



Development and validation of a short form aggressive beliefs and attitudes scale



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ABSTRACT

This research outlines six studies (total $N = 3867$) that develop and validate an Aggressive Beliefs and Attitudes – Short Form scale for use within the normal nonclinical adult population (e.g., organizational psychology). In the first two samples, exploratory factor analysis reduced the original 30 item scale to a shorter, more parsimonious, eight item measure. In the third sample, confirmatory factor analysis found that the proposed model and items fit the data extremely well. Examination of the nomological network underlying the new measure in Samples 3–4 displayed relationships with positive affect, negative affect, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism ranging from $r = .23$ to $-.23$, while relationships with anger, hostility, physical aggression, and verbal aggression ranged from $r = .49$ to $.30$. Finally, in two criterion-related validity studies the relationships between the aggressive beliefs and attitudes scales, both original and short forms, and workplace deviance were examined with independent samples of employed adults. The short form scale was significantly related to workplace deviance in both samples ($r = .37$ and $.43$). Furthermore, these relationships were of identical magnitude to the full 30 item measure, suggesting that the short form scale comparably captures aggression-related behaviors with a greatly reduced number of items.

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Social-cognition is a dominant theoretical perspective for understanding how personality and individual differences result in coherent patterns of human behavior (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Social-cognition emphasizes how individuals relate with and interpret their social world. Recent research has shown that implicit and explicit social cognitions are important components in explaining how personality and attitudes affect behavior. Implicit and explicit social cognitions are separate constructs at the theoretical and empirical levels, and are operationally distinct components of basic personality structure. Indeed, recent research has shown that implicit and explicit social cognitions each have unique and potentially interactive explanatory prediction in various criteria (e.g., dishonesty, organizational deviance, traffic violations) in basic and applied research (Bing, LeBreton, Davison, Migetz, & James, 2007; Bing, Stewart, et al., 2007; Frost, Ko, & James, 2007; Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006).

Implicit social cognitions are generally classified as effortless, automatic, and unconscious reasoning leading to a person's beliefs, attitudes, and subsequent behavioral tendencies (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Considering that implicit social cognitions operate unconsciously, researchers largely endorse the use of indirect personality assessment (Karpinski & Hilton, 2001; Nosek, Greenwald, & Banaji, 2005; Olson &

Fazio, 2003), such as the Thematic Apperception Test (Lilienfeld, Wood, & Garb, 2000) or Implicit Association Test (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). Within the industrial and organizational psychology literature, James and colleagues (e.g., James, 1998; James & LeBreton, 2012; James & McIntyre, 2000; James et al., 2005) advocate the use of conditional reasoning methods (e.g., Conditional Reasoning Test of Aggression or CRT-A) to assess underlying cognitive biases (i.e., motive-based biases in reasoning and inference). For example, the fundamental idea underlying the CRT-A is that aggressive people, versus non-aggressive or prosocial people, believe that their aggressive actions or reactions are reasonable and appropriate (Baron & Richardson, 1994; Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Accordingly, people high in dispositional aggression rely on implicit cognitive biases to rationalize their behavior, thus reflecting their personality and underlying implicit social cognitions.

Explicit social cognitions refer to corresponding (i.e., in relation to implicit social cognitions) introspective, organized, and conscious reasoning leading to a person's beliefs, attitudes, and subsequent behavioral tendencies (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Considering that explicit social cognitions take place within conscious awareness, direct methods such as self-reported questionnaires are typically used in assessment (McClelland, Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989). Though a number of general aggression measures currently exist with items that capture aggressive emotions and behavioral tendencies, such as "I have trouble controlling my temper" or "I have become so mad that I have broken things" (e.g., Angry Hostility Scale from the NEO personality inventory

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[Costa & McCrae, 1992]; Anger, Hostility, Physical Aggression, and Verbal Aggression from the Aggression Questionnaire [Buss & Perry, 1992]), as well as several instruments that measure aggressive cognitions within the clinical literature (e.g., Grisso, Davis, Vesselinov, Appelbaum, & Monahan, 2000; Nagtegaal, 2008), only one measure comprehensively assesses the six explicit social cognitions associated with aggressive biases outlined by James and colleagues within the organizational psychology literature (James, 1998; James & Mazerolle, 2002; James et al., 2005). Specifically, Michel, Pace, Edun, Sawhney, and Thomas (2014) developed a 30 item measure that taps into the aggressive biases of hostile attribution (tendency to see harmful intent in the actions of others), potency (tendency to frame and reason using the contrast of strength versus weakness), retribution (tendency to confer logical priority to retaliation over reconciliation), victimization by powerful others (tendency to frame oneself as a victim and as being exploited by the powerful), derogation of target (attempt to make the target more deserving of aggression), and social discounting (tendency to call on socially unorthodox and antisocial beliefs to interpret and analyze social events and relationships). In doing so, this measure assesses the “explicit aggressive beliefs and attitudes that influence individual patterns of appraisals, attributions, and behavior across situations” (Michel et al., p. 328; cf. Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Karpinski & Hilton, 2001).

The objective of the current research is to develop and validate a short form aggressive beliefs and attitudes scale for use within the normal nonclinical adult population for basic and applied research (e.g., organizational psychology). This is an important contribution to the literature as, in many scenarios, the use of the full 30 item measure may not be possible (e.g., survey length requirements). Additionally, much like the CRT-A, researchers and practitioners are generally interested in an overall assessment of aggression as opposed to facet level examination (e.g., retribution, derogation of target, social discounting). Accordingly, the goals of this research are as follows. First, the proposed series of studies will develop a short form measure based on item commonalities across multiple samples that best represents an overall construct of explicit aggressive beliefs and attitudes. Second, strong psychometric properties will be shown in multiple samples based on confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), coefficient alpha estimates, and mean inter-item correlations. Third, the nomological network of the short form items will be examined with trait affect, the Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality, and multiple forms of aggression (anger, hostility, physical aggression, and verbal aggression). This is an important contribution as the original validation work displayed strong convergent and discriminant validity evidence for all 30 items with other measures of implicit and explicit aggression and the FFM; however, examination of relationships with positive and negative affect remains unexplored. Additionally, we will reexamine patterns of covariance with the most highly related FFM traits in the original validation work (i.e., agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism), as well as other forms of aggression (i.e., anger, hostility, physical aggression, and verbal aggression), to further support the distinctiveness of the short form items. Fourth, criterion-related validity evidence will be shown for the Aggressive Beliefs and Attitudes – Short Form scale with real world aggressive criteria in multiple working adult samples.

1. Method

1.1. Participants and procedure

1.1.1. Samples 1–2

Two independent samples were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk, which is a large crowd sourcing internet marketplace (database currently consists of over 500,000 individuals from 190 countries) shown to produce demographically diverse samples and reliable data (see Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Mason & Suri, 2012; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010). We recruited participants living

in the U.S. and 19 years of age or older. To encourage participation, individuals received a small monetary incentive (\$0.25).

For Sample 1, we received completed cleaned data from 945 respondents.¹ The average participant was 33.3 years of age ($SD = 11.4$) and male (53.5%). Ethnic/racial breakdown of the sample was: 76.7% Caucasian or White (non-Hispanic), 5.7% African American or Black, 6.2% Hispanic, 9.6% Asian American or Pacific Islander, .3% Native American, and 1.4% other. The sample was well educated with the majority of participants having an advanced degree (10.1%), a Bachelor's degree (38.2%), or some college education (35.9%).

For Sample 2, we received completed cleaned data from 712 independent respondents. The average participant was 31.3 years of age ($SD = 10.0$) and male (53.2%). Ethnic/racial breakdown of the sample was: 76.5% Caucasian or White (non-Hispanic), 6.7% African American or Black, 7.0% Hispanic, 7.7% Asian American or Pacific Islander, .8% Native American, and 1.1% other. The majority of participants had an advanced degree (8.4%), a Bachelor's degree (36.9%), or some college education (39.2%).

1.1.2. Samples 3–4

Two independent samples of undergraduate students were recruited from a large university in the southeastern U.S. participated in the study for extra credit. Sample 3 participants were solicited through the university SONA system and completed the survey online. We received completed clean data from 670 participants. Demographic information indicated that the sample was diverse (12.7% Caucasian or White [non-Hispanic], 6.3% African American or Black, 65.4% Hispanic, 3.9% Asian American or Pacific Islander, and 11.7% other), predominately female (71.0%), and ranged in age from 18 to 56 ($M = 21.1$, $SD = 4.2$).

Sample 4 participants were recruited via classroom lectures and completed the survey in-person (i.e., paper-and-pencil). We received completed clean data from 341 participants. The average participant was 20.9 years of age ($SD = 4.6$) and female (67.6%). Ethnic/racial breakdown of the sample was: 15.5% Caucasian or White (non-Hispanic), 8.4% African American or Black, 68.1% Hispanic, 3.4% Asian American or Pacific Islander, and 4.6% other.

1.1.3. Samples 5–6

Two independent samples were recruited using a peer-nomination web-based sampling methodology similar to approaches used by Matthews, Kath, and Barnes-Farrell (2010) and Martins, Eddleston, and Veiga (2002). Information about the study was presented to students at a large southeastern U.S. university enrolled in advanced undergraduate courses in organizational psychology. Individuals were instructed to forward the study information to others who might qualify (an email invitation was provided). In order to be eligible, participants were required to be 18 years of age or older, work at least 20 h per week, and not identify themselves as a college student. Participants meeting these requirements followed a link to an online survey that verified their eligibility, collected contact information (to verify the accuracy of their data), and obtained consent to participate. Students received nominal course credit while participants received no compensation.

Sample 5 consisted of 339 participants. The average participant was 29 years of age ($SD = 10.5$), worked 36 h per week ($SD = 9.48$), had a job tenure of 3.38 years ($SD = 4.73$), was not married or living as

¹ We followed recommendations in the survey methods literature and included quality control items in each survey across the six samples (Huang, Liu, & Bowling, 2015; Meade & Craig, 2012). Participants engaging in careless or insufficient effort responding were identified and removed prior to analyses. Specifically, when examining the factor structure of the revised scale (Samples 1–3) we used an inclusion rule of zero missed items (i.e., if a participant missed one or more quality control items we excluded their data due to careless or insufficient effort responding). For nomological network and criterion-related validity evidence (Samples 4–6) we used a slightly relaxed inclusion rule of up to one missed item (i.e., if a participant missed two or more quality control items we excluded their data due to careless or insufficient effort responding).

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