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## GENDER-BASED SPEAKING ANXIETY IN ONLINE ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

by

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### Abstract:

*Speaking anxiety became one of the common problems faced by EFL students at any level. This study aims to determine the speaking anxiety level among postgraduate EFL students as well as the contributing factors to speaking anxiety in the setting of online learning. The data were collected from 20 respondents through a questionnaire adapted from Horwitz. The respondents are postgraduate EFL students from the 2023 batch at one of the universities in Malang. The survey was chosen to collect the data. The questionnaire was distributed through WhatsApp. In analyzing the data, the researcher used SPSS-24. The finding revealed that male students have moderate speaking anxiety, and the dominant factors causing it were fear of communication, next comes test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. In contrast, female students have significant levels of speaking anxiety. Variables contributing to their speaking anxiety involve fear of negative evaluation. The next one is anxiety in communication and test anxiety. Because of that, it can be stated that female students have a higher level of anxiety compared to male students. The results can help educators in teaching online learning to understand students' anxiety based on their gender.*

**Keywords:** anxiety; gender; online learning; speaking

### Abstrak:

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kecemasan berbicara di kalangan mahasiswa pascasarjana Bahasa Inggris. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga ingin mengetahui faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan kecemasan berbicara dalam konteks pembelajaran online. Data dikumpulkan dari 20 responden melalui kuesioner yang diadaptasi dari Horwitz. Para responden adalah mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris pascasarjana angkatan 2023 di salah satu universitas di Malang. Survei dipilih untuk mengumpulkan data. Kuesioner didistribusikan kepada para responden melalui WhatsApp. Dalam menganalisis data, SPSS-24 digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa laki-laki memiliki kecemasan berbicara yang sedang dan faktor dominan yang menyebabkannya adalah ketakutan akan komunikasi, diikuti oleh*

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*kecemasan akan tes, dan ketakutan akan evaluasi negatif. Di sisi lain, siswa perempuan memiliki tingkat kecemasan berbicara yang signifikan, dan variabel yang berkontribusi terhadap kecemasan berbicara mereka melibatkan kecemasan akan evaluasi negatif, dan selanjutnya adalah kecemasan dalam komunikasi dan kecemasan tes. Oleh karena itu, dapat dikatakan bahwa siswa perempuan cenderung lebih cemas daripada siswa laki-laki. Hasil penelitian ini dapat membantu para pengajar dalam mengajarkan pembelajaran online untuk memahami kecemasan siswa berdasarkan jenis kelamin mereka.*

**Keywords:** *berbicara; , jenis kelamin; kecemasan, pembelajaran online,*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most prevalent issues that students have when learning is anxiety. In an academic context, anxiety can affect student performance, especially in foreign language learning. According to Abrar (2017), anxiety is a psychological concept that causes a person to worry about something that hinders their ability to learn a foreign language. According to Noviyanti (2022), in general, anxiety is characterized as a lack of self-efficacy caused by emotional threats or sensations of discomfort caused by anything supposed to be dangerous. Anxiety makes individuals afraid and causes emotional instability. As stated by Horwitz (in Noviyanti, 2022), anxiety is a personal emotion of fear, apprehension, stress, and worry that everyone of any age can experience.

Thus, anxiety can be experienced by anyone regardless of age, ranging from elementary school students to students at the university level. Following that, Yusuf (2017) claimed that anxiety generally appears at the educational level, such as nervousness about sharing opinions and asking questions, hesitation in discussions, discomfort while communicating with teachers, and worry when facing tests, among other things. Similarly, anxiety can arise when a person is asked to make a decision and face an unfamiliar situation that they have never faced before (Atwater, 1983, as cited in Hijaziyah et al., 2021).

In some studies, gender influences anxiety levels. According to Angst and Dobler-Mikola (1985), it indicates that anxiety problems are more common in women than in men. In another study, Christiansen (2015) said that women experience twice the amount of anxiety that men do. This difference can already be observed before boys and girls reach the age of four years. As stated by Maramis (as cited in Assyifa et al., 2023), this is due to differences in female and male hormones, especially the hormone estrogen, where there are fluctuations in

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estrogen levels in women, causing serotonin imbalance, which serotonin plays a role in mood regulation, this is one of the causes that trigger anxiety in women. Related to learning a foreign language, Hwa and Peck (2017) discovered that psychological factors such as social pressure, low self-esteem, and fear of having a poor performance cause anxiety in female students more often than in male students. On the other hand, male students have lower anxiety because they tend to be more relaxed and confident in learning foreign languages (Geçkin, 2020).

Anxiety can affect students' ability to communicate effectively. If students become uncomfortable when speaking, they will become confused, insecure, and uncertain about what they want to say. Even in casual conversations with their friends, they struggle to convey their opinions (Nur et al., 2021). Anxiety is usually related to insecurity, dissatisfaction, fear of rejection, distraction, and a high level of fear (Sjaifullah, 2019). Anxiety does not only affect the students' psychology. Students can also lose their confidence and doubt themselves, which can lead them to skip class and lower their academic achievement. Fitriani et al. (2022) stated that Students' reluctance to attend English classes is not due to a lack of awareness of the importance of English or demotivation but instead because they are unsure of their skills, afraid of being judged by their friends, and fearful of being compared to their peers.

Even in the basic form of conversation with their friends, students find it difficult to express their ideas when they become nervous about speaking. According to Nur and Baa (2022), when students feel anxious while speaking, they tend to be shy, confused, and unsure of what to say. This kind of issue will harm students' performance in class. Speaking anxiety can be caused by a variety of factors. In this context, the researcher adopts the theory of anxiety proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), which includes three factors, namely communication anxiety, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Those three factors were chosen because they provide a comprehensive understanding of speaking anxiety. In this regard, communication apprehension, as described by McCroskey (as cited in Loureiro et al., 2020), refers to an individual's level of worry or anxiety related to actual or prospective communication with another person. Similarly, according to Shahi (2016), Communication anxiety arises from nervousness about the actual expected engagement with people.

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Moreover, test anxiety is a fear of failure in students when facing exams, where they may perceive themselves as unsuccessful if they do not achieve high scores. Meanwhile, the fear of negative evaluation is a feeling of worry about being judged negatively by other people (Rosyidah et al., 2020).

In addition to the factors proposed by Horwitz, the condition of the learning environment also plays a significant role in student performance. One of the significant shifts in learning is the transition from offline to online learning, or a combination of both, depending on each campus's policy. When learning is carried out online, then technological support is needed. Online learning is a type of learning that requires technology to be supported. Fitriyani et al. (2020) define online learning as an educational innovation that incorporates technological information into the learning process. As stated by Mukhtar et al. (2020), online learning necessitates technological advancements to generate and transmit learning materials while also facilitating communication between learners and instructors. It has several advantages, including flexibility and cost reductions. However, there are certain disadvantages, including the lack of interaction and the need for an internet connection. Online learning is classified into three types: synchronous, asynchronous, and blended learning.

Although this university did not fully implement online learning in this context, some courses included synchronous online classes. In that meeting, students could connect through Google Meet or Zoom to participate in activities such as presentations, discussions, and other events. These sessions often require speaking activities, which can trigger speaking anxiety because students may feel pressured to perform well in front of the lecturer or other students in the context of an online setting.

Several researchers have investigated the gender-based study on speaking anxiety. The first previous study was conducted by Saputra et al. (2023), which was carried out at one of the universities in Sorong, Indonesia. 30 EFL students from 4th and 6th semester participate in this study. The study employed quantitative methods, including a survey, to collect the

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data. The results show that male students are more anxious in English speaking than female students, based on three aspects: behavioral, cognitive, and affective.

In contrast with a study that was conducted by Mohtasham and Farnia et al. (2017), which was conducted at an Iranian university with 175 EFL students who participated in this study. Participants' data were collected for the study using a mixed method. Based on this study, female students reported more nervousness during speaking sessions than did male students.

Furthermore, the study also revealed that spontaneous speaking activity is one factor that makes students anxious in speaking class. Another previous research was conducted by Alsalooli and Al-Tale' (2022). This study investigated the anxiety level among 69 EFL students at one of the universities in Saudi Arabia. The data was gathered by the researcher using qualitative methods. The result showed that male and female students had no significant difference in anxiety levels. Both of them had moderate anxiety levels. The results also found that both male and female students have the same anxiety-causing factors, namely communication apprehension followed by anxiety of getting feedback and anxiety of language tests.

Regarding the previous three studies, the first study showed that male students had greater anxiety levels than female students. However, the second study found that female students had greater anxiety levels, meaning the two studies showed contradictory results. Meanwhile, the third study revealed that both genders of students had moderate amounts of anxiety. Two main factors contribute to the differences in these findings. First, the methodological approach used to collect data differed between the two studies. The first study employed a sample of 30 students. The first study used a questionnaire to collect the data.

In contrast, the second study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining a questionnaire with interviews, and had a much larger sample of 175 students. The third study also used a questionnaire to collect data with 69 students as participants. This methodological variation may be one reason for the differing results in the three studies. The first study had a

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relatively small sample size and relied solely on a questionnaire. Therefore, it may not fully explore the diversity of anxiety experiences faced by students as a whole.

In contrast, the second study involved a larger number of participants. It used both a questionnaire and an interview, which allowed an in-depth exploration of the anxiety experienced by EFL students. Second, the learning environment factor also contributes to the difference in results between these studies, wherein the first study, anxiety in male students tends to be higher than in female students because male students lack interest in learning English, the reason for learning English only to pass the exam not because they are interested in learning English. As a result, they lack active participation in learning English, which makes them more anxious when asked to speak in English. In contrast, women are more active in the classroom, which increases their confidence and helps them reduce their anxiety.

Meanwhile, in the second study, female students had greater anxiety than their male peers because the academic pressure faced by female students is higher, making them afraid when making mistakes in speaking English. Female students tend to be more sensitive and perfectionists, which makes them afraid of being judged by teachers and classmates, which increases their anxiety. In contrast, male students tend to be more confident and relaxed when receiving evaluations from teachers and classmates, thus reducing their anxiety when speaking in the classroom.

Meanwhile, in the third study, the anxiety level of both genders of students had the same moderate level, which shows that perhaps gender differences are not the main factor causing anxiety experienced by students. However, there are other factors, such as academic pressure, teaching methods, and the evaluation system applied, that trigger anxiety in EFL students. Therefore, these contradictory findings suggest that gendered speaking anxiety is influenced by factors such as the learning environment and methodological variations in research. Understanding these differences is important because it may help educators develop effective strategies to help overcome anxiety in male and female students. Hence, it is necessary to dig more into knowing the anxiety between male and female students.

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Moreover, some previous studies have focused more on anxiety experienced by undergraduate EFL students. In contrast, research on anxiety in postgraduate students is still under-explored. During their university years, postgraduate students often face a variety of unique challenges compared to undergraduate students, including higher academic expectations, more complex tasks, and greater pressure to perform in academic and professional settings (van Rensburg et al., 2016). According to Araas (as cited in Astutik et al., 2020), students at the higher level tend to experience increased burden. Furthermore, in the context of online learning, postgraduate students also face several challenges, such as unstable internet connections, a lack of understanding of technology, intrusion, and limited interaction between students and lecturers or peers, which makes learning less enjoyable (Yusniaty Lodo & Ajito, 2022). These variables might have an impact on postgraduate students' anxiety levels differently than undergraduate students.

Additionally, most existing research is conducted in offline classrooms. In contrast, there is a lack of research on anxiety in online classes. Therefore, further research is needed on speaking anxiety, particularly when postgraduate EFL students are participating in the setting of online learning.

To fill the gaps in this study, the purpose is to investigate students' speaking anxiety in the context of online English learning rather than in a traditional classroom setting. The researcher aims to determine the speaking anxiety levels of EFL male and female postgraduate students as well as the main contributing factors to speaking anxiety in an online English learning environment. This study is essential because if teachers are unaware of the factors that contribute to students' speaking anxiety in the setting of online learning, they may find it challenging to come up with strategies to overcome students' anxiety. This research is expected to contribute to educators and institutions regarding information about anxiety felt by EFL students, both male and female students. It is hoped that this research can provide knowledge about the factors that cause anxiety felt by students so that educators can take steps if there are students who have anxiety in learning English, especially in online classes. Furthermore, in the context of online learning, the instructor can create efficient methods to

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assist students in overcoming their speaking apprehension. The following research questions in this study aim to address the gaps.

1. What are the postgraduate EFL students' speaking anxiety levels between male and female students in an online English learning context?
2. What are the dominant factors causing postgraduate EFL students' speaking anxiety between male and female students in an online English learning context?

## METHOD

### *Design*

The researcher employed a quantitative survey design in this investigation. This design was selected because it aligns with the study's objectives of determining the levels and contributing factors of anxiety among university-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. According to Creswell (2009), the survey design aims to describe numerical samples taken from the population to determine trends, attitudes, or opinions so that conclusions can be drawn about the condition of the population. Thus, data are collected using a questionnaire that is distributed to a sample representative of the population, and then the data obtained are generalized.

### *Participant*

The researcher conducted this research in December 2023 at one of the universities in Malang. The researcher employed stratified random sampling to get data from the respondents. The selection of this technique aims to ensure a balance between male and female students, thereby allowing the sample to represent the population equally. There were 20 postgraduate EFL students, batch 2023, who participated in this study out of a total population of more than 60 people. The respondents consisted of 10 male students and 10 female students. The researcher chose them because they had already used online learning, having sometimes taken online classes via Google Meet and Zoom.

### *Instrument*

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For the instrument, the researcher applied a closed-ended questionnaire adapted from Noviyanti (2022), who designed the questionnaire by selecting 20 items from the 33-item Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). Due to its adaptation and modification for the online learning context in earlier research, this questionnaire was deemed suitable for this study. Each item of the questionnaire has a score range of 1 to 4 based on the Likert scale, which includes Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. To ensure the quality of the instrument, the instrument was validated through expert judgment, where the researcher asked three lecturers who are experts in their fields to provide an evaluation of the questionnaire being used. Then, after verifying the validity, a reliability test was conducted by asking several respondents with characteristics similar to those in this study, and the Cronbach's Alpha score was measured using SPSS to determine the reliability of this questionnaire.

***Data collecting technique***

To obtain the data for this study, the researcher used a questionnaire that employed a Likert scale. All postgraduate EFL students in Batch 2023 received the questionnaire; however, only 20 of them filled it out. For data collection, the researcher first translated the questionnaire from English to Indonesian and input it into Google Forms. Second, the researcher asked one student to invite the researcher to the English education 2023 cohort group in their WhatsApp application. Then, the researcher shared the questionnaire link with the respondent via WhatsApp. The respondents were asked to choose from Strongly Disagree to Agree with each statement in that questionnaire Strongly. The respondents were given a week to complete the survey. In filling out the questionnaire, respondents are encouraged to answer as honestly as possible and follow their experience while studying in online classes. In the last step, the researcher collected the results from Google Forms. The results of the questionnaire were collected from the respondents in the form of ordinal data, reflecting the student's agreement with the statements in the questionnaire.

***Data analysis technique***

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The descriptive statistics in SPSS 24 were used to analyze the data for both research questions. According to Field (2017), descriptive statistics are a method for summarizing large amounts of quantitative information, providing an overview of the sample and the measurements taken. It involves measurements such as the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation, as well as the use of tables or graphs. To analyze the data, the scores were categorized into three parts using interval scores with the formula below:

$$Interval = \frac{\text{Maximum score} - \text{Minimum score}}{\text{Number of categories}}$$

Based on the Likert scores are 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Agree), and 4 (Strongly Agree), the maximum and minimum scores are 4 and 1. So the interval is as follows:

$$Interval = \frac{(4 - 1)}{3} = 1$$

Based on the interval results, the score range is found. If the finding score ranges from 3.01 to 4.00, it is in the "high" category, and this is the highest score in that category. If the score is 2.01-3.00, it indicates the "moderate" category. Additionally, a score of 1.00-2.00 indicates that it falls within the "low" category, and this score is the lowest in that range. Field (2017) adds that using intervals like this can simplify the distribution of data in research.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

*The postgraduate EFL students' speaking anxiety level between male and female students in an online English learning context.*

*Table 1. Level of speaking anxiety of male students*

	N	Descriptive Statistics			Std. Deviation
		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	
Mean total	10	2.05	2.85	2.4000	.28087
Valid N (listwise)	10				

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According to the table above, the data indicate that the average score of 2.4, categorized as moderate, suggests that male students experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety in the online English classroom.

**Table 2. Level of speaking anxiety of female students**

	N	<i>Descriptive statistics</i>			
		<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>Mean Total</i>	10	2.15	3.65	3.1350	.49500
<i>Valid N (listwise)</i>	10				

Related to the data above, the average score is 3.13, which is categorized as high. Thus, based on the mean score, the female students of EFL have a high speaking anxiety level in online English classes.

***The dominant factors causing postgraduate EFL students' speaking anxiety of male and female students in an online English learning context.***

**Table 3. Factor anxiety of male students.**

	N	<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>			
		<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>Communication apprehension</i>	10	2.25	3.13	2.5125	.28535
<i>Test anxiety</i>	10	1.86	3.00	2.4429	.31190
<i>Fear of negative evaluation</i>	10	1.60	3.00	2.1600	.51467
<i>Valid N (listwise)</i>	10				

The table above indicates that each factor of the mean score falls within the moderate-level category. However, communication apprehension showed a score higher compared to test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation.

**Table 4. Factor anxiety of females.**

	N	<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>			
		<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>Communication apprehension</i>	10	2.00	3.75	2.8000	.48663

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<i>Test anxiety</i>	10	1.86	3.14	2.5429	.44057
<i>Fear of negative evaluation</i>	10	3.00	3.80	3.2600	.25033
<i>Valid N (listwise)</i>	10				

The data shown in the table above indicate that the mean score for communication apprehension is 2.8, which is categorized as moderate, and the mean score for test anxiety is 2.5, also categorized as moderate. The last one is fear of negative evaluation. The mean score is 3.2, indicating that the score falls into the high category.

**Discussion**

***The postgraduate EFL students' speaking anxiety level between male and female students in an online English learning context.***

From Tables 1 and 2, the data shows that the female students have a higher level of anxiety than the male students. This finding is consistent with Purwanti et al. (2019), who suggested that female students have a higher speaking anxiety degree because they are more emotionally sensitive than male students. Purwanti continued that another factor that causes higher anxiety levels experienced by female students is caused by social perceptions, where female students are worried about the negative opinions of others towards them when speaking English in class. Furthermore, differences in anxiety levels in both genders can be caused by differences in learning behavior. As stated by Lee (in Zulkiflee & Nimechisalem, 2022), male students tend to be more outspoken and spontaneous when speaking in class, particularly when answering questions. At the same time, female students tend to be polite and follow formal rules by raising their hands to ask permission to answer a question. This difference could be one of the reasons why female students have higher anxiety than male students. Thus, this study supports previous research on the existence of differences in anxiety in both genders of students speaking English in online classes.

Another study conducted by Hz (2022) found that one of the reasons why the level of anxiety of female students is higher than that of male students is that females pay more attention to their impressions of the social environment, while male students are less

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concerned about the social reactions given to them, thus reducing their anxiety when speaking. The finding is opposite to the research conducted by Saputra et al. (2023). The study found that male students have more anxiety than female students when speaking in English. It is because male students are less happy when they have to attend English classes since they feel shame when they have to talk in front of their peers.

***The dominant factors causing postgraduate EFL students' speaking anxiety of male and female students in an online English learning context.***

From the data in Tables 1 and 3 above, in this context, male students had moderate speaking anxiety, and the dominant factor causing it was communication anxiety, followed by anxiety test and anxiety of negative evaluation. Communication anxiety as the dominant factor here means that male students were afraid to communicate with others during online classes, such as being afraid to participate in online classes, afraid to express themselves, or afraid to ask questions when they were confused in online classes. Even some students waited until the end of the class to ask the question individually to the teacher. Loureiro et al. (2020) stated that individuals with high communication apprehension tend to have a negative attitude toward communication rather than the benefits they could achieve from it. This study was related to the study conducted by Zulkiflee and Nimehchisalem (2022). The results showed that, in general, the students had a relatively lower level of speaking anxiety. Male students tend to have less speaking anxiety. The lower level of anxiousness in students may be due to the impact of using online learning. According to Pakpahan and Gultom (2020), in synchronous online learning, students feel more relaxed because they can express their opinions without direct judgment from other students or teachers, unlike in face-to-face learning.

It can be said that the results show that although male students have moderate anxiety, especially in terms of communication, they tend to feel more comfortable and relaxed when learning is carried out online. Online learning can help alleviate the pressure that students often feel when learning in a face-to-face setting. This reduction in pressure may allow

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students to engage more freely without feeling scared of being judged by others, as often happens in face-to-face classes.

From the data in Tables 2 and 4, the female students had high speaking anxiety during online classes. Then, the majority of female students agreed that the fear of negative evaluation was a dominant contributing factor to their speaking anxiousness. This is supported by Najich et al. (2024), who found that apprehension of getting negative judgment was the most significant factor contributing to anxiety, which is that students are afraid of being judged by others. This finding aligns with previous research, which suggests that female students often experience anxiety, with the primary cause being the fear of negative judgment from teachers and peers when they make mistakes (Nirwana et al., 2023; Nur Hayati & Kaniadewi, 2022). This anxiety was caused by the fear of being punished by the teacher or ridiculed by their friends when they made a mistake while speaking. Therefore, students are also afraid when they get asked by their friends and teachers. It can be stated that female students tend to worry when they have to speak in online classes, which means that the psychological condition of female students is more anxious than male students.

Maharyadin et al. (2022) stated that when students had anxiety while speaking, it would influence their thoughts, which is that they think their friends would have an adverse reaction to them. Another study was conducted by Maharyadin et al. (2022). The result stated that female students are more afraid of speaking anxiety because it is influenced by several factors such as unpreparedness before speaking, feeling anxious when the teacher suddenly asks a question, anxiety if their peers would laugh at them when they speak, fearing being a failure, lacking confidence, and assuming that other students are somehow better than him/her. Speaking anxiety commonly happens to a student at different levels, and it is caused by many factors, especially in the online learning context. This research data also contrasts with that of Pakpahan and Gultom (2020). In his research on online learning, students feel free to express their opinions without fear of being judged by teachers or peers, unlike in face-to-face learning. It indicates that students feel more comfortable and experience lower anxiety when learning online.

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It may be concluded that female students experience higher levels of anxiety than male students. The factors that cause this anxiety level are very varied, one of which is that female students tend to pay attention to other people's views of themselves. In contrast, male students appear to be unaware of others' opinions on their English skills. However, in this study, it was found that male students were anxious more about their English communication skills than about other people's judgments or impressions of their English skills. Nevertheless, it does not mean male students do not fear negative evaluations from teachers and peers. They still experience anxiety, but their primary concern lies in communication apprehension.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

### *Conclusion*

The majority of female students have high speaking anxiety when speaking in an online context. The dominant factors that caused it were fear of getting an adverse judgment, such as teachers and other students, continued by communication anxiety and test anxiety. This is because female students experience more emotional responses than male students. The female students were intimidated when the other students laughed or judged them for making a mistake while speaking. Female students also fear getting an evaluation from their teacher. Moreover, most of the male students had moderate speaking anxiety. Male students were more relaxed. Although the male students seem to enjoy the class, some of them still have anxiety. The dominant factor that caused male students' speaking anxiety in the online class was communication apprehension, which means that male students had anxiety about talking or communicating with other students during online classes.

However, because this study only included a small number of people, the results cannot be generalized. Thus, the larger participants will have different results. Furthermore, the questionnaire, as the only instrument in this study, has limitations. However, when combined with other instruments, such as interviews or observations, it may provide optimal results related to students' anxiety levels and the factors that cause it.

### *Limitation*

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Although the researcher has already conducted this study correctly, the results of the data may not be generalizable to all postgraduate EFL students. In this research, the researcher has a limited number of respondents, specifically 20 students who filled out the questionnaire. Therefore, this study cannot be representative of all postgraduate EFL students in online learning. Besides, this study does not provide rich data, as the researcher conducted the study using a survey only. Perhaps another study could employ a variant of the method, combining a survey with an interview, to obtain more detailed information about speaking anxiety and the factors that contribute to it.

***Implication***

In this research, the researcher did not develop a new theory, as this study already utilizes a theory developed by Horwitz regarding speaking anxiety. Those theories are communication anxiety, the anxiety of the test, and the anxiety of negative evaluation. Moreover, this study contributes information about the level of speaking anxiety in higher-level (postgraduate students) and also the dominant factor causing their speaking anxiety in online learning. This study is also beneficial for lecturers in higher education to consider practical strategies for reducing students' speaking anxiety. By knowing the result of this study, future researchers can use this study as one of the pieces of information that they can use in the future.

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