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## Relationship between Glossophobia and Social Interaction Anxiety among University Students

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### Abstract

The study aims to find the relationship between glossophobia and social interaction anxiety among university students. Glossophobia commonly known as the fear of speaking in public and negative evaluation of self, other and the world. Social interaction anxiety causes negative impact on student performances in academic and other areas of life particularly the communication skills. The objectives of the study were to determine that the relationship between the variables under study and glossophobia significantly predicts social interaction anxiety among university students. A quantitative cross-sectional survey research design was used to collect data from the university students through purposive sampling. Standardized psychological instruments were used to measure public speaking anxiety and social interaction anxiety. Statistical analyses involved descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Linear Regression analysis were applied to the data by using SPSS-24. The outcomes suggested that there is a positive correlation between public speaking anxiety and social interaction anxiety. When public speaking anxiety increases social interaction anxiety increases. Reliability analysis showed acceptable internal consistency of the scales being used in the studies. This study focuses on importance of psychological interventions and communication skills training programs for students to mitigate the fear and negative evaluation of self, other and the world.

**Keywords:** social interaction, glossophobia, university students

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## **Introduction**

Public speaking phobia, clinically termed glossophobia, is a prevalent form of performance-related anxiety. In college and university classrooms, many students hesitate to participate in presentations despite strong academic capability. This hesitation suggests that fear of public speaking may undermine confidence and classroom engagement. Glossophobia involves an intense, persistent fear of speaking before an audience. While moderate nervousness can be facilitative, excessive anxiety interferes with memory, concentration, confidence, and communication skills. Research has examined public speaking anxiety in relation to academic performance, personality traits, social interaction, and psychological well-being, indicating that high speaking anxiety reduces participation and limits overall academic growth (Perveen et al., 2018). Public Speaking Phobia and Social Anxiety disorder. Public speaking phobia is closely linked to social anxiety disorder, in which individuals frequently experience intense fear in social or performance situations. Heimberg (2002) reported that public speaking is among the most feared situations for individuals with social anxiety disorder. In Heimberg's cognitive-behavioral model, socially anxious individuals hold negative beliefs about their abilities and anticipate negative evaluation, which amplifies anxiety during speaking tasks (Heimberg et al., 2002). In many academic settings, students avoid presentations, speak less, or feel highly stressed despite academic capability. Understanding this connection is important for reducing public speaking anxiety and supporting more confident classroom participation.

### **Social Interaction**

Social interaction refers to the processes through which individuals act and respond to one another within society (Goffman, 1959). Beck and Clark (1997) described social interaction as performance, where people manage impressions through self-image, identity, and behaviors, adjusting their conduct to achieve positive perceptions—often termed impression management. They distinguished between front stage (adhering to social norms to maintain a positive self-image, where anxiety often arises) and back stage (a relaxed state when alone or with trusted others). These dynamics help explain why some people become anxious in social situations: they fear that the self-image they project may be judged negatively (Beck & Clark, 1997).

## **Social interaction anxiety**

Social interaction anxiety is the nervousness or fear experienced during interactions with others. Individuals with high social anxiety worry about communicating and being negatively perceived, embarrassed, or rejected (Gupta et al., 2019). Commonly challenging situations include speaking with strangers, one-on-one conversations, and participation in group activities.

Social anxiety can have environmental, psychological, cultural, and hereditary contributions. Cultural factors may involve strict social norms and fear of rejection or failure (Dakanalis et al., 2024). Hereditary and developmental factors may include genetic predisposition, childhood adversity, overprotective environments, and limited social exposure. Psychological factors such as introversion, neuroticism, and low openness can elevate risk. These factors may lead to withdrawal from social life, decreased communication, strained relationships, and increased risk of depression and mood disorders (Springer et al., 2023). Although avoidance can provide short-term relief, it tends to worsen symptoms over time.

Social interaction anxiety is characterized by fear of interaction and communication in situations where negative evaluation may occur (Stein & Stein, 2008). Common features include:

- Withdrawal from social communication.
  - Heightened concern about embarrassment in front of others.
  - Negative interpretations of social rules and ambiguous cues.
  - Physical signs such as trembling, sweating, and a pounding heart.
- Social interaction anxiety is distinguished by its focus on interpersonal encounters and perceived evaluation in specific contexts (Hemberg et al., 2016).

Self-perception and self-presentation perspectives propose that, during interaction, individuals aim to create favorable impressions and control how they are perceived. When they believe they cannot meet these standards, anxiety increases, which can manifest as glossophobia. Cognitive models suggest that social anxiety arises from negative appraisals of thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs—such as “others will think I am foolish”—which trigger automatic

physiological responses (e.g., trembling voice, shaking, palpitations), heighten self-consciousness, and impair coping and communication. Fear of negative evaluation plays a central role in social and performance anxiety. According to self-presentation theory, anxiety increases when individuals believe they may fail to make a desired impression (Leary et al., 1983). Public speaking and classroom presentations can intensify this fear because speakers become the center of attention, heightening perceived scrutiny and discouraging participation.

## **Literature Review**

Glossophobia and social interaction anxiety involve psychological and physiological arousal associated with threat perception, often described as a fight-or-flight response mediated by the sympathetic nervous system. During social interactions, cortisol and adrenaline may increase, producing symptoms such as trembling, sweating, dry mouth, and rapid heartbeat, alongside negative cognitions (e.g., “people will judge me”) (Rahmanwati et al., 2018). Prior schemas, disturbing thoughts, overgeneralization, and misinterpretation of bodily sensations can exacerbate glossophobia. Some studies suggest women may report higher glossophobia due to heightened sensitivity to social evaluation; narrative counseling has been proposed to help reframe self-stories and beliefs (Rahmawati et al., 2018).

A biopsychosocial perspective emphasizes that biological (e.g., cortisol responses, autonomic arousal), psychological (e.g., low self-esteem, cognitive distortions), and social factors (e.g., cultural norms, academic and peer pressures) jointly contribute to public speaking anxiety (Al-Ali et al., 2026). Public speaking anxiety is positively associated with fear of negative evaluation and linked to poorer academic presentation performance due to fear of embarrassment, judgment, and criticism, thereby connecting glossophobia with social interaction anxiety (Huda et al., 2024). Among ESL learners, lower language fluency correlates with higher speaking anxiety; improvements in fluency are associated with higher confidence, greater participation, and reduced anxiety (Rajanthran et al., 2013).

Anticipatory anxiety—nervousness occurring before a speaking or social event—can reduce willingness to communicate and limit participation. Recent work describes public speaking anxiety as multidimensional, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and physiological components (Daly et al., 2020). Higher public speaking anxiety is associated with lower willingness to initiate conversations and contribute to discussions (Dewaele et al., 2021). Communication anxiety affects

both formal and informal interactions, leading to lower confidence, avoidance, and reduced engagement (MacIntyre et al., 2020).

## **Methodology**

### **Objectives**

1. Assess the level of public speaking anxiety among university students.
2. Assess the relationship between glossophobia and social interaction anxiety, including correlations between public speaking anxiety and social interaction anxiety.

### **Hypotheses**

1. Glossophobia will be positively associated with social interaction anxiety.
2. Glossophobia will significantly predict social interaction anxiety among students

### **Sample**

Participants will be university students (N = 150–200) from Abdul Wali Khan University and Women University Mardan, with approximately equal numbers of males and females. Convenience sampling will be used. The age range will be 18–25 years.

### **Operational Definitions**

- Glossophobia: Psychological and physiological arousal during communication or performance in front of others. Measured by the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) (McCroskey, 1997). Also conceptualized as fear of negative evaluation of self and others during interaction (Clark & Wells, 1995).
- Social interaction anxiety: The perceived threat experienced during interaction and communication with others or when being observed. Measured by the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS) (Mattick & Clarke, 1998).

### **Instruments**

#### **Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA)**

Developed by James C. McCroskey in the 1970s to assess public speaking anxiety. It includes 34

items rated on a 5-point Likert scale; 12 items are reverse-scored (4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 24, 26) (McCroskey, 1997).

### **Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS)**

A 20-item, 5-point Likert scale assessing fear related to social interactions; 3 items are reverse-scored (5, 9, 11) (Mattick & Clarke, 1998).

### **Research Design**

A cross-sectional design will be used. The independent variable is glossophobia; the dependent variable is social interaction anxiety. Analyses included reliability, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and regression.

### **Procedure**

Institutional permission will be obtained. Participation will be voluntary, with confidentiality assured. Data will be collected via cross-sectional surveys and analyzed using IBM SPSS.

- Phase 1 (Pilot): Conducted with approximately 20 students to assess reliability of the scales. Informed consent was obtained.
- Phase 2 (Main Study): Conducted with approximately 200 students using convenience sampling. Informed consent and privacy protections were provided. No psychological or physiological harm was anticipated.

**Inclusion Criteria:** University students aged 18–25 who consent to participate.

**Exclusion Criteria:** Individuals unwilling to participate; non-university students; students with severe psychotic disorders or on medications that could confound anxiety assessment.

Reliability (e.g., Cronbach's alpha) was computed for PRPSA and SIAS. Pearson Product Moment correlation was computed. Linear regression analysis was used to evaluate whether glossophobia predicts social interaction anxiety while controlling for relevant covariates (e.g., age, gender, language fluency if collected).

**Table 1**

*Internal Consistencies of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) and Social Interaction Anxiety (SIAS)*

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>N of items</i>
PRPSA-scale	.78	34
SIAS-Scale	.64	20

The reliability of PRPSA Scale is exhibited acceptably ( $\alpha = .781$ ) which represents the that internal consistency of items measure public speaking anxiety. The reliability for SIAS is also acceptable for measuring social interaction anxiety.

**Table 3**  
*Demographics and Sample characteristics*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>categories</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Age	19.00	27	13.5
	20.00	35	17.5
	21.00	45	22.5
	22.00	37	18.5
	23.00	25	12
	24.00	13	6.5
	25.00	13	6.5
Gender	males	101	50.5
	females	99	49.5
Semester	2.00	46	23.
	4.00	29	14.
	6.00	63	31.5
	8.00	43	21.

The above table shows sample of 200 universities students from women and Abdul Wali khan including 101 (50.5%) male students and 99 (49.0%) female students age 18(2.0%), 19(13.5%), 20(17.5%), 21(22.5%), 22(18.5%), 23(12.5%),24 (6.5%) ,and 25 (6.5%). It also includes

student educational level from Bs; semester 2<sup>nd</sup> semester (23.0%), 4<sup>th</sup> semester (14.5%), 5<sup>th</sup> semester (3.0%), 6<sup>th</sup> semester (31.5%) and 8<sup>th</sup> semester (21.5%).

**Table 4**

*Descriptive statistics*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
SIAS_	200	16.00	68.00	43.385	8.84011
PRPSA	200	66.00	158.00	117.8855	18.20381

PRPSA Means scores is 117.88 (SD=18.20) and SIAS mean score is 43.38 (SD=8.84) which shows moderate level of social anxiety and public speaking anxiety experienced by the participants.

**Table 5***Correlation Analysis*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>SIAS</i>	<i>PRPSA</i>
<i>SIAS</i>	-	<b>.37**</b>
<i>PRPSA</i>	-	-

A significant positive correlation was examined between PRPSA and SIAS ( $r = .37, p < .01$ ) which shows that if social interaction anxiety increases public speaking anxiety will increase means SIAS is associated with PRPSA.

## Regression analysis

Linear regression is used to test did social interaction anxiety anticipates public speaking anxiety or not.

**Table 6**

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*Model Unstandardized Coefficients Standardized Coefficients*

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	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1 (Constant)	84.305	6.004		14.042	.000
SIAS_TOTAL	.774	.136	.376	5.708	.000

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A Dependent Variable: PRPSA\_TOTAL

Outcomes from linear regression analysis shows that SIAS significantly anticipates PRPSA (B= .376,  $p < .01$ ) which shows high association between SIAS and PRPSA.

## Discussion

The current study is conducted to test relationship between social interaction anxiety (SIAS) and public speaking anxiety (PRPSA) among university students of Abdul Wali Khan and women university data was collected from  $n=200$  including  $N=100$  males and  $N=100$  females from age 18-25 their education level includes Bs program; 1<sup>st</sup> semester to 8<sup>th</sup> semester. The outcomes from the result examined a significant moderate positive relationship between social interaction anxiety (SIAS) and public speaking anxiety (PRPSA) ( $r=.376$ ,  $p < .01$ ) demonstrated that if a person have high level of social interaction anxiety, he/she is likely to experience higher level of public speaking anxiety.

This finding is related to one literature that visualized public speaking anxiety is associated with social anxiety (Hoffman et al., 2007). The findings of the present study revealed a significant positive correlation between glossophobia and social interaction anxiety among university students. This relationship suggests that students who experience heightened anxiety when speaking in front of an audience are also more likely to struggle with broader social interactions. Such results are consistent with prior research indicating that communication apprehension often overlaps with social anxiety symptoms, particularly in academic contexts where peer evaluation is frequent (Daly et al., 2019).

The positive correlation highlights the interconnected nature of these constructs. Glossophobia may serve as a specific manifestation of social interaction anxiety, as both involve fear of negative evaluation and avoidance of social exposure (Stein et al., 2017). For university students, this overlap can have detrimental effects on academic performance, classroom participation, and overall social integration. Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of early interventions, such as communication skills training and cognitive-behavioral strategies, to reduce both public speaking fear and general social anxiety (Beidel et al., 2014).

Another study demonstrated that people who are afraid and negative estimation of being embarrassed in front

of others have high level of anxiety while speaking in front of others (Waston et al., 1969).

The moderate correlation shows that both variables have association but are not same. Which shows that both variables are multidimensional and should be understood as multidimensional factors because it is caused by different situation, events. Circumstances and personality traits like neuroticism and introversion etc (McCroskey et al., 1977).

The reliability shows acceptable consistency for PRPSA ( $\alpha = .781$ ) and for SIAS ( $\alpha = .644$ ) which is relatively lower which may be due to differences in cultures, personal biases or misunderstanding of items but instead of these limitations SIAS highlights' visualization within the sample.

Regression analysis outcomes shoes that social anxiety significantly anticipates public speaking anxiety ( $B = .376, p < .01$ ). This finding suggested that if social interaction anxiety is reduced through interventions public speaking anxiety level will also be decreased.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Participants' autonomy, confidentiality, and data privacy will be maintained. Informed consent will be obtained, and participants may withdraw at any time without penalty.

### **Limitations**

The cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Convenience sampling may restrict generalizability. Self-report measures are subject to bias. Some cited sources need verification and completion of bibliographic details per APA 7.

### **Conclusion**

Glossophobia and social interaction anxiety are interconnected constructs that can impede student participation and academic development. The proposed study will clarify their relationship using validated instruments and standard statistical analyses, with practical implications for student support within higher education.

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