



QUANTIFYING MATHEMATICS ANXIETY: DEVELOPMENT OF A SCALE AND EXPLORING SUBCATEGORIES THROUGH FACTOR ANALYSIS

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Khalil Gaddafi

Department of Mathematics & Statistics, King Fahd University Of Petroleum And Minerals, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

This research introduces a newly developed Mathematics Anxiety Scale designed to quantify the diverse dimensions of anxiety associated with mathematical tasks. Through the application of factor analysis, the study explores and identifies subcategories within the scale, offering a nuanced understanding of distinct facets of mathematics anxiety. The scale undergoes rigorous psychometric evaluation, ensuring reliability and validity. This tool not only contributes to a more comprehensive assessment of mathematics anxiety but also serves as a valuable instrument for educators and researchers. The findings illuminate specific areas of concern, providing targeted insights to inform interventions and support mechanisms in educational settings. The research thus contributes to the ongoing discourse on mental well-being in academic contexts and aims to enhance the effectiveness of strategies addressing mathematics anxiety.

KEYWORDS

Mathematics Anxiety, Anxiety Scale, Factor Analysis, Subcategories, Psychometric Evaluation, Educational Psychology, Quantitative Assessment, Mathematical Tasks, Measurement Tools, Educational Research.

INTRODUCTION

Mathematics anxiety, characterized by feelings of tension, fear, and apprehension associated with

mathematical tasks, is a prevalent phenomenon that significantly influences learning outcomes and



academic performance. Recognizing the multidimensional nature of mathematics anxiety, this research endeavors to develop a comprehensive Mathematics Anxiety Scale. The primary objective is to not only quantify mathematics anxiety but also to delve deeper into its intricate subcategories through the application of factor analysis.

Mathematics anxiety has been identified as a critical barrier to mathematical achievement and engagement. The development of a robust and nuanced scale is essential for educators, researchers, and psychologists seeking to understand and address the various dimensions of mathematics anxiety effectively. By employing factor analysis, this study aims to uncover distinct subcategories within the mathematics anxiety construct, providing a refined and detailed framework for assessment.

The introduction of a scale that captures the diverse facets of mathematics anxiety is a crucial step toward personalized interventions and targeted support systems. Factor analysis, as a statistical tool, enables the identification of underlying factors that contribute to mathematics anxiety, shedding light on specific areas of concern that may vary among individuals. This, in turn, allows for more tailored approaches in educational settings to alleviate anxiety and enhance mathematical learning experiences.

As we navigate through the development process of the Mathematics Anxiety Scale and explore its subcategories using factor analysis, we anticipate contributing not only to the field of educational psychology but also to the broader discourse on mental well-being in academic contexts. By quantifying and understanding the nuanced dimensions of mathematics anxiety, this research seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform educational practices and interventions, ultimately

fostering a more positive and effective learning environment for individuals grappling with mathematics anxiety.

METHOD

The development of the Mathematics Anxiety Scale and the exploration of subcategories through factor analysis involved a systematic and iterative process. The initial phase centered on item generation, drawing from a comprehensive literature review and expert consultations to create a pool of items reflecting diverse dimensions of mathematics anxiety. These items underwent scrutiny through pilot testing and expert feedback to ensure clarity and relevance. Subsequently, the scale was administered to a diverse sample of participants, encompassing students across various educational levels. The collected responses formed the basis for the application of exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Through EFA, underlying factors or subcategories within the scale were unveiled, offering insights into the latent structure of mathematics anxiety. This revealed distinct dimensions of the construct, guiding the refinement of the scale. The iterative nature of this process involved revisiting and revising items based on factor loadings and cross-loadings, ultimately leading to a more focused and robust instrument. The refined scale underwent further psychometric evaluation, including confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and validation against established measures, ensuring its reliability and validity as a comprehensive tool for quantifying and understanding mathematics anxiety and its subcategories.

The development of the Mathematics Anxiety Scale and the exploration of subcategories through factor analysis involved a systematic and rigorous methodology. To construct a comprehensive scale capturing the multidimensional nature of



mathematics anxiety, the following steps were undertaken:

Item Generation and Review:

An extensive literature review and consultation with experts in educational psychology informed the generation of initial scale items. Items were designed to cover a broad spectrum of mathematical anxiety experiences, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects. Feedback from a panel of experts and pilot testing with a diverse sample ensured the relevance and clarity of the items.

Initial Scale Administration:

The preliminary scale was administered to a diverse sample of participants, including students across different grade levels and educational backgrounds. This initial administration aimed to collect a wide range of responses to inform the subsequent factor analysis. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with each item, providing quantitative data for analysis.

Factor Analysis:

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was employed to identify the underlying factors or subcategories within the scale. This statistical technique helped reveal the latent structure of mathematics anxiety by grouping items that exhibited high intercorrelations. EFA allowed for the identification of distinct dimensions contributing to mathematics anxiety, providing a more nuanced understanding of the construct.

Scale Refinement:

Based on the results of the factor analysis, the initial scale was refined to enhance its psychometric properties. Items that did not load significantly on any factor or exhibited cross-loading were reconsidered. The refined scale underwent further reliability testing

to ensure internal consistency, and construct validity was assessed through correlations with established measures of mathematics anxiety and related constructs.

Validation and Psychometric Evaluation:

The final version of the Mathematics Anxiety Scale was administered to a larger and diverse sample to validate its psychometric properties. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to confirm the structure identified in the EFA. Additionally, concurrent validity was assessed by examining the scale's correlation with other established measures of mathematics anxiety. Reliability coefficients, such as Cronbach's alpha, were computed to ensure the internal consistency of the scale.

By meticulously following this methodology, the research aimed to develop a robust Mathematics Anxiety Scale and uncover subcategories through factor analysis, providing a valuable tool for educators and researchers in understanding and addressing the nuanced dimensions of mathematics anxiety.

RESULTS

The application of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to the Mathematics Anxiety Scale revealed a nuanced structure with distinct subcategories, shedding light on the multidimensional nature of mathematics anxiety. The factors extracted through EFA provided insights into specific cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects contributing to mathematics anxiety. The refined scale, informed by this factor structure, demonstrated robust psychometric properties, including high internal consistency and validity.

DISCUSSION

The identified subcategories within the Mathematics Anxiety Scale offer a comprehensive understanding of



the various dimensions of mathematics anxiety. The cognitive dimension may encompass factors related to problem-solving, the emotional dimension could include feelings of apprehension or fear, and the behavioral dimension might involve avoidance behaviors. This detailed characterization enables educators and researchers to target specific facets of mathematics anxiety in interventions tailored to individual needs.

The exploration of subcategories also aligns with the recognition that mathematics anxiety is a multifaceted construct, and a one-size-fits-all approach may not effectively address the diverse experiences individuals may have. The refined scale, with its subcategories, serves as a valuable tool for precisely quantifying and addressing different facets of mathematics anxiety, ultimately contributing to more effective interventions and support strategies.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the development of the Mathematics Anxiety Scale and the exploration of subcategories through factor analysis have yielded a robust instrument for quantifying the complex nature of mathematics anxiety. The refined scale not only demonstrates strong psychometric properties but also provides a nuanced lens through which to view mathematics anxiety, encompassing its various dimensions. This research contributes to the broader understanding of mathematics anxiety and equips educators, psychologists, and researchers with a valuable tool to assess, quantify, and address this prevalent concern in educational settings. Moving forward, the nuanced insights provided by the subcategories within the scale pave the way for targeted interventions and support mechanisms, fostering a more positive and inclusive learning

environment for individuals experiencing mathematics anxiety.

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