



Students Experience of Coping with Public Speaking Anxiety: A Qualitative Study on Overthinking and Self-Confidence

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Abstract:

Public speaking anxiety is a significant psychological barrier for students, but the role of overthinking and its relationship with self-confidence has never been studied in an integrated manner. This study aims to explore in depth students' subjective experiences related to public speaking anxiety triggered by overthinking and its impact on self-confidence. Using a qualitative method with a transcendental phenomenological design, data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and analysis using epoche, horizontalization, theme reduction, and textural, structural, and essential descriptions. The results of the study showed that anxiety manifested multi-layered in the physiological, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions triggered by Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE). Overthinking operates as repetitive negative thinking (RNT) in the anticipatory, active (mind blank), and ruminative phases after performance. It was also found that a reciprocal relationship (vicious cycle) where low self-confidence triggers overthinking, which then gradually erodes students' self-confidence. Despite Islamic spirituality, this mechanism has not been well structured. This research implies the importance of a holistic psychoeducational intervention program that integrates cognitive reconstruction and spiritual values.

INTRODUCTION

Public speaking is one of the essential competencies that must be possessed by students in the context of higher education. In a higher education environment, activities such as presentations, seminars, scientific discussions, and oral exams are an integral part of the learning process that requires students to be able to convey ideas orally clearly, systematically, and confidently. This ability is not only related to the oral delivery of information, but also to train students in building, composing, presenting, and conveying information through oral interaction fluently and correctly (Hidayad et al., 2023). However, the reality found in the field shows that most students actually experience significant psychological obstacles when exposed to public speaking situations, whether in the context of academic presentations, seminars, or class discussions.

Public speaking anxiety has long been identified as one of the most common forms of communication anxiety experienced by individuals in various

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age groups, including college students. Speech anxiety is a complex phenomenon influenced by cognitive and affective elements, which are the main cause of individual variability in language learning (Gallego et al., 2022). This affective domain includes the emotional side of human behavior such as emotions and attitudes that directly interfere with an individual's performance when appearing in public. In the context of students, public speaking anxiety can have a serious impact on academic achievement, active involvement in the learning process, and readiness to enter the professional world.

One of the psychological factors that has recently received great attention in the study of communication anxiety is overthinking. (Arrasyid & Putra, 2024) states Overthinking is defined as a psychological phenomenon that involves overthinking a situation, event, or decision, often causing anxiety, stress, and procrastination. In the context of public speaking, students who tend to overthink are often trapped in a cycle of unproductive negative thoughts, such as imagining the worst-case scenario, questioning one's ability to exaggerate, and predicting negative judgments from the audience long before the presentation takes place. This condition can increase anxiety about public speaking, lower confidence, disrupt focus, and ultimately have an impact on the smoothness and quality of student presentation delivery (Nurhayati et al., 2025).

Although many studies have been conducted on public speaking anxiety, research that specifically explores the experience of overthinking as a major factor in the formation of communication anxiety in college students is still very limited, especially in the Indonesian context. Most existing research tends to focus on clinical interventions or quantitative measurement of anxiety levels. But effective anxiety management doesn't just focus on qualitative numbers, but on how individuals interpret those experiences. Efforts to formulate targeted and contextual intervention strategies rely heavily on understanding how an event is interpreted through individual cognitive processes (Wardhani, 2022). This is because anxiety often arises from irrational beliefs and the mind's expectations about social threats, such as predictions of failure or negative judgments from others.

On the other hand, self-confidence is one of the crucial psychological factors that determine the low anxiety of public speaking in college students. When a person has confidence in one's ability objectively, including identifying valuable competencies that are useful in his life (Tirta & Ambarwati, 2024). Low self-confidence or self-confidence can worsen the effects of speaking anxiety, further reducing students' abilities (Setiadi, 2025). When a person experiences excessive feelings of anxiety, this condition makes students tend to doubt their own abilities. Thus, there is a mutually influential relationship between overthinking and self-confidence in shaping the experience of public speaking anxiety in students.

However, what is new about this study is that until now there has been no study that explicitly integrates these two factors, namely overthinking and self-confidence in the framework of qualitative analysis to understand the experience of public speaking anxiety in students. Previous studies have generally examined these two variables separately and with a quantitative approach, so they have not been able to capture the richness of students' subjective experiences holistically. Therefore, the research is present to fill this gap by using a phenomenological

qualitative approach that allows for an in-depth exploration of students' personal experiences.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore in depth students' subjective experiences related to public speaking anxiety triggered by overthinking and its impact on self-confidence. The qualitative approach was chosen because this psychological phenomenon involves the meaning and depth of experience that cannot be accommodated through statistical measurement. This design is considered the most relevant because it facilitates an understanding of how participants construct meaning over the psychological dynamics they experience. This includes the process of forming overthinking, its interaction with self-efficacy, to coping strategies in the everyday academic context. Thus, this design allows researchers to explore deeper and more authentic layers of experience from a first-person perspective, as cannot be obtained through quantitative approaches.

Participants in this study are students of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program who were selected using the purposive sampling technique because this study requires participants who have direct experience and are relevant to the phenomenon being studied, not just statistical representation of the population. The inclusion criteria for participants include: (1) Active students of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program, (2) Students aged 21 years and above, (3) Have real experience of experiencing anxiety when speaking in public in an academic context, (4) Experiencing anxiety of public speaking accompanied by a tendency to overthink, (5) Willing to participate in in-depth interviews voluntarily. The number of participants was set at 9 people which was considered adequate to produce in-depth and diverse data to answer research questions comprehensively.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection in this study was carried out through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview type. The interview guide is structured based on three main focuses, namely: (1) The experience of anxiety of public speaking, (2) The process and manifestation of overthinking before, during, and after public speaking, (3) The dynamics of self-confidence and its association with overthinking.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique in this study uses phenomenological data analysis developed by Moustakas (1994), known as the transcendental phenomenological analysis approach, through six systematic stages. 1. Bracketing: research sets aside all assumptions and personal knowledge about the phenomenon being studied so that the data can speak for what it is. 2. Horizontalization: all statements in the transcript are treated equally and identified as significant statements that are relevant to the phenomenon of anxiety, overthinking, and self-confidence. 3. Theme Reduction and Clustering: meaning statements are inductively grouped into meaning clusters based on the similarity of themes that emerge from the data (grounded in data). 4. Textural Description:

the research compiled a narrative that described what (what) the participants experienced, supported by direct excerpts from interview transcripts. 5. Structural Description: The study describes how and under what conditions the experience of anxiety due to overthinking occurs, including the context and underlying psychological processes. 6. Composite description: textural and structural descriptions are integrated into a complete picture of the essence of the anxiety experience of speaking in public of Islamic religious education students in relation to overthinking and self-deprecation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Students' Experience in Dealing with Anxiety When Speaking in Public Triggered by Overthinking

Based on interviews conducted with students about their experiences, it was found that most of the 8% respondents reported feeling worried when they knew they were going to make a presentation in front of the class, while only a small fraction of the 1% respondents said they did not feel worried about the situation. These findings are in line with the results of a study (Solihati et al., 2025) which shows that many college students experience anxiety when speaking in public, which is characterized by fear of being judged negatively, discomfort in communication, and stress when facing presentation situations. This kind of anxiety in the communication psychology literature is categorized as public speaking anxiety that is commonly experienced by students. This condition has a significant relationship with speaking performance, where higher levels of anxiety tend to have an impact on the overall quality of material delivery (Megawati, 2023). Therefore, a deep understanding of these anxiety triggering factors is crucial in efforts to improve students' communication skills effectively.

In terms of physiological symptoms, respondents reported various physical manifestations that appeared before and during the process of public speaking, including tremors or trembling 9%, cold sweats 7%, and nausea 2%. This diversity of physical symptoms suggests that public speaking anxiety does not only occur in the psychological aspect, but is also reflected in real physical reactions. This is in line with the statement (Vinto & Irta, 2025) that anxiety in college students when speaking in public is characterized by the appearance of physical reactions such as body tension, nervousness, and other physiological responses that interfere with comfort when speaking in public. This physiological response can ultimately worsen the psychological condition of students and create a cycle of anxiety that is increasingly difficult to control if not handled appropriately.

From the cognitive aspect, some 9% of respondents reported that the first thought that comes to mind when experiencing anxiety is the fear of making mistakes. This cognitive pattern reflects the anticipation of negative evaluation from the audience, where students tend to be trapped in the fear of being embarrassed or seen as incompetent if technical or verbal errors occur (Grieve et al., 2021). In line with this, some respondents also expressed concern about social consequences, such as fear of being the subject of other people's talk 4%, fear of negative judgments from the audience 3%, and fear of not being able to answer the questions asked 2%. This condition is in line with findings in a journal (Missasi, 2025) which states that social anxiety is a significant predictor of the low quality

of interpersonal communication in students. Furthermore, this repetitive negative mindset is closely related to the phenomenon of overthinking which strengthens the intensity of anxiety and inhibits students' ability to perform optimally in front of the public.

In terms of cognitive impact on performance, most 8% of respondents stated that the anxiety they experienced had a direct impact on concentration and quality of material delivery. This impact is specifically manifested in the form of mind blank, which is the inability to remember material that has been prepared in advance at the time of the presentation. This phenomenon is in line with the concept of language anxiety in the journal (Mukhtarimi et al., 2025), which emphasizes that these psychological factors are a serious inhibitor in cognitive processes and language production. This anxiety condition often interferes with the motor mechanisms and muscle memory in the speech organs, making it difficult for learners to process information and produce sounds accurately. Thus, the anxiety of public speaking not only has an impact on the psychological aspect, but also affects students' cognitive and motor abilities at the same time.

These findings are reinforced by 9% respondents' reports stating that the intensity of anxiety they experience varies depending on the situation and the characteristics of the audience they are facing. This variation is closely related to the variable Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), where individuals feel very worried about the judgment of others when in certain social situations. Based on research (Ali & Ali, 2025), FNE is a major cognitive-affective factor that worsens the condition of anxiety in public speaking. The higher the FNE level a student has, the greater their tendency to avoid public speaking situations, which ultimately negatively impacts their communication competence in the long run.

Forms of Overthinking that Arise in Students When Facing Public Speaking Situations

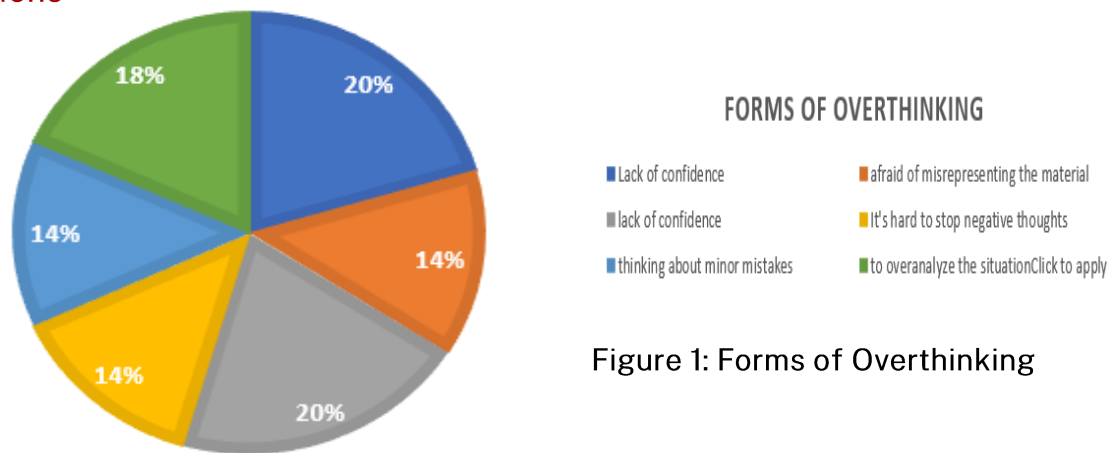


Figure 1: Forms of Overthinking

The results revealed that some respondents reported repetitive thoughts before public speaking, with the main manifestations being 6% insecurity and 3% fear of making mistakes. In the anticipatory cognitive dimension, most 8% respondents tended to imagine the worst possibilities before performing, such as fear of making mistakes in delivering material 6% and fear of not being able to answer 2% questions, while only a small percentage of 1% respondents stated that they did not do such negative visualizations. These findings show the

existence of repetitive negative thinking (RNT), which is a negative mindset that appears repeatedly, is difficult to control, and focuses on the possibility of failure or bad outcomes. (Hijne et al., 2020) also states that repetitive negative thinking refers to repetitive, passive and relatively uncontrollable and negative thought processes. This mindset can increase anxiety because individuals focus more on threats and mistakes that may occur than on their own abilities. This condition is in line with research (Edgar et al., 2024) which explains that repetitive negative thinking is related to an increase in anxiety symptoms and an individual's tendency to continue to think about negative possibilities repeatedly. Thus, this repetitive negative mindset needs serious attention as one of the psychological factors that directly affect students' readiness and self-confidence in public speaking situations.

In terms of the ability to control negative thoughts, this study found that there was a fairly even variation among respondents, where 3% of respondents each reported that stopping negative thoughts related to other people's judgments was classified as very difficult, a little difficult, or not at all difficult. This relatively proportional distribution indicates a heterogeneity of cognitive control capacity among respondents. (Li & Zheng, 2025) in their research concluded that individuals with social anxiety generally have difficulty managing negative thoughts and doubts about their ability to control emotions, so these conditions can amplify anxiety in social situations. These findings reinforce the argument that not all individuals have the same capacity to manage intrusive thoughts, so the interventions given need to be tailored to their respective cognitive profiles. This suggests the importance of a personalized and differentiated approach when designing public speaking anxiety management strategies for students.

Regarding the tendency to rumination after performance, the results showed that some 6% of respondents still thought about small mistakes after the presentation was finished even if only in light intensity, while some of the other 3% said that they were no longer involved in the thought process. These findings indicate that public speaking anxiety does not stop at the time of performance, but continues in the form of repeated self-evaluation after the presentation is over. Respondents tend to focus on perceived shortcomings and mistakes during performances, raising concerns about negative judgments from others. (Lilis et al., 2024) states that students often experience a fear of audience judgment, such as fear of being observed by others, fear of being corrected, or ridiculed, which is basically a form of real social threat to the community. This thought pattern shows a tendency to repetitive negative thinking that can maintain social anxiety while lowering individual confidence in academic situations. The results of this study are in line with the findings (Estrada & Hasani, 2025) which states that individuals with a fear of negative evaluations tend to think too much about the impressions shown and feel worried about the views of others towards themselves. Therefore, this post-performance rumination needs to be identified as an important component in the cycle of public speaking anxiety which, if left unchecked, can hinder the development of students' communication competencies in a sustainable manner.

The most significant finding in the formulation of this problem was the report of a majority of 9% respondents stating that the overthinking they experienced was rooted in insecurity and lack of confidence. In addition, respondents also

showed variations in the tendency to overanalyze the situation, even for minor matters, namely 4% stated that they were very inclined, 3% were quite inclined, and 2% were not inclined to do so. (Ivanka & Saragi, 2023) in their research concluded that in addition to reduced self-confidence, overthinking also has an impact on the appearance of low self-esteem and mental disorders such as excessive stress and anxiety. In line with this, (Buckner et al., 2020) explain that socially anxious people tend to be hypervigilant to social threats to prevent rejection, but this pattern can turn into avoidance if they feel rejected by their environment. This condition shows that overthinking stemming from low self-confidence not only worsens anxiety in public speaking situations, but can also encourage the formation of avoidant behavior patterns that negatively impact students' social and academic development in the long term.

The Relationship of Overthinking to Anxiety Levels and Self-Management Strategies in the Context of Public Speaking

The results of this study revealed that most of the 9% respondents stated that overthinking greatly affected their anxiety levels before public speaking. In addition, the same proportion of 9% affirm that the more they think about the bad possibilities that will happen, the higher the intensity of anxiety they feel. These findings empirically confirm the existence of a reciprocal relationship between repetitive mindsets and anxiety escalation, where overthinking is not solely a consequence of anxiety, but also serves as a mechanism that actively exacerbates and maintains the condition. Individuals with a strong tendency to fear negative evaluations consistently showed increased anxiety in performance situations. (Sarpdagi et al., 2025) in their research concluded that cognitive bias worsens perceptions of social situations, so cognitive restructuring is needed to transform unrealistic thoughts into more rational perspectives. This restructuring process aims not only to replace negative thoughts with more adaptive ones, but also to build a more flexible and evidence-based mindset in response to perceived threatening social situations. Thus, interventions that focus on the management of repetitive mindsets become particularly relevant in an effort to break the cycle of overthinking that significantly contributes to increased public speaking anxiety in college students.

On the functional impact dimension, most 7% of respondents reported that their overthinking had a significant impact on sleep quality and ability to focus ahead of the presentation, while only a small percentage of 2% respondents said they did not experience such disturbances. These findings suggest that overthinking in the context of public speaking anxiety not only manifests at the cognitive level, but also has a significant impact on individual psychophysiological functioning more broadly. (Turkzadeh et al., 2025) in his study of college students found that without enough sleep, the brain loses the ability to reset the integrity of emotional circuits, leading to failures in rational decision-making and social judgment. This condition confirms that sleep quality disorders due to overthinking can affect an individual's emotional, psychological, and social well-being, as well as affect the way an individual thinks, feels, and behaves (Magomedova & Fatima, 2025). Therefore, sleep disorders triggered by overthinking need to be seen as a clinical indicator that needs attention in the context of handling public speaking anxiety in college students, given its widespread impact on cognitive function and

overall emotion regulation.

Regarding overthinking management efforts, respondents reported various strategies that they carried out independently, including convincing themselves or positive self-talk 5%, practicing speaking before appearing in public 2%, and doing refreshing activities 2%. The diversity of the reported strategies reflects that respondents have developed coping mechanisms that vary in response to the anxiety they experience, although their implementation is still informal and not systematically structured. (Rahma et al., 2025) emphasized that the application of positive religious coping is the strongest protective factor that is able to significantly reduce secondary traumatic stress in college students. Although positive religious coping has proven to be effective as a protective factor, the success of its implementation in the long term still requires reinforcement through a more structured and planned coping strategy. The coping mechanism, which is still informal and reactive, as found in most of the respondents in this study, has the potential to be inadequate in dealing with anxiety situations that are of higher intensity or chronic in nature. This suggests the need for the development of psychoeducational-based mentoring programs that can help students identify and implement coping strategies that are more effective, structured, and tailored to the characteristics of the anxiety they experience.

In the aspect of the anxiety symptom neutralization strategy, respondents reported various methods they used when anxiety symptoms began to appear, including trying to stay calm 3%, praying 5%, and not thinking too much about the situation 1%. This variation suggests that students tend to adopt coping mechanisms that integrate spiritual aspects, especially through active partnerships between individuals and gods, as a distinctive characteristic in the Indonesian Islamic education environment (Aini et al., 2025). (Dolcos et al., 2021) in their research concluded that religious coping strategies act as an effective emotion regulation mechanism in reducing symptoms of emotional distress such as anxiety and depression through the mediation of cognitive reappraisal and coping self-efficacy. Thus, the integration between religiosity-based cognitive reappraisal and coping self-efficacy reinforced by spiritual beliefs forms a holistic and layered system of emotion regulation. This system not only works on the cognitive level in changing the way individuals interpret threats, but also strengthens the motivational dimension that encourages individuals to continue to make active efforts in dealing with anxiety situations. These findings underscore the importance of recognizing and integrating spiritual values as legitimate psychological resources in the development of local wisdom-based interventions to address public speaking anxiety among Indonesian students.

Factors Influencing the Emergence of Public Speaking Anxiety in College Students

The results of this study show that most of the respondents 7% stated that they were able to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in public speaking skills, while the other 2% stated that they did not recognize it. The ability to recognize one's strengths and weaknesses is a manifestation of self-awareness which is an important foundation in the sustainable development of public communication competencies. (Astuti et al., 2025) in their research concluded that self-awareness has a significant positive relationship with an individual's ability

to accurately recognize thoughts, feelings, and impulses. Students with high levels of self-awareness tend to be better able to identify their personal shortcomings and strengths, which ultimately influences how they manage personal information and respond to situational challenges more objectively. These findings imply that strengthening self-awareness through a refractory approach and psychoeducational counseling needs to be an integral part of students' public speaking skills development programs, in order to encourage a more targeted and sustainable process of self-improvement.

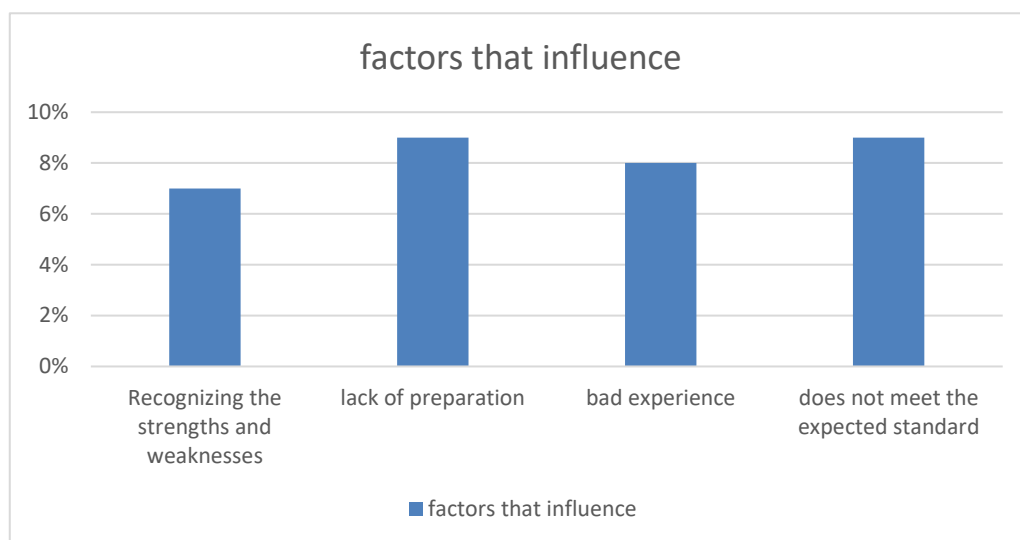


Figure2: factors that influence

On the readiness dimension, most 9% respondents stated that a lack of preparation greatly affects the level of anxiety they experience when speaking in public. These findings strongly confirm the central position of readiness as a variable that directly determines the intensity of anxiety in public performance situations. (Naser & Isa, 2021) in his study of college students concluded that careful preparation is a key factor in reducing public speaking anxiety, students who spend more time practicing and preparing material report higher levels of confidence and feel calmer when delivering presentations in front of an audience. (Silaban et al., 2021) also emphasized that performance anticipation significantly affects students' cognitive function and anxiety levels, where the pressure arising from expectations to perform, both factually and subjectively, is able to balance performance guidance with students' cognitive capacity. Thus, readiness is not just a technical aspect in public speaking, but also a relationship between performance pressure and the intensity of anxiety felt by students.

Regarding the influence of previous bad experiences, respondents showed quite varied variations, where some respondents stated that the experience had a great effect on the current anxiety level of 5%, some stated that it had a slight effect of 3%, and some stated that it had no effect at all 1%. This varied distribution of responses indicates that the influence of past negative experiences on public speaking anxiety is individual and cannot be uniformly generalized. (Ibrahim et al., 2022) explain that the extent to which past bad experiences with current anxiety depend largely on the individual's cognitive interpretation. Those who have low self-efficacy due to previous failures tend to

view challenges as threats and focus attention on their shortcomings, while those with strong self-confidence will view the experience as something that can be mastered through effort and strategy improvement. This confirms that responses to negative past experiences are not determined solely by the event itself, but rather by the cognitive schema and level of self-efficacy that individuals have, so interventions that focus on cognitive reconstruction and strengthening self-confidence become highly relevant in handling public speaking anxiety in college students.

In the aspect of post-performance evaluative response, the results showed that when they did not reach the expected standard, some respondents reported feeling disappointed 6%, while others tended to continue to think about the failure repeatedly 3%. These two response patterns reflect two different but interrelated dimensions, namely the emotional response in the form of disappointment and the cognitive response in the form of post-performance rumination. The tendency to continue to think about mistakes or failures after the evaluation takes place is a form of post-event processing which, if not managed adaptively, can develop into a risk factor for avoiding public situations in the future. (Edgar et al., 2025) assert that post-event processing, which is characterized by an individual's tendency to negatively review past performance, is significantly associated with increased social anxiety, if this post-event processing is maladaptive, it not only inhibits biological recovery from stress, but also reinforces risk factors for individuals to avoid similar social situations in the future. Therefore, the handling of post-performance rumination patterns needs to be an important component in the intervention of public speaking anxiety, considering that it is not only short-term on an emotional level, but also has the potential to form a chronic pattern of social avoidance if left untreated.

DISCUSSION

Self-Transformation Efforts and Supporting Factors for Increasing Confidence in Public Speaking Ability

The results of this study show that most of the 9% respondents stated that the first step they take in an effort to develop themselves is to actively practice public speaking skills. These findings indicate that there is a fairly high awareness among respondents that public speaking competence is a skill that can be developed through structured and continuous practice, not merely an innate talent that is static. Public speaking practice can significantly lower anxiety levels over time. In line with this, (Lee & Mori, 2021) emphasizes that reflective practice carried out on an ongoing basis allows students to monitor their own learning process, where proactive self-evaluation helps individuals recognize their strengths and weaknesses, thereby increasing confidence competence in facing communicative tasks. The implications of these findings confirm that public speaking training programs that are systematically designed and based on reflective practices need to be an integral part of the student competency development curriculum, in order to encourage progressive and measurable confidence improvement.

In the dimension of goal setting, 5% of respondents stated that they set certain targets or standards as a reference in improving public speaking skills, while another 4% stated that they did not do so. These differences in tendencies

reflect variations in the goal orientation possessed by respondents, which directly implicates the quality and consistency of their self-development efforts. Setting specific, measurable, and realistic targets in the context of developing public speaking skills plays an important role in maintaining intrinsic motivation. (Bylkova et al., 2021) stated that setting targets can reduce fear responses through habituation mechanisms and increase social self-efficacy. Students who do not have clear targets in their competency development tend to be prone to demotivation when facing obstacles or failures in presentations. Therefore, guidance in setting structured goals needs to be integrated into student academic services as a preventive effort against stagnation in the development of public speaking skills caused by the absence of a clear development direction.

Regarding the change in mindset, most 8% respondents reported a significant change in their thinking regarding public speaking skills, from the previous period to the present, while only a small percentage of 1% respondents reported no similar changes. The dominance of responses that indicate cognitive changes is a very positive finding, because a change in way of thinking is one of the most important indicators of the success of the self-development process in the context of public speaking anxiety. The cognitive changes experienced by the majority of respondents in this study had a more lasting impact than behavioral changes that were solely triggered by external pressures without an underlying cognitive transformation. (Mooij et al., 2023) in their research concluded that cognitive restructuring focuses on the process of identifying and challenging automatic thoughts that are negative and self-destructive, to then implement more positive and constructive thoughts. Through these techniques, individuals learn to alter maladaptive cognitive judgments and modify interpretations of social stimuli, which can ultimately reduce their anxiety in social situations. These findings underscore the importance of cognitive restructuring-based interventions as an approach that not only addresses the symptoms of anxiety on the surface, but also targets the root of the problem in the form of negative mindsets that consistently hinder students' public speaking performance.

In terms of supporting factors for increasing confidence, respondents revealed that 4% of peer support, 3% of mature preparation, and 2% of positive thinking were the elements that played the most role in increasing their confidence in the context of public speaking. This diversity of reported factors reflects the multidimensional nature of self-confidence in the context of public performance, which is simultaneously influenced by social, behavioral, and cognitive factors. (Win et al., 2024) in their research concluded that social support has an important role in improving self-efficacy, where support from peers and the surrounding environment serves as a source of reinforcement that helps individuals cope with academic stress. In stressful situations, social support acts as a mediator that strengthens a student's confidence in his or her ability to manage stress and achieve academic success, thereby lowering anxiety levels in the face of evaluation or educational guidance. The combination of mature preparation as a foundation of cognition and positive thinking as an emotional regulation mechanism is the most effective combination in building stable and adaptive confidence. Thus, strengthening these supporting factors in an integrated manner through the facilitation of social support networks, structured preparation, and positive cognitive-based emotion regulation training is a

comprehensive strategy that needs to be implemented in public speaking skills development programs in the university environment.

This research has a number of limitations. First, the anxiety management strategies found in the study are still informal and reactive, so their long-term effectiveness has not been empirically verified. Second, the use of retrospective data through in-depth interviews causes research findings to be highly dependent on the subjectivity of participants and their ability to reconstruct their experiences. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the characteristics of the sample, especially in students from non-religious science groups, in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the variation in the pattern of Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) and the form of overthinking experienced by students. In addition, future research needs to develop a mixed methods-based experimental approach to test the effectiveness of psychoeducational intervention modules that integrate cognitive restructuring techniques with spiritual values in a more systematic and measurable manner.

CONCLUSION

Public speaking anxiety in students of Islamic religious education study programs is manifested in multiple layers, including physiological, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions triggered by Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE). Overthinking in this context operates as Repetitive Negative Thinking (RNT) which takes place continuously in three phases: the anticipatory phase before performing, the active phase during the presentation that triggers mind blank, and the ruminative phase after performance. The main findings of this study prove the existence of a synergistic reciprocal relationship between overthinking and self-confidence, where low self-confidence triggers overthinking and conversely, constant overthinking gradually erodes student confidence. Although students have developed independent coping strategies, including the regulation of emotions based on spirituality or religiosity that are distinctive in the context of Islamic culture, this informal mechanism has not been well structured.

Theoretically, this study provides the novelty that overthinking and self-confidence cannot be studied as separate variables in the context of public speaking anxiety, but must be understood as two psychological entities that interact dynamically with each other and form a whole unit of experience in students. Practically, these findings imply that the handling of public speaking anxiety in students needs to prioritize a holistic and personalized approach, which not only focuses on improving technical speaking competence, but also simultaneously targets cognitive restructuring of overthinking patterns and strengthening self-confidence as two inseparable pillars of intervention. For higher education institutions, especially Islamic-based study programs, these findings are an empirical basis for the development of student psychological assistance programs that are more responsive, contextual, and integrate spiritual values as valid and effective psychological resources.

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