

# Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Writing and Public Speaking Anxieties

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**Objectives:** Students and professionals who suffer from communication anxiety may have all of the skills necessary to be excellent communicators, but unable to communicate effectively as they struggle with that anxiety. Guided by the Instructional Beliefs Model, the purpose of this study is to evaluate emotional intelligence (EQ), a developable skill, as an indirect influence of writing and presentation anxieties.

**Methods:** An online survey was disseminated to 224 business majors. Each were assessed on the dimensions of EQ, self-efficacy, writing apprehension, and public speaking anxiety.

**Results:** The data supported a model in which the EQ dimensions of well-being and self-control, which are the dimensions of EQ that are oriented toward one's own emotions, indirectly influence students' public speaking anxiety through the mediation of self-efficacy. However, while all EQ dimensions were negatively correlated with writing apprehension, none appear to be an indirect influence of it.

**Conclusions:** The findings of this study indicate that elevating an individual's well-being and self-control can ultimately give them the tools they need to manage their anxiety when giving presentations. Through instructional strategies known to enhance these characteristics, business educators and organizational trainers should be able to assist individuals in giving better presentations.

**Key Words:** Communication Anxiety, Writing, Public Speaking, Emotional Intelligence (EQ), Self-Efficacy

## Introduction

Communication skills are critical for students of all majors if they wish to be successful in their careers (Gaffney, 2013). Yet anxiety about a particular method of communication can pre-

vent students and young professionals from demonstrating the competence they truly have in communication (Prentiss & Violanti, 2019). Anxiety hinders performance through its impact on working memory (Kelly, Rice, Wyatt, Ducking, & Denton, 2015). Working memory is the part of the human brain that processes *in the moment* information and functions. That means it is the same resource required to compose a message, solve a math problem, or manage anxiety symptoms (Miller & Bichsel, 2004). Because of this, the more anxiety symptoms someone has, the more working memory must be devoted to managing its symptoms, leaving less working memory to perform a task. For this reason, if educators do not help students manage their communication anxieties, it can prevent them from performing

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well in the classroom and future careers.

Two contexts in which communication anxieties can be particularly detrimental for future and current professionals is writing apprehension and public speaking anxiety. Writing and making presentations are an inevitable and continuous part of professional careers (Bodie, 2010; Kelly & Gaytan, 2020). Because of this, business educators must strive to help students manage these communication anxieties before they leave the classroom. While the majority of inoculation research has focused on learning activity, instructional communication, or therapeutic interventions for improving these anxieties (e.g., Kelly & Gaytan, 2020; Lindner et al., 2019), this paper will examine pre-existing student characteristics that may be developed. Specifically, this paper will test a path model in which students' emotional intelligence (EQ) is expected to influence their communication anxieties through the mediation of self-efficacy.

## Literature Review

### Emotional Intelligence

EQ is one's ability to comprehend the emotions of others and oneself, control one's own emotions, and also strategically use that emotional acumen to influence others (Bar-On, 2006). Petrides et al. (2016) explains that EQ has four dimensions: well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability. Well-being is composed of one's self-confidence in their ability to manage their emotions and default to happy or optimistic attitudes. Self-control is one's ability to manage their own emotions, stress, and impulses. Emotionality is the ability to perceive the emotions of others and express or accept empathy. Lastly, sociability is the ability to perceive and adapt to the emotions of others.

Individuals who have higher EQ tend to have fewer social anxieties than those with low EQ (Abdollahi & Abu Talib, 2016). Individuals with higher EQ are also perceived to be more socially competent (Jordan & Troth, 2011). When focusing on a task, high EQ gives one the ability to be more productive and successful because they can regulate their own emotions rather than becoming distracted by them (Serrat, 2017).

In the workplace, individuals who have strong EQ are perceived to be more effective communicators by their colleagues (Moon & Hur, 2011). Workplace leaders, especially those who are successful in a global environment, tend to be more successful if they have higher EQ (Colfax, Rivera, & Perez, 2010). These leaders are able to adapt their communication styles to the social needs of their subordinates, leading to increased job satisfaction for those subordinates (Matthew & Gupta, 2015). Workers with high EQ also tend to have less anxiety about conducting business with colleagues of another culture (Fall,

Kelly, Macdonald, Primm, & Holmes, 2013), which has become increasingly essential in today's global economy.

Though individuals are born with a natural baseline of EQ (Petrides et al., 2016), EQ is a skill that can be developed across a lifetime (Colfax et al., 2010). A variety of tested pedagogical activities have been introduced to increase students' EQ which involve assessment (Kelly & Claus, 2015), simulations (Mabry, 2011), service learning (Cicilia, Musa, Walanda, Tangge, & Jamhari, 2017), and EQ theory exposure (Myers & Tucker, 2005).

### Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief of how capable they are at planning and executing courses of action successfully (Artino, 2012). In Bandura's (1986) seminal writing on self-efficacy, he explains that educators' understanding student self-efficacy is critical because students will be reluctant to even attempt learning material in a subject in which they do not feel they have some efficacy. As such, without a baseline of self-efficacy in a subject, students will avoid learning and practicing skills related to the subject (Schunk, 2003).

Students' motivation and learning in the classroom are strongly predicted by their self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 2000). Students with higher self-efficacy are more likely to participate in class discussions and activities than students with low self-efficacy (Johnson & Kelly, 2020). Further, student self-efficacy strongly predicts their academic resilience, that is, their willingness to continue attempting to learn even if they have found the task to be difficult (Cassidy, 2015). Students' self-efficacy also predicts how engaged they will be with their instructor (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). LaBelle, Martin, and Weber (2013) found that students' self-efficacy was a direct influence of whether students engaged in rhetorical dissent, which is asking critical questions about assignments, course materials, and grading policies that students must understand to perform optimally.

In a study of business communication students, Autman and Kelly (2017) found a small negative correlation between students' self-efficacy and their writing apprehension. Mascle (2013) found that many business majors struggle to transfer their writing skills into a writing context, and while additional writing training was not useful in fixing their writing apprehension, enhancing their self-efficacy was useful.

### Communication Anxieties

Anxiety about communication can be induced by the actual act of communicating or by simply anticipating that communication will happen (McCroskey, 1982). The symptoms of communication anxieties can be both physical and physiological,

ranging from sweating palms and a racing heart to one's mind going blank (Prentiss & Violanti, 2019). Communication anxieties can happen in any communication context, but are most frequently studied in public speaking, meeting, interpersonal and group contexts (Croucher et al., 2019). This study will focus on anxieties as they manifest in writing and public speaking.

### *Writing Apprehension*

Writing apprehension, though it is traditionally called an *apprehension* rather than *anxiety* in the literature, is the communication anxiety specific to writing tasks (Autman & Kelly, 2017). Writing apprehension is the angst some individuals feel when forced to write that results in lower motivation, confidence, and overall skill in writing (Daly & Miller, 1975; Limpo, 2018). It is a situational form of communication apprehension induced by the need to transmit a message or record information whether the channel is pencil and paper or electronic (Prentiss & Violanti, 2019).

For college students, writing apprehension is typically most pronounced when their writing is going to be assessed (Daly & Miller, 1975). Many college students suffer from writing apprehension and as a result avoid writing training and assignments (Ahrens, Meyers, Irlbeck, Burris, & Roach, 2016). Students are not apprehensive about writing because they are bad at writing though; rather, writing apprehension causes many students who are perfectly capable of being excellent writers to struggle to perform well as their apprehension becomes a barrier (Autman & Kelly, 2017).

Instructors can inoculate students against writing apprehension while they are in the college classroom. High instructor clarity and nonverbal immediacy behaviors both lead to a reduction of student writing apprehension (Kelly & Gaytan, 2020). Creating assignments that allow students to practice the entire writing process from conception, to writing, to editing, to reflecting also helps students manage their writing apprehension over the course of a semester (Fischer et al., 2017). Unfortunately, there is no evidence to indicate that these instructor inoculations for writing apprehension continue to help students once they leave the classroom and enter the workplace. Additionally, the nonverbal immediate behaviors studied in the face-to-face classroom can only be shared with online students in very rich communication channels (Kelly & Gaytan, 2020). The online environment limits channel richness, leaving professors with one less tool for helping students manage their writing anxiety in the online environment, particularly in asynchronous courses.

### *Public Speaking Anxiety*

Public speaking anxiety is a situational type of communication

apprehension brought on by being forced to speak before an audience (McCroskey, 1982), more recently defined as anxiety one feels when giving a presentation (Prentiss & Violanti, 2019). Public speaking anxiety is the most common form of communication apprehension, with many people fearing public speaking more than death itself (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012). Yet, presentations are an essential part of both university studies and professional careers (Bodie, 2010).

Like writing apprehension, public speaking anxiety can improve over time through practice (Bodie, 2010). However, the effects of public speaking anxiety can be even more detrimental on performance than writing apprehension because public speaking is assessed in the moment as speakers are struggling against the physiological symptoms of anxiety such as a racing heart, sweat, and/or shaking hands, whereas with writing individuals at least have the opportunity to edit for mistakes before their messages are evaluated. Many individuals experience public speaking anxiety just through thinking about an anticipated presentation, long before a presentation actually begins (Homer, Deeprose, & Andrade, 2016; McCroskey, 1982).

Early efforts to address students' public speaking anxiety focused on repeated practice (Finn, Sawyer, & Behnke, 2009). Today, the standard of immersion therapy in the form of continuous forced practice has not changed except that it has been expanded beyond live audiences to include virtual reality (Harris, Kemmerling, & North, 2002). Students can also benefit from discussing their public speaking anxiety as they learn they are not alone and others are sympathetic rather than judgmental in regard to their anxiety (Bodie, 2010).

### **Rationale**

Previous research has found positive relationships between global EQ scores and self-efficacy (e.g., Hen & Goroshit, 2014; Salami, 2010). Consistent with the findings of such studies, this study expects to find positive relationships between EQ and self-efficacy, but will examine EQ in its individual subdimensions for a more nuanced understanding of EQ. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- Hypothesis 1: Emotionality will be positively correlated with self-efficacy.
- Hypothesis 2: Sociability will be positively correlated with self-efficacy.
- Hypothesis 3: Well-being will be positively correlated with self-efficacy.
- Hypothesis 4: Self-control will be positively correlated with self-efficacy.

Also consistent with previous literature (e.g., Autman & Kelly, 2017; Lucchetti, Phipps, & Behnke, 2003), it is expected that

self-efficacy will be negatively related to communication anxieties. Specifically, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- Hypothesis 5: Self-efficacy will be negatively correlated with writing apprehension.
- Hypothesis 6: Self-efficacy will be negatively correlated with public speaking anxiety.

Although these relationships have been observed in previous literature (albeit the EQ relationships in a less nuanced way), it is not clear whether these relationships are spurious or relationships of influence.

The Instructional Beliefs Model (IBM) explains that student characteristics indirectly affect their learning outcomes, including anxieties, through the mediation of students' beliefs about their abilities (Weber, Martin, & Myers, 2011). In other words, the IBM explains that student characteristics (e.g., EQ) directly influence their beliefs about their own abilities (e.g., self-efficacy), and that those beliefs about their abilities then in turn influence their learning outcomes (e.g., public speaking anxiety and writing apprehension). Therefore, it is predicted, in alignment with the IBM, that these six hypotheses form a path model in which students' EQ influences their self-efficacy, which in turn influences their communication anxieties. The proposed model is depicted in Figure 1.

## Method

### Participants

In total, 224 business majors participated in this study. The majors of participants broke down as follows: 27 accounting, 8 business analytics, 25 business education, 36 business information technology/systems, 26 economics, 6 finance, 23 market-

ing, 51 management, and 22 supply chain. Rank broke down as follows: 34 freshmen, 40 sophomores, 68 juniors, 60 seniors, and 22 graduate students. There were 90 participants who identified as biologically male, 133 who identified as biologically female, and none who identified as other. The average age of the participants was 23.17 ( $SD = 6.18$ ) years old.

### Procedure

The researchers emailed personal contacts who they knew were teaching business courses during the fall 2019 semester and asked them to share a link to an online questionnaire with their students. This link directed students to an informed consent, which stated that completion of the questionnaire would require approximately 10 minutes and that no identifying information would be recorded. If participants chose to accept the informed consent, their browser was redirected to the questionnaire. This method of solicitation resulted in 144 participants. Qualtrics was then enlisted to share the link with 80 additional business majors.

### Instruments

#### Emotional Intelligence

EQ was measured through Petrides and Furnham's (2006) Trait EQ Questionnaire–Short Form. This measure includes 30 items Likert-type with a 7-point response scale ranging from *Disagree Strongly* to *Agree Strongly*. Petrides and Furnham (2006) report that this condensed measure yielded evidence of content validity.

#### Self-Efficacy

Autman and Kelly's (2017) self-efficacy measure was used, which was refined in a sample of business majors from

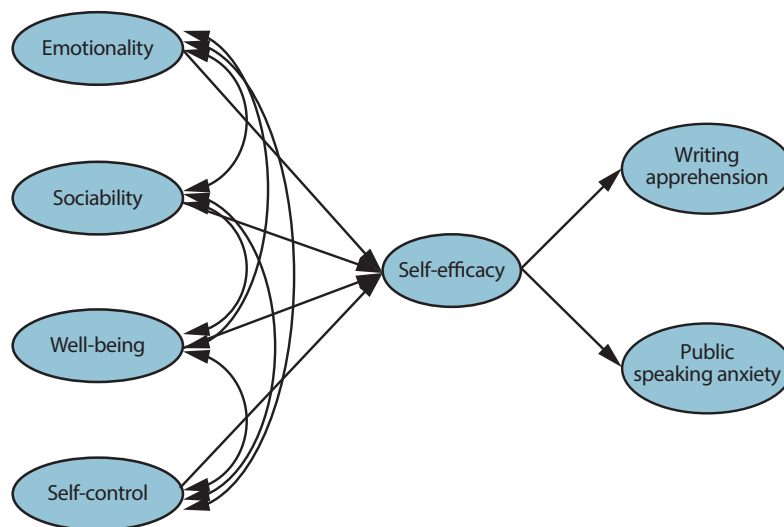


Figure 1. Proposed model.

Schwarzer and Jerusalem's (1995) measure. It includes seven Likert-type items with a 7-point response scale ranging from *Disagree Strongly* to *Agree Strongly*. Autman and Kelly (2017) reported that the measure showed evidence of content and concurrent validity.

### Writing Apprehension

Writing apprehension was assessed through Autman and Kelly's (2017) writing apprehension measure. This measure was constructed with a validity portfolio among business students. It is composed of seven Likert-type items with a 7-point response scale ranging from *Disagree Strongly* to *Agree Strongly*. The published validity portfolio showed evidence of content and concurrent validity (Autman & Kelly, 2017).

### Public Speaking Anxiety

Public Speaking Anxiety was measured through McCroskey's (1982) submeasure of the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA). Croucher et al. (2019) recently cautioned scholars that the global fit of the PRCA no longer holds, but that submeasures, such as the public speaking anxiety submeasure, may still work among today's college students with respecification. The measure included six Likert-type items with a 7-point response scale ranging from *Disagree Strongly* to *Agree Strongly*.

## Results

### Measurement Models

Before testing any of the hypotheses, confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were run on each of the measurement models to scrutinize for potentially problematic items that contribute to measure misfit. Items that caused a statistically significant amount of residual error on other items in the measure were removed. The self-efficacy and writing apprehension measures yielded no problematic items. Public speaking anxiety lost two items through the CFA process, as predicted by Croucher et al. (2019). The EQ submeasures each lost at least one item: well-be-

ing lost one item, self-control lost two items, emotionality lost two items, and sociability lost two items. The fit statistics for the original and respecified measurement models can be seen in Table 1, and descriptive statistics for the final measures are listed in Table 2.

An overview of sample homogeneity then conducted. The mean scores for each variable are broken down by student major, sex, and rank in Table 3. One-way ANOVAs revealed no statistically significant difference between groups for emotionality ( $F(8, 215) = 1.15, p = .33$ ), self-control ( $F(8, 215) = 1.26, p = .27$ ), well-being ( $F(8, 215) = 0.77, p = .63$ ), sociability ( $F(8, 215) = .80, p = .61$ ), self-efficacy ( $F(8, 215) = 1.29, p = .25$ ), or writing apprehension ( $F(8, 215) = 1.75, p = .09$ ). There was minor heterogeneity for public speaking anxiety as a statistically significant difference was found between only the 8 business analytics majors and 36 business information technology/information systems majors ( $F(8, 215) = 2.45, p = .02$ ). Independent t-tests revealed no statistically significant differences by gender for any

**Table 1.** Fit statistics of confirmatory factor analyses

Variable	GFI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Original				
Self-efficacy	0.88	0.90	0.17	0.06
Writing apprehension	0.94	0.95	0.13	0.04
Public speaking anxiety	0.72	0.57	0.34	0.20
Emotionality	0.89	0.8	0.14	0.09
Self-control	0.86	0.61	0.21	0.14
Sociability	0.91	0.77	0.17	0.11
Well-being	0.85	0.72	0.25	0.12
Modified				
Public speaking anxiety	0.98	0.98	0.13	0.03
Emotionality	0.96	0.94	0.11	0.05
Self-control	0.98	0.95	0.13	0.05
Sociability	0.99	0.98	0.09	0.03
Well-being	0.98	0.98	0.07	0.04

Note. GFI, goodness-of-fit-index; CFI, comparative fit index; RMSEA, root mean square residual; SRMR, standardized root mean square residual.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics and internal consistency reliability

Variable	Range	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's alpha
Self-efficacy	1.00–7.00	5.38	1.00	-.72	.95	.89
Writing apprehension	1.00–7.00	3.49	1.42	.36	-.24	.89
Public speaking anxiety	1.25–7.00	4.05	1.27	.05	-.51	.89
Emotionality	2.00–7.00	4.66	1.15	.02	-.69	.73
Self-control	1.50–7.00	4.19	1.08	.18	-.23	.64
Sociability	1.75–7.00	4.50	1.12	.001	-.73	.66
Well-being	2.40–7.00	5.18	1.03	-.21	-.76	.66

Note. SD, standard deviation.

**Table 3.** Homogeneity

Subsample	<i>n</i>	Emotionality	Self-control	Well-being	Sociability	Self-efficacy	Public speaking anxiety	Writing apprehension
Accounting	27	4.13	4.04	4.86	4.17	5.33	4.10	4.07
Business analytics	8	4.67	4.06	5.23	4.97	5.39	4.97*	3.38
Business Ed	25	5.03	4.49	5.30	4.69	5.47	4.08	3.85
Business IT/IS	36	4.63	4.46	5.32	4.61	5.43	3.49*	3.12
Economics	26	4.72	4.13	5.24	4.39	5.47	4.56	3.59
Finance	6	4.69	3.89	5.67	4.96	5.98	4.46	4.19
Management	51	4.78	4.30	5.25	4.51	5.04	3.83	3.32
Marketing	23	4.56	4.03	5.03	4.37	5.64	4.30	3.03
Supply chain	22	4.71	3.76	5.04	4.48	5.49	4.08	3.63
Males	90	4.62	4.34	5.15	4.46	5.51	3.75	3.44
Females	134	4.69	4.10	5.21	4.53	5.29	4.25	3.53
Freshmen	34	4.65	4.08	5.19	4.18	5.17	3.80	3.47
Sophomores	40	4.68	4.07	5.05	4.45	5.52	3.98	3.81
Juniors	68	4.56	4.21	5.02	4.47	5.44	4.04	3.38
Seniors	60	4.88	4.39	5.48	4.65	5.39	4.21	3.40
Graduate	22	4.39	4.03	5.11	4.18	5.25	4.14	3.94

Note. \* $p < .05$ .

of the variables: emotionality ( $t(222) = -.44, p = .06$ ), self-control ( $t(222) = 1.64, p = .53$ ), well-being ( $t(222) = -.37, p = .36$ ), sociability ( $t(222) = -.43, p = .61$ ), self-efficacy ( $t(222) = 1.60, p = .72$ ), writing apprehension ( $t(222) = -.51, p = .82$ ), and public speaking anxiety ( $t(222) = -2.92, p = .47$ ). One-way ANOVAs revealed no statistically significant differences by rank: emotionality ( $F(4, 219) = 0.99, p = .41$ ), self-control ( $F(4, 219) = 0.84, p = .50$ ), well-being ( $F(4, 219) = 1.87, p = .12$ ), sociability ( $F(4, 219) = .79, p = .53$ ), self-efficacy ( $F(4, 219) = 0.74, p = .57$ ), writing apprehension ( $F(4, 219) = 0.81, p = .52$ ) and public speaking anxiety ( $F(4, 219) = .63, p = .64$ ). As such, the overview revealed no substantive concerns for heterogeneity among the sample.

### Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 predicted positive relationships between self-efficacy and each of the subdimensions of EQ. The data indicated positive relationships between self-efficacy and well-being (Hypothesis 3) and self-control (Hypothesis 4). However, Hypothesis 1 predicting a positive relationship between self-efficacy and emotionality was not supported. Hypothesis 2 predicting a positive relationship between self-efficacy and sociability was also unsupported. The correlation matrix can be found in Table 4.

Hypotheses 5 and 6 predicted negative relationships between self-efficacy and the communication anxieties of writing apprehension and public speaking anxiety. Hypothesis 6, predicting a negative relationship between self-efficacy and public speaking was supported. However, Hypothesis 5, predicting a negative

**Table 4.** Correlation matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Self-efficacy						
Writing apprehension	.03					
Public speaking anxiety	-.18*	.01				
Emotionality	.04	-.41*	.07			
Self-control	.15*	-.41*	-.16*	.57*		
Sociability	.05	-.29*	.04	.61*	.47*	
Well-being	.35*	-.20*	-.12*	.49*	.36*	.41*

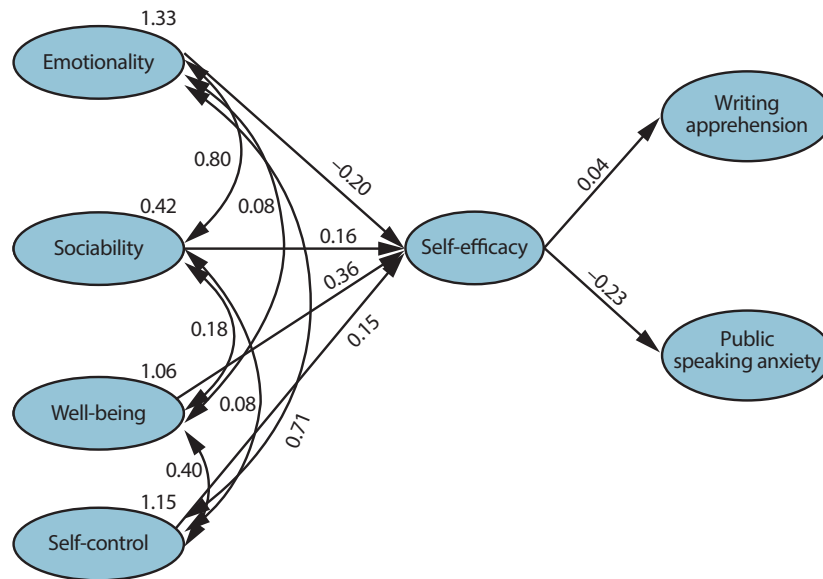
Note. \* $p < .05$ .

relationship between self-efficacy and writing apprehension was inconsistent with the data.

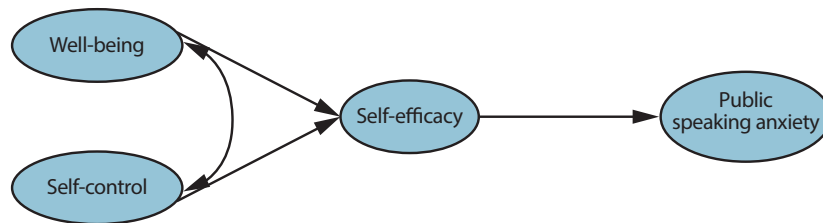
### Model Testing

Before testing, it was anticipated that the hypothesized model depicted in Figure 1 would fail given that three of the hypotheses composing it are unsupported. The model was tested through structural equation modeling using the AMOS maximum likelihood parameter estimation algorithm. The hypothesized model had poor fit: GFI = .92, CFI = .83, RMSEA = .18, and SRMR = .13. The observed model is shown in Figure 2. Unsurprisingly, the model has poor fit.

The model was respecified removing the paths represented by unsupported hypotheses (Figure 3). The respecified model yielded good fit: GFI = .99, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .07, and SRMR = .04. Therefore, the data support the respecified model.



**Figure 2.** Observed model.



**Figure 3.** Supported model.

## Discussion

The results of this study, while not as expected, have interesting implications for research and teaching. To begin, the predicted negative relationship between self-efficacy and writing apprehension was not observed. This is surprising, not just given the predictions of the IBM, but given that previous research has already observed the expected correlation (i.e., Autman & Kelly, 2017). Perhaps this relationship was not observed in the current dataset because students enrolled in a variety of business courses, not specifically business communication as in the Autman and Kelly (2017) study, were solicited. Honicke and Broadbent (2016) found that the relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance is moderated by effort regulation and goal orientations. Therefore, perhaps the relationship between self-efficacy and writing anxiety was not found because these participants represented a variety of business majors who were not required to be currently enrolled in a writing intensive course and may not see writing as a critical part of their current or future success. If so, this means business faculty may need to

do a better job of helping students understand that writing well will be an enduring demand of their anticipated career.

Although the relationship between writing apprehension and public speaking anxiety were not explicitly hypothesized in this study, spurious correlations were predicted through the hypothesized model. It is noteworthy that the data revealed no relationship between these communication anxieties. It is possible that written communication is simply not perceived to be face-threatening like public speaking anxiety. Because written communication is typically evaluated in a mediated way, such that communicators do not see immediate nonverbal judgment of their compositions, that it is potentially not as face-threatening and therefore anxiety inducing. Else, it could be that in this social media rich world in which texting, Tweeting, and Snapping have become norms of writing, the idea that having more focused written communication skills may not be held by the modern college student who actively engages in and is gratified by social media (Rathnayake & Winter, 2018).

Another unexpected finding was that not all of the dimensions of EQ correlated with self-efficacy. Only well-being and

self-control yielded statistically significant correlations with self-efficacy. So, while as expected, well-being and self-control both trend in positive ways with self-efficacy, sociability and emotionality did not. This gives a much more nuanced look at the previously established relationship between EQ and self-efficacy (e.g., Hen & Goroshit, 2014; Salami, 2010) which used global measures of EQ. These results indicate that one's ability to perceive others' emotions (emotionality) and effectively respond to those emotions (sociability) are not related to their beliefs in their own abilities (self-efficacy). As such, it seems that students' EQ dimensions which give them advantages in connecting with others do not affect how competent they feel they are. This leads to a number of questions. Do business students not perceive that being able to affect the emotions of others is an important skill for their preparation as young professionals? For example, do they not perceive that the skill with which they communicate will affect the emotions of others during conflict in the workplace? Else, do they not believe that identifying and effectively responding to the emotions of others is a skill rather than an act of chance? Future research should strive to understand the disconnect between self-efficacy and EQ related to communicating with others.

Consistent with expectations though, one's ability to regulate their emotions towards happiness (well-being) and ability to manage stress (self-control) are positively related to self-efficacy. Also, as anticipated, self-efficacy was negatively related to public speaking anxiety. The data were further consistent with a path model in which well-being and self-control indirectly influence public speaking anxiety through the mediation of self-efficacy. In short, the better students perceive themselves to be at controlling their own feelings, the more confident they feel in their abilities and therefore the less anxiety they feel when giving or anticipating that they will give a presentation.

### Implications for Educators

Individuals who suffer from public speaking anxiety struggle to give strong presentations (McCroskey, 1982; Prentis & Violanti, 2019). When educators or supervisors see consistently weak presentation skills from someone who otherwise reliably produces strong work, public speaking anxiety is likely the reason for this poor presentation performance. By assisting these individuals in overcoming their public speaking anxiety, they will be able to produce presentations that are both more engaging for audience members and effective in information delivery.

The value of path modeling is that it helps scholars find the variables at the beginning of chains of influence. These exogenous variables, the first variables in the chains must be addressed to ultimately influence the variables at the end of the chain.

Therefore, though self-efficacy is the direct influence of students' public speaking anxiety, the results of this study indicate that to help students with their public speaking anxiety, educators must address EQ. However, these interventions cannot focus on improving their perception of others' emotions or global EQ metrics (e.g., Ashkanasy & Dasborough, 2003; Kelly & Claus, 2015). Rather, the indirect influences of public speaking anxiety were well-being and self-control, which deal with students' ability to control their own emotions. Thus, educators who wish to help students with their public speaking anxiety must target these specific dimensions of EQ. As such, business communication professors (or workplace trainers) may benefit their students through engaging in activities to develop EQ (Cicilia et al., 2017; Kelly & Claus, 2015; Mabry, 2011; Myers & Tucker, 2005).

The results for this study also indicate the business majors may not understand the critical role of writing well outside of the business communication classroom. It may be that students have enough confidence in their microblog style of writing that they feel those skills transfer to all forms of writing. Therefore, it is the role of business professors, particularly those in business communication, to emphasize the need to hone writing skills to be successful at work, especially those skills required to write longer documents with well-crafted arguments and transitions that cannot take place in a microblog format.

Further, though more research is needed to confirm this, the results of this study indicate that students may perceive that they are not able, through their own skills, to recognize and influence the emotions of others. As students are trained to be managers that sometimes must have difficult conversations with subordinates, employees who may have to engage in articulated dissent, and coworkers who may have to engage in workplace conflict, business educators must impress on students that the skillfulness in which they communicate can affect the magnitude of the emotional reaction others will have to their communication. Student should also understand that by paying careful attention to the nonverbal cues of others give during communication, they can recognize their emotions. Being mindful of the current and anticipated feelings of other is a learnable, critical communication skill for future professionals. Infusing the business communication curriculum with presentations that include interactivity may help students refine their emotionality and sociability and help them recognize the importance of these skills.

### Limitations

This study was limited in that it failed to collect data on whether students were currently enrolled in a business communication course. As such, it is unable to confirm its suspicions as to why the correlation between self-efficacy and writing apprehension



was different than the Autman and Kelly (2017) findings.

Further, the study was limited by some measurement noise. Consistent with past research on EQ among business students (e.g., Fall et al., 2013), the EQ submeasures yielded low reliability scores. The RMSEA was also slightly elevated for the public speaking anxiety, emotionality, and self-control measures. Therefore, the authors echo the call of Croucher et al. (2019) and Kelly and Westerman (2020) to continue the pursuit of measurement refinement in communication research.

Finally, this study was limited by its use of cross-sectional data. The purpose of this study was to attempt to identify exogenous variables that influence communication anxieties. However, with cross-sectional data it is only possible to conclude that the data fit a pattern consistent with causation rather than truly demonstrate causation.

## Conclusion

This study gives insight into writing apprehension and public speaking anxiety. The data indicate that by training speakers to have better emotional control, business educators and likely workplace trainers can have an impact on their public speaking anxiety so that these individuals can be more effective presenters. The results also showed that while there were moderate correlations between writing apprehension and the dimensions of EQ, that they do not appear to fit a path model with the mediation of self-efficacy as predicted by the IBM. Future research should continue to explore additional writer characteristics that may be bolstered to reduce their writing apprehension.

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