

ANXIETY SELF-REPORTS. A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Simplicity and ease of administration have made anxiety self-reports one of the most popular assessment method among researchers and practitioners. Yet the fallibility of human memory and judgment has made this methodology the subject of much scrutiny and criticism. The current review aims to highlight both the advantages and limits of self reports in light of newly developed cognitive models of assessment (see Schwarz, 1999). Evidence suggests that, in order to edit their response to a self report question, participants must first understand it, then search their memory for relevant information, and finally translate their answer into a meaningful response. All these processes can be affected in undesirable ways by such factors as question order, question wording and available response options. The present paper thus discuss the processes that underlie self-reports, reviewing the distinct strength and weaknesses of this technique. Though valuable, anxiety self-report must not be view as the default or most desirable assessment method (as some researchers continue to see it), but rather as one assessment option among many others (i.e. behavioral, physiological, or implicit).

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