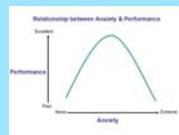# Presentation Anxiety in Psychology Students: A factor analytic study

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Introduction

- It is important that students have the confidence to orally communicate their work and ideas to others, to enhance their academic skills and also to prepare them for professional work after University (Van Emden & Becker, 2016)

- The UoL 'Get Set' data (2016) revealed many new students had serious concerns about giving presentations, a finding particularly strong amongst Psychology students

- A certain degree of anxiety is normative and may aid presentations

Aims of the study:
To further our understanding of the nature of presentation anxiety

> "I am not particularly confident in presenting to people, especially in large groups."
> (Participant #12 Get Set 2016)

Method

Psychology First Year Undergraduates (*N* = 259)

Measures:
- Presentation Anxiety Questionnaire (PAQ)
  A 57 item survey, especially designed for this research

- The GAD-7 (Generalised Anxiety Scale, Spitzer *et al.* 2006)
- Additional items on sample demographics, barriers to presentations and context/type/size of feared audience

Sample items from the PAQ
- If I were to give a presentation, I might get anxious that I would…
- Not be able to properly describe the topic
- Be judged for the way I look

Responses on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree)

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Key references

Spitzer, R., Kroenke, K., Williams, J., & Löwe, B. (2006). A brief measure for assessing generalized anxiety disorder: the GAD-7. *Archives Of Internal Medicine, 166*(10), 1092-1097.

Van Emden, J., & Becker, L. M. (2016). *Presentation skills for students*. London : Macmillan Education.

Results

- A principal components analysis was employed on the 57 items using varimax rotation
- 7 items removed
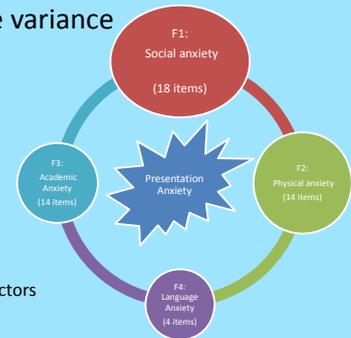- The analysis suggested 4 distinct factors, accounting for 50.72% of the variance

Fig 1. to show the four factors and factor labels

Social anxiety	• Be written about on social media • Be judged negatively on social media
Physical anxiety	• Appear anxious • Get a shaky voice
Academic anxiety	• Not be able to answer any questions • Answer a question wrongly
Language anxiety	• Have difficulty with my language • Have an accent that people would not understand

Fig 2. to show the top loading items on each factor

What is a large group to present to?
responses ranged from 3 to 300 (*Md* = 20)
What is the ideal group size to practice with?
responses ranged from 0 to 50 (*Md* = 5)

I CAN'T KEEP CALM BECAUSE I HAVE ANXIETY

Scores from the Generalised Anxiety Disorder scale (GAD-7) covered the full possible range from 0 to 21 with a mean of 7.62 (*SD* = 4.87)
74 students (28.6%) had GAD scores in the clinically significant range

Correlations between the four new factors and GAD ranged from *r* = .23 to .38
All highly significant (*p* < .001) but with modest effect sizes

Discussion

- Anxiety about giving presentations is multidimensional
- GAD is high in a number of students, reflecting currents trends in mental health noted elsewhere
- Presentation anxiety is related to GAD but not merely a function of it
- Findings can be used for further research or intervention
- Future research may want to include lecturers, who may be experiencing increasing self-presentation concerns associated with social media use
- More psychometric work is needed to develop the PAQ

Acknowledgements