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Perceptions and Performance of Working Memory: Insights into Test Anxiety

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Test anxiety is a common phenomenon that can be detrimental to cognitive performance, academic achievement, and mental health. One mechanism consistently identified as playing a role in such deficits is working memory. While many studies have investigated the relationship between working memory and test anxiety, approaches to measuring working memory have varied between using assorted standardized behavioural measures and self-report inventories. While self-report inventories are often found to be valid, there is some evidence suggesting that subjective appraisal of functioning might not be accurate in all contexts. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to determine the extent that self-appraisal of working memory predicted test anxiety over performance on working memory tasks. To achieve this objective, self-reported working memory was compared with scores on behavioural assessments and evaluated in relation to test anxiety. While self-appraisal of working memory was predictive of test anxiety, working memory performance was not a significant predictor of test anxiety. Results of this study may underscore the necessity to continue to clarify the relationship between test anxiety and different modalities of working memory assessment, as it has relevance for both the field of test anxiety research and application in clinical and educational settings. Future studies in this area may contribute to the development of interventions support student academic success and general well-being.