

EXPLORING THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF HIGH LEVEL PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS' ANXIETY IN TEACHING PRACTICUM EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

Teaching practicum is a crucial stage in teacher education. However, many pre-service English teachers experience high levels of anxiety that may negatively effect their teaching performance. This study aims to measure the level of teaching anxiety among pre-service English teachers, identify its causes, and explore its effects on teaching performance. A mixed-methods approach was employed. The quantitative phase used descriptive statistics to analyze data from a questionnaire consisting of 26 items, distributed to 58 seventh-semester students at a private university in Malang who had completed their teaching practicum. The qualitative phase applied narrative inquiry, using in-depth interviews with three participants identified as having high anxiety levels. The findings revealed that overall teaching anxiety among pre-service teachers was at a medium level, indicating manageable anxiety during teaching. The main sources of anxiety included lack of teaching experience, lack of self-confidence and mastery of materials, unexpected questions from students, and supervisor observation. The effects of anxiety included difficulty in preparing a lesson plan, have a negative effect on quality of teaching, disrupting teacher-student interactions, changes in teacher behavior in the classroom, and dissatisfaction with teaching performance. This study was limited to 7th semester students from one private university in Indonesia. Future research should expand the sample size, add additional variables, and explore the causes, effects, and strategies for coping with anxiety simultaneously to obtain more significant results.

Keywords: pre-service English teacher; teaching practicum; anxiety; causes; effects

INTRODUCTION

The quality of education depends on the quality of teachers because they play a central role in shaping effective and meaningful learning experiences. Teachers not only deliver subject content, but also foster student engagement, shape classroom dynamics and influence student motivation (Mashburn et al., 2008). As facilitators, teachers are expected to create a supportive and engaging environment to help students reach their full potential (Sanjaya, 2014). This responsibility requires teachers to have strong pedagogical, interpersonal and communication skills, especially for those who teach English as a foreign language.

An important phase in developing professional teaching competencies is the teaching practicum, which serves as a bridge between theory and practice. During this period, prospective teachers are expected to apply their theoretical knowledge in actual classroom situations. According to Alvi et al. (2015), teaching practicum provides an opportunity for prospective teachers to experience the reality of teaching, from classroom management to lesson planning. This hands-on experience not only tests their teaching ability, but also serves as a critical period to shape their professional identity as future educators (Ubaidillah et al., 2020).

Preservice English teachers, especially those in EFL contexts, often face additional challenges such as language barriers and doubts about their language skills. As Rahmati (2017) states, many non-native speakers struggle with self-confidence, especially when using English to teach others. This insecurity can effect their ability to teach effectively, especially when combined

with the pressures of teaching practice. In such high-stakes environments, anxiety becomes a common emotional response, which can interfere with performance and learning outcomes.

Teaching anxiety is a psychological condition characterized by nervousness, fear, or apprehension related to the task of teaching. It is particularly common among pre-service teachers, who often feel unprepared or insecure about their ability to manage a classroom, deliver subject matter, or deal with student behavior (Thomas, 2006). According to Horwitz (1996), further highlights that teachers who are not native English speakers may feel anxious due to concerns over language accuracy and fear of making mistakes. Factors contributing to teaching anxiety include lack of confidence, inadequate preparation, language proficiency issues, and fear of negative evaluation (Yoon, 2012; Liu & Wu, 2021).

Several previous studies have explored teaching anxiety among pre-service EFL teachers. For example, Charisma and Nurmalasari (2020) examined student teachers' anxiety during practicum and how they cope with it, while Wijaya (2022) investigated foreign language anxiety among Indonesian pre-service teachers. Sari and Anwar (2021) identified factors contributing to foreign language anxiety during internships, and Li et al. (2023) studied how practicum participation affects anxiety levels among pre-service teachers in China. While these studies provide useful insights, most of them tend to focus on the presence of anxiety in general or on coping strategies, with limited attention to how anxiety specifically affects teaching performance.

This study aims to explore in greater depth the sources of anxiety experienced by pre-service English teachers and its effect on teaching performance during the practicum. Focusing on students from one of the private universities in Malang, this study investigates three main aspects: the level of anxiety experienced by pre-service teacher, the main sources of their anxiety, and the ways in which anxiety affect in their teaching performance. The following research questions guide this study:

1. How is the profile of teaching anxiety of pre-service English teachers during teaching practicum?
2. What are the causes of anxiety experienced by pre-service English teachers during teaching practicum?
3. How does teaching anxiety affect the teaching performance experienced by pre-service English teachers during teaching practicum?

METHOD

This research used a mix method approach with an explanatory sequential design. The participants in this research were 58 seventh-semester students who had completed their teaching practicum in lasted 2 months. To collect data, researchers used two instruments, namely the FLTA questionnaire which was adapted from Aydin and Utsuk (2020) to find out the level of anxiety experienced by pre-service English teachers and an in-depth interview to determine the causes of anxiety and its effects on teaching performance experienced by pre-service English teachers. There were arranged to 27-item questionnaire. Furthermore, the researcher modified the questionnaire by removing some of the items, resulting in a 26-item questionnaire. Then the researcher tested the reability and validity of the questionnaire with the following results.

TABLE 1. Reliability Statistics for FLTA Questionnaire

Cronbach's alpha	N of items
.946	26

Then, the interview was self-constructed interview that consisted of 3 question themes. This interview aimed to determine the particular sources of anxiety experienced by pre-service teachers and the effect on their teaching performance. The interview question were arranged as follow : the first themes was about the teaching anxiety felt by participants during teaching practicum consisted

of 8 questions, the second themes was about the sources that caused teaching anxiety consisted of 13 questions, the third themes was about the effects of the anxiety to their teaching performance based on their experienced consist of 13 questions. The total number of questions was 34 questions. Furthermore, the questionnaire data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the interview data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

FINDINGS

Finding RQ 1 : Level of Anxiety felt by pre-service English teachers

TABLE 2. The Mean and Standard Deviation of Students Level of Anxiety

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Anxiety	58	1.08	4.38	2.85	0.78
Valid	58				

Based on the descriptive statistical analysis above, it shows that the average of teaching anxiety felt by pre-service English teachers is ($\bar{x} = 2.85$). this average can be interpreted that the level of teaching anxiety felt by these pre-service teachers is at a medium level. This means that, although they may feel some level of apprehension or nervousness when teaching in the classroom, these feelings of anxiety are not at an excessive level, neither too high nor too low. Instead, their anxiety is within a manageable range.

Finding RQ 2 : The causes of teaching anxiety during teaching practicum

Lack of teaching experience

One of the main causes of teaching anxiety experienced by many pre-service English teachers when carrying out teaching practicum is a lack of teaching experience. As expressed by Maria (pseudonym).

"Maybe it's because of this lack of experience. Since I've only taught three times, perhaps if I taught for a full month, I could adapt. So, my anxiety could be reduced if I had more experience." (Maria)

This statement showed that the lack of teaching experience is one of the sources of teaching anxiety experienced by pre-service English teachers. This is because the participant feels that she is not used to it or does not have enough teaching experiences in the real teaching environment. She believes that the more experience she gets, the more comfortable and confident he will be in teaching, so that his anxiety will decrease.

Lack of self-confidence and mastery of materials

Another significant causes is the lack of teaching experience, pre-service English teachers also experience teaching anxiety caused by a lack of self-confidence and mastery of the material. Some of them feel that this often makes them anxious and afraid when teaching. This was conveyed by Maria and Vero (pseudonym).

"I feel less confident and afraid of being boring if I teach like that..." (Maria)

"...more about mastery of the material, lack of self-confidence, or feelings of fear of students...." (Vero)

These concerns indicate that mastery of the material is a significant source of anxiety. The prospective teachers feel burdened with the expectation to not only convey information, but also to make it interesting and be able to respond to any questions or challenges from students. This feeling is compounded by their lack of confidence in carrying out their role as teachers.

"Also, I'm a bit embarrassed because I'm afraid there will be students who are better at English than me." (Angel)

In addition, this anxiety is triggered by feelings of shame or fear of being judged by students, especially if there are students who have better English skills than their teachers. This feeling, as expressed by Angel (pseudonym), indicates the existence of internal pressure that triggers concerns that their competence will be questioned by students can reduce their level of self-confidence.

Unexpected questions from students

Unexpected questions from students also turns out to be one of the causes of teaching anxiety felt by pre-service English teacher. This was revealed by Vero, who stated:

"The teaching anxiety that I experienced at that time was the fear of not being able to answer questions from students which made me most anxious. because as a teacher, if we don't master the material, students will think that the teacher is incompetent." (Vero)

This statement clearly showed that the fear of interacting with students and the inability to respond to spontaneous questions from students are triggers of anxiety. There is great pressure on prospective teachers to appear competent and knowledgeable in front of students, because they believe that failure to answer can damage their professional image and credibility in front of students.

Supervisor observation

In addition, teaching anxiety is also triggered by observations from supervisors. This causes feelings of anxiety, nervousness, and tension felt by pre-service English teachers. This observation puts additional pressure on them. This statement is supported by Maria (pseudonym).

"Then the third sources is because there are observations from Malay lecturers, UITM lecturers. They did an observation to observe us while teaching in class. So, I felt nervous again." (Maria)

It shows that observation from the supervisor is an external factor triggered anxiety. In the middle of the learning process, pre-service teachers usually start to feel enjoy. However, the arrival of the supervisor can trigger feelings of tension and nervousness. As conveyed by Angel (pseudonym).

"For example, in the middle of explaining the material, suddenly the supervisor comes. So I, who was not tense at first, became more tense." (Angel)

This statement also shows that the presence of a supervisor during the teaching process, although intended to observe, is actually a significant anxiety trigger for prospective teachers. The pressure to perform perfectly under supervision can disrupt their concentration, change their mood from calm to tense, and even affect their ability to interact naturally and effectively with students.

Finding RQ 3 : The effects of teaching anxiety on teaching performance

Difficulty in preparing lesson plan

One of the effects of teaching anxiety experienced by pre-service English teachers is difficulty in preparing lesson plans. This is supported by the statement made by Vero (pseudonym).

"It's really difficult. It seems like it's difficult to make teaching modules. I think that's what makes us anxious. Because what we have to do, it has to really be in line with the Merdeka curriculum. I think that's what makes us anxious too." (Vero)

This statement shows the effect of teaching anxiety experienced by pre-service English teachers in preparing lesson plans, especially in preparing teaching modules. In addition, the specific demands of the Merdeka Curriculum, with all its implications, seem to be the dominant factor contributing to this anxiety, as they feel they should ensure that every aspect of their lesson plans are fully aligned with the new curriculum framework. In addition, the difficulty of adjusting the lesson plan to the classroom situation is also an effect of teaching anxiety. This is in accordance with statement revealed by Angel (pseudonym).

"Yes, a little bit, especially adjusting the learning plan to the conditions in the classroom, we don't know what it will be like or whether it will not be according to expectations." (Angel)

This statement shows that another effects of teaching anxiety experienced is the adjustment of the learning plan to the real conditions in the classroom. Concerns that implementation in the field may not be in accordance with expectations or initial planning. This shows the importance and adaptability of a teacher in dealing with the dynamics of an unexpected learning environment.

Have a negative effect on the quality of teaching

Furthermore, another effects felt by pre-service English teachers is that it has a negative effect on the quality of teaching during teaching practicums. This was revealed by Maria (pseudonym).

"It really has an effects because we actually have planned what we want to convey, maybe we're already prepared. Later in class, we want to be like this, we want to be like this. If it's blank, it's like when we leave the class, we think, oh, it should have been like this." (Maria)

The statement from Maria (pseudonym) clearly shows the negative effect that pre-service English teachers felt on their teaching quality during their teaching practicum. Maria explained that even though they have a mature lesson plan and careful preparation, the reality in the field often does not match. The feeling of being "blank" or empty when teaching makes them feel that there should be a better way to deliver the material, which leads to regret after the lesson is over. This indicates that there are differences between planning and implementation in the classroom, which has an effect on the performance and teaching satisfaction of prospective teachers. This is also supported by a statement revealed by Vero (pseudonym).

"It really has an effect, especially on the students. I'm afraid that the material we deliver is not optimal. So I feel sorry for the students." (Vero)

Vero's (pseudonym) statement further strengthens this finding by highlighting concerns about the direct effect on students. While Maria felt that there was a differences between planning and implementation that affected her teaching satisfaction, Vero specifically expressed concerns that the material being delivered would not be optimal. This is not only a matter of personal satisfaction for

the teacher, but also has the potential to harm students because they may not receive the learning they should. Thus, these two statements, from both Maria and Vero, collectively indicate that the mismatch between planning and reality in the classroom not only reduces the teaching effectiveness of pre-service teachers, but also has direct implications for the quality of students' understanding and learning experiences.

Disrupting teacher-student interactions

In addition, teaching anxiety not only affects pre-service English teacher performance, but also has a significant effect on the interaction between teachers and students. When a teacher feels anxious, they tend to be more tense and forgetful. This was conveyed by Maria (pseudonym).

"Maybe yes, because like that, it's a bit blank, right, so it's like, what do you want to say, then what do you want to convey?" (Maria)

This statement shows that teaching anxiety makes pre-service English teachers experience obstacles in delivering materials and difficulties in interacting spontaneously and effectively with students in class. This can ultimately disrupt the smoothness of the teaching and learning process and create a less conducive atmosphere. This is supported by a statement revealed by Vero (pseudonym).

"Because when we feel anxious, we panic and don't know what to say. When we create a new topic, it's like our brain is at a standstill. From there, I feel that my interaction with students is decreasing." (Vero)

Both of participants highlighted that teaching anxiety has a significant effect on teacher-student interactions and the smoothness of the learning process. Teaching anxiety can cause a "blank" mind that hinders the teacher's ability to speak and deliver material effectively. This was reinforced by Vero, who felt panic and a dead brain when anxious, especially when having to initiate a new topic. Both showed that anxiety not only disrupt the individual performance of prospective teachers, but also reduces the quality of spontaneous communication in the classroom.

Changes in teacher behavior in the classroom

Another significant effect caused by teaching anxiety felt by pre-service English teachers is the change in teacher behavior in the classroom. This was conveyed by Maria (pseudonym).

"Maybe it seems a bit blank, and the sequence of learning methods seems a bit messy." (Maria)

This statement shows that anxiety can disrupt the flow of thought and spontaneous planning of teachers in learning process, so that the structure and sequence of learning methods that have been prepared become irregular or even forgotten. As a result, the process of delivering material becomes less effective and has the potential to affect students understanding and engagement in class. This is supported by statement revealed by Angel (pseudonym).

"Sometimes I often make mistakes with words or pronunciation, like when I'm nervous, I stay quiet first before I speak, so for example, if I'm in a challenging situation, I tend to be stiff like that." (Angel)

The statements of both participants show how teaching anxiety not only disrupts the flow of thought, but also triggers changes in teacher behavior in the classroom that have the potential to

hinder the learning process, such as word or pronunciation errors that make pre-service teachers tense. In addition, this can also create a less than optimal learning environment. This situation hinders communication and makes it difficult for teachers to build an interactive and comfortable classroom atmosphere, which in the end can hinder the overall student learning process.

Dissatisfaction with performance

On the other hand, another effect of teaching anxiety felt by pre-service English teachers is dissatisfaction with their teaching performance. This is often felt when learning activities was finished. This was conveyed by Vero (pseudonym).

"...it affects, so I'm not satisfied with my performance, I blame myself more. So many thoughts come up more regrets and I also feel like I'm not doing my best." (Vero)

This statements shows that anxiety not only interferes the teaching performance, but also triggers negative reflection and self-blame after teaching. This feeling of dissatisfaction was accompanied by various thoughts of regret and the belief that they are not giving their best.

"Yes, because I think it would be better if I didn't feel that anxiety." (Maria)

Both participants expressed that teaching anxiety not only interferes the teaching performance but also triggers profound negative psychological effects afterwards. Other participants reinforce the idea that these pre-service teachers are well aware of the negative effects of anxiety and desire a teaching environment free from such pressure. Other participants reinforced the idea that these pre-service teachers were well aware of the negative effect of anxiety and expect a better teaching environment without pressure.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the level, causes, and effects of teaching anxiety experienced by pre-service English teachers during their teaching practicum. The findings revealed that the majority of participants experienced teaching anxiety at a moderate level ($\bar{x} = 2.85$). While this is not considered extreme, it still suggests the presence of significant psychological pressure that may affect their teaching performance. As Gorospe (2022) highlighted, teaching anxiety varies across contexts, and even moderate levels can disrupt the teaching process if left unaddressed. Similarly, Solanon and Jose (2025) found that teaching anxiety often falls in the moderate range, but persistent anxiety can effect teacher confidence and long-term instructional quality. These results emphasize the importance of providing psychological and pedagogical support to pre-service teachers to help them adapt during the practicum period.

The sources of teaching anxiety identified in this study include lack of teaching experience, low self-confidence, inadequate mastery of teaching material, fear of unexpected student questions, and anxiety due to supervisor observation. These findings align with Charisma and Nuralasari (2020), who reported that limited teaching exposure contributes significantly to anxiety levels. Pre-service teachers often feel unprepared to face real classroom challenges, leading to nervousness and a fear of underperformance. Similarly, Access et al. (2023) noted that a lack of self-confidence and insufficient mastery of material are the main factors that trigger anxiety among EFL pre-service teachers. Without a strong foundation, these individuals may struggle to deliver lessons confidently and effectively.

In addition, the sources of anxiety reported by participants was the fear of being unable to respond to unexpected questions from students. This reflects a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical readiness. Pasaribu and Lestari (2023) pointed out that such fear is rooted in the

possibility of making mistakes in front of students, which can threaten a teacher's perceived competence. Moreover, this fear not only affects momentary teaching performance but may also diminish long-term confidence. Teachers are required to be adaptive and responsive; hence, anxiety in these moments can hinder spontaneity and effective communication.

Additionally, supervisor observation during practicum sessions emerged as a major contributor to anxiety. Many pre-service teachers expressed discomfort about being evaluated and feared negative assessments. This is consistent with Sari and Anwar (2021), who found that performance anxiety often stems from supervisory feedback, which may be perceived as judgmental. Aydın (2021) also emphasized that the pressure to perform perfectly under supervision can lead to sub-optimal teaching behaviors. These findings underline the need for constructive and supportive mentoring approaches during practicum periods to reduce anxiety and encourage reflective growth rather than fear of failure.

In terms of performance, teaching anxiety was found to negatively affect several aspects of the teaching process, such as lesson planning, classroom management, instructional delivery, and teacher-student interactions. Alamri (2018) reported that anxiety can hinder a teacher's ability to choose appropriate teaching strategies, while Aydın (2021) found that it can disrupt overall classroom effectiveness. Anxiety can also alter behavior, such as avoiding eye contact or relying on passive teaching methods, which weakens student engagement (Access et al., 2023). These behavioral changes can diminish classroom rapport and create a rigid, less adaptive learning environment, ultimately impacting student learning outcomes.

Finally, teaching anxiety also led to self-dissatisfaction among pre-service teachers. Many participants reported feelings of regret and inadequacy following teaching sessions they perceived as unsuccessful. This aligns with Aydın's (2021) findings that anxiety affects not only instructional performance but also psychological well-being and job satisfaction. Interestingly, the study highlighted the potential role of peer feedback in microteaching sessions as a tool to reduce anxiety. Reflecting on peer suggestions can serve as self-evaluation, fostering increased competence and emotional resilience. Therefore, integrating structured peer feedback into teacher education programs may be an effective pedagogical intervention to prepare pre-service teachers more thoroughly for classroom realities. The discussion should explore the significance of the results of the work, not repeat them. A combined Results and Discussion section is often appropriate. Avoid extensive citations and discussion of published literature.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that the overall teaching anxiety level among pre-service English teachers during teaching practicum was at a moderate level ($\bar{x} = 2.85$). Although not extreme, this level of anxiety still reflects significant psychological tension that pre-service teachers must manage during classroom teaching. Their anxiety was not caused by a single dominant factor but rather a combination of several interrelated challenges. Among these, the lack of teaching experience emerged as the most influential source, suggesting that limited exposure to classroom situations makes them feel underprepared and uncertain. This finding highlights the importance of early and repeated classroom experiences during teacher education programs.

The interview findings further reinforced the quantitative data, revealing key sources of anxiety including lack of teaching experience, low self-confidence, poor mastery of teaching material, fear of unexpected student questions, and pressure from supervisor observation. These factors created a compounded sense of stress, often making pre-service teachers feel overwhelmed and doubtful of their competence. Each of these factors interacted with one another, increasing the level of anxiety and reducing their emotional readiness to teach. The presence of a supervisor, in particular, made them feel closely scrutinized, which further intensified their nervousness during

practicum sessions. Such insights confirm that teaching anxiety is a multidimensional issue requiring comprehensive support strategies.

In terms of its impact, teaching anxiety was found to hinder teaching performance. Pre-service teachers reported difficulties in planning lessons due to constant worry and self-doubt. This also affects the quality of their teaching, as they sometimes struggle to deliver material clearly and manage the class effectively. Teacher-student interactions are also negatively affected, which can lead to an uncomfortable classroom atmosphere. In addition, teaching anxiety causes behavioral changes, such as forgetting the order of the lesson or mispronouncing words, which disrupts teaching and learning activities.

Ultimately, the presence of anxiety resulted in dissatisfaction with their teaching performance. Many pre-service teachers expressed regret and frustration over not being able to perform at their best. This sense of underachievement can undermine their self-efficacy and motivation in future teaching roles. The findings suggest the need for teacher education programs to incorporate targeted interventions, such as peer feedback and anxiety management training, to help pre-service teachers better cope with the emotional demands of practicum. By doing so, teacher candidates can enter the classroom with stronger confidence, preparedness, and resilience.

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