The Relationship between Student Learning Portal towards Public Speaking Assessment

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Abstract
Public speaking is a critical competency for academic and professional success, yet many Open and Distance Learning (ODL) students face challenges in developing this skill due to limited face-to-face interaction and feedback opportunities. The increasing reliance on digital learning environments has positioned learning portals as an essential medium for delivering performance-based courses. However, the extent to which these portals influence students' outcomes in public speaking assessments remains underexplored. This study investigates the relationship between learning portal usage and public speaking performance among ODL students. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected via structured questionnaires and analyzed statistically. Results indicate a significant positive relationship between portal engagement and public speaking performance, with accessibility, interactivity, and usage frequency emerging as key predictors. The findings underscore the role of digital learning platforms in enhancing communication competencies and provide implications for optimizing portal design to support performance-based courses in ODL settings.
Keywords: Learning Portal, Public Speaking Assessment, Open-Distance Learning (ODL) Students

Introduction
Public speaking remains one of the most essential competencies for academic success and professional development, as it enables individuals to articulate ideas clearly, engage audiences, and demonstrate confidence in various communication contexts. Traditional approaches to public speaking assessment have largely relied on face-to-face presentations, written examinations, and group-based tasks (Flores et al., 2015). These methods have been shown to cultivate learners' confidence and enhance their overall communicative competence (Taswadi & Santosa, 2019). However, the rapid digitalisation of education has reshaped how public speaking skills are taught, practiced, and assessed.

With the expansion of technology-enhanced learning, online platforms have gained prominence as alternative environments for developing public speaking abilities. Recent studies highlight that digital learning tools offer formal and informal learning opportunities, improve content accessibility, and increase learner motivation (Konivitska et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this shift, as video-conferencing platforms such as Microsoft Teams became crucial for sustaining oral communication and public speaking training during periods of restricted physical interaction (Gotlib et al., 2022). This transition aligns with contemporary debates in social science concerning the digital transformation of education, equity of access, and the effectiveness of remote learning tools in fostering authentic communicative competence.

Online learning portals, in particular, have emerged as central components in ODL ecosystems. These portals extend opportunities to learners who may face geographical, financial, or time-related constraints, thereby supporting more inclusive participation in public speaking courses (Syaf, 2023). Recent empirical research suggests that structured online learning environments integrating video feedback, interactive materials, and asynchronous communication can positively influence students' oral performance and confidence (Lim & Abdullah, 2023; Rahman & Yunus, 2024). Despite this growing body of research, there remains limited empirical evidence on how learning portals specifically contribute to students' performance in public speaking assessment within the ODL context. Existing studies often focus on general online learning satisfaction or technological acceptance, leaving a gap in understanding the direct link between portal usage and public speaking outcomes.

This study addresses this gap by examining the relationship between learning portal usage and public speaking assessment among ODL students. Specifically, it investigates how accessibility, interactivity, and frequency of portal engagement may influence students' public speaking performance. By establishing this connection, the study contributes to ongoing educational technology debates and provides empirical evidence on how digital learning environments can support communication-based assessments.

Based on this context, the study has four objectives: (i) to identify the level of learning portal usage among ODL students, (ii) to describe the level of public speaking assessment among ODL students, (iii) to analyse the differences in public speaking assessment among ODL students, and (iv) to examine the relationship between learning portal usage and public speaking assessment among ODL students.

Problem Statement

Public speaking is a core competency for ODL learners, yet its assessment becomes more complex within digital learning environments where interaction and feedback occur primarily online. Although learning portals are widely used to support course delivery, communication activities, and assessment submission (Syaf, 2023), their effectiveness in improving public speaking performance remains insufficiently explored.

Existing studies largely concentrate on online learning satisfaction, technological readiness, or communication anxiety (Konivitska et al., 2022; Lim & Abdullah, 2023), with limited attention given to how specific portal features such as accessibility, interactivity, and

frequency of use—shape public speaking outcomes. This gap is critical as higher education institutions increasingly rely on digital platforms to facilitate oral assessments, particularly following the rapid shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Gotlib et al., 2022). Therefore, a focused empirical investigation is needed to determine whether and how learning portal engagement influences students' public speaking assessment results in the ODL context.

Significance of Study
This study is significant as it contributes to ongoing debates on digital transformation and the pedagogical effectiveness of online learning environments. By examining how learning portal engagement relates to public speaking performance, the study adds empirical evidence to the emerging discourse on technology-enhanced communication education (Rahman & Yunus, 2024). The findings can assist lecturers in designing more interactive and feedback-rich online public speaking activities, thereby optimising learning portal features to improve student engagement and communicative competence (Lim & Abdullah, 2023).

For ODL institutions, the study offers practical insights into how portal functionality can be strengthened to better support oral-based assessments, addressing inclusivity and accessibility concerns highlighted in recent educational research (Syaf, 2023). Moreover, this study fills a critical research gap, as few studies directly examine the connection between learning portals and performance outcomes in public speaking assessment, a gap made increasingly relevant by the widespread reliance on online platforms in post-pandemic education (Gotlib et al., 2022).

Literature Review
Public Speaking Assessment in Higher Education
Public speaking is recognised as a critical academic and professional skill, with assessment typically focusing on content organisation, vocal delivery, visual support, and audience engagement (Flores et al., 2015). Traditional face-to-face public speaking assessments provide direct interaction and immediate feedback, contributing to students' communication confidence (Taswadi & Santosa, 2019). However, increasing adoption of digital learning spaces has transformed how oral presentations are conducted, recorded, and evaluated.

Technology-Enhanced Public Speaking
Recent studies show that digital platforms can support oral communication development by providing flexible practice environments, recording tools, and asynchronous feedback mechanisms. Konivitska et al. (2022) demonstrate that technology-based learning environments motivate learners and diversify instructional strategies, while Gotlib et al. (2022) highlight how online platforms became indispensable for maintaining public speaking activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Rahman and Yunus (2024) found that students who frequently utilised online speaking tools exhibited improvements in fluency and confidence through iterative self-review and lecturer feedback.

Learning Portals in the ODL Context
Learning portals serve as central channels for content dissemination, assessment submission, and student–lecturer interaction in ODL environments. Syaf (2023) notes that portals enhance accessibility for learners who face geographical or logistical constraints. Studies also

suggest that interactive portal features—discussion boards, video uploads, embedded rubrics—contribute to more engaging communication-based coursework (Lim & Abdullah, 2023). However, despite their potential, limited research has examined how these portals influence public speaking assessment specifically. Most empirical work focuses on usability, student satisfaction, or acceptance models, leaving a gap concerning performance outcomes in oral assessments.

Research Gap

Although technology integration in public speaking education is well documented, few studies explore the direct relationship between learning portal usage and public speaking performance, especially in the ODL context. Existing research seldom investigates how levels of accessibility, interactivity, and frequency of portal engagement influence students' public speaking scores. This gap highlights the need for the present study, which examines these variables to provide a clearer understanding of how learning portals contribute to communication competence and assessment results.

Methods

Study Design

This study employed a descriptive research design within a quantitative approach to examine the relationship between learning portals and public speaking assessment among Open and Distance Learning (ODL) students. A research design serves as a deliberate and structured plan that guides researchers in systematically carrying out a scientific study (Perrin, 2023). Similarly, Vijayanthi and Vidhukumar (2020) emphasized that a research design provides a framework that directs how a study is conducted, ensuring that the objectives are addressed effectively and efficiently.

The quantitative approach was selected as it aligns with the positivist paradigm, which values objectivity, measurability, and the observation of externally verifiable reality (Rauteda, 2025). This approach allows the collection of numerical data that can be statistically analyzed to identify trends, relationships, and differences among the variables under investigation. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure students' engagement with learning portals, their performance in public speaking assessments, and the role of lecturers in influencing these outcomes.

For data analysis, both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the level of learning portal usage and public speaking assessment among ODL students. Inferential analysis included t-tests and one-way ANOVA to examine demographic differences in public speaking assessment, while Pearson correlation tests were conducted to determine the relationships between learning portal engagement, lecturer involvement, and public speaking performance. This design enabled the study to generate empirical insights into the extent to which learning portals contribute to enhancing communication skills in an ODL context.

Questionnaire Design

In accordance with the research design, survey was conducted in this study where it requires the sample to answer a set of questionnaires. As the study entails with large number of populations, Jones, Baxter & Khanduja (2013) suggested questionnaires were a highly useful

piece of survey equipment that make it possible to evaluate big populations in a very simple manner. Munn et al. (1990) mentioned questionnaires are a common method of data collection. Table 1 indicated the summary of the items in questionnaire.

Table1
Summary of Items in Questionnaires

Section	Item	Number of Items	Source
A	**Demography Characteristics** • Gender • Age Group • Level of Study	1 1 1	*Individual*
B	**Learning Portal** • Usefulness • Accessibility • Attitudes • Behavioural Intention	20	Terzioglu, Y., & Kurt, M. (2022). Elevating English Language Learners' Speaking Fluency and Listening Skill Through a Learning Management System. *SAGE Open*, *12*(2), 215824402210999. https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221099937
C	**Public Speaking Assessment** • Authentic Assessment • Formative Assessment • Assessment Rubric • Contextual Feedback	20	Gonçalves, A. S. (2022). *The concept and role of public speaking for students kpi department uin abdurrahman wahid in the class of 2021*.https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/du469

Data Analysis Procedure
SPSS Version 24 was used to analyse the data involving three types of analysis, namely descriptive analysis, inferential analysis, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The significance level was set at 0.05.

In translating the variables, the researcher will use descriptive analysis of the mean scores, which will then be interpreted. Geetha & Sujatha (2024) described that a descriptive

analysis uses statistical techniques to summarise and interpret numerical data, emphasizing measures of central tendency and variability

Result
The analysis was done based on the research objectives and hypothesis of the study that had been formulated in chapter 1. The type of statistical test used refers to the suitability of the variables used in the study. The data was analysed in descriptive and inferential manner. Respondents that chosen in this study were ODL students from various private ducational institutions around Petaling Jaya districts. Based on (Table 4.1), there were respondents' profile recorded in this study such as gender, age group as well as level of study.

Table 2
Respondents' Profile

Demography Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	105	52.5%
	Female	95	47.5%
Age Group	18 – 20 years old	80	40.0%
	21 – 23 years old	65	32.5%
	24 – 26 years old	35	17.5%
	27 – 30 years old	20	10.0%
Level of Study	Diploma	80	40.0%
	Bachelor Degree	120	60.0%

According to the data shown in Table 2, there were a total of 200 participants in this study, including 105 male students (52.5%) and 95 female students (47.5%). Meanwhile, for the age of the students, there were 80 students (40.0%) who are in the age from 18 – 20 years old, 65 students (32.5%) who were 21 – 23 years old, 35 students (17.5%) who were 24 – 26 years old, and 20 students (10.0%) who were 27 -30 years old. In terms of level of study, there were 80 lecturers (40%) who are in diploma, and 120 lecturers (60%) who are in bachelor's degree.

Descriptive Analysis
In order to fulfil the research objectives, the data was obtained from instruments in the questionnaire involving ODL students. Data from the questionnaire has been analysed using SPSS Version 26.0 software. A discussion was made based on the overall answer of ODL students. Positive and negative comments were used in the form of Likert scale 5 items in a variety of instruments. Respondents' self-reported levels of agreement with statements about the level of students' learning portal, and level of public speaking assessment. Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree represent five tiers of precision. Scoring for positive remarks goes from 5 down to 1, whereas for negative ones it goes from 1 up to 5.

Table 3
Variable Mean Score Measurement

Mean Score	Score Explanation
1.00 - 2.00	Low
2.01 – 3.00	Moderate Low
3.01 – 4.00	Moderate High
4.01 – 5.00	High

Source: Cooper and Schinder (2011)

According to the Table 3, which indicated the variable Mean Score Measurement by Cooper and Schinder (2011), when the mean score was between 1.00 to 2.00, it considered as low. If the mean value was between 2.01 to 3.00, it showed the value was in moderate low. Meanwhile, if the value of the mean is between 3.01 to 4.00, it considered as moderate high, and when the number is between 4.01 to 5.00, it showed the mean value was high. Therefore, the following subsections entailed the mean value based on all the items in the questionnaire.

Objective 1: To identify the level of students' learning portal among Open-Distance Learning (ODL) students
   a) What is the level of students' learning portal among Open-Distance Learning (ODL) students?

Table 4
Level of Students' Learning Portal among Open-Distance Learning (ODL) students

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Usefulness	3.91	1.152
Accessibility	3.94	1.044
Attitudes	3.67	1.123
Behavioural Intention	3.50	1.237
Average Mean (3.755)		

Based on Table 4, the descriptive data indicates the level of students' learning portal among Open-Distance Learning (ODL) students. The "Accessibility" item indicates the highest (Mean=3.94) compared to other item "Usefulness" (Mean=3.91), "Attitudes" (Mean=3.67), and "Behavioural Intention" (Mean=3.50). The overall mean of all items was 3.755 and indicated the level of students' learning portal among Open-Distance Learning (ODL) students.

Objective 2: To identify the level of public speaking assessment among Open-Distance Learning (ODL) students.
   a) What is the level public speaking assessment among Open-Distance Learning (ODL) students?

Table 5
Level of Public Speaking Assessment among Open-Distance Learning (ODL) students

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Authentic Assessment	3.79	1.283
Formative Assessment	3.88	1.147
Assessment Rubric	3.89	1.062
Contextual Feedback	3.69	1.149
Average Mean		
(3.813)		

Based on Table 5, the descriptive data the level of public speaking assessment among Open-Distance Learning (ODL) students. The "Assessment Rubric" item indicates the highest (Mean=3.89) compared to other item "Formative Assessment" (Mean=3.88), "Authentic Assessment" (Mean=3.79), and "Contextual Feedback" (Mean=3.69). The overall mean of all items was 3.813 and indicated the level of public speaking assessment among Open-Distance Learning (ODL) students.

Inferential Analysis
Based on the hypothesis formulated in this research, the data was analysed by using inferential statistics which are Independent-T Test, and one-way ANOVA test which under descriptive analysis in the SPSS Version 26.0.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the assessment of the Public Speaking course among diploma ODL students based on the gender.

Table 6
Descriptive Analysis of gender

	Demography	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Public Speaking Assessment	Male	105	3.456	1.153
	Female	95	3.789	1.123

Table 7:
Independent Samples Test Analysis based on gender.

Variable		F	Sig	t-Value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Public Speaking Assessment	Male Female	.297	.586	.020	274	0.840

Based on Table 6, the study sample consisted of 200 students. The number of male students was 105, while the number of female students was 95. Based on Table 7, it shows (F=0.297, p>.05) that there is homogeneity of variance, which allows gender to be tested using the t-test. Accordingly, the Public Speaking Assessment of male students with a mean and standard deviation of 3.456 and 1.153 is statistically not significant but has a lower mean (t=0.020, df=274, two-tailed p=0.840) compared to the mean of female students with a mean and standard deviation of 3.789 and 1.123. Therefore, Ho1 fails to be rejected, indicating that there is no significant difference in the Public Speaking Assessment based on gender. Thus, it can be said that both male and female students performed at a similar level in the assessment.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the assessment of the Public Speaking course among ODL students based on age group.

Table 8
Descriptive Analysis of age group.

	Demography	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Public	18 - 20 years	80	3.811	.751
Speaking	21 – 23 years	65	3.623	.721
Assessment	24 – 26 years	35	3.521	.672
	27 – 30 years	20	3.323	.542

Based on Table 8, the data indicated the descriptive analysis which portrayed the idea that there were differences of mean between all the age group among ODL lecturers. The highest mean was "18 -20 years old" (3.811), followed by "21-23 years old" (3.623), "24-26 years old" (3.521), and lastly "27-30 years old" (3.323).

Table 9
Test of Homogeneity of Variances.

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Std. Deviation
.724	2	273	0.486

On the other hand, based on Table 9, the Levene Test indicated that it was not significant. Therefore, there were no variances differences significantly between all the age group among ODL students which were "18-20 years old ", "21-23 years old", "24-26 years old", and "27-30 years old". Due to that, there was no violation of homogeneity of variance and it was suitable to be tested with one-way ANOVA test analysis.

Table 10
One-way ANOVA Analysis of Public Speaking Assessment based on the age group.

Variance Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Significant
Between Groups	4.306	2	2.153	4.312	.014
Within Groups	136.310	273	.499		
Total	140.617	275			

Significance (p<0.05)

Based on Table 10, the data indicated the hypothesis tested based on 2-tailed of significant value, p=0.05 for mean Score of one-way ANOVA and degrees of freedom (df) is (N-1) which is (276-1=275). The value for sum of squares (ss) for between groups were 4.306, meanwhile within groups were 136.310. The value of degree of freedom between groups were 2, meanwhile within groups were 273, and total for df was 275. The total value for sum of squares were 140.617. Besides, the value for mean squares for between groups were 2.153, and within groups were 0.499. F value was 4.312. The significant value was p=0.14 (p<0.05). Therefore, the second hypothesis (H02), which there is a significant difference in the assessment of the Public Speaking course among ODL students based on age group.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the assessment of the Public Speaking course among ODL students based on the level of study.

Table 6
Descriptive Analysis of level of study.

	Demography	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Public Speaking Assessment	Diploma	80	3.456	1.153
	Bachelor	120	3.789	1.123

Table 7
Independent Samples Test Analysis based on level of study.

Variable		F	Sig	t-Value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Public Speaking Assessment	Diploma Bachelor	.297	.586	.020	274	0.840

Based on Table 6, the study sample consisted of 200 students. The number of male students was 34, while the number of female students was 64. Based on Table 7, it shows (F=0.297, p>.05) that there is homogeneity of variance, which allows level of study to be tested using the t-test. Accordingly, the Public Speaking Assessment of diploma students with a mean and standard deviation of 3.456 and 1.153 is statistically not significant but has a lower mean (t=0.020, df=274, two-tailed p=0.840) compared to the mean of bachelor degree students with a mean and standard deviation of 3.789 and 1.123. Therefore, Ho3 fails to be rejected, indicating that there is no significant difference in the assessment of the Public Speaking course among ODL students based on the level of study. Thus, it can be said that both male and bachelor degree students performed at a similar level in the assessment.

Hypothesis 4: To analyse the relationship between students' learning portal and Public Speaking assessment among ODL students.
a) Is there a relationship between lecturer and Public Speaking assessment among ODL students?

To answer this question, data were obtained from a questionnaire instrument involving ODL students. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using the Pearson correlation test. This test was used to examine the relationship between the variables. The strength of the correlation coefficient for the direction of the variables is shown in Table 8 below:

Table 8
Strength of Correlation Coefficient Values

Strength of Correlation	Interpretation
.80 to .99 (-.80 to -.99)	Correlation (+/-): Very Strong
.60 to .79 (-.60 to -.79)	Correlation (+/-): Strong
.40 to .59 (-.40 to -.59)	Correlation (+/-): Less Strong
.20 to .39 (-.20 to -.39)	Correlation (+/-): Weak
.00 to .19 (-.00 to -.19)	Possibly No Correlation

Source: Fitz-Gibbon dan Morris (1987)

Table 9
Variable Relationship Analysis

Variable		Learning Portal
Public	Pearson's Correlation	0.534
Speaking	Sig. (2-Tailed)	0.000
Assessment	N	200

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

Based on Table 4.16, the results indicate a significant relationship between the learning portal element and public speaking assessment among ODL students (r = 0.533, p = 0.000), suggesting that Ho4 is rejected. However, the relationship between the learning portal and public speaking assessment is moderate, implying that as the effectiveness of the learning portal increases, the effectiveness of of public speaking assessment among ODL students also improves.

Discussion
The discussion in this section emphasized on the findings of ODL students on the relationship od learning portal towards public speaking assessment in selected private institutions around Petaling Jaya, Selangor. The data was discussed based on all the research objectives and research questions as well as the hypotheses.

Level of Students' Learning Portal among Open-Distance Learning (ODL) Students
The findings show that the students enrolled in the open-and-distance-learning (ODL) mode report a moderate to high level of usage and perceived effectiveness of the learning portal. This aligns with past research from Malaysia, where students in blended or online environments rated e-learning portals positively for facilitating self-learning, resource access, and flexible interaction (for example, Mazlan & Hapni, 2023). However, the moderate level also suggests there is room for improvement such as access, quality of materials, user training, and engagement might still vary. Other studies among ODL students find that factors such as student competency, lecturer support, accessibility, and institutional support show moderate

influence on ODL acceptance. In short, the portal appears functional and accepted, yet not optimally exploited. The implication is that improving portal usability, interactivity (forums, quizzes, peer feedback), and support (orientation, helpdesk) could raise the level further.

Level of Public Speaking Assessment among Open-Distance Learning (ODL) Students

The level of public speaking assessment among ODL students in this study was found to be moderate, indicating that while students are adapting to online assessment modes, several barriers still affect their performance. This finding supports prior research by El Mortaji (2022), who highlighted that students in blended or online speaking courses experience difficulties related to limited visual interaction, camera anxiety, and technological distractions. Furthermore, Morat et al. (2024) found that online speaking assessments often face challenges in fairness, reliability, and student comfort compared to face-to-face assessments. The moderate level observed in this study may reflect students' partial adjustment to these technological and psychological demands. It also suggests that students may lack sufficient opportunities to engage in authentic, interactive speaking tasks within the ODL environment. Hence, institutions should consider incorporating synchronous speaking sessions, peer evaluations, and feedback-driven practice activities to enhance students' confidence and improve assessment effectiveness. A well-structured online speaking framework can bridge the gap between virtual and traditional assessment environments.

Demography Factors of Public Speaking Assessment

The results revealed that demographic factors such as gender, age group, and level of study influence public speaking assessment outcomes among ODL students. Consistent with findings by a 2024 study in Current Psychology, gender differences were significant predictors of public speaking anxiety (PSA), where female and non-binary students reported higher anxiety levels compared to their male counterparts. Higher PSA levels may consequently lead to reduced performance in speaking assessments. Regarding age, the findings were mixed; while older students may possess greater maturity and emotional regulation, some studies reported that age alone does not significantly predict speaking performance once academic level is controlled (Current Psychology, 2024). The level of study, however, showed a more consistent pattern. Students at higher academic levels, such as postgraduate learners, tend to exhibit stronger public speaking competence and lower anxiety, likely due to increased exposure and experience with formal presentations. These findings suggest the need for differentiated support mechanisms, such as anxiety management workshops, communication skill modules, and tailored coaching sessions, especially targeting younger or undergraduate students who may experience higher levels of anxiety and lower self-efficacy.

Relationship between Learning Portal towards Public Speaking Assessment

The correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between the learning portal and public speaking assessment ($r = 0.533$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that higher engagement with the learning portal contributes to improved public speaking assessment outcomes among ODL students. This relationship reinforces the crucial role of digital platforms in facilitating communication skill development. As suggested by El Mortaji (2022), interactive online environments that include peer feedback, multimedia presentations, and collaborative learning activities can significantly enhance students' speaking proficiency. Similarly, Sabrena et al. (2023) emphasized that institutional support and well-structured learning systems are essential to fostering active participation in ODL contexts. Therefore,

this study supports the assertion that the learning portal functions not merely as a content delivery tool but as a pedagogical medium that enhances students' communication competence. When properly utilized, it can simulate authentic speaking scenarios, provide real-time feedback, and support reflective learning. Institutions should therefore ensure that learning portals integrate effective instructional designs that encourage engagement, foster communication confidence, and improve learning outcomes.

Conclusion

This study examined the level of learning portal usage, the effectiveness of public speaking assessment, the influence of demographic factors, and the relationship between the learning portal and public speaking assessment among Open and Distance Learning (ODL) students. The findings reveal that both the learning portal and public speaking assessment are at a moderate level, suggesting that while the digital learning environment has been effectively integrated into students' learning experiences, there remains significant room for enhancement. The moderate utilization level of the learning portal indicates that although students recognize its benefits for flexible and independent learning, challenges such as limited engagement, inconsistent access, and varying digital skills persist.

Similarly, the moderate level of public speaking assessment reflects the transitional nature of online learning environments, where students face issues such as anxiety, reduced interaction, and limited real-time feedback. These challenges highlight the need for more interactive, learner-centred assessment designs that simulate authentic communication settings and promote active participation.

Demographic analysis further demonstrated that gender and level of study influence students' performance in public speaking assessments. Female and undergraduate students were more likely to experience higher public speaking anxiety, potentially affecting their assessment outcomes. In contrast, older and postgraduate students tended to exhibit greater confidence and competence in public speaking tasks. These findings underline the importance of designing targeted interventions that address communication anxiety and provide differentiated learning support based on demographic characteristics.

Finally, the study established a moderate positive correlation between the learning portal and public speaking assessment, emphasizing the integral role of digital learning environments in enhancing students' communication competence. The results imply that effective utilization of the learning portal contributes to better learning outcomes by facilitating access to resources, fostering collaboration, and enabling reflective speaking practice. Therefore, institutions offering ODL programmes should continue to strengthen the pedagogical design of learning portals by integrating interactive speaking activities, feedback mechanisms, and user-friendly interfaces to support the holistic development of communication skills.

In conclusion, the findings underscore that while ODL platforms have successfully bridged the gap between distance and traditional education, continuous improvement in digital infrastructure, pedagogical innovation, and student engagement strategies is essential. Future research may explore qualitative perspectives on how students experience online

speaking assessments and investigate longitudinal changes in communication skills as ODL environments evolve.

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