Chapter XLII
Personal Report of Communication Apprehension

Robert H. Woods, Jr.
Spring Arbor University, USA

BACKGROUND

The personal report of communication apprehension (PRCA-24) (McCroskey, 1982) measures communication apprehension. Communication apprehension (CA) first appeared in James McCroskey's 1970 research note in *Communication Monographs.* Communication apprehension is defined as the level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated (oral) communication encounters. McCroskey was interested in a person's *trait* or dispositional anxieties across all or most communication situations. Recent investigations have expanded CA to include *state-like* communication apprehension, or anxiety associated with particular communication contexts and events.

The 24-item, Likert-type PRCA instrument is the most popular and valid measure of *trait-like* CA. It assesses a person's CA in four separate communication contexts: public, small group, meeting, and interpersonal. Each of these contexts is represented by six items. In filling out the form, an individual indicates the level of anxiety he or she feels about participating in various oral communication situations in one of these four contexts.

An individual's CA score on the PRCA-24 is determined by summing responses across all four contexts (24-items). In addition, four generalized-context scores can be calculated (6-items each). Thus, an overall CA score and a separate score for each communication context may be computed.

A "high" range is between 80-120, and a "low" range is between 24-50. A "high" score means that you report more anxiety related to oral communication than most people do. A "low" score means that you report less anxiety related to oral communication than most people do.

The instrument is self-report and takes about 10-15 minutes to complete.

RELIABILITY

Research supports that the PRCA-24 is internally consistent and reliable. Alpha reliability coefficients ranging from .93-.95 have been reported (McCroskey, Beatty, Kearney, & Plax, 1985). Alpha coefficients are only slightly lower for the four communication contexts (McCroskey & Beatty, 1984). Moreover, test-retest coefficients greater than .80 have been reported (Rubin, Graham, &

Mignerey, 1990), indicating that the measure is stable across time.

VALIDITY

Construct and criterion validity of the PRCA-24 have been supported. Scores in each of the four areas (public, small group, meeting, and interpersonal) predicted *state* anxiety experienced in a public speaking context (McCroskey & Beatty, 1984). This finding was replicated for the public speaking component of the PRCA-24 (Beatty, 1987, 1988; Beatty, Balfantz, & Kuwabara, 1989; Beatty & Friedland, 1990). Scores on the public speaking portion of the PRCA-24 have predicted speech duration (Beatty, Forst, & Stewart, 1986) and avoidance/withdrawal behavior (Beatty, 1987). Students with high CA who anticipated interaction reported lower recall of lecture material than did those not anticipating social interaction (Booth-Butterfield, 1988).

Finally, PRCA-24 total scores are negatively correlated (-.70) with assertiveness (McCroskey, et al., 1985).

COMMENTS

Other instruments have been developed to measure communication apprehension. Many of these instruments are similar to the PRCA-24. For example, a popular alternative to the PRCA-24 is the communication anxiety inventory (CAI) (Booth-Butterfield & Gould, 1986). The CAI includes two separate scales designed to measure trait and state CA. The CAI assesses an individual's predispositions to experience anxiety in three contexts: interpersonal, small groups, and public speaking. The PRCA-24 is recommended as a way to assess trait-like CA, given its high reliability and validity.

LOCATION

The PRCA-24 may be completed online at http://www.wadsworth.com/communication_d/templates/student_resources/053456223X_hamilton/survey/prca.html. The PRCA-24 instrument is launched in a new window.

A welcome page appears that gives users two options. By selecting the first option, users can respond to the 24-item instrument and receive a personal report assessment of their CA. This option also allows them to e-mail the results to themselves and their instructors. Finally, by selecting the first option, individual responses are anonymously entered into a database of responses of all users who have visited the site. The second option allows the user to view how all individuals completing the PRCA-24 at this site have responded.

Clicking on the first option described above opens another page that includes the 24-item PRCA survey. Before answering the 24 questions, users must indicate gender and select a location from which they are taking the survey (one of the 50 states or "outside the United States"). Students may then answer each of the 24 questions by clicking one of five Likert-style serial button options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

At the end of the survey, users click on "Submit My Data." The data will only be submitted if all questions have been answered. If any item, including the demographic questions (gender and location), have not been answered, a notice in red font will appear, just below the "Submit My Data" button, directing the user to complete the missing item(s).

The results are reported on a separate page in table format according to each of the four contexts: public, small group, meeting, and interpersonal. An overall CA score is also provided. A brief explanation of subscale and overall scores is provided just below the table. A place for Student Name/e-mail and Faculty Name/e-mail is provided just above the table of results.