Exploring the Concept of Reciprocal Determinism for Factors of Oral Presentation Anxiety

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Abstract

In higher institutions of learning, oral presentation is a common way for students to be assessed. No matter how prepared a presenter is, he/she still experiences some form of anxiety when it comes to facing audience during presentations. This quantitative study is done to explore the concept of reciprocal determinism for factors of oral presentation anxiety. This study is anchored by the concept of reciprocal determinism in social cognitive theory. The instrument used is a questionnaire with 14 items on environmental, personal and behavioural components. 92 students participated in this study. Findings revealed the highest total mean is Behavioural components and is followed by the personal components. Presenters were least anxious with Environmental components. Additionally, this study also revealed strong, positive relationships between environmental components with personal and behavioural components. It also showed that there is also a strong positive relationship between personal and behavioural components. Findings in this study bear interesting implications on the teaching and learning of oral presentations among learners.

Keywords: Oral Presentation, Environmental, Personal, Behavioural, Relationship

Introduction

Background of Study

Higher institutions in Malaysia requires learners to have English proficiency to get through their learning journey. Learners not only have to refer to materials written in English to get through the lessons taught. Teaching is mostly done in English and one thing that many learners feared would be making oral presentations in English. Interestingly, many courses in higher institutions end with an assessment that requires learners to make oral presentations. Even the most prepared presenters experience a certain degree of nervousness when they present. The dilemma of oral presentations in higher institutions is that no matter how anxious students are about oral presentations; they have to be contented with the fact that it is the main form of assessment.

According to McCrosky (1977), communication apprehension explains that learners face anxiety when they communicate (in the target language). This apprehension is increased

when learners have to make public speaking such as oral presentations. Nevertheless, this apprehension towards presentations is influenced by a variety of factors. The factors can stem from the presenter or their surroundings. The fear of the surrounding would then influence the presenter and can be seen in his/her behaviour. According to Rahmat (2019), fear of it is a cycle because on factor in the presentation influence another component and if not addressed by the presenter, the fear becomes a cycle.

Studies by Sharif, et.al. (2023) and Grieve,et.al (2021) suggested that future researchers look into sources for fear of oral presentation. They proposed that researchers carry out investigations for dwell into more factors in oral presentation anxiety. Hence, this study is done to explore fear of oral presentation based on the social cognitive theory. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions;

- How does the environmental factor influence learners' presentation anxiety?
- How does the personal components influence learners' presentation anxiety?
- How does the behavioural components influence learners' presentation anxiety?
- How do the mean differ for all components?
- Is there a relationship between all social cognitive components for oral presentation anxiety?

Literature Review
Theoretical Framework of the Study
- Social Cognitive Theory

The social cognitive theory was introduced by Bandura (1986) and it explains the dynamic interaction between components involved in learning. The components are personal, behavioural and environmental components. Bandura (1986) states that learning may begin with the learner depending on his/her personal components to maximise learning. Personal components include the learner's beliefs and expectations and also his/her self-perception. The personal components that have already existed in the learner may play an important role in their behavioural components. The learner's personal components affect his/her behavioural components and these components snowball into affecting how the learner views the environmental components. This interplay between the components reflects on the concept of reciprocal determinism. Each influence is influenced by the others.

- Oral Presentation Anxiety

Oral presentation anxiety can be traced from several factors. According to Endler (1980), presenters are influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors include the presenters feeling nervous. They could also feel they did not have sufficient preparation. Some were worried they lacked presentation skills, or even feeling they were not as good as others. External factors include factors that caused the presenters to worry about the marks they will get. They may also fear the size and composition of the audience, or the venue or even the time of the day of the presentation. Hussein (2021) also added that the presenters were anxious about the classroom atmosphere.

Past Studies on Oral Presentation Anxiety
Ding,et.al (2024) conducted a mixed mode study on the relationship between Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) and Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) in group oral presentation. 25 students participated in the study. The instrument used was a questionnaire.

Data was also collected from self-reflective journals. Findings revealed that the participants enjoyed the oral presentations instead of feeling anxious. Findings also showed there was limited influence of FLE on oral presentation. There was also a negative correlation between FLCA and overall presentation performance. Qualitative analysis showed that the students' FLCA and FLE was influenced by personal and peer-related factors.

Another study was conducted by Ye, et.al. (2024) to investigate mixed-mode study on public speaking anxiety (PSA) among students. 297 students participated in the study. The students presented in virtual public speaking scenarios which are differentiated by audience size, engagement levels and also room spatial dimensions. Data was analysed using principal axis factoring and multiple regression, Three factors were identified and they are engagement in a large audience, confinement or evaluation anxiety and audience disengagement. Findings showed that PSA is influenced by a complex interplay of audience size, engagement levels and also room spatial dimensions.

Grieve,et.al. (2021) conducted a study to investigate the fear of oral presentation and strategies used by students to overcome these fears. 46 undergraduate students participated in this study. This qualitative study has two aims. The first aim is to investigate the fears and the strategies. The second aim is to determine whether this fear affects students' experience in higher education. Data was collected from four open-ended questions. Data was analysed using thematic analysis. Findings for fear and strategies include uncertainty of topic, physical symptoms of the presenters, negative effect on university experience and lack of preparation. A mixed-mode study was done by Kurakan (2021) explored anxiety levels in English oral presentations. It also looked at the anxiety faced during pre-presentation d while presentation. 72 students chosen were from Thailand studying English as a foreign language (EFL) studying engineering. The instrument for quantitative data is a questionnaire adapted from Personal Report on Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA-34). Qualitative data was collected from a semi-structured interview. Findings showed higher anxiety levels while doing the presentation. The qualitative analysis showed that both high and low anxious group experienced a lack of English vocabulary and grammar. Their pronunciations were also found to be lacking. Findings also revealed that students found making eye-contact with the audience an added anxiety. The low anxiety participants felt uncomfortable answering questions from audience. The highly anxious group were worried about negative evaluation as well as live reactions from the audience.

Gallego, et.al (2021) conducted a study on public speaking anxiety. 95 university students participated in this study. This study explored the. Influence on self-report, observer report, as well as behavioural and physiological reactivity on speech challenge tasks. The participants completed a self-report measure. Of public speaking anxiety before and after the speech challenge. Findings revealed that self-reported public speaking anxiety predicts. Speech duration and speech quality. The study also revealed that socially anxious participants underrate their speech performance compared to actual observers' evaluations.

The study by Dellah, et.al. (2020) was done to explore the relationship between students' speaking anxiety in English oral presentations and their level of speaking anxiety, genders, programs and proficiency. The instrument used is a questionnaire on fear of foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCAS). 199 students participated in this study. Results showed that

participants had moderate level of speaking anxiety during English oral presentations due to fear of negative evaluations. The result indicated female participants were more anxious. However, there was a significant difference between English proficiency and level of speaking anxiety.

Lastly, Alharbi (2021) examined the level of anxiety, signs of anxiety and the sources of oral anxiety among Saudi EFL students. 50 students participated in this study. Data was collected form direct observation, in-depth interviews and also a survey. Findings revealed that students experience moderate levels of anxiety. Findings also showed that among some of the signs of anxiety are using scripts, poor eye contact, rigid facial. Expressions and many more. Studies also showed that some sources of anxiety are fear of being ridiculed, and humiliation.

To sum up, past studies indicated that the sources of fear of oral presentation can be traced to be either internal or external. Internal sources refer to the speaker's Personal components. Next, external sources can be traced as the speaker's fear of getting negative reactions from the listeners and this can also be considered Behavioural components. Lastly, external sources can also refer to the speaker being anxious of the audience and this can be considered as Environmental factors.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study. In the context of this study, this framework reveals the components affecting oral presentation among learners learning English as a second language. This study is anchored from Albert Bandura's (1986) concept of reciprocal determinism in social cognitive theory. The main components in this study are the environment, personal and behavioural components. Reciprocal determinism posits that the three components (figure 1) all influence one another. The study suggests that the presenter are not only shaped by the environment, but also his/her beliefs (personal components) and also his/her behavioural components.
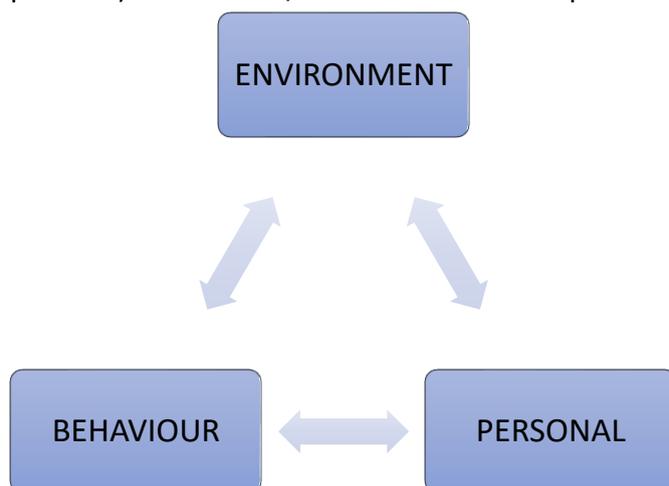

Figure 1- Theoretical Framework of the Study
Exploring Reciprocal Determinism in Oral Presentation Anxiety

Methodology

This quantitative study is done to explore oral presentation anxiety from the view of social cognitive theory. A convenient sample of 92 participants from a public university in Malaysia responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5 Likert-scale survey. Table 1 below shows the categories used for the Likert scale; 1 is for Strongly Disagree, 2 is for Disagree, 3 is for Undecided, 4 is for Agree and 5 is for Strongly Agree.

Table 1
Likert Scale Use

1	Never
2	Rarely
3	Sometimes
4	Very Often
5	Always

Table 2 shows the distribution of items in the survey. The concept of this study is rooted from Badura's (1986) social cognitive theory. This concept is then mapped to match the instrument for oral presentation anxiety by Endler (1980) to reveal the variables in table below.

Table 2
Distribution of Items in the Survey

SECTION	VARIABLE	NO OF ITEMS	CRONBACH ALPHA
B	ENVIRONMENT	4	.868
C	PERSONAL	6	.897
D	BEHAVIOUR	4	.862
	TOTAL FEAR	14	.949

Table 2 also shows the reliability of the survey. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .868 for Environmental factor, .897 for Personal factors and .862 for Behavioural factors. The overall Cronbach Alpha for all 14 items is .949. This shows a good reliability of the instrument chosen. Further analysis using SPSS is done to present findings to answer the research questions for this study.
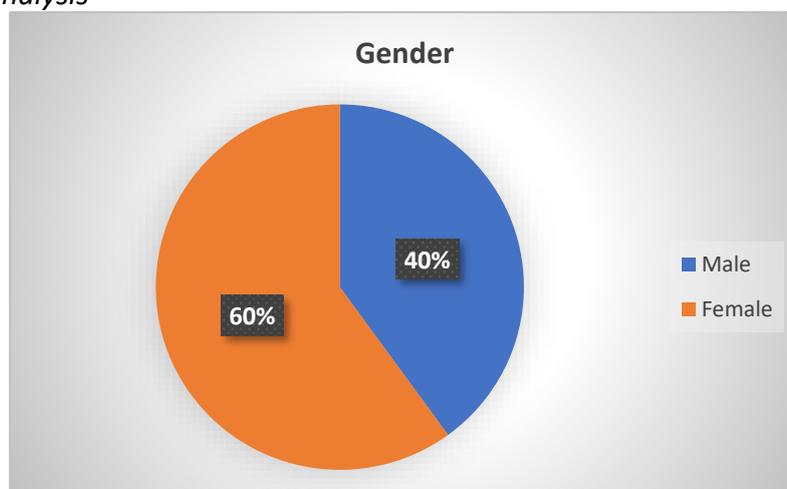
Findings

Demographic Analysis

Figure 2- Percentage for Gender
Figure 2 reveals the percentage for gender. 40% of the participants are male while 60% are female students.
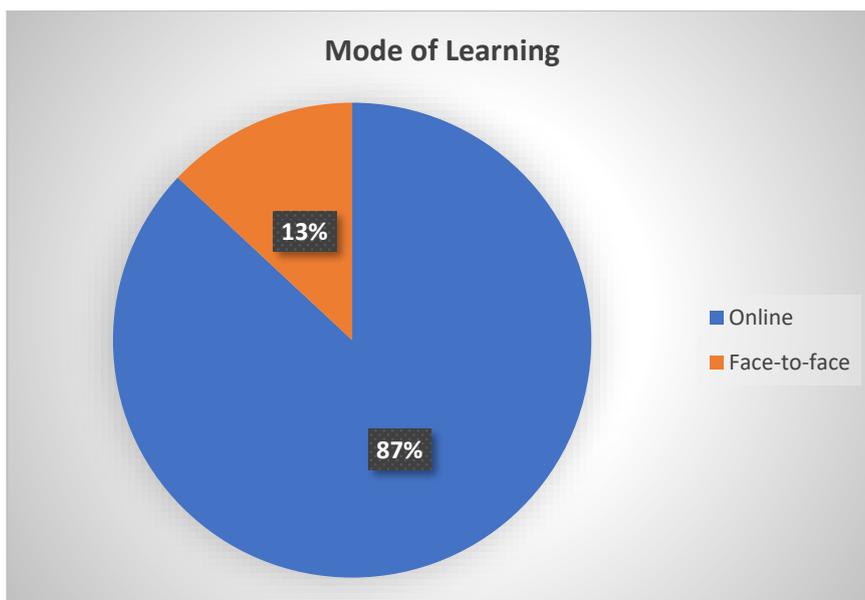
Figure 3- Percentage for Preference of Learning Mode
Figure 3 shows the percentage for learning mode preference among students. 87% of them preferred to study online and 13% chose face-to-face lessons.

Descriptive Statistics (mean)
Findings for Environmental Components
This section reveals data to answer research question 1- How does the environmental factors influence learners' presentation anxiety?
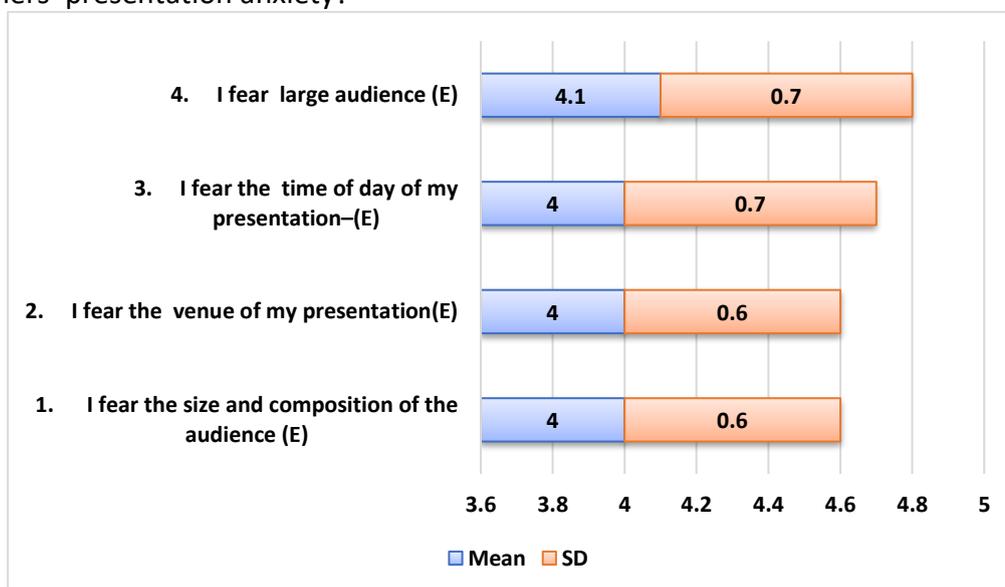

Figure 4- Mean for Environmental Factors

Figure 4 above presents the mean for environmental factors. The highest mean id 4.1 (SD=0.7) for item 4 which states that the students feared a large audience when they presented. Next, item 1 (mean=4, SD=0.6) states that the students feared the size and composition of the audience. Item 2 (mean=4, SD=0.6) states that the students feared the venue of the presentation. Finally, item 3 (mean=4, SD=0.7) states that the students feared the time of the day of the presentation.

Findings for Personal Components
This section reveals data to answer research question 2- How does the personal components influence learners' presentation anxiety?
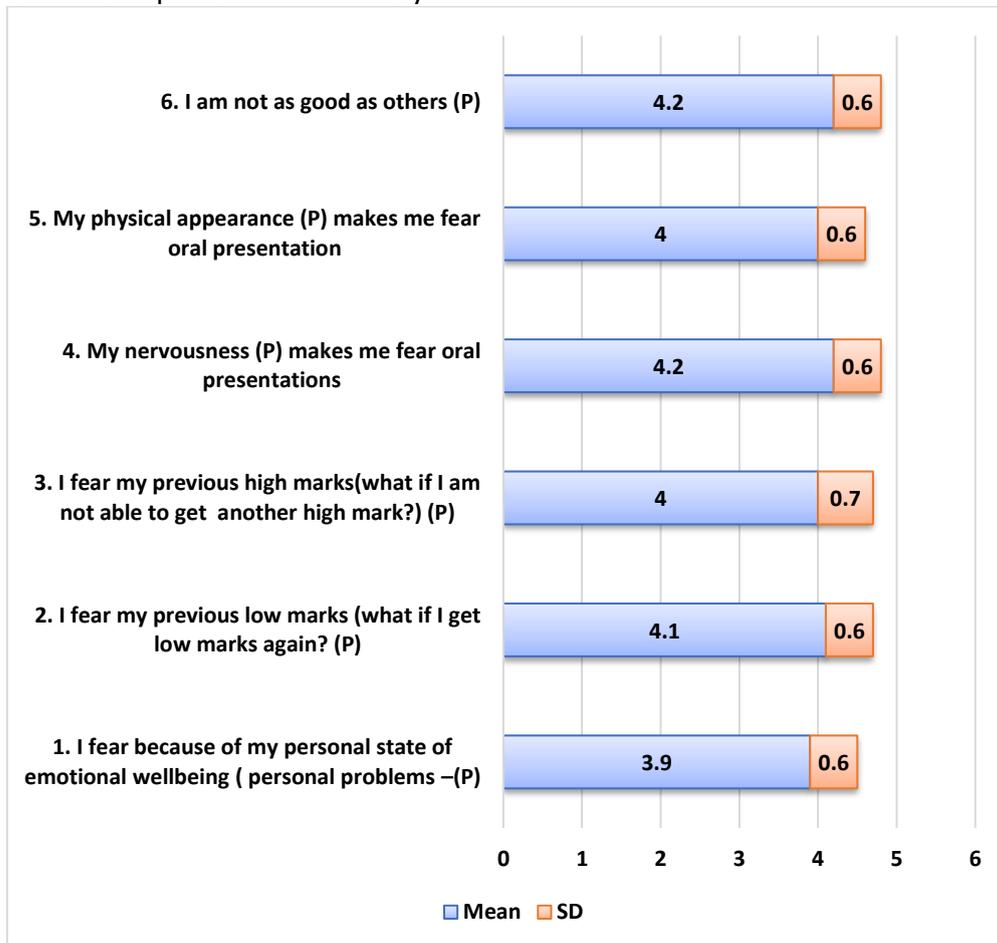

Figure 5- Mean for Personal Factors

Figure 5 above presents the mean for personal factors. Two items shared the same mean of 4.2. Item 4 (mean=4.2, SD=0.6) states that the students' nervousness made them fear oral presentation. Item 6 (mean=4.3, SD=0.6) states that the students felt they were not as good as their peers. Next, item 2 (mean=4.1, SD=0.6) states that the students feared their previous low marks would be repeated. The lowest mean is item 1 (mean=3.9, SD=0.6) states that the students' fear was caused by their personal state of emotional well-being.

Findings for Behavioural Components
This section reveals data to answer research question 3- How does the behavioural components influence learners' presentation anxiety?
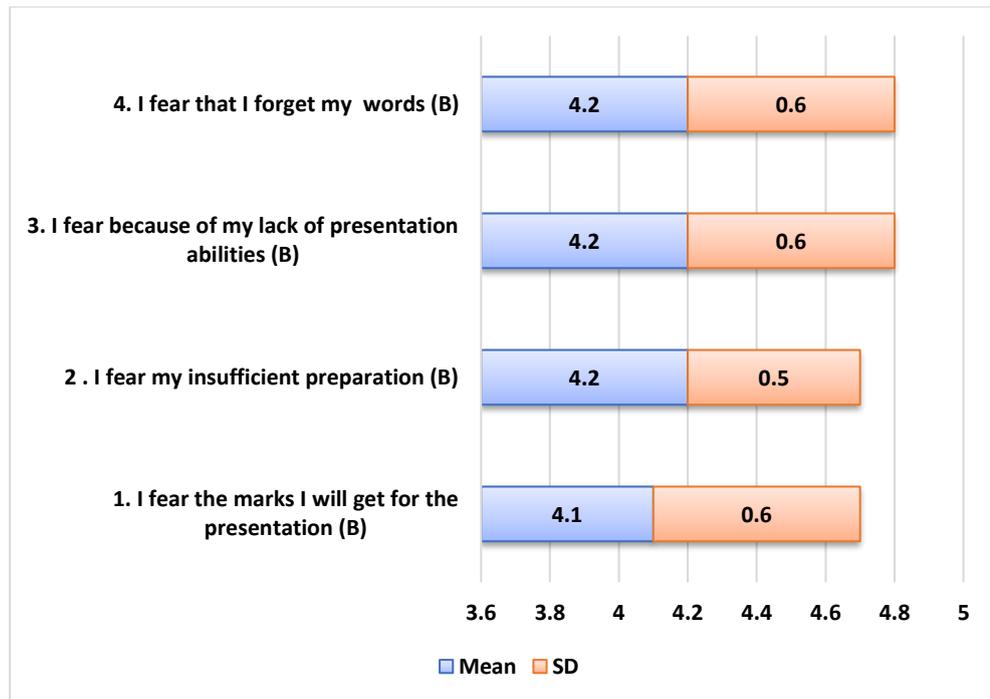
Figure 6- Mean for Behavioural Factors

Figure 6 shows the mean for behaviour factors. Item 2 (mean=4.2, SD=0.5) states that the students feared their insufficient preparation. Item 3 (mean=4.2, SD+0.6) states that the students fear because of their lack of presentation abilities. Item 4) mean=4.2, SD=0.6) states that the students feared that they forgot their words during presentation, Finally, item 1 (mean=4.1, SD=0.6) states that the students feared the marks they would get for the presentation.

Findings for Mean Comparison

This section reveals data to answer research question 4- How do the mean differ for all components?
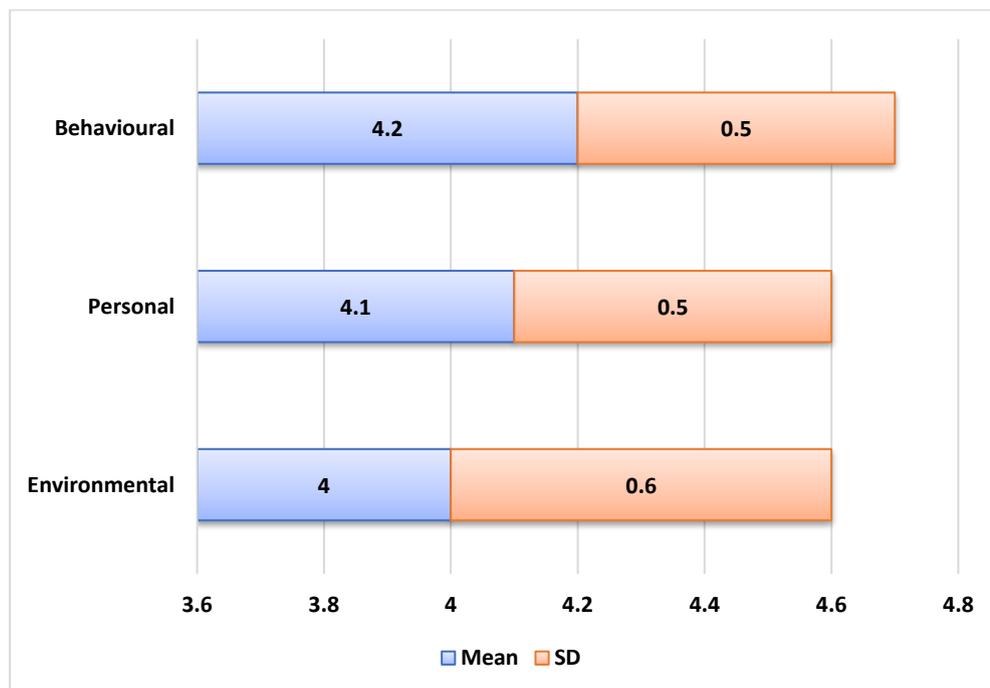

Figure 7- Total Mean Comparison for all Factors

Figure 7 presents the comparison of all total mean scores for each component. The highest mean if Behavioural components (mean=4.2, SD=0.5). Next, is Personal components with a mean of 4.1 (SD=0.5). The lowest mean is Environmental factors with a total mean of 4 (SD=0.6).

Exploratory Statistics
Findings for Relationship between all social cognitive components for oral presentation anxiety

This section reveals data to answer research question 5- Is there a relationship between all social cognitive components for oral presentation anxiety? To determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between all social cognitive components for oral presentation anxiety, data is anlaysed using SPSS for correlations. Results are presented separately in table 4, 5 and 6 below.

Table 4
Correlation between Environment and Personal Components

		ENVIRONMENT	PERSONAL
ENVIRONMENT	Pearson (Correlation	1	.808**
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	92	92
ENVIRONMENT	Pearson (Correlation	.808**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	92	92

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4 shows there is an association between environment and personal components. Correlation analysis shows that there is a high significant association between environment and personal components (r=.808**) and (p=.000). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a strong positive relationship between environment and personal components.

Table 5
Correlation between Environment and Behavioural Components

		ENVIRONMENT	BEHAVIOURAL
ENVIRONMENT	Pearson (Correlation	1	.744**
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	92	92
BEHAVIOURAL	Pearson (Correlation	.744**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	92	92

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5 shows there is an association between environment and behavioural components. Correlation analysis shows that there is a high significant association between environment and behavioural components (r=.744**) and (p=.000). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0

scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a strong positive relationship between environment and behavioural components.

Table 56
Correlation between Personal and Behavioural Components

		PERSONAL	BEHAVIOURAL
PERSONAL	Pearson (Correlation	1	.857**
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	92	92
BEHAVIOURAL	Pearson (Correlation	.857**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	92	92

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5 shows there is an association between personal and behavioural components. Correlation analysis shows that there is a high significant association between personal and behavioural components (r=.857**) and (p=.000). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a strong positive relationship between personal and behavioural components.

Conclusion
Summary of Findings and Discussions
This section summarises findings for environmental, personal and behavioural components. The summary of each component is accompanied by discussions to relate to past studies.

Environment
This study revealed that students feared a large audience when they presented. They also feared the size and composition of the audience. In addition to that, they also feared the venue of the presentation. Interestingly, the students also feared the time of the day of the presentation. Similar findings were also found by Ye, et.al. (2024), Grieve,et.al. (2021) and also Kurakan (2021). The study by Ye, et.al. (2024) added that the room's size and its spatial composition can add anxiety to speakers. Next, Grieve,et.al. (2021) also added that being uncertain about the topic can add anxiety to the speakers when the speech ended with question-and-answer sessions. This is agreed by Kurakan (2021) who mentioned that live reaction of the audience added anxiety to the speakers.

Personal
Next, this study also found that the students' nervousness made them fear oral presentation. They felt they were not as good as their peers and they feared their previous low marks would be repeated. The findings for personal components are in accordance by findings by Ding,et.al.(2024), Grieve,et.al (2021), Gallego, et.al. (2021), and Dellah, et.al (2020). Additionally, they reported that presenters feared their own performance as not being good enough compared to others. They are also conscious of their (lack of) English proficiency.

Behaviour
The personal components can have a snowball effect of their behavioural components. This study found that the presenters feared their insufficient preparation, and their lack of presentation abilities. They are also anxious that they forgot their words during presentation, and feared the marks they would get for the presentation. The findings for behavioural components are in accordance by findings by Ye, et.al. (2024), Grieve,et.al (2021), Kurakkan (2021) Dellah, et.al (2020) and also Alharbi (2021). Additionally, these previous findings found that the presenters feared negative evaluations fearing the negative evaluation may cause them their low marks.

Comparison and Correlation of Mean
A comparison of mean reveals that the highest total mean is Behavioural components and is followed by the personal components. Data in this study revealed that the presenters were least anxious with Environmental components.

Additionally, this study also revealed strong, positive relationships between environmental components with personal and behavioural components. It also showed that there is also a strong positive relationship between personal and behavioural components. This finding is in accordance with the studies by Ye, et.al (2024) and Kurakan (2021) who reported similar findings that showed learners began by being affected by the behaviour of others (peers and evaluators) and this influenced how they see themselves as presenters.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research
Theoretical and Conceptual Implications
This study began by anchoring (refer to Figure 1 below) the classic social cognitive theory by Bandura (1986) as the pivotal theory to unfold the components that influence learners in oral presentations. Although the theory explained the components responsible for learning, the findings in the study revealed the relevancy of the components on oral presentation. Oral presentation begins with the presenter with his/her own personal components that facilitates or hinder the presentation. The personal components owned by the presenter then influences his/her behavioural components. These two components are influenced by the environmental factors.

This correlation revealed in the study therefore further demonstrates the relevance of the conceptual framework (figure 1) that observes the concept of reciprocal determinism among all the three components.
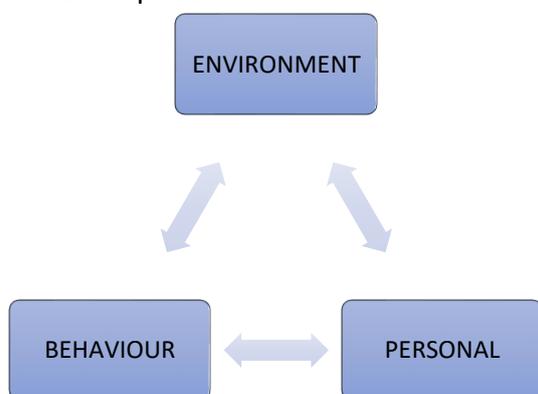

Figure 1- Theoretical Framework of the Study

Exploring Reciprocal Determinism in Oral Presentation Anxiety

Pedagogical Implications
How can the teaching of oral presentations improve? Firstly, oral presentation skills is not only the responsibility of the language instructor. Perhaps if oral presentations were not assessed heavily on language ability, presenters could be less anxious to perfect their speech and concentrate on their content. Secondly, oral presentation could be assessed in a less stressful environment like a less formal classroom setting.

Suggestions for Future Research
It is suggested that future research carry out investigations to find out if students' oral presentation anxiety is reduced when the presentation is focussed on content instead of language. Future research could also look into comparison of anxiety between face-to-face and online presentations.

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