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Psychology of Personality: Real and Virtual Context

DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF THE RADICAL ATTITUDES QUESTIONNAIRE

Vadim Emelin (a)*, Elena Rasskazova (b), Aleksander Tkhostov (c)

*Corresponding author

(a) Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia, 125009, Mokhovaja street, 11-9, emelin@mail.ru,

(b) Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia

(c) Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia

Abstract

Based on the cultural-historical approach in psychology, we suggest the consideration of the personal radicalism as radical attitudes triggering and escalating some forms of behaviour. They include the intention to defend one's own opinion at any rate, the "black-and-white" thinking, impulsivity in decision-making, the acceptability of the public expression of aggression, the high self-confidence and low subjective value of mistakes. The present study aims at developing and validating the Radical Attitudes Questionnaire measuring cognitive components of radicalism. 218 adults have filled the Radical Attitudes Questionnaire, the Aggression Questionnaire, the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, the Index of Tolerance, the Antisocial and Passive-Aggression scales of the Beck's Personal Beliefs Questionnaire and the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale. Almost any cognitive component of radical attitudes are associated with more passive-aggressive and antisocial beliefs, a lower tolerance (especially, the personal tolerance), a higher aggression (especially anger and anger expression) and a poorer interpersonal reactivity but unrelated to impulsivity. The Radical attitudes Questionnaire could be further employed in the studies of various forms of radical behavior.

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1. Introduction

Although contemporary social changes related to the rapid development of technologies (Rheingold, 2002) give an obvious opportunity for connection, empathy and tolerance, in practice, they also frequently become a basis for arguments and intolerance (How technology changes everything (and nothing) in psychology: 2008 annual report of the APA Policy and Planning Board, 2009). It is also expressed in various radical forms of behaviour from cyber- or other public forms of aggression, or in the opinion defending of religious fundamentalism, extremism, nationalism, terrorism, at any rate. Traditionally, those phenomena and their relation to social changes and info-communication technologies use are considered from the viewpoint of sociology, philosophy or politics. A psychological consideration of the moving world and information society could be helpful in understanding the common basis of different factors and their psychological predictors (Martsinkovskaya, 2015).

Based on the cultural-historical approach in psychology, we suggest the consideration of the personal radicalism as radical attitudes (Asmolov, 2002) triggering and escalating some forms of behaviour. From this point of view, radicalism is defined as a personal style of the interaction of the person with other people when only one version (actions, behaviors, events) is considered as correct and acceptable in social situations. And the person is ready to stand up for it by all means including aggression and extreme actions (Rasskazova et al., 2018).

2. Problem Statement

Based on the cognitive approach, we propose six major components of radical attitudes. Each component could trigger or escalate radical forms of behaviour. First, there is opinion defending by all means. Although assertiveness (Alberti & Emmons, 1970) is an important trait, indeed, helping the person to achieve success in the world, the same capacity and readiness could function as a basis for insensitivity of others' point of view and aggressive actions. Second, confidence in the existence of only one "right" way of thinking and behaviour in the social situations are described as a part of "black-and-white" thinking (Beck et al., 2015) when the person sees extreme variants only. Third, radical forms of behaviour could be a result of too quick decision taken without any full orientation in the situation. It is noteworthy that this construct is closer to Kuhl's (1994) action orientation and jumping to conclusions (Evans et al., 2015) than to behavioural impulsivity (Patten et al., 1995). It reflects the idea that generally productive capacity to act instead of ruminations could lead in some situations to behaviour that is aggressive or insensitive to others. Fourth, the subjective attitude to the public expressions of aggression including the interest to aggression, expressions and perception of the public expression of aggression as "normal" and acceptability could make radical forms of behaviour subjectively usual and acceptable, as well. With our full agreement to that aggression should be considered as a factor of correlate of the radical behaviour, we insist not to include aggression per se as a much wider construct into the structure of the cognitive components of radical attitudes. Fifth, self-confidence, if it includes incapability for the uncritical belief (that one's own opinion is righter and unwillingness to listen to others) could lead to insensitivity to others, as well. To our mind, this belief is conceptually different from the opinion defending, although it should be associated with it, and this is close to self-confidence as a component of a low cognitive insight (Beck et al., 2004). Last,

radical forms of behaviour could be triggered by the belief that all the mistakes in life are easily corrected. As to the other constructs, the subjective readiness to make mistakes and learn on them is described in psychology as the positive personality resource (Maddi, 2002). However, we suggest that in some social situations, the same personal style could make a person care for his/her actions and for others less.

3. Research Questions

The present study aims at developing and validating the Radical Attitudes Questionnaire (RAQ) measuring cognitive components of radicalism according to this model.

4. Purpose of the Study

We suggest that radical attitudes are associated with the higher aggression, impulsivity, antisocial and passive aggressive beliefs as well as a lower tolerance and interpersonal sensitivity. They are frequently considered as the factors of various radical forms of behaviour.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Sample

218 adults (83 males, 126 females, 9 did not report gender) aged 18-60 years old (mean age 37.81-14.54 years old) participated in the study.

5.2. Methods

To develop the “operating” version of the Radical Attitudes Questionnaire, 7-11 items were formulated by the authors (two PhD clinical psychologists and one PhD philosopher) to reflect each of the cognitive components of radicalism in the model (see Table 1 for items examples). Some items for the Self-Confidence scale were chosen from the Cognitive Insight Scale by Beck (Beck et al., 2004). Participants evaluated their agreement with each of 54 items using 1-5 Likert-type scale.

Then they filled the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992), the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983), the Index of Tolerance (Soldatova & Shaigerova, 2008), the Antisocial and Passive-Aggressive scales of the Personal Beliefs Questionnaire by Beck (Beck et al., 2001) and the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (Patten et al., 1995). The Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) was developed by Buss and Perry (1992) to differentiate anger, anger expression, hostility and physical aggression as well as to assess the total level of aggression. The Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS) was used to compare radical attitudes with the behavioural impulsiveness and included Attentional, Motor and Non-planning secondary factors. The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRT) was a measure of sensitivity of other people and empathy that included four scales: perspective taking, fantasy, empathic concern and personal distress. The Tolerance Index (TI) included the general score of tolerance to other people as well as the scales of the ethnic tolerance (a person’s attitude towards the representatives of another ethnic groups and attitudes in the sphere of the intercultural interaction), social tolerance (a tolerant and intolerant attitude towards such social groups as minorities, criminals and mentally ill people) and tolerance as a personality trait. The Personal Beliefs Questionnaire (PBQ) included beliefs about oneself and others that are typical of people with different

personality disorders. The antisocial and passive-aggressive scales were used in this study because antisocial attitudes were obviously related to the readiness to radical behaviour while a passive-aggressive behavior implied a concealed aggression, as well.

6. Findings

6.1. Reliability and structure of the Radical Attitudes Questionnaire

Cronbach's alphas were good .72-.80 for Opinion Defending, Impulsivity in Decisions, Acceptability of Public Aggression, Self-Confidence scales but .62 and .68 for "Black-And-White" Thinking and Low Price of Mistake scales, respectively (Table 01).

Men scores higher than women on Opinion Defending, Self-Confidence, Low Price of Mistake scales, Acceptability of public expression of aggression scales ($t=2.06-3.00$, $\eta=.14-.20$).

Table 01. Item examples and Cronbach's alpha for the Radical Attitudes Questionnaire

Scale	Item example	N of items	Cronbach's alpha
Opinion Defending	"If somebody has unfairly offended me, I must prove that I am right"	9	.72
"Black-and-White" Thinking	"A person can be either right or wrong"	7	.62
Impulsivity in Decision Making	"In any situation, I quickly make a decision and begin to act"	8	.72
Acceptability and Interest to Public Expression of Aggression	"I think that directly expressing my anger and aggression is unacceptable", "I like movies in which the characters are behaving explosively and emotionally"	12	.80
Self-Confidence	"Most of the time I do not change my decision if I have already taken it"	11	.79
Low Price of Mistake	"If I make a mistake, it's easy to fix"	7	.68

Factor analysis supported theoretical 6-factor structure (explaining 41.12% of variance) with only 9 items (16.6%) having cross-loadings to other factors. All the inter-scale correlations were positive with the highest one between impulsivity in decision making and self-confidence reached .64. "Black-and-white" thinking was almost unrelated to other cognitive components of radical attitudes while opinion defending, impulsivity, interest to expression of aggression, self-confidence and low subjective price of mistakes were related to each other (Table 02).

Table 02. Inter-scale correlations

Scale	Opinion Defending	“Black-and-White” Thinking	Impulsivity in Decision Making
Opinion Defending	1	.13	.35
“Black-and-White” Thinking	.13	1	.18
Impulsivity in Decision Making	.35	.18	1
Acceptability and Interest to Public Expression of Aggression	.47	.19	.36
Self-Confidence	.51	.22	.64
Low Price of Mistake	.18	.03	.38

Note: All the correlations higher than $|.13|$ are significant $p < .05$. Correlations higher than $|.18|$ are significant $p < .01$.

6.2. Discriminant and convergent validity of the Radical Attitudes Questionnaire

Antisocial beliefs are related to any cognitive components of radical attitudes while passive aggressive beliefs are related to any components but “black-and-white” thinking (Table 03). Any components except for “black-and-white” thinking and subjective low price of mistakes are related to higher aggression. These correlations are mostly not due to hostility but due to anger and its expression. To our mind, self-confidence, opinion defending, impulsive decisions make it easier to feel and express anger in different situations and less related to dispositional hostility to the world.

Personal, social tolerance, perspective taking and empathic concern are related to all but one (subjective low price of mistakes) components of radical attitudes while ethnic intolerance correlates to “black-and-white” thinking and might be based on sociocultural beliefs about some groups than on the general way of thinking. To compare, fantasy correlates only to lower readiness to defend one’s opinion and rarer “black-and-white” thinking. Both opinion defending, impulsivity, self-confidence and low subjective price of mistakes are associated with lower psychological distress in communication.

Total level of impulsivity was related to subjective acceptability of public aggression and interest to expression of aggression. Correlational patterns for all three secondary factors of impulsivity (attentional, motor and nonplanning) repeated this general pattern associating with relationship to aggression expression only ($r = .18-.27$, $p < .01$).

Table 03. Correlations between cognitive components of radical attitudes, passive-aggressive and antisocial beliefs, reactivity, tolerance, aggression and impulsivity

Scale	Opinion Defending	“Black-and-White” Thinking	Impulsivity in Decision Making	Acceptability and Interest to Public Expression of Aggression	Self-Confidence	Low Price of Mistake
PBQ – Passive-Aggressive Beliefs	.48**	.00	.38**	.43**	.59**	.20**
PBQ – Antisocial Beliefs	.34**	.28**	.44**	.69**	.51**	.28**
TI – Ethnic tolerance	-.12	-.28**	-.08	-.09	-.09	.16*
TI – Social tolerance	-.14*	-.32**	-.22**	-.20**	-.21**	-.03
TI – Personal tolerance	-.27**	-.35**	-.26**	-.34**	-.39**	-.02
TI – Tolerance (total score)	-.21**	-.39**	-.22**	-.25**	-.27**	.05
BIS – Impulsivity (total score)	.10	.03	.10	.33**	.05	-.04
AQ – Physical Aggression	.37**	.17*	.22**	.49**	.32**	.18**
AQ – Anger	.35**	.07	.20**	.50**	.22**	-.01
AQ – Hostility	.09	.03	.04	.36**	.08	-.14*
AQ – Anger Expression	.60**	.13	.34**	.64**	.47**	.17*
AQ – Aggression (total score)	.35**	.12	.20**	.57**	.27**	.03
IRT – Fantasy	-.19**	-.32**	-.10	-.10	-.07	-.07
IRT – Empathic Concern	-.28**	-.17*	-.27**	-.43**	-.36**	-.14*
IRT – Perspective Taking	-.36**	-.42**	-.30**	-.43**	-.37**	-.11
IRT – Psychological Distress	-.32**	-.09	-.47**	-.12	-.44**	-.30**

Note: * - $p < .05$, ** - $p < .01$.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the data support the consistency and factor validity of the Radical Attitudes Questionnaire. Confirming the convergent validity of the measure, almost any cognitive components of radical attitudes are connected to more passive-aggressive and antisocial beliefs, a lower tolerance (especially personal tolerance), a higher aggression (especially anger and anger expression) and a poorer interpersonal reactivity

but unrelated to impulsivity. None of the correlations are higher than .70 (varied for .20-.50) demonstrating that the cognitive components of radical attitudes are not reducible to those psychological factors related to the radical behaviour.

The result that behavioural impulsivity as measured by the Barratt's scale is not related to impulsivity in decision making as a component of radical attitudes is not surprising. It is in case of that the behavioural impulsivity describes difficulties in planning, motor arrangement and concentration but not the personal style of readiness to actions. It is interesting that impulsivity is associated with the acceptability of the public aggression expression that could be a compensatory belief subjectively apologizing oneself and others for the aggression that is related to attentional, motor or planning impulsivity.

Further studies could differentiate the roles of different beliefs in different forms of aggressive, autoaggressive, intolerant behaviour online and offline.

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