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## CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY & NEUROPSYCHOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Enhanced effects of combined cognitive bias modification and computerised cognitive behaviour therapy on social anxiety

Emma Butler<sup>1</sup>, Sirous Mobini<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Ronald M. Rapee<sup>1</sup>, Bundy Mackintosh<sup>1</sup> and Shirley A. Reynolds<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** This study examines whether combined cognitive bias modification for interpretative biases (CBM-I) and computerised cognitive behaviour therapy (C-CBT) can produce enhanced positive effects on interpretation biases and social anxiety. Forty socially anxious students were randomly assigned into two conditions, an intervention group (positive CBM-I + C-CBT) or an active control (neutral CBM-I + C-CBT). At pre-test, participants completed measures of social anxiety, interpretative bias, cognitive distortions, and social and work adjustment. They were exposed to 6 × 30 min sessions of web-based interventions including three sessions of either positive or neutral CBM-I and three sessions of C-CBT, one session per day. At post-test and two-week follow-up, participants completed the baseline measures. A combined positive CBM-I + C-CBT produced less negative interpretations of ambiguous situations than neutral CBM-I + C-CBT. The results also showed that both positive CBM-I + C-CBT and neutral CBM-I + C-CBT reduced social anxiety and cognitive distortions as well as improving work and social adjustment. However, greater effect sizes were observed in the positive CBM-I + C-CBT condition than the control. This indicates that adding positive CBM-I to C-CBT enhanced the training effects on social anxiety, cognitive distortions, and social and work adjustment compared to the neutral CBM-I + C-CBT condition.

**Subjects:** Cognitive Science; Psychiatry & Clinical Psychology - Adult; Psychological Disorders - Adult

**Keywords:** social anxiety; cognitive bias modification; computerised cognitive behaviour therapy

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Authors have been involved in developing the laboratory-based paradigms in modifying cognitive biases in anxiety over a decade. They have published extensively in the area of cognitive bias modification for anxiety disorders, both from a theoretical perspective and applied research.

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

People with social anxiety tend to interpret ambiguous situations in a negative manner. We developed a computerised treatment i.e. cognitive bias modification for interpretative biases (CBM-I) which aims to modify negative interpretations. We combined CBM-I with another treatment method, i.e. computerised cognitive behaviour therapy (C-CBT) and examined the effects of both CBM-I and C-CBT on social anxiety and negative interpretations. The results showed that combining both treatments produced better treatment outcomes.

# Enhanced Effects Of Combined Cognitive Bias Modification

**Yan Bai**



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