

# Glossophobia among Undergraduate Students of Government Medical Colleges in Karachi

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## ABSTRACT:

*Glossophobia is the phobia or dread of speaking in public. The main objective of our study was to determine among medical student the prevalence of public speaking anxiety. This is an Observational cross sectional study. We conducted our study in medical colleges of government sector i.e. Dow medical college, Sindh medical college and Karachi medical and dental college. To investigate the prevalence of glossophobia in medical students, they were subjected to mark one of the given options in the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) questionnaire (McCroskey, 1970; McCroskey & Richmond, 1998). Among 288 students 95 (33.0) questionnaires were filled by Dow Medical College students, 96(33.3) by Sindh Medical College and 97(33.7) by Karachi Medical and Dental College. According to PRPSA 41.3 % (119) of students exhibit low, 54.9 % (158) exhibit moderate and 3.8 % (11) exhibit high public speaking anxiety with mean PRPSA 100.27±18.10. Out of total females majority of them (56.6%) falls in moderate speaking anxiety and out of total males, majority of them (51.4%) falls in low category. Amongst*

*the institute, majority of students exhibit moderate anxiety with highest in Dow Medical College (57.9%). From 1<sup>st</sup> year to 5<sup>th</sup> year, most of the students exhibit moderate anxiety being highest among 4<sup>th</sup> year students (60%). At the end of our study, we have concluded that females have higher rate of glossophobia than males and 5<sup>th</sup> year students exhibit least anxiety level so overall our research emphasize on the fact that females are more prevalent to glossophobia.*

## Keywords:

Glossophobia; fear; public speaking; anxiety ;medical students; government sector

## INTRODUCTION

Glossophobia (in Greek glossa means tongue and phobos means fear or dread) is the anxiety of speaking in public (Hancock et al., 2010)[1] It, affecting approximately 75% of the population, accounts for one of the most pervasive world dread. Analysis shows, people are under the influence of public speaking anxiety much more commonly than fear of

death. (Glossophobia, 2001)[2]. Terror of public speaking affects the speaker physiologically, for example, some may experience dryness of mouth, rise in blood pressure, reddening of face, perspiration, asymmetrical breathing, and emotionally, as they fear embarrassment and looking stupid and silly (Kushner, 2004)[3]. People experiencing speaking anxiety tend to get confuse easily even in front of small crowd. Their voice become feeble and their body starts trembling. They may even sweat, blush and feel palpitations .they get anxious easily before and even thinking of giving speech or interact with people, ignoring such occasions which sparks group's attention towards a person individually, discomfort, nausea, get nervous quickly. The particular symptoms of glossophobia can be categorized into three: physical, verbal, and non-verbal. sympathetic part of the autonomic nervous system (ANS) plays an important role as far as physical symptoms are concerned as it accounts for fight or flight response of the body. All or nothing nature of response of SNS produce large variety of symptoms simultaneously which altogether act to prepare the body for condition provoking panic and chaos. The manifestations include acute hearing, raised heart beat, dilated pupils, enhanced sweating, increased oxygen intake, spasm of upper back muscles and neck rigidity. these symptoms may get relieved by drugs like beta blockers . The verbal symptoms include, tense and shaking voice, vocalized pauses—which helps relaxing distressed speakers. IT can affect both males and females .women suffer more phobia than males according to Furmark (2002)[4] and Pollard & Henderson (1998)[5] Anxiety is defined as a state of discomfort and agitation or dread caused by the expecting something alarming (Scovel, 1991)[6].

The college students as well as the population in general are both frequently inflicted by glossophobia. Glossophobic individuals elude situations which involve public interaction or presentation, but in an inescapable event they have to handle this with great discomfort and anguish. Nervousness commonly occurs, several days or weeks before, in these persons who even think of giving a presentation in future. In spite of knowing the fact that their fear is unexplainable and outrageous they are helpless in overcoming it.

Even the professionals like actors business men, politicians may feel a little agitated and undergo difficulties giving speech. For some individual the fear becomes so enormous that it impedes with the performing abilities and completely destroys person's self-esteem

Talking about students, some try to escape from the situations which demand presentations or speeches to be given orally in front of classmates and group of people and further lead to avoidance of their social gatherings. Studies have shown that language speaking courses can markedly reduce speakers anxiety and create a big impact on one's performance. (Scovel, 1991)[6].

Many studies have been conducted on fear of public speaking evaluating mainly symptoms and definition. But our research tries to bring the prevalence of glossophobia among medical students under the spot light. College students and population in general suffered frequently from glossophobia. Louise Katz, Ph.D (2000)[7] The public speaking anxiety is related with fear or verbal agitation. The chaos caused by this fear in a person is reflected by physical symptoms such as increased heartbeat, respiratory rate, discomfort of the neck and shoulder muscles, trembling of hands and legs,

quivering of voice and sweating. (Mohamad et al., 2009)[8].

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This cross sectional study is limited to medical undergraduate students in Karachi. Universities included in it are Dow medical college, Sindh medical college and Karachi medical and dental college and total of 288 were asked to fill the questionnaire. 96 students filled forms from each respective institute.

To investigate the prevalence rate of glossophobia in medical students, they were subjected to ask to fill out the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) questionnaire (McCroskey, 1970; McCroskey & Richmond, 1998)[9]. It comprised of 34 questions evaluating conditions during giving presentation and the study is uni-dimensional. Individuals were requested to mark one of the given options which are meant to evaluate their speaking anxiety, these options include strongly agree (1), agree (2), neutral (3), disagree (4), or strongly disagree (5). McCroskey and Richmond (1998) reported that scores >131 indicate high anxiety, scores <98 indicate low anxiety and scores between 98 and 131 indicate moderate anxiety. The

questionnaire was calculated by first adding the 22 positive items, then adding the scores of the reversed items, and finally subtracting the total from 132. Scores ranging from 34 to 170, with a higher score showing more public speaking anxiety.

Data was entered in Epidata software and was analyzed in SPSS (version 16.0). Mean and standard deviation was for continuous variable and frequency and percentages were used for categorical variable. Independent sample T-test and Chi-square test were used to find the association between two variables. P-value was set at 0.05.

## RESULTS:

TABLE 1 shows frequency distribution of demographic factors, institute and year of study. 288 student were included in this study, 87.2 % (251) females and 12.8 % (37) males with an average age of 20.67±1.63 years. Around 95 (33.0) questionnaires were filled by Dow Medical College students, 96 (33.3) by Sindh Medical College and 97(33.7) by Karachi Medical and Dental College. Among 288 students 7.6 % (22) were from 1<sup>st</sup> year, 20.8 (60) from 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 43.8 (126) from 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 8.7 (25) from 4<sup>th</sup> year and 19.1 (55) from 5<sup>th</sup> year.

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS INSTITUTE AND YEAR OF STUDY

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age (Mean ± SD)</b>	20.67+1.63	
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	251	87.2
Male	37	12.8
<b>Institute</b>		
Dmc	95	33.0
Smc	96	33.3

Kmdc	97	33.7
<b>Year of study</b>		
First year	22	7.6
Second year	60	20.8
Third year	126	43.8
Fourth year	25	8.7
Fifth year	55	19.1
SD = standard deviation		

TABLE 2 shows frequency distribution of public speaking anxiety. According to PRPSA 41.3 % (119) of students exhibit low, 54.9 % (158) exhibit moderate and 3.8 % (11) exhibit high public speaking anxiety with mean PRPSA 100.27±18.10.

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONAL REPORT OF PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY

PRPSA	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
PRPSA (mean ± SD)	100.27+18.10	
Low	119	41.3
Moderate	158	54.9
High	11	3.8

TABLE 3 shows association of PRPSA with demographic factors, institute and year of study. Although the results in this table are statistically insignificant, mean age for low, moderate and high are 20.76±1.52, 20.65±1.69, 20.0±1.789 respectively. Out of total females majority of them (56.6%) falls in moderate speaking anxiety and out of

total males, majority of them (51.4%) falls in low category. Amongst the institute majority of students exhibit moderate anxiety with highest in Dow Medical College (57.9%). From 1<sup>st</sup> year to 5<sup>th</sup> year, most of the students exhibit moderate anxiety being highest among 4<sup>th</sup> year students (60%).

ASSOCIATION OF PERSONAL REPORT OF PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY WITH DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS INSTITUTE AND YEAR OF STUDY

Variable	Low		Moderate		High		Chi/ANOVA	P.Value
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Age(x+SD)	20.76±1.5		1.69+20.6		1.789+20.		1.105	0.333
)	2		5		0			

<b>Gender</b>							2.35	0.308
Female	100	39.8	142	56.6	9	3.6		
						9		
Male	19	51.4	16	43.2	2	5.4		
				1				
<b>Institute</b>							1.673	0.796
DMC	36	37.9	55	57.9	4	4.2		
SMC	38	39.6	54	56.2	4	4.2		
KMDC	45	46.4	49	50.5	3	3.1		
						2		
<b>Year of study</b>							8.529	0.384
First Year	8	36.4	11	50.0	3	13.		
		7				6		
Second Year	23	38.3	35	58.3	2	3.3		
Third Year	54	42.9	69	54.8	3	2.4		
Fourth Year	10	40.6	15	60	0	0		
Fifth Year	24	43.6	28	50.9	3	5.5		

n = number of students

## DISCUSSION

Glossophobia is a dread of public speaking or attempt to speak. Our study provokes the idea about the prevalence of glossophobia among the students of mean age of  $20.67 \pm 1.63$  of three government medical colleges for the cause we have distributed almost equal number of questionnaires among them. According to PRPSA most of the students falls in moderate category of glossophobia followed by low and high. Our research estimates that glossophobia among females (87.2%) about is more common than males, in addition it has been also found out that most of the female have moderate glossophobia on the other hand most of the males have low glossophobia. As compared to other two institutes Dow Medical College has high prevalence rate of having glossophobia.

Interestingly, high category glossophobia is most prevalent among 1<sup>st</sup> year students whereas moderate and low category glossophobia is highest among 4<sup>th</sup> year and 5<sup>th</sup> year students respectively. It shows that 5<sup>th</sup> year students have least prevalence of having this speaking fear as compared to other years.

According to Andrew and YauHauTse (2012)[10], the results of their study showed that the level of fear was equal among males and females. On the other hand our study indicates that glossophobia is more prevalent in females. This difference may be because Pakistan is male dominating society. Our study also shows that at the final year prevalence of glossophobia drops down considerably. In one of a research conducted among engineering students in Malaysia, emphasized that this change of

prevalence was due to effective teaching strategies but it could be due to passage of time as students gain maturity and confidence because our study shows that this prevalence of speaking anxiety drops as the students progress from 1<sup>st</sup> year to 5<sup>th</sup> year.

According to, Ojaras Purvinis; Dalia Susnienė; Rūta Virbickaitė [11], even before they start giving a speech or presentation, many people suffer cardiovascular symptoms like increased pulse, high blood pressure, dried mouth and get faint. Once they start giving a speech, some may become able to overcome their conditions of panic and somehow manage to hide their nervousness and anguish, but their analysis did not reveal which problem comes together, our questionnaire is also comprised of some questions to figure out the major symptoms like some students experienced their hands tremble while giving speech, while some are in constant fear of forgetting of what they are prepared to say or difficulty in falling asleep a night before a speech. But like the study mentioned above, our research also could not provide any significant cause behind this anxiety of public speaking.

#### **Limitation of this study:**

We have limited our study to only medical students of government sector no doctors or post graduate were chosen for this as well as students not associated with medical studies any specific age religion and caste was not the part of our study.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Our results highlight that fear of public speaking is more prevalent among female medical undergraduates of Karachi, level

of glossophobia is least among final year students due to increase level of knowledge and confidence. Further research is required to evaluate the relationship between students who have gone through effective teaching strategies and those who have not, to check whether these teaching strategies are playing a part or its just due to passage of time that reduce their anxiety level. Furthermore, there is a need to assess whether the schooling system or our social environment has any significant impact on reducing or increasing this anxiety of public speaking.

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