



Angry rumination as a mediator of the relationship between ability emotional intelligence and various types of aggression



E. García-Sancho^a, J.M. Salguero^b, P. Fernández-Berrocal^a

^a Department of Basic Psychology, University of Malaga, Spain

^b Department of Personality, Evaluation and Psychological Treatment, University of Malaga, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 5 August 2015

Received in revised form 2 October 2015

Accepted 3 October 2015

Available online 22 October 2015

Keywords:

Emotional intelligence

Aggression

Angry rumination

Indirect aggression

ABSTRACT

Ability emotional intelligence (AEI) has been negatively associated with aggressive behavior. There is, however, no evidence about the associations between AEI and indirect aggression or angry rumination, although several studies have reported that people with low AEI tend to use depressive rumination as an emotional regulation strategy. The purposes of this study were to provide preliminary evidence on the relationships between AEI and angry rumination and between AEI and indirect aggression, and to examine the role of angry rumination as a mediator of the relationship between AEI and different types of aggression (physical, verbal and indirect aggression). We used a cross-sectional design; 243 undergraduate students completed questionnaires assessing the variables of interest. The results provided evidence for negative associations between AEI and both angry rumination and indirect aggression. Analysis also indicated that angry rumination was a significant mediator of the relationship between AEI and all three types of aggression. These findings are discussed in the light of aggression models and their practical implications for work on prevention or treatment of aggressive behavior are considered.

© 2015 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) is defined as the set of abilities involved in perception, usage, understanding, management and regulation of emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). EI can be conceptualized as a trait or as a mental ability. Trait EI (TEI) or trait emotional self-efficacy is a set of emotional self-perceptions located at the lower levels of the personality hierarchy (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007) and is assessed with self-report measures (Petrides, 2009) whereas ability emotional intelligence (AEI) is defined as a set of abilities related to processing emotional information (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) and is measured in terms of maximum performance (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003).

People with lower EI tend to be characterized by conflict and aggressive behavior (García-Sancho, Salguero, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2014). The most of research on this field has focused on TEI. TEI and AEI have been conceptualized like two different constructs and have shown different associations with related variables (Petrides & Furnham, 2003). Therefore this study extends previous research by focusing on the association between AEI and aggression and exploring the role of angry rumination as a mediator of the relationships between these variables.

1.1. Emotional intelligence and aggression

Aggression has been defined as any form of behavior intended to harm or injure another individual (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) and can be classified as overt or indirect. Overt aggression is behavior which is intended to have a direct negative effect on the victim's well-being; overt aggression can be physical or verbal (Coie & Dodge, 1998). Physical aggression encompasses behaviors such as hitting or pushing, whilst verbal aggression encompasses verbal attacks in the form of name calling, taunting or threats. Indirect aggression is behavior which causes harm indirectly, by damaging social relationships and it encompasses behaviors such as gossiping, excluding the victim from social groups or spreading rumors (Björkqvist, 2001; Card, Stucky, Sawalani, & Little, 2008). In recent years there has been an increased interest in indirect aggression as it is the most common form of aggressive behavior in adulthood (Anguiano-Carrasco & Vigil-Colet, 2011).

Various theories of aggressive behavior have been put forward. These have been integrated into the General Aggression Model (GAM; Anderson & Bushman, 2002). The GAM provides a parsimonious account of why people act aggressively in terms of three levels: personal and situational factors, internal states and outcomes of appraisal and decision-making processes. In this model personal factors (e.g. personality traits, gender, attitudes) interact with situational factors (e.g. insults, presence of guns, alcohol) to create an internal state which influences behavior. Internal state, which is a composite of cognitions (hostile thoughts, aggressive scripts), affect (anger, general negative

E-mail address: egarciasancho@uma.es (E. García-Sancho).

affect) and arousal (physiological and psychological arousal) influences appraisals and decision-making processes which may or may not result in an aggressive response.

A number of studies have highlighted the role of emotional variables on aggressive behavior (Denson, 2013; Denson, Pedersen, Friese, Hahm, & Roberts, 2011; Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939). Lerner and Arsenio (2000) proposed that emotion processes may have a relevant role during information processing in a social situation. For instance, deficits in recognition of facial emotions may result in a tendency to attribute anger to others and react aggressively (see García-Sancho, Salguero, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2015a). Similarly, individuals who are unable to manage strong emotions may be overwhelmed by them during appraisal and decision-making processes, and therefore generate a smaller range of responses, most of which are related to their affective state (e.g. aggressive responses when they feel angry) (Lerner & Arsenio, 2000). This perspective suggests that EI may have a role in reducing and managing aggressive behavior.

García-Sancho et al. (2014) systematically reviewed research on the relationship between EI and aggression and concluded that there was strong evidence that EI and aggressive behavior are negatively associated (García-Sancho et al., 2014); the association was consistent across populations, ages and indicators. Few studies, however, have analyzed the association between AEI and aggression (Plugia, Stough, Carter, & Joseph, 2005). An investigation of the relationship between AEI and aggression which was intended to address this gap in the literature (García-Sancho, Salguero & Fernández-Berrocal, 2015b) revealed negative associations between AEI and physical and verbal aggression in both adult and adolescent samples. Also, AEI showed incremental validity on physical aggression after controlling traits personality in adults and AEI predicted physical aggression nine months later in adolescents (García-Sancho et al., 2015b). In contrast, verbal aggression was only weakly associated with AEI in both adults and adolescents, suggesting that the extent to which AEI influenced aggression might depend on the type of aggression. No other forms of aggression were explored in this study, leaving open the question of how indirect aggression, one of the most common aggressive behaviors in adulthood, is related to AEI (Anguiano-Carrasco & Vigil-Colet, 2011). This study explored the associations between AEI and all three types of aggression (physical, verbal and indirect).

1.2. Angry rumination as mediator

Angry rumination is potential contributor to aggression. Angry rumination is the term used for repetitive, negative cognitions about an anger-inducing event, such as anger-inducing memories, angry thoughts and feelings, and plans for revenge (Denson, Pedersen, & Miller, 2006; Sukhodolsky, Golub, & Cromwell, 2001). A substantial body of empirical evidence suggests that angry rumination following a provocation increases aggression towards the provocateur (Bushman, 2002), and even towards other targets (Bushman, Bonacci, Pedersen, Vasquez, & Miller, 2005).

According to the GAM, rumination after an anger-inducing provocation maintains or increases the activation of all three aspects of internal state leading to aggression: angry affect, aggressive cognitions and physiological arousal (Pedersen, Goss, Vasquez, Kelley, & Miller, 2011). Internal state influences appraisal and decision-making processes by increasing the likelihood that they will result in aggressive behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Denson's (2013) multiple system model of angry rumination posits that when one experiences angry feelings, aggressive thoughts and high arousal it takes more effort to self-regulate one's internal state and this effort consume cognitive resources. Given that executive functioning is a limited yet renewable resource, it is possible that angry rumination temporarily depletes executive functioning resources (Slotter & Finkel, 2011) thus impairing appraisal and decision-making processes and increasing the risk of impulsive behavior such as retaliatory aggression (Denson et al., 2011). Additionally,

other associated type of rumination, hostile rumination, defined as tendency to have repetitive thoughts related to desire for retaliation and vengeance (Caprara, 1986), mediated the relationship between traits of personality associated to negative affect (emotional stability) and violent behavior (Caprara et al., 2013).

Little is known about the relationship between EI and angry rumination. To the best of our knowledge, there has been only one study investigating the association between TEI and angry rumination, and it reported a negative association (Sukhodolsky et al., 2001). EI has been associated with emotional regulation (see Peña-Sarrionandia, Mikolajczak, & Gross, 2015, for a review). Several studies have shown that people with lower AEI tend to use depressive rumination, as an emotional regulation strategy (Curci, Lanciano, Soleti, Zammuner, & Salovey, 2013; Lanciano, Curci, Kafetsios, Elia, & Zammuner, 2012). Some authors have suggested that people with low EI may be overwhelmed by their emotions when they experience an event with high negative emotional impact; their difficulties perceiving, understanding and regulating sadness and related negative emotions may mean that they experience these emotions as threatening and use rumination as an avoidant coping strategy (Salguero, Extremera, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2013; Smith & Alloy, 2009). It seems plausible that EI should also be associated with other forms of rumination, such as angry rumination, but to date no study has investigated this. Given that angry rumination is an explanatory factor in models of aggression, and that AEI has been associated with other forms of rumination and aggressive behavior, angry rumination may mediate the relationship between AEI and aggression.

1.3. This research

In summary, there is evidence of an association between AEI and aggression; however, the magnitude of this association depends on the type of aggression involved (physical or verbal) and there is no evidence on the relationship between AEI and other forms of aggression such as indirect aggression. There is evidence that people who engage in angry ruminative thinking are more likely to act aggressively, but although AEI has been linked with ruminative thinking there has been no research investigating its relationship with angry rumination. Finally, given what is known about the relationships among AEI, aggression and angry rumination it seems plausible that angry rumination mediates the association between AEI and aggression. The objectives of this study were therefore 1) to analyze the association between AEI and different types of aggression, namely physical, verbal and indirect aggression; 2) to examine the relationship between AEI and angry rumination; 3) to determine whether angry rumination mediates the relationship between AEI and aggression.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedure

The participants were 243 undergraduate students (52 men and 191 women) at public university in South of Spain aged between 19 and 54 years old ($M = 21.78$, $S.D. = 4.38$). Participation was in exchange for extra course credit and was entirely voluntary and anonymous. The participants completed the AEI measure individually in a group format during a normal lesson day and the rest of the scales were completed individually as part of an electronic survey.

2.2. Measures

Physical and verbal aggression (Aggression Questionnaire, AQ; Buss & Perry, 1992). The AQ is a self-report questionnaire containing of two subscales assessing physical aggression (nine items) and verbal aggression (five items). All items are rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = extremely uncharacteristic to 5 = extremely characteristic). The original

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7250755>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7250755>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)