

## Background

- Panic disorder is a debilitating mental health disorder characterized by recurrent panic attacks, fear of future panic attacks, and maladaptive behavioral changes.
- 4.7% of Americans will battle panic disorder in their lifetime, and 27.3% of Americans will experience at least one panic attack.
- Cognitive models of panic disorder emphasize the role of anxiety sensitivity in predicting panic symptoms, but the role of other transdiagnostic variables have not yet been explored.
- It is unclear how thought suppression may fit into cognitive loop models of panic disorder featuring catastrophic thoughts (i.e., misinterpretations of body signals).

## The Current Study

- The purpose of this study was to test the ability of thought suppression to predict panic symptom severity and compare it to other known predictors
- We hypothesized that thought suppression would positively predict panic symptom severity above and beyond other predictors, such that higher thought suppression would predict more severe panic symptoms

## Method

### Procedures

- The data for this analysis was collected as part of a larger study testing the effects of an intervention on anxiety sensitivity, but no significant effects of the manipulation were found, so sub-analyses were conducted assuming moot effects of the manipulation.
- Cross sectional design: Online (Qualtrics survey), consent, self-report measures, debrief, compensation

### Participants

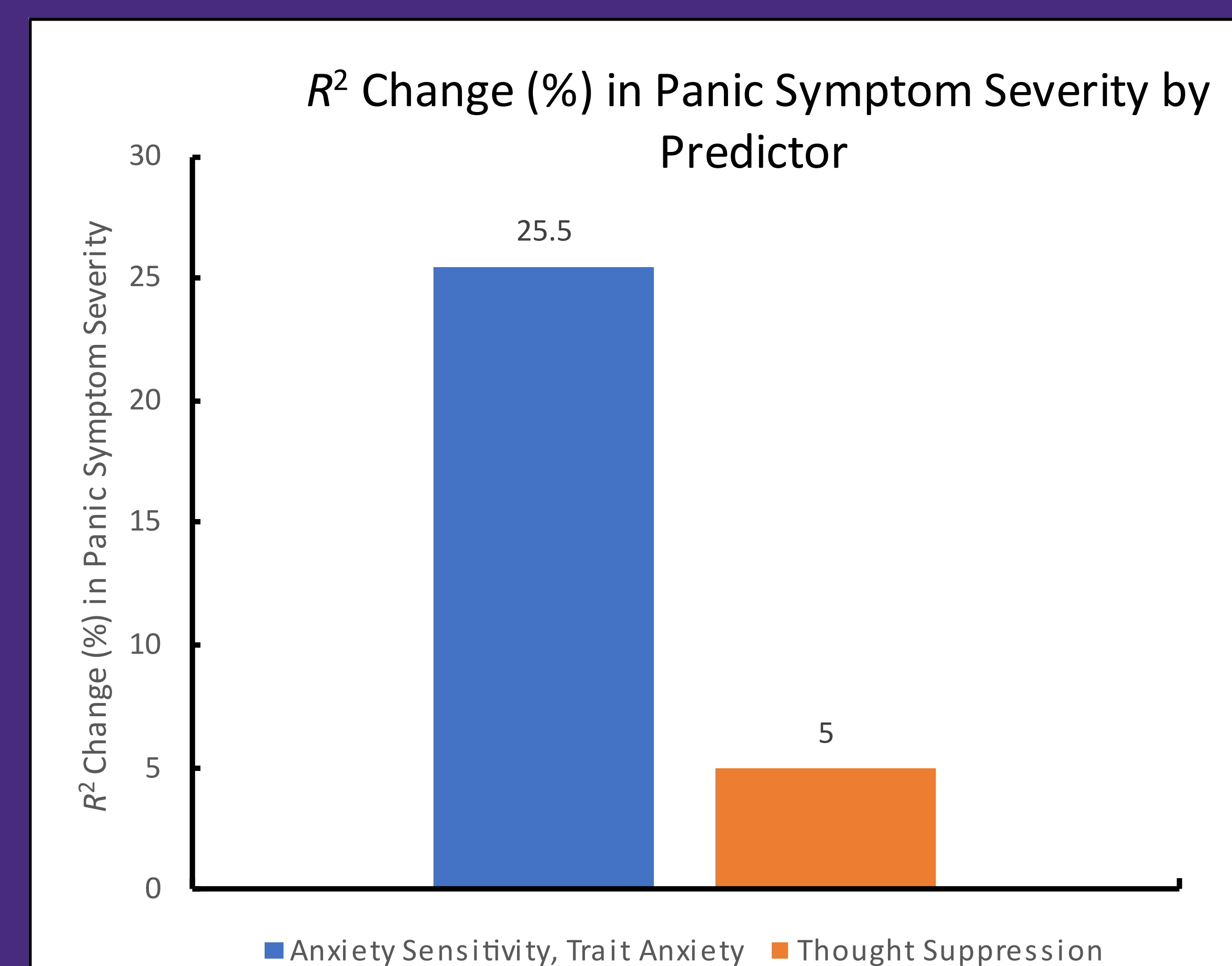
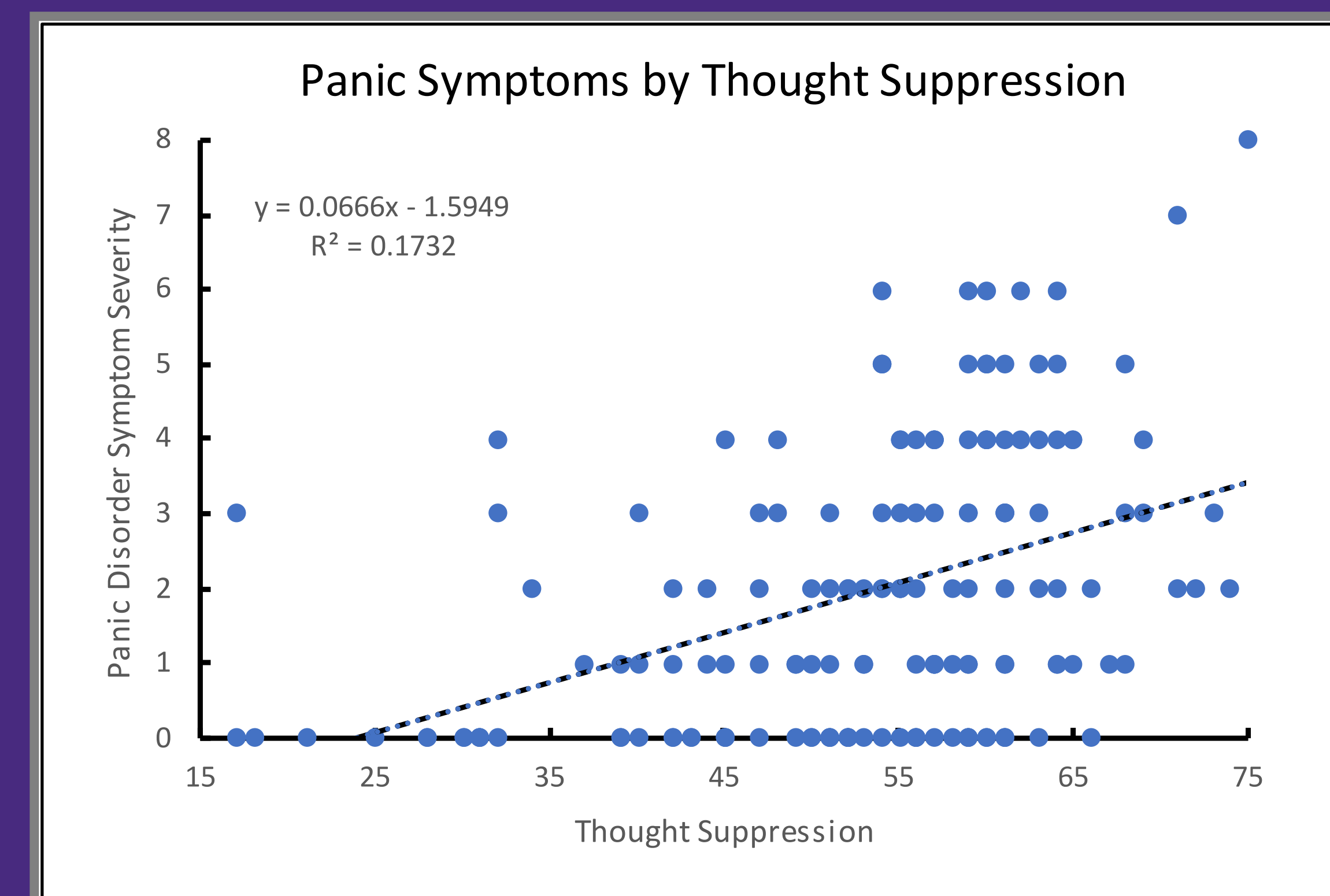
- Cloud Research Participants - Amazon MTurk ( $N = 161$ ,  $M_{age} = 39.5$ , 57.8% female)

### Measures

- Panic Disorder Symptom Severity (PDDS-SR)
- Thought Suppression (WBSI)
- Anxiety Sensitivity (ASI-3)
- Trait Anxiety (TAI-Y)

## Results

- Thought suppression was significantly positively correlated with panic symptom severity,  $r = .37$ ,  $p \leq .001$
- A simultaneous multiple regression revealed all variables were significant predictors of panic symptom severity while controlling for others,  $p_s \leq .03$
- Anxiety sensitivity was the strongest positive predictor ( $R^2 = .13$ ), followed by thought suppression ( $R^2 = .05$ ), and trait anxiety was a weak negative predictor ( $R^2 = .02$ )
- A hierarchical multiple regression revealed that anxiety sensitivity and trait anxiety accounted for 25.5% of the variance in panic symptom severity in the model, and thought suppression accounted for an additional 5.0% of the variance



## Discussion

### Summary

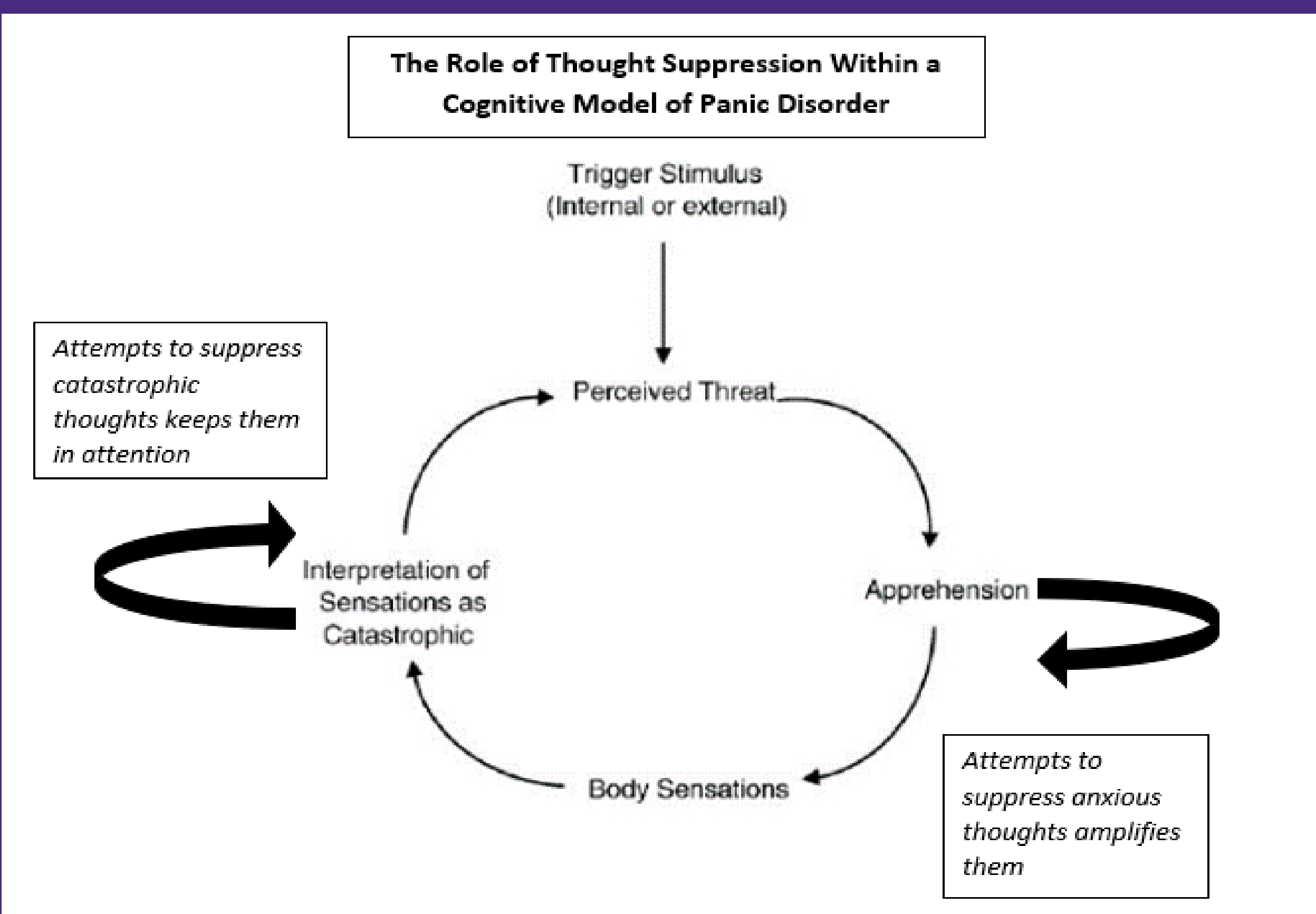
- Thought suppression uniquely positively predicts panic symptom severity above and beyond known predictors

### Limitations

- MTurk sample potentially nonrepresentative or misunderstood measure (very high rate of panic symptoms)
- Cross-sectional research cannot demonstrate causality

### Discussion

- Supports exploration of acceptance-based interventions to address thought suppression as opposed to traditional cognitive-behavioral therapy



## References

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