Teaching Anxiety among Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) TESL Pre-Service Teachers during Teaching Practicum

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Apprehension, commonly known as anxiety, refers to the feeling of worry or fear, which can lead to stressful conditions that may have a significant impact. This study explores the teaching anxiety experienced by TESL pre-service teachers during their teaching practicum experience. This research also intends to investigate the factors, effects and coping mechanisms used by the respondents throughout their teaching training practice, particularly during formal observation and their experiences during the practicum phase. A mixed-method research approach was employed to carry out the study among 50 final-year TESL UTM students who had undergone teaching training and participated in this study. The data were collected through a set of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Data were analysed using SPSS 24 and thematic analysis. Findings reveal that most respondents experienced moderate apprehension during their teaching practicum phase. Some influencing factors of teaching anxiety include fear of evaluation and classroom management. Effects of teaching anxiety include inability to concentrate and burnout. Other than that, the coping mechanisms applied by most respondents were emotional regulation strategies. Correspondingly, this research is significant as it creates awareness about teaching anxiety among pre-service teachers. This research is hopeful that suitable courses and policies are designed to help future TESL pre-service teachers during their teaching practicum.

1. Introduction

Munna and Kalam [1] declared that the teaching and knowledge acquisition is defined as a transformation process of knowledge from teachers to students. It is an amalgamation of various elements within the procedure wherein an educator identifies and contrived the goals of the learning as well as developing teaching resources and integrate the teaching and learning strategy Munna and Kalam [1]. Before teaching in real life, teachers must complete a required teaching practicum - a practice program where pre-service teachers apply theoretical and practical skills gained during their studies. Ngidi and Sibaya [2] stated that Practice teaching or Teaching Practicum functions as the pre-service teacher's introduction to the practical aspects of the school environment. It is a service that

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serves practical purposes with the aim of polishing and preparing for workplace settings. Teaching Practicum is vital for a vast number of reasons, one of which is that it provides the opportunity to gain real-world experience teaching in a classroom setting with actual students and student teachers Charisma and Nurmalasari [3]. Hence, pre-service teachers are denoted as students with a comprehensive understanding of pedagogical components.

However, it cannot be denied that pre-service teachers may have at least experienced various teaching challenges, whether physical, mental, or spiritual. The underlying issue should be considered, as it indicates the harmful impact on their situation. The responsibilities of this profession are significant as it involves exerting influence upon students both within the school and in their wider environment. The current English teacher education in Malaysia places a strong emphasis on the significance of serving in a teaching practicum in order to enhance the overall quality of English instruction Ag-Ahmad *et al.,* [4]. During their teaching practicum, pre-service teachers are expected to confront a bewildering and ever-changing teaching environment that frequently results in heightened levels of anxiety. The pressures faced during this crucial phase are influenced mainly by factors such as advocating instructional approaches to navigate students' needs, constantly managing classroom dynamics, and handling unforeseen circumstances that one could barely expect. From this notion, it can be understood that a great amount of stress or anxiety is significantly impacted and evident among pre-service teachers and from the impacts itself can generate an unhealthy mindset for a longer period. This phenomenon and uncommon feelings known to be teaching anxiety. As a consequence, teaching anxiety can be immensely detrimental within these clusters of young promising pre-service teachers.

Teaching is a challenging endeavour and the significant requirements and difficulties can induce anxiety among novice teachers who are experiencing the actual science, art, and skill of the profession for the first time Soriano [5]. In addition, the heightened scale of the fear constantly to correlate with self-efficacy which lies under the theory of Social Cognitive Theory. Self-efficacy is a concept in which individuals' beliefs in their abilities to carry out activities influence the outcomes of their efforts. Li [6] The concept of teacher self-efficacy refers to the degree to which a teacher has faith in their own competence to effectively carry out various educational responsibilities. Koutroubas and Galanakis [7] noted in Bandura's theory that past success boosts confidence and skill for repeating tasks and taking on new challenges. In Selami [8] study, high anxiety levels in classrooms were linked to poorer teaching effectiveness, deteriorating work environments, altered teaching behaviour, disrupted lesson planning, and negative perceptions or flaws in knowledge and teaching skills. Upon analysing the gap of the said topic. It is believed that there has a little to no information regarding the effects of teaching anxiety. Cheng [9] proclaimed that the absence of general conclusion of the manner and degree of anxiety has impacted in the context of EFL pre-service teachers. In addition, the effect of anxiety could be seen to have both positive and negative impact on the language pre-service teachers. After doing an extension in searching using the studies that were obtained, the field of the consequences of teaching anxiety has revealed an unsatisfactory number of results.

1.1 Introduction

In general, teaching is a physically demanding job that requires patience and passion to fully carry out the duty of facilitating the learning process for the sake of their students. It is quite common to witness a struggling phase from the teachers while they are executing their jobs and juggling with their life. From the study, it is aimed to investigate the factors and effects of teaching anxiety among pre-service TESL teachers and their effectiveness. Though teaching anxiety is no longer a foreign topic

in today's timeline, there is little to no research being done and addressed in Malaysia in the context of the discussed matter. Several articles and studies can only be identified within the scope from other countries' perspectives. Thus, carrying out the study should be able to provide more insights of teaching anxiety in Malaysia's context and practically can contribute for both non-TESL TESL and TESL pre-service teachers to give enlightenment regarding the matter discussed. The three main objectives of this conducted are to explore the causes of teaching anxiety which was experienced by TESL pre-service teachers throughout their practicum teaching, to investigate the effects of teaching anxiety which might affect their teaching performance, as well as, to explore the coping mechanism strategies used by TESL pre-service teachers and their effectiveness.

2. Methodology
2.1 Participants

Majid [10] describes research population or the population interest as the set of individuals or people that the researchers intend to explore the findings to the target topic. A total of 50 students of a 4th Year TESL students from the School of Education, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Skudai. The specific respondents chosen are the pre-service English teachers who have undergone their training at their own respective schools. It is believable that the target respondents may have at least experienced teaching anxiety once before having observation with their supervisors. 10 respondents will be chosen prior to the results gathered from quantitative method. Each respondent would be remain confidential for ethical consideration in this research.

2.2 Research Design

This study solely entailed the mixed method approaches as it could support and strengthen data. As stated by Creswell *et al.,* [11] mixed method approach is known as the combination of both qualitative and quantitative method for this research wherein it may include theoretical framework as well as philosophical conjecture. Furthermore, a mixed method which incorporates qualitative and quantitative is employed for this study in order to achieve the goals of the research questions. The first two research questions are part of the quantitative method, which is a set of questionnaires in google form, distributed to the respondents mainly to explore the factors that contribute to teaching anxiety and their effects on their teaching performance. To strengthen the data a semi-structured interview is utilised to gain the respondents' insights on their coping mechanism strategies and its effectiveness towards their teaching performance.

2.3 Data Analysis

For the purpose of providing a measure for evaluating anxiety that is specific to the task of teaching, Parsons [12] developed the Teaching Anxiety Scale, also known as the TCHAS. Items from Li [6] are also being adopted to strengthen the reliability of the instrument particularly for research question 2. In addition, the questions used for this study are adopted and reviewed thoroughly based on the past research being done. Prior to the research questions the adoption of the questionnaire is done by meticulously selecting and analysing the best questions which suit to be used for the study. Collecting and reconstructing questionnaires from the past study is also being used as well as making the interview questions for the five potential respondents. Next, it also intends to distribute the questionnaire by using the medium of Google Form and through the platform of WhatsApp to ease the process.

After that, the procedure of collection and analysis of the questionnaire data is being done by using SPSS software to analyse findings gained prior to the distribution. By using, SPSS could help in measuring and detecting the mean for the data which includes the standard deviation as well. A better understanding of the degree of variability that is present in the data can be gained by the utilisation of dispersion measures such as the range, variance, and standard deviation. It is common practice to visualise frequency distributions using histograms or bar charts. In addition to support the findings of the study, about ten TESL pre-service teachers who have completed their training are selected to undergo the interview. In the final data collection, the insights gained from the respondents is analysed by using thematic analysis to further explain the final collection. Incorporation of thematic analysis is included as the classification of the theme employed the use of deductive approach, whereby the researcher had categorised the theme of each coping mechanism in accordance with past research on coping mechanisms. The categorisation helped in distributing the suitable context of coping mechanisms based on respondents' insights.

3. Results
3.1 Demographic

A total of 50 UTM pre-service TESL teachers who have undergone teaching practicum during third year under SHPA3008 have willingly participated in the data gatherings. The participation of the target group solely focuses more on students that have completed their training, hence, the current third-year TESL students of session 2023/2024 are excluded in this research.

3.1.1 The respondents' demographic background

It can be seen that female respondents display higher frequency and percentage in comparison to male (Table 1). Majority of respondents consist of females with a total percentage of 80% equivalent to 40 people, while the male percentage is shown to have 20% with a total of 10 people. In which can be concluded that the majority of TESL students are compromises of female students in comparison to male students. Malay respondents are the majority respondents of this study with a percentage of 72% equivalent to 30 people, it is followed by the second largest, Indian total of 6 people with percentage of 12% and Others which signify other ethnicity occupy about 10% and equivalent of 5 people. Meanwhile, Chinese ethnicity remains as the minority with a total of 6% equivalent to 6%.

Table 1
Respondents' demographic background

Demographic variables		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	10	20%
	Female	40	80%
Ethnicity	Malay	36	72%
	Chinese	3	6%
	Indian	6	12%
	Others	5	10

3.2 Quantitative and Descriptive Analysis
3.2.1 The causes of teaching anxiety

The shown items or statements in Table 2 are sourced from Parsons [12] in order to determine the mean of the causes of Teaching Anxiety experienced by TESL pre-service teachers during practicum training. In reviewing the theme of Pedagogy, items 1 and 7 demonstrate that the average range of each item falls within the range of moderate teaching anxiety. In contrast to item 3 and 6 which pertains with Pedagogy theme reveals a significant scale of high teaching anxiety with mean of 3.84 for the statement *"I worry about being able to keep students interested in what I (will teach) teach them".* According to this assertion, the vast majority of pre-service teachers have shown concern with generating ideas of teaching to sustain students' engagement over the entire lesson. Next, through the theme of evaluation there is a different gap between items 2 and 5. Statement number 2 *"I would feel anxious if the principal informed that me he/she was coming to my class to observe"* has shown a mean of 3.70 which indicates high teaching anxiety. Similarly, statement 5 *"I feel nervous when I am being observed by my college supervisor"* with a mean of 4.10 also displays a high scale of mean. The fear of being evaluated by supervisors or academic school staff has predominantly become the highest rate causes for the young pre-service teachers which heightened their apprehension. Item number 8 *"I'm uncertain whether I (will be able to) can tell the difference between really seriously disturbed students and those who are merely "goofing off" in class' '* falls under classroom management theme with scale mean of 3.22, moderate teaching anxiety. Last but not least, item 4 with the statement *"I feel inferior to other pre-service teachers in my teacher preparation program"* is related to staff relations. The result of the mean has shown to be the lowest among all other items with a total of 2.68. Hence, it is assumed that TESL pre-service teachers are confident in themselves.

Table 2
The causes of teaching anxiety

Statements	Percentage	Mean
I (would feel) feel panicky when a student asks me a question I (couldn't) can't answer.	36.0 (Frequently)	3.12
I would feel anxious if the principal informed to me he/she was coming to observe.	46.0 (Frequently)	3.76
Lack of rapport with my students (will be) is one of my biggest worries.	40.0 (Frequently)	3.72
I feel inferior to other pre-service teachers in my teacher preparation program.	26.0 (Occasionally)	2.68
I feel nervous when I am being observed by my college supervisor.	46.0 (Always)	4.10
I worry about being able to keep students interested in what I (will teach) teach them.	44.0 (Frequently)	3.84
I'm worried that differences in background between my students and me (will prevent) prevent me from teaching effectively.	36.0 (Frequently)	3.42
I'm uncertain whether I (will be able to) can tell the difference between really seriously disturbed students and those who are merely "goofing off" in class.	34.0 (Occasionally)	3.22

3.2.2 The effects of teaching anxiety

Based on the results of overall mean displayed from Table 2 above, it can be addressed that almost all mean for effects of teaching anxiety (Table 3) has exhibited to be lower in comparison to causes of teaching anxiety. Item 1 showed a result of moderate scale of anxiety presented with a

mean of 2.80 "If I have trouble answering a student's question I (will find) find it difficult to concentrate on questions that follow" from the result of the statement it is believed that pre-service teachers infrequently faced the difficulty and able to overcome it. Item 2 "I'm worried whether I will find teaching a satisfying profession" unveils a moderate teaching anxiety with a scale of 3.26 the result from the table presents. Next, item 3 with the statement "losing enthusiasm in teaching" has shown a mean of 2.78 with moderate anxiety. Based on the table below, the feeling of procrastination is much evident among TESL pre-service teachers and frequently happens, the scale of its mean reached about 3.10 which is considered as moderate anxiety. The highest scale of mean 3.92 with high anxiety is for item 5 "I worry about own teaching effectiveness".

Table 3
The effects of teaching anxiety

Statements	Percentage	Mean
If I have trouble answering a student's question I (will find) find it difficult to concentrate on questions that follow.	30.0 (Infrequently)	2.80
I'm worried whether I will find teaching a satisfying profession.	28.0 (Always)	3.26
Losing enthusiasm in teaching.	28.0 (Infrequently)	2.78
I tend to procrastinate my work due to the stress I felt.	26.0 (Frequently)	3.10
I worry about own teaching effectiveness.	19 (Always)	3.92

3.3 Qualitative and Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is the predominant approach used for qualitative research upon obtaining and analysing the data. The classification of the theme employed the use of deductive approach, whereby the researcher had categorised the theme of each coping mechanism in accordance with Novitasari and Murtafi'ah [13] past research on coping mechanisms. Based on the analysis done after gathering all excerpt from the interview process. It has been noted that there are no significant differences usage between the four types of coping mechanism. Each mechanism proved to be effective based on the perspective from different respondents.

3.3.1 Social coping mechanism

Algorani and Gupta [14] addressed social coping as the involvement of an individual in reaching for emotional support within their community or environment with the goal to ease their stress. Each respondent strongly believed that social coping mechanisms have helped them to reduce tension or teaching anxiety. Based on their thoughts, two respondents had taken the initiatives to build good relationships with their own designated students during practicum (Table 4). They admitted that a strong foundation of positive relationships with learners could be a stepping stone for a supportive and conducive learning environment. Having a comfortable space could create a more conducive environment which eliminates teaching anxiety. In line with research done by Lampadan [15] the researcher stated that developing positive personal relationship with students could help pre-service teachers to lessen anxiety that might exist. It can be seen that the effectiveness of this mechanism may extend the support which is needed by the vulnerable groups of people. Hence, social coping mechanism should be the easiest mechanism to be utilised.

Table 4
Social coping mechanism

Statements
I also tried to build relationships with the students. I mean a positive relationship with them so that I will be able to have a supportive classroom environment.
Additionally, I directly engaged with my students by asking them about their expectations and goals for the class. Understanding their perspectives and receiving their feedback allowed me to tailor my teaching approach.

3.3.2 Professional coping mechanism

Novitasari and Murtafi'ah [13] emphasised professional coping mechanisms mostly associated with the use of self-management skills and professional qualities executed in coping with teaching anxiety. Increasing self-management skills should be able to help in heightening self-efficacy, so pre-service teachers are able to produce performance attainment. Numrich Carol quoted in Abbasian [16] stated that the presence of an anxiety can create adversity for language teachers which negatively affects their instructions. Respondents of this study have firmly stated that professional coping mechanisms are essential needed to be practised evenly (Table 5). Professional coping mechanisms involve having a strong basis of organisational skills, having effective time management as well as the basic professional qualities in work settings. This can be further supported by research done from Djawamara and Listyani [17] had mentioned that adaptation to new environments and good preparation should be properly done beforehand, by doing so, it is expected that the pre-service teachers should be able to grasp the momentum that is needed to perform effectively.

Table 5
Professional coping mechanism

Statements
I believe the first thing I did was calm myself first and try not to show it on the outside in front of my students.
I found that taking a deep breath before going to the classroom helps to calm me down before I can start to feel nervous.
Deep breathing exercise is what I always do before I go to my classes. It helps me calm my nerves and mind. I also had a mirror talk using positive affirmations every morning.
I usually went to *Bilik Bahasa* to do some revision of my lesson plan and to calm myself down before the next class.
As for the teaching, usually, I will prepare the notes for me and students days before classes, and I will have some kind of rehearsal for that class just to familiarise with each topic.

3.3.3 Personal coping mechanism

Personal coping mechanism usually being displayed as the ability of one to manage oneself by enhancing through the use of three main strategies which comprises behavioural, emotional and cognitive strategies Novitasari and Murtafi'ah [13]. Personal coping mechanisms are considered as one of the strategies that any individual applies in their personal lives adding the likelihood of a positive lifestyle. Novitasari and Murtafi'ah [13] as quoted in Sameephet and Wanphet [18] investigated the successful anxiety management strategies, namely: positive thinking, self-talking and calming down as part of personal coping mechanism. It is commonly tailored to one's preferences in maintaining positive attributes while simultaneously reducing anxiety. As being included in other passages, personal coping mechanisms are perceived as informal or should be in accordance with one's preferences of lessening teaching anxiety. Respondents stated that by engaging in a healthy lifestyle or pursuing simple interests eventually provided solace for them as a break from academic burdens (Table 6). Emotional strategy which includes worshipping practising like praying could also

help in providing resilience in preparing pre-service teachers for the upcoming future career be it in the field of teaching or any other professional settings.

Table 6
Personal coping mechanism

Statements
I will try to distract myself by trying to think positively and think that whatever happens is due to God's will. I will also pray that my heart will be calm and that my teaching will go smoothly.
My techniques are relaxation and focusing on a healthy lifestyle. When I was stressed, I relaxed myself by taking a deep breath and sit for a while to calm myself. Besides that, I also went for a brisk walk and gym to ease my stress.
Usually when it gets too exhausting, I tend to isolate myself and take a breather. For example, I go to the bathroom, or listen to loud music.
I was able to overcome it by practising breathing techniques, massage points, and listening to podcasts and music. This way I was able to focus elsewhere, and not the source of my anxiety.

3.3.4 Institutional coping mechanism

Statements gathered from the semi-structured interviews mostly show the results of seeking support from lecturers, mentors and friends (Table 7). This type of coping mechanism is vital for assisting pre-service teachers to manage their stress or anxiety associated with their training phase. Supervisors and supervising teachers play a crucial position in distinguishing and observing teaching momentum, giving continuous constructive feedback and also guiding them to improve their teaching methods. A study conducted by Han and Tulgar [19] stated that one of the ways the pre-service teachers deal with teaching anxiety is by asking for evaluation from mentor and cooperating teacher. Continuous support and regular meet-ups could increase motivation and cultivate effectiveness which results in positive training experience as they believe that having multiple experiences may help them to gauge well within the environment they have to experience.

Table 7
Institutional coping mechanism

Statements
I found most effective in managing this anxiety revolved around seeking support and feedback. Consulting my mentor was a key strategy.
One major contributor to my being able to manage my anxiety was by seeking the advice of my lecturers, and mentors.
Talk about my nervousness or anxiety with my friends. After I had finished with the observation from my mentor and supervisor, I talked it out with my friends. I find that it actually helps me to lift my burdens for a bit.

4. Conclusions

Grounded on the data obtained for causes of teaching anxiety, the researcher could conclude that TESL pre-service teachers tend to feel moderate to high anxiety based on certain circumstances which can provoke the apprehension. While eliciting the findings for research question 1, it has been proven and noted that the fear evaluation garnered the most of mean value among all other items presented in the section of causes of teaching anxiety. This presented data suggests that TESL pre-service teachers are particularly anxious and concerned about being supervised by their lecturer supervisors or teacher supervisors. The apprehension is most noticeable when being observed, as they are likely to fear receiving negative feedback regarding their performance on teaching. Li *et al.,* [20] stated that the state of anxiety can be evident through the situation, especially during classroom

observation and post-class evaluation can induce greater anxiety, fear and worry among practicum teachers, especially with possibility of gaining negative evaluation, thereby raising pre-service.

Analysis for effects of teaching anxiety revealed that moderate teaching anxiety still garnered a significant impact in any aspect of teaching. Majority of the respondents reported feeling nervous regarding their own perceptions of their teaching effectiveness. Many reported feelings of inadequacies and self-doubt, as resulted in hindering their feelings to try with new teaching methods or catering with diverse needs of their students. The lack of confidence might also become one of the aftereffects which ultimately hinders their self-efficacy to perform tasks efficiently. Moreover, the lack of confidence is often associated with diminishing satisfaction which can result in procrastination, whereby pre-service teachers will delay planning and classroom teaching preparation to the point it will reduce the teaching effectiveness for a lesson conducted. Additionally, the ongoing stress and anxiety can have great effects, which potentially lead to a long-term negative impact. Pre-service teachers who are struggling with anxiety may have trouble in building a stable teaching career. For instance, they may limit themselves in their own comfort zone.

Next, several mechanisms can also be used to lessen the pressure on the aspiring young teachers. Individuals find comfort in personal coping methods due to their customization to fit preferences and daily routines. These strategies, which encompass behavioural, emotional, and cognitive approaches, can aid in managing anxiety and embracing imperfections without judgment. Professional coping methods focus on self-management and skill utilization to navigate anxiety effectively. Social and institutional coping mechanisms may be related but differ in context. Social coping involves seeking support and understanding from the community, while institutional coping relies on guidance and feedback from supervisors to address problems effectively. Both types of coping mechanisms, essential for TESL pre-service teachers, offer valuable insights and contribute to their professional growth.

In conclusion, the research on teaching anxiety among TESL pre-service teachers has revealed findings on the causes, effects and coping mechanisms relating to this issue. Based on the findings of this study, quantitative analysis highlighted that fear evaluation is the most highlighted source of anxiety, by having from moderate to high teaching anxiety which resulted in increasing the nervousness and self-doubt among TESL pre-service teachers. Teaching anxiety not only affects their confidence but it is also believed to have broader effects on their professional development and job satisfaction. The findings emphasise the need for targeted interventions to help TESL pre-service teachers to manage and control their anxiety effectively.

Acknowledgement

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