

Design and Testing of a Model of the Effect of Social Situation Appraisal on Social Anxiety in Female University Students with the Mediating Role of Safety Behaviors and Social Beliefs and Thoughts

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R e v i e w e r s

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the paragraph on safety behaviors, the sentence “Although these behaviors may provide short-term relief, they ultimately reinforce anxiety...” is accurate; however, the authors do not discuss whether safety behaviors are conceptualized as state-dependent or trait-like in this model. This ambiguity affects interpretation of mediation pathways and should be clarified.

The paragraph introducing “dysfunctional social beliefs and thoughts” lacks a precise distinction between automatic thoughts, schemas, and beliefs. The authors should provide a more rigorous conceptual delineation, particularly since the STABS instrument is used, which operationalizes specific subdimensions.

In the paragraph “Recent research has increasingly focused on the mediating mechanisms...”, the discussion of mediation is broad but not sufficiently tied to the proposed model. The authors should explicitly articulate their hypothesized mediation pathways (e.g., appraisal → beliefs → anxiety; appraisal → safety behaviors → anxiety) before presenting the aim.

The sentence “the initial model did not demonstrate an adequate fit” in the model evaluation section is appropriate; however, the subsequent decision to add error covariances is not theoretically justified. The authors must explain why these modifications are conceptually defensible rather than purely data-driven.

In Table 3, the improvement from RMSEA = 0.11 to 0.07 is substantial, yet no cross-validation or model comparison is provided. The authors should address potential overfitting resulting from post-hoc modifications.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The final paragraph of the Introduction states “there remains a need for integrative models...” but does not clearly identify the specific gap in prior literature. The authors should explicitly state what previous models failed to include or test simultaneously, thereby strengthening the study’s novelty claim.

In the Methods section under “Study Design and Participants”, the use of convenience sampling combined with structural equation modeling raises concerns about representativeness. The authors should justify the adequacy of this sampling strategy for SEM, particularly given the implications for external validity.

The sentence “Exclusion criteria included the presence of any psychological disorder other than social anxiety...” raises methodological concerns because it is unclear how such diagnoses were assessed. Without structured clinical interviews or validated screening tools, this criterion may not have been reliably enforced.

The data collection procedure paragraph describes distribution via “email, WhatsApp, and Instagram”. This introduces potential sampling bias and non-random participation. The authors should discuss how they mitigated self-selection bias and ensured data quality in an online environment.

In the Measures section, the inclusion of the OASES (stuttering assessment) is conceptually questionable. The sentence “The Overall Assessment of the Speaker’s Experience of Stuttering...” does not align clearly with social anxiety unless explicitly justified. The authors must clarify why this instrument is appropriate or consider removing it.

The reporting of reliability for STABS (“Cronbach’s alpha... was .78”) is notably lower than prior studies. The authors should discuss this discrepancy and its implications for measurement reliability in the current sample.

In the Data Analysis section, the sentence “The bootstrap method was applied...” lacks sufficient detail. The authors should specify the number of bootstrap samples, confidence interval type (bias-corrected or percentile), and criteria for significance.

In the Findings, Table 1 reports VIF values up to 5.08. While below the threshold of 10, values above 5 may still indicate moderate multicollinearity. The authors should provide a more nuanced interpretation rather than stating simply that no multicollinearity exists.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.