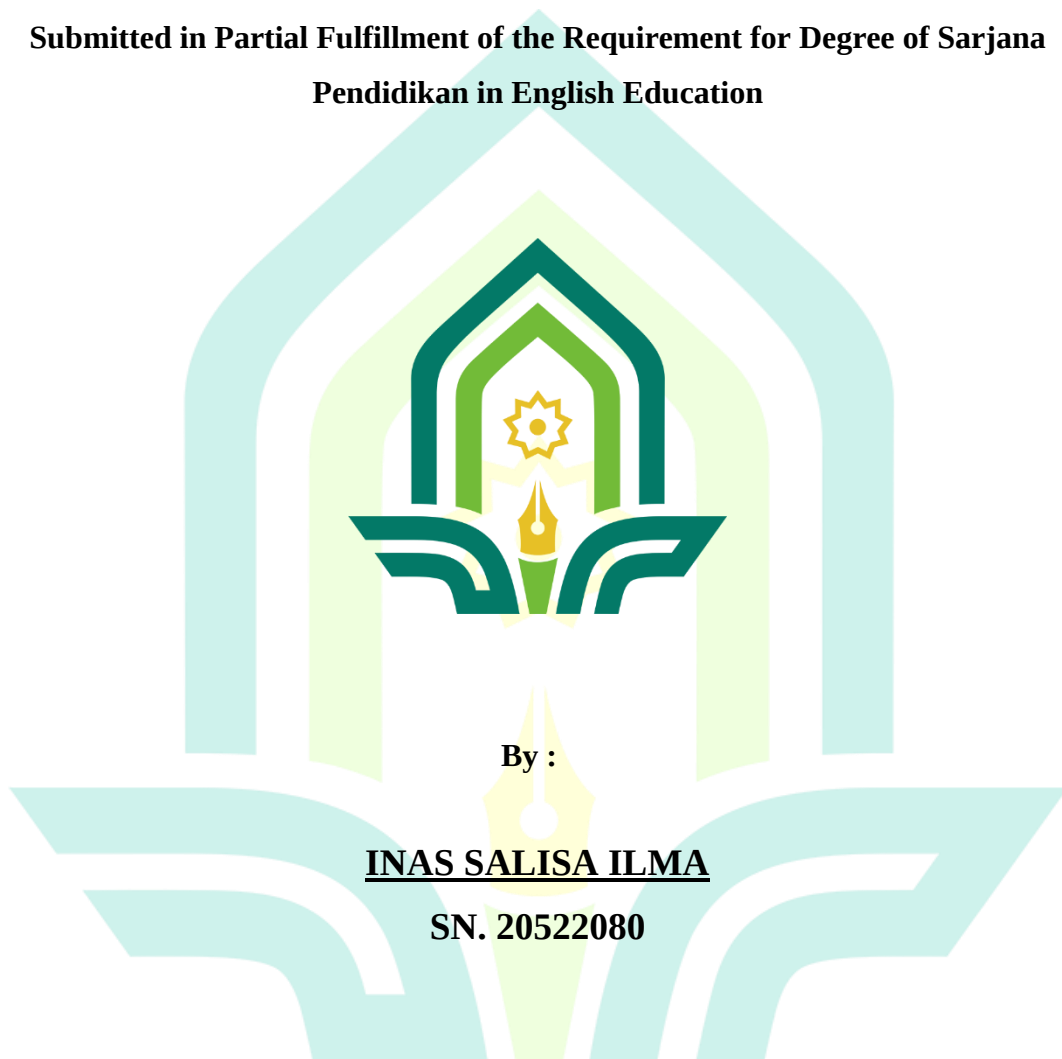


**EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WITH
SOCIAL ANXIETY DURING PUBLIC SPEAKING:
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY**

A THESIS

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for Degree of Sarjana
Pendidikan in English Education**



**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING
STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
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By :

INAS SALISA ILMA

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Motto

God has perfect timing, never early, never late. It takes a little patience and it takes a lot of faith, but it's a worth to wait.

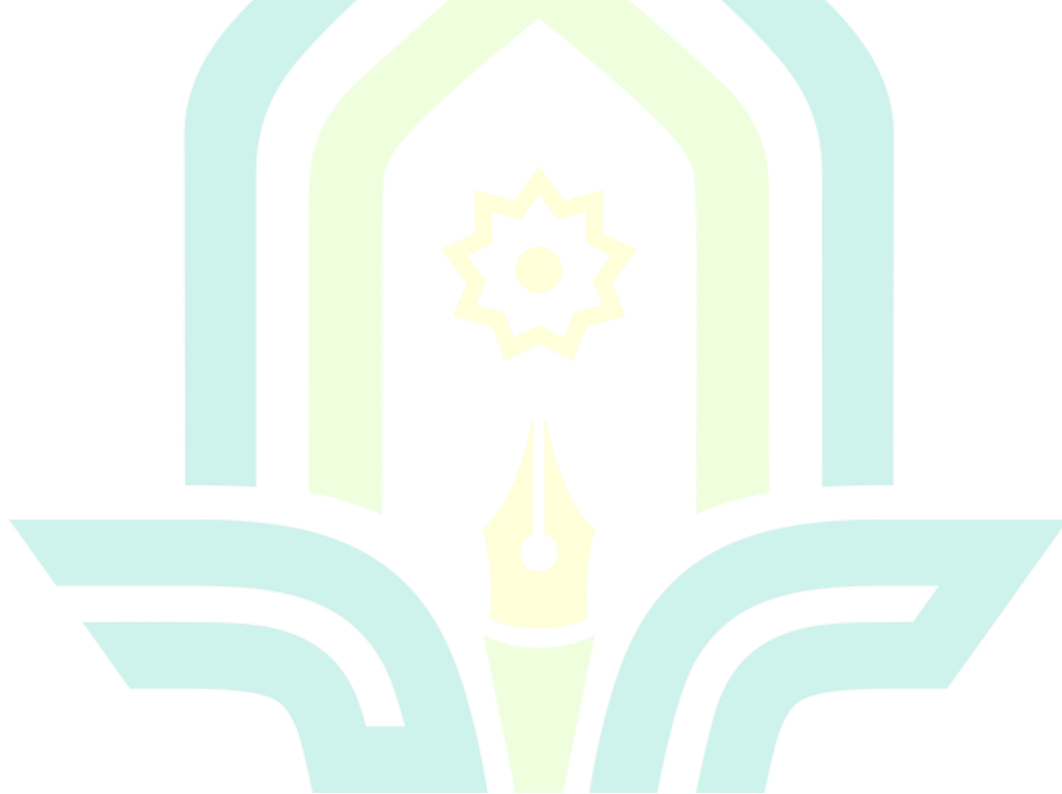
Long story short I survived - Taylor Swift

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ABSTRACT

Ilma, Inas Salisa. (2026). Emotional Experiences of Students with Social Anxiety During Public Speaking: A Narrative Inquiry. Thesis. English Education Department. FTIK UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.
Supervisor: Dr. Dewi Puspitasari, M.Pd.

Keywords: social anxiety, public speaking, emotional experiences, coping strategies, narrative inquiry.

Social anxiety is one of the challenges experienced by students during public speaking activities. Students who experience social anxiety often face various emotional difficulties when speaking in front of an audience. Therefore, this study aimed to explore students' emotional experiences related to social anxiety during public speaking and the coping strategies they used to manage their anxiety. This study employed a qualitative approach using narrative inquiry. The participants were four university students who experienced social anxiety during public speaking activities. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The participants' emotional experiences were interpreted using the Affect system of Appraisal Theory proposed by Martin and White (2005). The findings revealed five emotional experiences, namely pre-presentation nervousness, fear of negative evaluation, physical and emotional distress during public speaking, loss of concentration during public speaking, and relief after completing public speaking activities. In addition, four coping strategies were identified, including preparation and practice, relaxation techniques, seeking social support, and developing confidence through experience. These strategies helped the participants manage their anxiety and gradually build confidence in public speaking situations. Overall, the findings indicate that social anxiety influenced students' emotional experiences during public speaking activities. However, the participants were able to cope with their anxiety through various strategies and repeated speaking experiences.

ABSTRAK

Ilma, Inas Salisa. (2026). Emotional Experiences of Students with Social Anxiety During Public Speaking: A Narrative Inquiry. *Skripsi*. Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris. FTIK UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. Pembimbing: Dr. Dewi Puspitasari, M.Pd.

Kata kunci: kecemasan sosial, public speaking, pengalaman emosional, strategi koping, narrative inquiry.

Kecemasan sosial merupakan salah satu tantangan yang dialami mahasiswa saat melakukan kegiatan public speaking. Mahasiswa yang mengalami kecemasan sosial sering menghadapi berbagai kesulitan emosional ketika berbicara di depan audiens. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman emosional mahasiswa terkait kecemasan sosial selama public speaking serta strategi koping yang mereka gunakan untuk mengatasi kecemasan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain narrative inquiry. Partisipan penelitian terdiri atas empat mahasiswa yang mengalami kecemasan sosial dalam kegiatan public speaking. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik yang dikemukakan oleh Braun dan Clarke (2006). Pengalaman emosional partisipan diinterpretasikan menggunakan sistem dalam Appraisal Theory yang dikembangkan oleh Martin dan White (2005). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan lima pengalaman emosional, yaitu rasa gugup sebelum presentasi, ketakutan terhadap penilaian negatif, tekanan emosional dan fisik selama public speaking, kehilangan konsentrasi saat public speaking, serta perasaan lega setelah menyelesaikan kegiatan public speaking. Selain itu, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi empat strategi koping yang digunakan partisipan, yaitu persiapan dan latihan, teknik relaksasi, mencari dukungan sosial, serta membangun kepercayaan diri melalui pengalaman. Strategi-strategi tersebut membantu partisipan mengelola kecemasan mereka dan secara bertahap meningkatkan kepercayaan diri dalam situasi public speaking. Secara keseluruhan, temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kecemasan sosial mempengaruhi pengalaman emosional mahasiswa selama kegiatan public speaking. Namun, para partisipan mampu mengatasi kecemasan tersebut melalui berbagai strategi koping dan pengalaman berbicara yang berulang.

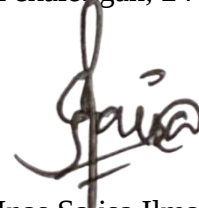
PREFACE

All praise and gratitude be to Allah SWT for His endless blessings, mercy, and guidance, which have enabled the researcher to complete this undergraduate thesis entitled *"Emotional Experiences of Students with Social Anxiety During Public Speaking: A Narrative Inquiry."* Peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad SAW. This thesis is submitted as one of the requirements for obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in the English Education Department, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. The researcher realizes that this thesis could not have been completed without the support, guidance, encouragement, and assistance of many people. Therefore, the researcher would like to express her sincere gratitude to:

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Inas Salisa Ilma

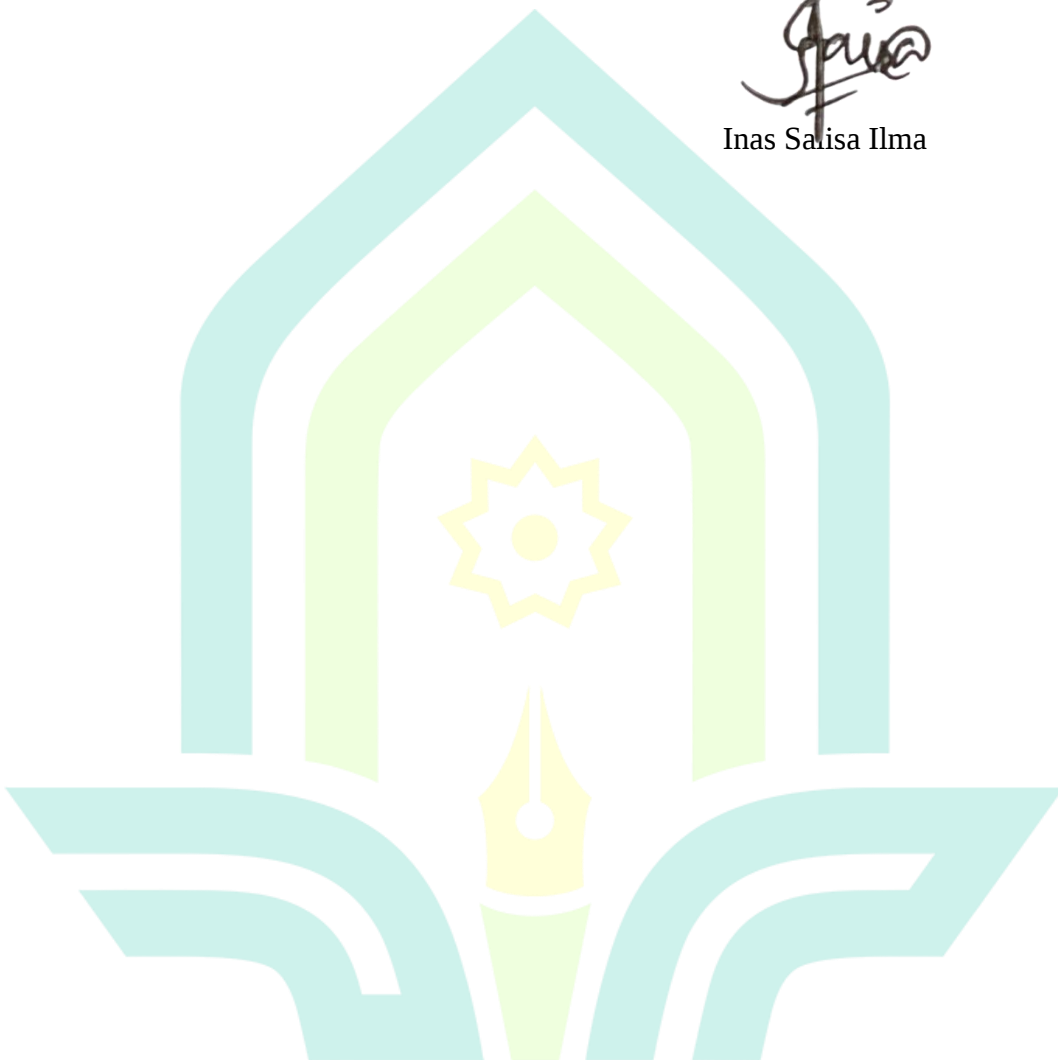


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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Public speaking anxiety is becoming more common among students and often disrupts their performance in presentations and group discussions (Huda et al., 2024). Many students feel nervous, tense, or afraid of being judged when they have to speak in front of others. These feelings can interfere with their ability to concentrate and organize their ideas during a presentation (Megawati, 2023). Physical reactions such as a shaky voice or trembling hands often make the situation even more challenging. Recent research also showed that public speaking situations often trigger strong physical and emotional reactions in university students, which makes the experience even more stressful (Lintner & Belovecová, 2024).

Students who have social anxiety often deal with strong negative emotions, like being afraid of getting judged or easily feeling embarrassed in social situations. These reactions can make it harder for them to read other people's emotions, which makes the interaction feel even more uncomfortable (Israelashvili et al., 2024). They also struggle with handling their own emotions, especially when they're in situations that feel uncertain or hard to predict (Daniel et al., 2025). When this uncertainty shows up, it usually brings negative thoughts that make their anxiety worse during social interactions (Shen et al., 2024). Because of that, students with social anxiety often lack confidence in social settings and prefer to keep their distance rather than deal

with the pressure.

Many students try to manage their speaking anxiety by preparing their material well and practicing before the presentation day (Muhibbah & Amalia, 2025). Some also use relaxation techniques, like deep breathing or calming their thoughts, to help reduce their nervousness (Annur & Yunita, 2025). Others deal with it by facing their anxiety step by step, for example by speaking in smaller groups first before trying larger audiences (Martiningsih et al., 2024). These strategies help students feel more in control and less worried about being judged. Over time, these small efforts can make them more confidence and more comfortable in speaking situations.

Based on preliminary observations, many students still show emotional reactions when they have to speak in front of others, such as feeling tense, losing focus, or taking deep breaths to calm themselves. Some of them try simple strategies like positive self-talk or quick relaxation, but these techniques do not always help in every situation. Others prefer practicing with their friends to feel more supported, yet the impact of this approach also varies among students. These differences suggest that each student uses coping strategies that feel easiest or most familiar to them. However, there is still limited understanding of how students' emotional experiences during public speaking. More specifically, little is known about how these experiences relate to the coping strategies they use. Therefore, further research is needed to explore this issue.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on the background of the study above, the researcher identifies the problems as follows:

1. Social anxiety during public speaking is still commonly experienced by EFL students and often affects their participation in classroom speaking activities.
2. Students with social anxiety experience various emotional responses before, during, and after public speaking, but these experiences have not been widely explored.
3. Previous studies have mainly discussed the causes of anxiety or strategies to reduce it, while limited attention has been given to students' emotional experiences related to social anxiety during public speaking.
4. There is still limited understanding of the coping strategies used by EFL students to manage social anxiety during public speaking.

1.3 Problem Restriction

Based on the problem identification above, this study limits its scope to keep the discussion focused. This study focuses on the emotional experiences of EFL students who experience social anxiety during public speaking and the coping strategies they use to manage it. The participants are limited to English Education students who have experienced social anxiety during classroom public speaking activities, such as presentations and discussions. The data are collected through semi-structured interviews using a narrative inquiry

approach.

1.4 Formulation of the Problems

1. What are the emotional experiences of EFL students with social anxiety during public speaking?
2. What coping strategies do these students employ to manage their social anxiety in public speaking situations?

1.5 Aims of the Study

1. To explore the emotional experiences of EFL students with social anxiety during public speaking.
2. To identify the coping strategies employed by EFL students to manage their social anxiety in public speaking situations.

1.6 Operational Definitions

To prevent any confusion about the terms used in this study, the researcher provided some explanations of the terms related to the study like this:

1. Emotional Experience: Students' conscious feelings, such as fear, anxiety, tension, or relief, that arise before and during public speaking situations (Smith et al., 2017).
2. Social Anxiety: Students' self-reported feelings of fear, discomfort, and nervousness related to being evaluated by others during public speaking, rather than a clinical diagnosis (Thyagaraj et al., 2025).
3. Public Speaking: Students' classroom speaking activities, such as

presentations or group discussions, conducted in front of peers or lecturers (Tucker et al., 2019).

4. Narrative Inquiry: An approach to studying human lives that values lived experience as an important source of knowledge and understanding (Clandinin, 2023).

1.7 Significances of the Study

1. Theoretical : This research added to the theory of emotional experiences in social anxiety. It shows that public speaking anxiety comes not only from the situation but also from how a person makes sense of their own experiences.
2. Empirical : This study provided empirical insight into students' emotional experiences and coping strategies in public speaking. The findings offer real evidence of the challenges students face, which can support future research on social anxiety in academic settings.
3. Practical : This study provided a clearer picture of students' emotions and coping strategies in public speaking. It may help educators and counselors provide suitable support for students with social anxiety. This approach is also expected to help students overcome their fears more effectively while fostering confidence in public speaking situations.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of the Findings

This study aimed to explore the emotional experiences related to social anxiety during public speaking and the coping strategies used by students to manage their anxiety. Based on the findings of the study, several conclusions can be drawn.

In terms of emotional experiences, the findings showed that the participants experienced various emotions related to social anxiety during public speaking activities. Five emotional experiences were identified, namely pre-presentation nervousness, fear of negative evaluation, physical and emotional distress during public speaking, loss of concentration during public speaking, and relief after completing public speaking activities. These emotional experiences appeared at different stages of the public speaking process and reflected how social anxiety influenced the participants before, during, and after presenting in front of an audience.

Most participants reported feelings of nervousness, fear, worry, and tension before and during presentations. These feelings were often accompanied by physical symptoms such as trembling hands, sweating, cold hands, nausea, a trembling voice, and a rapid heartbeat. The findings also showed that anxiety sometimes affected the participants' concentration during presentations. As a result, they forgot the material and experienced blank moments while speaking. However, after completing their presentations, the

participants generally felt relieved and more comfortable, although some still continued to think about their performance and possible mistakes.

In terms of coping strategies, the findings showed that the participants used several strategies to manage their social anxiety during public speaking activities. The coping strategies identified in this study included preparation and practice, relaxation techniques, seeking social support, and developing confidence through experience. These strategies were used at different stages of public speaking and helped the participants cope with various emotional challenges that emerged throughout the presentation process.

Preparation and practice helped the participants become more familiar with the material and reduced their fear of forgetting important information during presentations. Relaxation techniques helped them stay calm when feelings of nervousness appeared, while support from friends and lecturers provided encouragement and useful feedback. In addition, repeated exposure to public speaking activities gradually helped the participants become more familiar with presentation situations and develop greater confidence over time.

Overall, the findings indicate that social anxiety influenced the participants' emotional experiences during public speaking activities. Despite experiencing various emotional challenges, the participants actively used different coping strategies to manage their anxiety. As a result, they were able to participate more confidently in public speaking activities and gradually improve their ability to cope with public speaking situations.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher proposes several recommendations for students and future researchers.

1. Students who experience social anxiety during public speaking are encouraged to apply coping strategies such as preparation and practice, relaxation techniques, seeking social support, and gaining more speaking experience. These strategies may help students reduce anxiety and improve their confidence during public speaking activities. In addition, students are encouraged to continue participating in speaking activities because repeated experiences may help them become more familiar with public speaking situations and gradually develop greater confidence.
2. Future researchers are suggested to conduct similar studies with a larger number of participants or in different educational settings. This may help provide a broader understanding of students' experiences of social anxiety during public speaking. Future studies may also explore other aspects of social anxiety or examine coping strategies in greater depth to gain a richer understanding of how students experience and manage anxiety in public speaking situations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Bisa ceritain gimana perasaan kamu sebelum melakukan public speaking atau presentasi di kelas?
Can you describe how you feel before doing public speaking or a presentation in class?
2. Hal apa yang paling bikin kamu merasa cemas atau takut saat berbicara di depan orang lain?
What makes you feel most anxious or afraid when speaking in front of others?
3. Waktu public speaking, biasanya kamu ngerasain apa secara emosional maupun fisik?
During public speaking, what do you usually feel emotionally and physically?
4. Pernah gak rasa cemas itu bikin kamu jadi blank, kehilangan fokus, atau sulit ngomong? Ceritain pengalamannya dong.
Has anxiety ever made you go blank, lose focus, or struggle to speak? Please share the experience.
5. Pikiran apa yang biasanya muncul di kepala kamu saat sedang presentasi?
What thoughts usually come to your mind during a presentation?
6. Gimana perasaan kamu setelah selesai public speaking?
How do you feel after finishing public speaking?
7. Biasanya apa yang kamu lakukan buat ngurangin rasa gugup sebelum presentasi?
What do you usually do to reduce nervousness before a presentation?
8. Pas rasa nervous muncul saat public speaking, gimana cara kamu menenangkan diri?
When nervousness arises during public speaking, how do you calm yourself down?
9. Strategi apa yang paling membantu kamu menghadapi public speaking? Bisa kasih contohnya?
What strategy helps you most in facing public speaking? Can you give an example?
10. Pernah gak cara yang kamu pakai buat ngatasi rasa cemas ternyata gak terlalu berhasil? Ceritain dong.

Has a strategy you used to cope with anxiety ever not worked well? Please share.

11. Apakah ada dukungan dari teman, dosen, atau lingkungan yang membantu kamu lebih percaya diri saat public speaking?

Is there support from friends, lecturers, or the environment that helps you feel more confident during public speaking?

12. Kalau dibanding sebelumnya, apakah sekarang ada perubahan dalam cara kamu menghadapi public speaking dan rasa cemas itu? Gimana perubahannya?

Compared to before, has there been any change in how you face public speaking and anxiety now? What kind of change?

