

DUAL-FOCUS ACADEMIC COPING STRATEGIES OF STUDENTS IN OVERCOMING PRESENTATION ANXIETY AT SMP NEGERI 4 WARU

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Abstract: This study explores the dual-focused academic coping strategies of ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Waru in managing presentation anxiety. Using a descriptive qualitative method, three students were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, then analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings show that students combine problem-focused coping (task preparation, repeated practice, and structured explanation) with emotion-focused coping (prayer, self-affirmation, and peer support). Teacher assistance strengthens students' self-efficacy and reduces anxiety. These results contextualize Lazarus and Folkman's coping theory within the Indonesian school setting and provide a foundation for guidance and counseling interventions to reduce academic performance anxiety.

Keywords: Presentation Anxiety, Coping Strategies, Self-Efficacy.

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a universal emotional experience that is felt by every individual in various life situations, including in educational settings. In the context of school, one form of anxiety that often arises is anxiety when giving presentations in front of the class, known as public speaking anxiety or performance anxiety. This condition is characterized by psychological symptoms such as fear, nervousness, and self-doubt, as well as physiological symptoms like a racing heart, cold sweats, or trembling hands (Yustiti et al., 2024). If not managed well, this anxiety can negatively impact students' self-confidence, learning motivation, and academic performance (Pike & Raymundo, 2024). This kind of presentation anxiety is not only experienced by Indonesian students, but also by students in various countries. It is identified as a form of emotional pressure that affects students' readiness to learn. Dawaine's (2019) research found that negative emotions in the classroom can decrease students' courage to perform in front of the class (Dewaele, 2019). Similar research findings were also reported by Shao, Pekrun, and Nicholson (2019), who confirmed that students' performance anxiety in the classroom is significantly influenced by their perceptions, self-control, and the classroom environment's support (Shao et al., 2019). Even Liu (2021) found that physiological symptoms such as trembling hands and a racing heart are one of the main characteristics or indicators of students experiencing presentation anxiety (Liu & Hong, 2021).

Sriwahyuningsih and Barseli explain that academic stress and anxiety are forms of psychological pressure that arise from high learning demands, social expectations, and pressure to perform perfectly in front of teachers and peers. Therefore, managing academic stress and anxiety is an important aspect of guidance and counselling services in schools so that students can develop optimal psychological well-being and academic performance (Sriwahyuningsih & Barseli, 2024).

Individuals cope with stress thru two main strategies: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping is oriented toward direct efforts to solve the source of stress, such as planning, preparing materials, or practicing how to handle stressful situations. Meanwhile, emotion-focused coping focuses on controlling the emotional response to stress, for example, thru prayer, relaxation, or social support (Stanislawski, 2019). These two types of strategies do not stand alone, but can be used simultaneously, forming an approach known as a dual-focus coping strategy, which is a combination of problem-solving and emotional regulation occurring at the same time. Additionally, an individual's belief in their own ability to cope with difficult situations is a key determinant of their success in managing stress. Students with high levels of self-efficacy tend to be more confident, able to think rationally under pressure, and use more adaptive coping strategies (Freire et al., 2020). Thus, students' ability to cope with presentation anxiety in class is highly dependent on the interaction between coping strategies and self-efficacy. This explanation aligns with the findings of Barrows, Dun, and Lloyd (2013), which show that students who can combine problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies tend to have more stable stress regulation (Barrows et al., 2013). Macintyre and Gregersen (2012) assert that simultaneously managing emotions and cognition is key to reducing performance anxiety (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Pawlak and Mystkowska Wiertelak (2021) successfully documented how this dual strategy is used by students when facing stressful speaking tasks (Pawlak, 2021). These findings align with Weigold et al. (2024), who showed that students with higher self-efficacy tend to choose more active and stable coping strategies when facing presentation tasks (Weigold et al., 2024). where the balance between the two forms an effective adaptive mechanism in an academic context. The Lazarus and Folkman (1984) approach and Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory have been widely used in recent research to understand students' adaptive behavior toward academic stress and performance anxiety (Nuridzdzati & Akhriyah, 2023).

Some studies show that public speaking anxiety is a real phenomenon in high school (Pohan & Kusumawardany, 2023). For example, the study "Analysis of Junior High School Students' Anxiety in Foreign Language Learning" by Miyondri (2023) found that junior high school students experience anxiety when speaking in front of the class in foreign language subjects (Miyondri, 2023). This data suggests that middle school students also experience anxiety, not just high school or college students who face this kind of emotional challenge. In the realm of coping strategies, techniques or methods used by individuals to overcome stress or anxiety, research on Coping Strategies of SMPN 180 Jakarta Students was conducted to discuss how SMPN 180 Jakarta students utilize the two main coping categories according to the Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman model: problem-focused coping (addressing the root of the problem) and emotion-focused coping (managing their emotions) (Nadia & Andriany, n.d.). This means that students not only experience anxiety but also actively try to cope with it.

The Relationship Between Student Self-Confidence and Student Anxiety During Presentations at SMP NU Simo Lamongan revealed that SMP Lamongan found a relationship between self-confidence and anxiety during presentations (Sandy & Nastiti, 2025). The results show that students with higher self-confidence tend to experience less anxiety when speaking in front of

the class. This trend is relevant because it shows that individuals' internal issues, such as self-confidence, also determine how anxiety manifests and how students cope with it.

Despite extensive research on presentation anxiety and coping strategies in students, there are still significant gaps in the literature that need attention, and this study aims to address those gaps. First, many previous studies used a sufficiently broad sample, such as all middle school students or all classes within a single school, without narrowing it down to a specific class. This makes environmental variables in the classroom, such as friend familiarity, group dynamics, and classroom atmosphere, less deeply considered. For example, a study profiling public speaking anxiety in junior high school students found that 27% of students had relatively high levels of anxiety (Dewi & Fahmawati, 2025). Although useful, the study is descriptive and does not fully explore how students in a specific special education class develop their coping strategies. Second, numerous studies have extensively examined general speaking anxiety (public speaking) or presentation tasks, but have not specifically focused on dual-focused academic coping strategies, which are strategies that manage not only emotions (focused on emotion) or tasks (focused on problem), but both simultaneously. Third, most studies have not considered the specific conditions leading up to graduation or the final year transition period as a different context of pressure, which may exacerbate presentation anxiety. Even international studies such as (Botes et al., 2020), (Dong et al., 2022), and (Woodrow, 2006) still focus on general anxiety patterns without examining dual-focus coping strategies within the context of a specific class. This is the gap that this research aims to fill.

Based on initial observations in class 9A at SMP Negeri 4 Waru, it was found that students experienced symptoms of anxiety during presentations, such as trembling voices, avoiding eye contact, and increased speaking speed. This behavior not only impacts presentation performance but also the activeness of discussions afterward and students' motivation to participate in front of the class. The conditions of class 9A, especially as the final middle school class before graduation, present additional academic pressure such as final exams and major assignments, which have the potential to exacerbate presentation anxiety. Therefore, narrowing the research focus to only the 9A class students at SMP Negeri 4 Waru allows for a sharper understanding of classroom dynamics as a unique academic social unit, such as: student familiarity, peer influence, and the role of teachers specific to one class.

Therefore, this study aims to understand the dual-focus academic coping strategies of 9A grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Waru in overcoming presentation anxiety in front of the class. Choosing a dual-focused academic coping strategy means we will examine two dimensions simultaneously: ways related to task management, such as material preparation, practice, and time management, and ways related to emotional management, such as relaxation techniques, peer support, and controlling negative thoughts. With a narrow and specific focus, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution by enriching the literature on coping strategies in the realm of junior high school student presentations, as well as a practical contribution to guidance counselors and classroom teachers in designing appropriate interventions for final-year 9th graders.

Empirically, the research findings can help answer an important question: How do the students in class 9A prepare for presentations? So, how do they cope with the emotional pressure that arises? With the answer to this question, the school can establish more appropriate support programs, such as special presentation training for 9A class, peer group mentoring, short relaxation workshops before presentations, or the creation of a repeated practice schedule. From a theoretical perspective, this research also clarifies that the classroom environment specific to class 9A is not

merely an empty context, but rather an academic social unit with unique characteristics that influence how coping strategies are implemented and anxiety is felt. In short, this research is expected to be a finding that will help strengthen counselling guidance practices in secondary schools and enrich scientific understanding of students' presentation anxiety and how they cope with it.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was chosen because the researcher wanted to thoroughly understand students' experiences, their feelings, and the approaches they use to overcome anxiety when speaking in front of the class.

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 4 Waru Sidoarjo, East Java in 2025. The research subjects consisted of three 9A grade students selected purposively, based on certain considerations. This study was carried out while the researcher was interning at SMP Negeri 4 Waru and lasted for approximately one month. The researcher specifically chose the 9A class as the research subject because this class had more stable learning regularity than the other classes. This class also showed a relatively stable academic and non-academic profile, and the students in this class were also able to follow learning instructions well. This made it easier for the researcher to conduct observations and collect data. Researchers selected three students from the entire 9A class because they appeared anxious during presentations, based on the researchers' observations during their internship as guidance counselors. These three students were chosen because they were considered capable of providing relevant and in-depth information about the topic being studied. The researchers selected these three students because they showed signs of anxiety during class presentations, while students who were not active in presentation activities were not included.

Data collection techniques were carried out thru semi-structured interviews and participant observation, using a theory-based guide from Lazarus and Folkman (1984). The researcher used the semi-structured interview method to collect data. Although the main questions were used in this interview, the researcher was still able to further explore the students' answers based on their responses. The interview questions covered the students' feelings during the presentation, physical symptoms, the causes of their anxiety, and what actions they took to cope with those symptoms.

The data from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. This thematic analysis was conducted in six stages: data familiarization, initial coding, theme searching, theme definition, and report writing. This analysis will generate data categories such as signs of anxiety, contributing factors, and strategies to reduce it. Furthermore, the results of this analysis are used to show that each student has a unique way of handling presentation anxiety.

This research has a specific focus on the concept of dual-focused academic coping strategies, so the data collection and analysis process was adapted to identify these two categories of coping strategies: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. The interview guide is designed based on Lazarus and Folkman's theory, so each question explores concrete aspects of students' actions in preparing for the presentation task (problem-focused) as well as their efforts to manage emotions before and during the presentation (emotion-focused). This approach ensures that the data obtained not only describes the experience of anxiety but also provides insights into mapping coping mechanisms according to the theoretical framework used in the research (G. Plaza et al., 2022).

To strengthen the research data findings, observations of student behavior were conducted over a period of four months during the researcher's internship. The observations were carried out

to match the interview findings with the students' actual behavior during presentations, thus gaining a more comprehensive understanding of students' coping strategies. By focusing on a single class, this study provides an in-depth look at the relationship between anxiety experiences, dual-focus strategies, and the academic social context in which these strategies are formed.

The research process was conducted in the following order: first, preparation (initial observation and permission), second, subject selection, third, interviews and observation, fourth, data transcription and analysis, and finally, fifth, verification thru triangulation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Results

The interview results indicate that students employ a variety of unique approaches to manage anxiety.

Student A said he was shaking and very nervous when he gave his presentation. He broke out in a cold sweat and his heart was pounding. On the contrary, he has a strong desire to show what he has learned. To calm himself, he used the tactic of focusing on one friend who provided positive energy. Additionally, he tends to speak quickly, even tho he tries to speak at a slower pace. Beside that, he's still not used to giving presentations in public.

Student B said they felt nervous and their heart was racing. He overcame his anxiety by praying and trying to boost his self-confidence. Additionally, student B acknowledged that when he felt his presentation was unclear, the support from his teacher was very helpful. The teacher's intervention can make him more relaxed and continue the presentation with more confidence.

Student C said they get nervous, especially when they have to give presentations on their own. He also often has difficulty putting words together. Before the presentation, he drank water and did some exercises to relax. Additionally, extracurricular activities like PMR helped him learn the importance of public speaking and communicating well.

Based on the interview and observation results, all three students showed similar physiological symptoms such as trembling hands, a racing heart, and a dry mouth. And external factors like support from teachers and peers also repeatedly emerged as helpful in helping them cope with anxiety. The three students showed that everyone has a unique way of dealing with anxiety. Internal factors such as: practicing and using breathing techniques. While external factors, such as support from teachers and friends, are also very influential.

The symptoms expressed by students (A), (B), and (C) are consistent with the findings of research by (Botes et al., 2020) and (Liu & Hong, 2021), which states that speaking anxiety (presentation anxiety) in adolescents often manifests thru the same bodily responses mentioned by the students: trembling, a racing heart, and difficulty organizing the flow of their narrative. The three students had different strategies but were still within the same overall strategy. Student A used problem-focused coping by preparing materials and regulating their speech patterns. Student B did this by improving the structure of their explanation after receiving feedback from the teacher, while Student C prepared materials and practiced from their experience in the PMR extracurricular activity. Then, Student A used emotion-focused coping by focusing only on friends who provided positive energy. Student B did this by praying and self-affirming before the presentation, and Student C did this by drinking water and making self-relaxing movements like taking deep breaths.

Students (A), (B), and (C) also mentioned several consistent main patterns when experiencing presentation anxiety, including physiological symptoms of anxiety such as

trembling hands, a racing heart, and a dry mouth. Teacher and peer support were the most influential external factors. Previous presentation experiences, both in class and outside of class (extracurricular activities), and the interaction patterns of classmates shaped unique ways of managing anxiety. The context of 9A as the final year class intensified performance pressure, leading to higher levels of anxiety.

2. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that students develop various internal strategies, such as preparing material well and using positive words, as well as external sources like asking for help from friends or choosing group presentations. These strategies demonstrate the adaptive efforts made by individuals to cope with stress and achieve academic success in class.

This result supports Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) coping theory, which distinguishes coping strategies into two types: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping (Virgianto et al., 2023). The first strategy shows how students prepare material and practice repeatedly to reduce presentation errors. The second strategy demonstrates self-affirmation, deep breathing, or avoiding direct eye contact with others.

Interestingly, some students stated that they used visualization of success before performing in front of the class, a method that aligns with imagery techniques in the cognitive-behavioral approach. This technique is believed to boost self-confidence and reduce performance anxiety. This was previously studied by Sumirta et al. in hospital practice. Their research showed that visualization techniques are very effective in reducing a person's anxiety levels, which they applied to patients with diabetes mellitus (Sumirta et al., 2017).

Anxiety during presentations can be categorized in educational psychology as academic anxiety, which impacts student achievement. A study conducted by Nurhidayati and Mulyadi in 2019 found that presentation anxiety experienced by adolescents can lead to them being less motivated to learn (Lailatul Muarofah Hanim & Sa'adatul Ahlas, 2020). Additionally, this anxiety can cause students to be less actively involved in collaborative learning. The results of this study support the conclusion that students with high anxiety tend to withdraw or not participate in groups.

However, the findings of this study also indicate that students have the potential to become more empowered. Despite being scared, most students find ways to perform and deliver the material. This indicates that self-efficacy, or belief in one's own abilities, has developed. According to Bandura (1997), this is an important component in overcoming social and academic pressure (Purwanti, 2018). Students with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to use active strategies rather than avoid them.

This finding contradicts some previous studies, such as the research conducted by Fatmawati in 2018 on high school students in Yogyakarta, which found that students tend to exhibit passive anxiety when facing presentations. Most students would rather not attend or request a time change when they have to be in class. Factors such as greater social support in the environment of SMP Negeri 4 Waru, differences in school culture, or the way teachers handle presentation assignments could be the cause of these differences (Fauziya, 2023).

This research also indicates the importance of the teacher's role in facilitating a student-friendly presentation process. The strategies used by students do not appear in a vacuum, but are influenced by the learning environment. Teachers who provide clear instructions, sufficient preparation time, and positive feedback can help reduce students' anxiety levels. This aligns with

research by (Noerjanah & Dhigayuka, 2022) which states that the role of the teacher as a facilitator can significantly influence students' perceptions of anxiety-inducing tasks.

Theoretically, the results of this study can be linked to social cognitive theory, which emphasizes that the interaction between individual factors, behavior, and the environment influences individual behavior. In this situation, the strategies chosen by students are influenced by the interaction between their personalities, such as a tendency to be shy, prior experiences, and pressure or support from their school's social environment. Therefore, these findings can help strengthen the understanding that anxiety is part of the interactional dynamics in educational environments and not solely an individual symptom. This can be done during the theory development process.

Additionally, this research opens opportunities for developing school-based interventions to address presentation anxiety. Institutional support can include presentation training, implementing relaxation strategies in learning, and giving students time to think. Community-based and preventive approaches are considered more effective than corrective and individualistic methods (Elisanti & Ardianto, 2021).

Thus, it can be concluded that students' strategies for managing presentation anxiety are a reflection of an inclusive and supportive learning process, not just a psychological reaction. To address this issue, caring teachers, a friendly classroom environment, and personal capacity building for students are an effective combination (Martiningsih et al., 2024).

The three students provided insights or perspectives that are repeatedly echoed in the field of educational psychology: that anxiety is not something that can be addressed with a single recipe applicable to everyone. Each student has a different approach: student (A) with their spontaneous courage, student (B) with their spiritual foundation and interpersonal support, and student (C) with their social experiences that fostered assertiveness and readiness. This variety of strategies shows that each individual develops ways of coping with pressure based on internal resources, social networks, and experiences that shape their self-belief. This finding reinforces the importance of the role of teachers and counselors in more subtly reading students' emotional needs, so that the mentoring approach is not only academic, but also adaptive according to psychological conditions. This kind of sensitive approach opens up space for students to continue experimenting with the strategies that work best for them, so that presentation anxiety, which students previously saw as a barrier, becomes a learning experience that strengthens their confidence.

CONCLUSION

This study explains how presentation anxiety arises in 9A grade students and how they use dual-focused academic coping strategies to manage it. Their anxiety manifested through physical symptoms like trembling and a racing heart, as well as psychological symptoms such as a fear of making mistakes, self-doubt, and a concern about being negatively judged. This condition primarily arises when students perform individually, feel less confident in their mastery of the material, or have low self-esteem.

In response to the research question regarding the strategies used, this study found that students simultaneously combined two coping mechanisms. In terms of problem-focused coping, they prepared the material more structured, practiced repeatedly, improved the flow of their presentation, and utilized previous experiences to enhance their mastery of the task. This effort reduces uncertainty and provides a sense of control.

In terms of emotion-focused coping, students calm their emotions thru prayer, affirmations, breathing techniques, drinking water, and seeking reassurance from friends. Social support, especially from teachers and peers, has been proven to reduce anxiety, which aligns with the finding Daymiel that social support is correlated with lower presentation anxiety.

The problem statement regarding the role of the classroom environment indicates that academic pressure in the final year intensifies anxiety while also triggering students' need to combine task and emotion management strategies. A supportive environment increases the courage to perform, while a competitive atmosphere makes students rely more on dual-focus coping.

Overall, this study confirms that the dual-focus academic coping strategy is the most appropriate adaptive response for 9A grade students in dealing with presentation anxiety. Students not only rely on academic preparation but also on emotional regulation to maintain their ability to perform well. This finding provides a basis for guidance and counselling services to develop interventions that simultaneously strengthen academic skills and emotional management.

Theoretically, the research findings support the Lazarus and Folkman coping model, which places problem-focused and emotion-focused coping as two strategies that can work simultaneously. Contextually, this research adds empirical evidence that junior high school students in Indonesia are capable of developing adaptive coping mechanisms thru a balance between task and emotion management, especially when they receive support from teachers and peers. Therefore, a dual-focus coping strategy is relevant to implement in counselling services to help students manage performance anxiety sustainably.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

This research was compiled by two authors with complementary roles. Firman Abdullah, as the lead author, was responsible for research planning, data collection, thematic analysis, and the final writing and compilation of the article manuscript. Ragwan Albaar served as the main supervisor, providing conceptual direction, methodological supervision, and academic validation throughout all stages of the research. Both authors have read and approved the final version of this article for publication.

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The authors declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest, either personal or institutional, that could influence the results of the research, writing, or publication of this article.

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