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Abstract

Purpose: To examine the relationship between glossophobia traits, academic performance, and fear of negative evaluation among Pakistani students in universities in Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

Methodology: A cross-sectional correlational design was employed, and purposive sampling was used to recruit Pakistani students studying at universities in Pakistan and the United Kingdom, aged 18 to 30 years. Standardized measures included the Public Speaking Anxiety Scale, the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale, and an Academic Performance Scale. Correlation analysis, mediation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS macro version 4.2 Model 4, and independent samples t-tests were conducted.

Findings: Glossophobia traits showed a significant positive association with fear of negative evaluation and a significant negative association with academic performance. Mediation analysis indicated that fear of negative evaluation did not significantly mediate the relationship between glossophobia traits and academic performance. Independent samples t-tests revealed that women scored significantly higher on glossophobia traits, men scored significantly higher on academic performance, and women scored slightly higher, but not significantly, on fear of negative evaluation.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy, and Practice: The study extends Cognitive Behavioural Theory by highlighting how glossophobia traits negatively impact academic performance even when fear of negative evaluation does not serve as a significant mediator. The findings support the development of cognitive restructuring, exposure-based interventions, and communication skills programs. Policymakers and universities may implement targeted public-speaking and mental health services to strengthen students' academic functioning.

Keywords: *Glossophobia Traits, Fear of Negative Evaluation, Academic Performance*

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Introduction

Glossophobia can be described as an intense fear of public speaking or talking in front of a group, characterized by symptoms such as panic, fear, dry mouth, weak voice, body shaking, excessive sweating, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, and increased heart rate (Pema, 2024; Ningrum & Lestari, 2024; Samyukta, 2024). Glossophobia traits are commonly observed among students and can detrimentally affect academic performance, as marks are not only obtained through written work but also through presentations to groups, classes, and teachers. Even with adequate preparation, anxiety during speaking can lead to lower academic performance (Shabbir et al., 2025; Concepcion et al., 2023; Wulandari, 2024). If left unmanaged, this anxiety can significantly impede both academic and professional success by disrupting verbal fluency, nonverbal communication, content organization, and confidence, which are essential for effective public speaking (Rismita, 2024; Dewi, 2024; Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020).

Studies have consistently shown that glossophobia traits among students are associated with declines in academic performance. Academic performance can be defined as grade point averages, standardized test scores, and educational aspirations and attainment, reflecting students' grades and attitudes toward learning, including their enjoyment of school and desire to attend (Kocsis & Molnár, 2025; Rani et al., 2025; Rizwan et al., 2025). A recent study in Lahore-based universities examined the effects of stress and glossophobia on students' learning attitudes. Using a questionnaire, 200 students were surveyed regarding academic stress, public speaking anxiety, and their relationship with learning behaviors. Findings indicated a strong association between stress, glossophobia, and negative learning attitudes. Stress negatively affected motivation and concentration, while glossophobia reduced students' willingness to participate in discussions and presentations, leading to poorer academic outcomes (Shabbir et al., 2025). Similarly, a study conducted in Bhutan found that fear of speaking in class, participating in academic discussions, and presenting in front of peers contributed to decreased learning and poorer academic performance among university students (Pema, 2024).

Fear of negative evaluation (FNE), defined as the apprehension of being judged unfavorably by others, is a significant contributor to public speaking anxiety (Pothakani et al., 2023; Babu et al., 2024). This fear is characterized by excessive concern with others' opinions, leading to anxiety in both social and academic settings, and can result in social avoidance and submissive behaviors (Huang & Wang, 2024; Downing et al., 2020). Previous research has shown that glossophobia traits are strongly associated with fear of negative evaluation, which can negatively impact academic performance by lowering motivation and inducing feelings of inadequacy, particularly during presentations (Vieira, 2019; Wilson & Gullon-Scott, 2024). A study in Jakarta involving 104 students found that anxiety about public speaking significantly and positively correlated with poor academic outcomes (Wulandari, 2024). Another recent study explored the mediating role of fear of negative evaluation in the relationship between public speaking anxiety and academic achievement among university students. Results showed a

positive association between public speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, which was negatively correlated with academic performance. Mediation analysis revealed a significant negative direct effect of anxiety on performance but an insignificant indirect effect, highlighting the need for further research on students' well-being and academic success (Ul Huda et al., 2024).

Students who struggle with public speaking due to fear of judgment often experience lower academic performance because university assessments require both written and oral contributions (Wulandari, 2024; Balachandran et al., 2024; Tari, 2024). Cognitive Behavioral Theory, developed by Aaron Beck in the 1960s, describes cognitive distortions—negative beliefs about oneself—that are linked to students' fear of speaking, such as thinking they will be judged, laughed at, or perceived as weak speakers. These cognitive distortions are common among students with glossophobia traits and can negatively affect their academic performance (Asperis, 2024; Jinga, 2021; Leahy et al., 2022).

Rationale

Although existing literature recognizes the impact of anxiety on learning outcomes, limited research has specifically examined the role of glossophobia traits in academic settings, particularly considering fear of negative evaluation as a mediating factor. This study aims to address this gap by investigating how glossophobia traits affect academic performance and fear of negative evaluation among Pakistani students in universities in Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

Research Questions

1. Do glossophobia traits show a significant negative relationship with academic performance and a significant positive relationship with fear of negative evaluation among university students in Pakistan and the United Kingdom?

2. Does fear of negative evaluation significantly mediate the negative relationship between glossophobia traits and academic performance among these students?

3. Are there significant mean gender differences in glossophobia traits, fear of negative evaluation, and academic performance among these students?

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between glossophobia traits, academic performance, and fear of negative evaluation among Pakistani students in universities in Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

2. To investigate fear of negative evaluation as a mediator in the relationship between glossophobia traits and academic performance among these students.

3. To assess gender differences in glossophobia traits, fear of negative evaluation, and academic performance among these students.

Hypotheses

1. Glossophobia traits are expected to show a significant negative relationship with academic performance and a significant positive relationship with fear of negative evaluation among Pakistani university students in Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

2. Fear of negative evaluation is likely to significantly mediate the negative effect of glossophobia traits on academic performance among these students.

3. There are likely to be significant mean gender differences in glossophobia traits, fear of negative evaluation, and academic performance among these students.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a survey correlational research design to examine the associations between public speaking anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and academic performance among Pakistani students in universities in Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

Sample Selection

A sample of 240 Pakistani students, aged 18 to 30, was recruited using convenience and purposive sampling methods. Participants were selected based on their enrolment in a university or higher education institution, experience with public speaking activities, and sufficient English comprehension to complete the study's questionnaires. Individuals with severe psychological disorders or speech delays that might interfere with their ability to respond to the questionnaires were excluded.

Study Instruments

Public Speaking Anxiety Scale (PSAS)

The PSAS comprised 17 items, each rated from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). The scale demonstrated high internal consistency, with reliability coefficients ranging from 0.744 to 0.88 (Bartholomay & Houlihan, 2016). In this study, the reliability was 0.76, which is satisfactory.

Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNES-Revised)

The 12-item BFNES-Revised (Carleton et al., 2006) uses a 1–5 rating scale. Reported reliability coefficients range between 0.96 and 0.97. The reliability in this study was 0.75, which is satisfactory.

Academic Performance Scale (APS)

The 8-item APS, developed by Carson, Birchmeier, and colleagues (2015), uses a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale, with reported internal reliability of 0.89. The reliability in this study was 0.79, which is satisfactory.

Procedure and Ethical Considerations

All procedures were conducted in accordance with APA 7 ethical guidelines. Permission to use the questionnaires was obtained via email from the original authors. Universities in Pakistan and the United Kingdom were informed of participants' right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study.

Data collection was conducted in controlled environments to minimize potential biases and distractions. Participants completed the questionnaires in quiet settings to ensure focus. The collected data were carefully reviewed for completeness and accuracy, and any questionnaires with missing or inconsistent responses were excluded from analysis. Data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 29).

Results

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants (N=240)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Age			21.98	2.83
Gender				
Men	123	51.2		
Women	117	48.8		
Educational Level				
Bachelor	131	54.6		
Master	86	35.8		
PhD	23	9.6		
Socio-economic Status				
Lower Class	43	17.9		
Middle Class	89	37.1		
Upper Class	108	45		
Pakistani Students' Country of Study				
Pakistan	153	63.7		
United Kingdom	87	36.3		

Note. SD = Standard Deviation

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of the 240 participants. The mean age of the participants was 21.98 years (SD = 2.83). The sample included 123 men (51.2%) and 117 women (48.8%), indicating a fairly balanced gender distribution. Regarding educational level, the majority of participants were enrolled in bachelor's programs (n = 131, 54.6%), followed by master's students (n = 86, 35.8%) and PhD students (n = 23, 9.6%). In terms of socio-economic status, 43 participants (17.9%) were from lower-class families, 89 (37.1%) from middle-class families, and 108 (45%) from upper-class families. Most of the participants were Pakistani students studying in universities in Pakistan (n = 153, 63.7%), while a smaller proportion were Pakistani students enrolled in universities in the United Kingdom (n = 87, 36.3%). Overall, the sample consisted of relatively young, educated Pakistani adults, with a balanced gender distribution, a majority from middle- to upper-class backgrounds, and most studying in Pakistani universities.

Table 2

Relationship among Study Variables (N=240)

Variables	1	2	3
1.Glossophobia Traits	-	.83**	-.13*
2.Fear of Negative Evaluation		-	-.04
3.Academic Performance			-

*Note. *p < .05, **p < .01*

The above table shows a significant positive relationship between glossophobia traits and fear of negative evaluation, and a significant negative relationship between glossophobia traits and academic performance. Furthermore, the relationship between fear of negative evaluation and academic performance is negative but not significant.

Table 3

Mediation Analysis Using Hayes Process Macro 4.2 (N=240).

		Consequences						
		FNE (M)				AP (Y)		
Antecedents		**B**	*SE*	*p*		**β**	*SE*	*p*
GAT (X)	a	.64***	.02	<.001	c'	-.19**	.07	.008
FNE(M)	-				b	.17	.09	.07
Constant	*I*	3.60*	1.55	.02	*I*	21.59	2.36	<.001
	R^2=.70	*F*= 560.60				R^2=.03	*F*= 3.78	
	***p <.001					*p <.02		

*Note. ***p<.001, GT= Glossophobia Traits, FNE= Fear of Negative Evaluation, AP= Academic Performance*

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The table shows that Glossophobia Traits (GAT) have a significant positive effect on fear of negative evaluation (β = .64, *p* < .001). GAT also have a significant negative direct effect on Academic Performance (β = −.19, *p* = .008). Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) has a positive but non-significant effect on Academic Performance (β = .17, *p* = .07).

Table 3.1

Indirect Effect (N = 240)

	B	**β**	***SE***	**95% CI [LL-UL]**
FNE	.11	.17	.09	[-.003 - .36]

Note. FNE= Fear of Negative Evaluation

The indirect effect of fear of negative evaluation (FNE) on the outcome variable was examined (N = 240). Results showed that the indirect effect was *B* = .11, with a standardized coefficient of β = .17 and a standard error of *SE* = .09. The *95% CI* ranged from –.003 to .36, which includes zero, indicating that the indirect effect was not statistically significant. This suggests that fear of negative evaluation did not indirectly influence the outcome through the tested mediating pathway.

Table 4

Gender Difference between Study Variables (N=240).

	Men(n=123)		**Women(n=117)**				
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***t (238)***	***P***	**Cohen's d**
Glossophobia Traits	55.02	9.48	57.77*	9.95	-2.19	.02	0.28
FNE	39.28	7.74	40.64	7.28	-1.40	.16	0.18
Academic Performance	18.21*	6	16.54	6.46	2.07	.03	0.26

Note. *p < .05, M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, FNE = Fear of Negative Evaluation

Table 4 presents the gender differences in the study variables (N = 240). Results indicated a significant gender difference in glossophobia traits (GT), with women (*M* = 57.77, *SD* = 9.95) scoring higher than men (*M* = 55.02, *SD* = 9.48), *t*(238) = -2.19, *p* = .02, Cohen's *d* = 0.28, representing a small effect size. No significant gender differences were found for fear of negative evaluation (FNE), with men (*M* = 39.28, *SD* = 7.74) and women (*M* = 40.64, *SD* = 7.28), *t*(238) = -1.40, *p* = .16, *d* = 0.18. Academic performance (AP) showed a significant gender difference, with men (*M* = 18.21, *SD* = 6.00) scoring higher than women (*M* = 16.54, *SD* = 6.46), *t*(238) = 2.07, *p* = .03, *d* = 0.26, indicating a small effect size.

Discussion

Substantial literature highlights the relationship between glossophobia traits and academic performance; however, the mediating role of fear of negative evaluation has not been

widely explored, particularly among Pakistani students in universities in Pakistan and the United Kingdom. This study aimed to fill this gap and provide insights for academia, as well as practical implications for students in both contexts.

The first hypothesis was supported, as glossophobia traits were significantly and positively associated with fear of negative evaluation and significantly negatively associated with academic performance, according to Pearson's correlation. These results are consistent with previous research in Pakistan, which reported that social anxiety among university students is positively related to fear of negative evaluation and negatively related to academic performance (Ul Huda et al., 2024). Students with higher public speaking anxiety may perform worse academically due to mandatory tasks such as presentations, where fear of judgment or low self-confidence can impair performance.

The second hypothesis was not supported. Hayes PROCESS Macro 4.2 (Model 4) indicated that while the direct effect of glossophobia traits on academic performance was significant and negative, the indirect effect through fear of negative evaluation was not significant, indicating that the mediation model was unsupported. This aligns with previous research in Pakistan, which also found that fear of negative evaluation did not mediate the relationship between public speaking anxiety and academic performance due to a non-significant indirect effect (Ul Huda et al., 2024). The nonsignificant mediation may be due to self-reported data, small sample size, or assessment practices in universities, where exams, assignments, and written work may carry more weight than oral presentations. Students' self-efficacy, coping strategies, or prior experience with public speaking may further mitigate the impact of fear of negative evaluation.

The third hypothesis was partially supported. Independent samples t-tests indicated that women scored significantly higher on glossophobia traits, whereas men scored significantly higher on academic performance. Although not significant, women scored slightly higher on fear of negative evaluation. These findings are consistent with a previous study at the University of Karachi, which reported that female students had higher public speaking anxiety than male students (Parveen et al., 2018). However, they contradict more recent findings suggesting that male students, although not significantly, scored slightly higher than female students on fear of negative evaluation (Anwar et al., 2025). The results align with Ul Huda et al. (2024), showing that women scored higher on fear of negative evaluation without statistical significance, while men scored significantly higher on academic performance. Conversely, a study in Punjab reported higher academic performance among female students, which contradicts the current findings (Shoaib & Ullah, 2019).

The observed gender differences may reflect cultural and social factors in Pakistan, as most of the participants in this study were students of Pakistani universities. Pakistani society often encourages men to be more assertive and vocal, which may reduce public speaking anxiety

and enhance academic performance. Women, in contrast, may face heightened social pressures, stricter expectations regarding behavior, and fewer opportunities to practice public speaking from a young age, making them more prone to anxiety, depressive tendencies, and lower well-being, which can affect confidence in academic settings (Shahid et al., 2024a; Shahid et al., 2024b; Irfan et al., 2025).

Limitations and Recommendations

A key limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size (N = 240) and the imbalance between participants from Pakistan and the United Kingdom, with Pakistani students from Pakistani universities being higher in number. Future research should aim for a more balanced sample from both countries to allow for comparative analysis and more generalizable results. A second limitation is the limited range of demographic variables. Future studies should include additional factors, such as urban versus rural background, type of university (private vs. public), ethnicity, employment status, and CGPA. The age range in this study was restricted to 18–30 years, although some PhD students exceeded this range. Future research should consider a broader age range, such as 18–40 years, to capture diverse academic experiences.

Conclusion

The study concluded that glossophobia traits among Pakistani students in universities in Pakistan and the United Kingdom are positively associated with fear of negative evaluation and negatively associated with academic performance. Hayes PROCESS Macro (v4.2), Model 4, indicated that fear of negative evaluation did not mediate the relationship due to a nonsignificant indirect effect. Gender differences showed that women scored significantly higher on glossophobia traits and lower on academic performance, while fear of negative evaluation was slightly higher among women but not statistically significant.

The findings encourage universities to strengthen counseling services and motivate students to seek mental health support to overcome public speaking anxiety. Cognitive restructuring and exposure-based therapies are recommended for students experiencing glossophobia traits. Teachers should identify such students and encourage professional help, and policymakers in educational institutions should develop effective strategies to address public speaking anxiety among students.
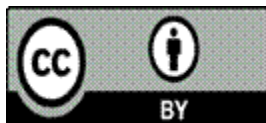
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