

Obsessive-compulsive, Generalized Anxiety Tendencies and the Illusion of Control: An Investigation of Cognitive Mechanisms

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Abstract

The current study investigated the inter-relations between obsessive-compulsive (OC) and general anxiety (GA) tendencies and the illusion of control, introducing two concepts which could account for this association (i.e., rational and irrational beliefs). Participants (N = 69) were presented with a computerized task which involved trying to control the presentation duration of a series of aversive or neutral stimuli (which was in fact pre-programmed), and asked to rate their level of perceived control. Participants' sense of control was therefore entirely illusory. OC tendencies were related to the illusion of control, $r(31) = .30$, $p = .045$, but only in the aversive stimuli condition, and both OC and GA tendencies were positively associated with the illusion of control in the case of participants offering low control estimations, and negatively related for those offering high control estimations.

Keywords

obsessive-compulsive tendencies; generalized anxiety tendencies; illusion of control; rational and irrational beliefs.