

The Development and Validation of the Public Speaking Threats Questionnaire (PSTQ)

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Abstract

Public speaking is a frequent recurrent task in both occupational and educational settings. It is however a situation that often elicits worries, concerns, apprehensions, anxieties, and in extreme cases, fear, panic, and avoidance. The purpose of the present study was to develop and validate a self-report instrument that assesses sources of threat related to public speaking. Relevant literature and the author's applied work were used to generate items for the instrument. Three studies were carried out to assess the content and validity of the Public Speaking Threats Questionnaire (PSTQ), using three independent samples. Study 1 focused on item development of the PSTQ, resulting in a 3-factor model consisting of physiological arousal, self-perceptions, and external judgements. Utilising Bayesian structural equation modeling (BSEM) to test the factor structure, results revealed a good model fit of a 26-item from a sample of 248 adults ($M_{\text{age}} = 33.54$, $SD = 7.89$). Study 2 further validated a lightly revised model (27 items) using BSEM with a larger, more heterogeneous sample ($n = 709$; $M_{\text{age}} = 38.97$, $SD = 12.33$). Study 3 assessed test-retest reliability and predictive validity using a sample from a UK university (results coming in November). Evidence of construct stability and criterion validity of the PSTQ is presented, with all subscale scores correlating significantly with existing anxiety and fear measures. The valid PSTQ is expected to significantly enhance and streamline current methodologies for the assessment and treatment of fear and anxiety related to public speaking. Practical applications and directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: public speaking anxiety, fear of public speaking