participated in this research and they were given a questionnaire where 17 items with positive and negative statements were included. This way, they investigated the four major causes according to the (PSCAS) and those are 1. Fear of negative evaluation (FNE), 2. Communication apprehension (CA) 3. Test anxiety (TA). (FNE) was the most common one since 20.8 percent of students agreed with the items on this factor. (CA) was the second factor with 20.25 percent, and the last one was, the (TA) with 17.7 percent of student reconciliations. (Sugiati, 2021)

All of the information included above is serving as an addition to “Glossophobia in the training of speech.” By Nahliah, & Rahman, F (2018). It provides information about Glossophobia which is described as a fear of delivering a speech. This one gives more profound knowledge about to what extent the “anxiety” can convert to “fear” and become a phobia. While anxiety and phobia are very different from each other, the causes and coping mechanisms can have similarities. The participants of this research were from the girl Islamic boarding school of Darul Huffadh. All of the participants were girls because at that location and during the month of Ramadhan it was quite difficult to find any public speaker men. The results of this survey are again a very narrow circle as the participants are girls and there is a religion limit. However, this one, combined with several primary sources about other researches about glossophobia will answer my questions. (Almost like the case with the article “Exploring the level and primary causes of public speaking anxiety among English Department students” by Sugiyati, K., & Indriani, L.). The results of the survey revealed that people who had glossophobia and others who did not have it were interviewed for this research, giving the researchers a good sample to further explore this phobia. The students were again given a questionnaire like in the previous cases with public speaking anxiety research, and the results were classified as a strong level of phobia and a low level of confidence. Then the researchers analyzed all the results and included them in this paper. There are more than 20 pieces of the dialogues with the students and they are all analyzed differently. In conclusion, the results showed that many problems by the” students were related to glossophobia and they included heart palpitations, dissatisfaction with their ability, comparing with others, feeling panic, self-doubt, nervous, excessive worry, afraid of making mistakes, trembling, nausea, cold or sweaty hands or feet, fear, afraid of being criticized, afraid of being criticized, irrational fear, perfectionist, pessimist, negative thinking, shy, lack of

confidence, clumsy, lazy, pretending to be sick, afraid of being laughed, etc.” (Nahliah, & Rahman, F.,2018).

Winslow E. who was a healthcare worker wrote the article “Overcome the Fear of Speaking in Public” in which she describes the phenomenon of public speaking anxiety from the perspective of medicine. Compared to the first source (by Swargiary K & Roy K. 2022) where the phenomenon was approached more in a creative way saying that it is a form of art, this one concentrates on the scientific part and is a good addition to the source by Strongman K. T. where the author gives more scientific (in the scope of psychology) way. This source helps understand what are the common feelings during the phenomenon of public speaking anxiety. The examples that are mentioned above are going to help while discussing the conversion of anxiety to fear and see which are the common physical reactions that occur during both. Some examples of people’s body reactions are included in this research such as a pounding heart, dry mouth, shaking hands, and knees which she describes as the “fight or flight” effect. Then, she moves on to giving some techniques that usually help with public speaking anxiety. She gives the “getting past the fear” technique and suggests making the audience participate, choose a topic that the speaker is passionate about, and practice since most common cases of anxiety are related to the fear of making mistakes in front of the public. In this article Winslow not only speaks about not only the standard mechanisms like mentioned before, but also puts the emphasis on the importance of practice, and says that “Even if you are an expert, review the current literature on your topic. Doing so can save you the embarrassment of finding that your audience is more aware of new developments than you are.” (Winslow, E. H.,1991). Lastly, she writes about the other (daily) feelings and aspects that have a huge impact on one’s anxiety during their speeches, such as “their clothing, appearance, posture, body language, relaxation techniques, location, even the

usage of alcohol and caffeine) This one is quite an interesting source in terms of the “medical” and “psychological” point of view. Moreover, as mentioned the source by Strongman K. T, more specifically the part where the author speaks about “physiological theory” tells us how a person’s physiology can cause anxiety, and this one is more about the “public” speaking anxiety, so together they make a good way to go deeper and somehow fill the gap.

Research question

The investigation of public speaking anxiety is an important inquiry to the complex dimension of human psychology and communications. A central research question for this exploration will be: What are the major causes and symptoms of public speaking anxiety and what are the most effective ways of coping with this? Digging deeper into psychological aspects (such as cognitive processes), physiology (body reactions to stressful situations) and social influences (such as the fear of making mistakes) will help us understand all details about this phenomenon and come up with specific strategies that will help people fight with these feelings. The video project is aimed at identifying key signals and behavioral signals that indicate a change from manageable anxiety to much deeper issues such as fear and phobia.

Methodology and Reflection

The phenomenon of public speaking anxiety has interested a lot of researchers, and as seen in the literature review, there have been several studies on this topic. Initially, this capstone project was planned to be a research paper, however, after investigating the media and checking all possible sources about this topic, I understood that there isn’t much material that would be accessible to the general public. Surely, those people who wanted to, would dig deeper into this topic and investigate both the prior research that had already been done by the scholars and my

paper as well. Although this would be the obvious path that a person would follow if they are interested in a topic, it is quite important to also consider the fact that many people would not want to read several pages of research, and would prefer a much shorter “solution”. In addition, a lot of individuals would not consider themselves as people facing public speaking anxiety in order to dive that deep. For this reason, I decided to make an educational video that would be posted on social media platforms where people engage with video materials more (for example YouTube) in order for the information to be more easily accessible and lighter to convey the information with.

When making a project in the form of a video, one of the most important aspects is to ponder about the following points.

1. What is going to be the aim of the video?

Initially, the video was planned to be a training video. However, the material and the information would be much more comprehensible if it also included parts about the symptoms and causes. Moreover, since there is already quite a lot of information on social media on this topic, and most of the videos include an expert talking about the coping mechanisms, it was important to include visuals as well. Eventually, as aforementioned, the video got converted into an educational video that includes both expert interviews and other materials (visuals, scenarios, bloopers) as well.

2. Where is the video going to be posted and who is going to be the target audience?

When it comes to introducing content in social media, one must be quite familiar with the majority of the materials that already exist on that specific platform. In this case, there were two main considerations on where to post the video. The first one was YouTube and the other

one was TikTok or Instagram. In the case of TikTok, it triggers interactive engagement through features like likes, comments, and shares. The algorithm of the "For You" page on TikTok promotes content based on the user's preferences, which can rapidly increase a creator's visibility. In addition, a person has to have constantly searched for the "public speaking" term at least, in order for TikTok's backend to pull up the suggested videos in the future. It is quite evident that not a lot of people would search for this type of content on TikTok and it would simply not get many views, and as it does not get a significant number of views, it is not going to appear in the international "for you" page, so the meaning and the work that has been done on the material would not be visible to people who need it. A similar situation is with Instagram since it again encourages likes, comments, and shares. In addition, Instagram is more focused on creating visually aesthetic content, and a reel about the fear or anxiety of public speaking would not work. On the other hand, YouTube stimulates a strong sense of community engagement through views and subscriptions. Viewers often interact with content creators through comment sections and participate in discussions. As a result, people will not need to "create" their feed but will know that they are following a channel that is constantly posting about specific topics. In addition, people will be more interested in watching an educational video on YouTube rather than on TikTok/Instagram, since those are apps for entertainment.

The target audience of this video are people aged nearly 17-30, which is the age range when people start performing in front of audiences and they might need trainings or pieces of advice on this topic. The age range is not limited to 40 because people older than that are also giving presentations and speeches, but considering the fact that they might have more experience in the past, this fear would be conquered to some extent. In addition to that, it is important to consider the gender of the target audience for this video. Since there are not any limitations for males and

females for giving speeches in front of the public, this video is also aimed at educating and helping both genders overcome their fear. Moreover, since this is a video which is going to be available to the public on YouTube, each gender can freely access and gather information from this video. The next point that was important to consider while making the video was the nationality of the target audience. Again, since it is available on YouTube, it can be accessed by everyone, however, it depends on which region consumes the content that has been posted. In this case, there are no limits in nationality as well, however, people in the USA and Europe are more likely to have consumed and engaged with media containing this information, which makes it possible that they will see it more frequently in their “recommended” section. This can be considered as a great opportunity for cultural awareness since Professor Garbis mentions a few aspects of public speaking in Armenia (but since the video is made in English, it is more possible to see it in international “recommended”)

3. What is going to be the length of the video?

This part of the decision was heavily dependent on the previous aspect. In the case of Tiktok, where the videos last typically between 15 seconds and 3 minutes long, with the majority falling within the 15 to 60-second range. This format is suitable for quick, entertaining, and easily consumable videos. In the case of Instagram, the videos (reels) on IGTV include up to 60 seconds of content which would be perfect for advertisements and promotional content. Since this video is structured to have a different type of content, I decided to make a longer one that can be posted on YouTube since the videos there can range from a few minutes to several hours in length. This platform is contributive to in-depth tutorials, vlogs, documentaries, and educational content. The next decision was whether to make approximately 10 videos each lasting about 2 minutes, or a longer video that would not be cut

out into parts. This decision arose during the content-creation process itself since there were many creative choices to make.

One of the first decisions that needed to be made was how the “public speaking anxiety” was going to be shown in the videos. This process requires quite a long contemplation since it includes several physiological reactions that cannot be shown on camera, for example, the heart-pounding is one of the most common physiological reactions but it is not something that can be filmed. In order to show the tension that the speaker is having, the large auditorium of the AUA was chosen. The video starts include a scene where the actress is evidently stressed and anxious, she is looking around and is quite confused. Then, she starts by saying “Public Speaking Anxiety is one of the most common fears people face”. This is done in order for her to not speak something out of the context of the project, but also show that she starts talking in front of the audience” There are several shots in a large auditorium and those are all aimed at illustrating the “anxiety” and the tension. There are scenes from different angles while the actress is walking around, opening a water bottle, etc. when there is no one in the auditorium, which is intended to show the stress before the speech. Then the actress says “But what if I told you that this fear can be conquered?” this scene is designed to show the transition between “acting as anxious” to “understanding” the symptoms and causes of public speaking anxiety.

The scene transitions into an interview with Professor Christian Garbis who teaches Public Speaking at the American University of Armenia. During this interview, he was asked what are the signs that a person has anxiety during their speech. He explained that most of the time students start fidgeting, they lean from one side to another, they do not make good eye contact because they are feeling stressed, and most importantly, they do not have positive body language. Professor Garbis has also been asked about what are the causes of this

phenomenon and he answered that it depends on the society that the person has been raised in, most of the time the main cause is “shame”. People (especially in Armenian society) constantly tell their children not to do this or that specific action and that is what isolates them from people and they start pondering that everything they do is a shame. In addition, the major cause is quite related to the expression of emotions. (C. Garbis, personal interview, April 5, 2024)

Professor Garbis explained this in the example of Armenian children when their emotions are being locked by their parents and they are not taught how to express those. This makes them a non-effective speaker in the future since they are unable to express what is in their mind even if it is the speech they prepared. As a consequence, this aspect answers the next question too, where Professor Garbis has been asked about controlling the situation when a challenging incident happens during one’s speech. He explained that he always advises people to not concentrate on the incidents and accept that everything can take place and they are not in charge of that. “It is all about discipline and controlling your emotions in a sense that everything can happen at any moment,” said Professor Garbis. (C. Garbis, personal interview, April 5, 2024)

Next, he was asked about the coping mechanisms he would suggest using and he mentioned that the most important part is that a person has to work on himself and build confidence. Each individual should love themselves to project the love to the audience and that is the key to a successful speech. (C. Garbis, personal interview, April 5, 2024)

In conclusion, he added that he always asks his students to read motivational literature and do meditations, in order to feel relaxed during their speech.

The scene with Professor Garbis’ interview is followed by a shot that gives insights into the interview with the psychologist. Tatevik Arekelyan who is a psychologist and teaches Introduction to Psychology at the American University of Armenia has been interviewed for this

project. She was asked about the causes too and she explained that most of the time the anxiety and fear of performing in front of audiences, comes from the past when the person has experienced traumas. She mentioned that this anxiety is a part of the social phobia which can lead to very serious complications. When asked about the point where anxiety gets converted into a fear or a phobia, she again mentioned childhood traumas and said that the difference between any type of anxiety and fear is that anxiety is a feeling that can happen at that moment whereas fear or phobia are feelings that intervene with people's daily life. For example, a person can feel anxious before or during their speech, but a person who has the phobia (Glossophobia) will experience it while they are shopping for groceries, stopping the bus, greeting people, etc. (T. Arakelyan, personal interview, April 9 2024) Next, Professor Arakelyan was asked about the coping mechanisms and handling of the incidents during the speech. Her pieces of advice differed from Professor Garbis' advice as she explained everything from a cognitive perspective. She said that first and foremost, they advise that people see a therapist and work on it with a professional since it is crucial to understand the root cause of the issue and solve the initial problem. Another way of coping with this according to Professor Arakelyan is to only concentrate on the information that the person is trying to convey and to not pay attention to people's opinions since those are not facts and are not always true. In addition, she said that sometimes she asks to imagine the audience with clown noses because the human brain cannot feel anxious when it is also having fun and finds something to be amused at. She added that a very effective means of handling any challenges is to express emotions at that moment. For example, making a small comment and letting those emotions out will help the speaker, because otherwise, those feelings will be collected and locked, which will disturb the process. (T. Arakelyan, personal interview, April 9 2024)

Since the interview with Professor Garbis had been filmed on camera and the interview with Professor Arakelyan had been in the form of a recording, it was important to include some visuals about her speech. Since the most important and the main point of her answer about the cause was childhood trauma, a scene was filmed in order to show this in the video. It was crucial to find children who would be willing to participate in the filming process and also to find a location (in this case the most suitable choice was a classroom) in order to film this part of the video. It was filmed in basic school No 77 after Ruben Miroyan. A small class consisting of 10 children was filmed (with the consent of the teacher). Two of the girls were asked to stand up and perform while other kids were constantly disrupting their speech. The video shows close-up shots of two children chitchatting and laughing while the girl is speaking, and the other boy is walking in the classroom and constantly catching everyone's attention. The girl in the back is moving around and not listening to the speech. The same happens during the second child's speech. Initially, this was a short video that lasted for 27 seconds. However, it has been cropped several times and zoomed in with the help of a montage in order to draw the viewer's attention to those children who are giving the trauma to the girls and not listening to them. In addition, this part of the video is specifically filtered to be black and white since it is aimed at showing what happened in the past. While showing the actress at the beginning of the video being stressed and afraid even when the auditorium was empty, this video is meant to be a flashback of her past experience and the traumas she experienced at school.

While the interviews with the experts have given valuable information and content for the video, it was also vital to include "dos and don'ts" in a more practical setting. For this content, mostly the information from the article "Overcome the Fear of Speaking in Public" by Winslow E has been used. The first scene for the "don't" shows how the actress walks in with a

very confused expression on her face, starts looking around, and is quite stressed to start her speech. On the other hand, the “do” of this scene shows her walking in confidently while looking at the audience and starting her speech with great enthusiasm. In this scene too, the actress is speaking about public speaking anxiety in order for her not to speak unplanned content and for the viewer to understand what she is showing with her actions. The second “don’t” shows the actress hiding behind objects which is in this case the podium. This shot is also aimed at showing her unsureness about herself and her speech. The “do” of this scene shows her standing near the podium and speaking freely while using hand gestures. The third “don’t” is about speaking low. The background noise is not muted (with the help of voice isolation) intentionally in order to show that the audience can barely hear her speech, especially in cases where background noise of for example a fan or an HVAC exists, the audience will not hear the speaker at all. The “do” of this scene is shot from the upper part of the auditorium and the background noise is not muted again, in order to show that the person can hear her even from the back of the room. The next shot shows only the “do” because the actress was already dressed appropriately at the beginning of the “dos and don’ts” and changing her clothes to a completely different outfit would not show the meaning in the video, instead, she put on a blazer to show the formality of her outfit. Lastly, the final “don’t” is a shot where the actress keeps forgetting not because she was anxious but because she did not prepare for it. Insufficient preparation creates anxiety and it becomes a loop as shown in the video. On the contrary, the “do” of this scene shows her in a different setting in order to illustrate the time before the speech when she prepared and rehearsed the speech. The text has been added to the videos describing each scene since some of the scenes (for example hiding behind the objects and the scene using papers during the speech) can

visually be very similar for the viewer and these texts will serve as a guide on what each “do” and “don’t” means.

Providing information from the sources and interviews can make the viewer very tired of seeing similar content throughout the whole video, for this reason, it was important to include stories of people who have experienced public speaking anxiety and who are almost in the middle of the age range of the target audience (20-23) as well since it will be more inquisitive to watch and hear advice from people who are very close to the viewer’s age. Moreover, the interviews with these people create an interesting contrast between the expert’s interviews as well, since the viewer has the chance to have two perspectives, one from the side of an expert who has been working in this field for years and has gained a lot of experience, and on the other hand, young people who are starting their journey in public speaking. This adds dynamics to the video and makes the viewer engage with each of these stories. The bloopers were included in the video specifically to show that even in cases where people have had previous experience in public speaking, their speeches still have some flaws. The black and white filter as well as the voice speed were added to make the video more entertaining.

While choosing the participants of the video, it was very important to consider their language, background, place of work, willingness to speak, etc. Four participants were interviewed and each of them had a different background. The only two criteria they met are 1. Speaking fluent English 2. Having a previous example in public speaking. The first participant is Marieta Danielyan who has participated in an exchange program called “Flex” and has lived a year in the United States. She was chosen for the video as she had a language and a culture barrier when first speaking in front of a big audience. Filming someone who had to give a presentation in the US in her second language was quite interesting because, in instances like

this, a person can easily forget the word in their second language and become even more anxious during their speech. The second person is Armen Godjamanian who has studied theatre in Scotland. His background differs from the other participant's backgrounds as he already had played in the theatre and gained experience in a country where English is not the native language. The third participant is Erik Adamyan who works at ServiceTitan Armenia and was born and raised in the US. As a person who grew up in America, his experience excluded the language barrier or any anxiety related to the ability to speak freely in front of people, because that is his native language. The last participant is Silvi Soghomonyan who is the president of the Rotaract Club of Yerevan. As a president of Rotaract, she had to give multiple presentations from a very young age compared to the other participants. Overall, each of the participants had a different background and different interests, but had a common passion for challenging themselves and conquering their anxiety.

After listening to all of those stories and interviews, it would be interesting for the viewer to see a documentary scene at the end where four friends are sitting in a classroom and passionately discussing their experience. Then, a close-up shot shows each of them telling their own experience this is mostly because they thought that they were the only ones having this issue but after hearing so many stories they understood that this fear could be overcome.

Conclusion

The deeper investigation of public speaking anxiety has led to an extremely interesting journey. Initially conceived to be a research paper, it included seven sources from different authors and different time periods because both psychology and communication are fields that are developing constantly and it is crucial to receive the updated

information. Getting profound knowledge of the causes, signs and coping strategies of public speaking anxiety is vital because it can happen to each individual at some point in their lives while giving presentations or performing in front of big audiences. Gathering information from the sources that already exist on the internet demonstrates survey results, very specific causes of public speaking anxiety, and experiments on small groups of people who meet several criteria. The sources on the internet lacked information on the very initial causes of public speaking anxiety and how it can be converted into glossophobia. Aside from the sources found on the internet, hearing to what experts would advise is a valuable experience as they describe the situation from their perspective. The gap of information on the internet was filled when interviewing professionals since they were able to provide valuable information on both the earliest signs, causes, and the psychological aspect that turns anxiety into fear. Having gathered all of the data, it is crucial to make it accessible to the public and make it unique to cause interest in the content. The video content includes information about the causes, symptoms, and coping mechanisms. There are multiple illustrations of various situations, such as “do’s” and “don’ts”, childhood traumas, a group scene, presentation of the symptoms of this fear, etc. The videos existing on social media (especially on YouTube) do not help with understanding what takes place in a person’s body when they are about to give a speech in front of an audience. Most of the videos show a professional speaking about the “do’s”. This video is unique since it includes the situation from both perspectives and the viewer can easily find themselves in one of the scenes. It shows empathy to the viewer by thoroughly explaining the causes and the coping mechanisms. The project is aimed at helping people understand and overcome their anxiety and fear, which will eventually be done with the help of a video that can be easily accessed on social media.

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