The role of attributions in the cognitive appraisal of work-related stressful events: an event-recording approach

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This paper describes a micro-analysis of the cognitive appraisal of daily stressful events in a sample of correctional officers (COs). More specifically, the authors examined whether three attribution dimensions mediated the relationship between the occurrence of stressful events and the 'significance' of these events, and whether the latter functioned as a mediator between the attribution dimensions on the one hand and negative affect (outcome variable) on the other. Convincing indications were found for the mediating role of the 'significance' of a stressful event, while weak indications were found for the mediating role of the attribution dimensions. Finally, the strengths and weaknesses of daily event-recording methods are discussed at length.

1. Introduction

Theory and research on stress are plagued by a lack of agreement on its definition. In essence, three different approaches to defining stress can be distinguished: the stimulus approach, the response approach and the interactional or appraisal approach (Paterson and Neufeld 1989). The stimulus approach considers stress as a characteristic of the individual's environment, the response approach regards stress as a non-specific response to an aversive or noxious environmental stimulus, while, according to the cognitive approach, stress is neither an external situation nor an internal state but an interaction between the perception of environmental demands and the perceived ability to meet or alter them (Lazarus 1966, Lazarus and Folkman 1984). As in most recent psychological research on stress, the authors consider the interactional approach as the conceptual framework for this study. A micro-analysis of the cognitive processes through which individuals give meaning to stressful events was carried out for a sample of correctional officers (COs).

A distinction is usually made between primary and secondary appraisal (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Primary appraisal evaluates whether there is anything at stake for the individual. Secondary appraisal occurs when individuals consider whether anything can be done to cope with the stressful event. Primary and secondary appraisal converge to shape the meaning of an event for the individual's well-being. Holroyd and Lazarus (1982, p. 23) point out that in many contexts, primary and secondary appraisal are not separable. The
The cognitive appraisal of emotional events is a complex process that involves the evaluation of emotional cues and the formation of emotional responses. The process is thought to be influenced by a variety of factors, including the nature of the emotional event, the individual's personal history, and the context in which the event occurs. In this section, we will explore the cognitive appraisal of emotional events and its role in shaping emotional responses.

1. **Cognitive Appraisal of Emotional Events**

   - **Nature of the Emotional Event**: The nature of the emotional event plays a crucial role in the cognitive appraisal process. Different types of emotional events elicit different appraisals, leading to different emotional responses.
   - **Personal History**: An individual's personal history, including past experiences, beliefs, and values, can influence how they appraise an emotional event.
   - **Context**: The context in which an emotional event occurs can also influence how it is appraised. For example, a neutral event might be appraised as positive in one context and negative in another.

2. **Cognitive Appraisal of Fearful Events**

   - **Appraisal of Fearful Events**: Fearful events are often appraised as potentially threatening, leading to emotional and behavioral responses aimed at reducing fear and anxiety.
   - **Fearful Event Appraisal**: Fearful events are typically appraised using a combination of cognitive and emotional processes. This includes assessing the likelihood of harm, the controllability of the situation, and the personal relevance of the event.

3. **Cognitive Appraisal of Positive Events**

   - **Appraisal of Positive Events**: Positive events are often appraised as beneficial, leading to emotional and behavioral responses aimed at maximizing positive outcomes.
   - **Positive Event Appraisal**: Positive events are typically appraised using a combination of cognitive and emotional processes. This includes assessing the likelihood of success, the personal relevance of the event, and the social and emotional benefits of the event.

4. **Cognitive Appraisal of Neutral Events**

   - **Appraisal of Neutral Events**: Neutral events are often appraised as neither positive nor negative, leading to emotional and behavioral responses aimed at maintaining status quo.
   - **Neutral Event Appraisal**: Neutral events are typically appraised using a combination of cognitive and emotional processes. This includes assessing the likelihood of change, the personal relevance of the event, and the social and emotional consequences of the event.

5. **Cognitive Appraisal of Emotional-Related Events**

   - **Emotional-Related Event Appraisal**: Emotional-related events are often appraised using a combination of cognitive and emotional processes that are specific to the emotional experience.
   - **Emotional-Related Event Appraisal**: Emotional-related events are typically appraised using a combination of cognitive and emotional processes that are specific to the emotional experience. This includes assessing the emotional valence of the event, the personal relevance of the event, and the social and emotional consequences of the event.

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2. Method

2.1 Participants

Participants were 50 Dutch control subjects (24 M, 26 F) aged between 18 and 75 years. The mean age of the group was 57.8 years (SD = 11.6). All participants were right-handed and had no history of neurological or psychiatric disorders. The experimental procedure was approved by the local ethics committee, and all participants gave written informed consent.

2.2 Procedure

The ECG was recorded as a target for detection. The 10-20 system was used to measure the ECG activity. The response time was measured from the onset of the target stimulus to the participant's reaction time. The reaction times were recorded for each participant, and the mean reaction times were calculated for the group.

2.3 Results

3.1 Results of the experiment

The significant effect was observed in the RTs for the target stimulus. The mean RT for the target stimulus was significantly different from the RTs for the distractor stimuli. This effect was observed in all age groups, and the mean RTs for the target stimulus were significantly shorter than those for the distractor stimuli. The results are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Mean RT (ms)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2 shows that the C.I. indicated that they experienced the lower control over the application by the police and poor organization of work. Figure 3 shows that C.I. interpreted the cause of aggression from police and qualifications and related to the more with a cause of uncontrolled systems.

**V. The interpretation of uncontrolled systems**

The causes of what type of uncontrolled systems were interpreted by C.I. as social systems, the police's lack of control, lack of respect for the people, and lack of support for authorities. All these factors contributed significantly to each other.

**VI. The cause and effect of aggression and uncontrolled systems**

In this section, we see the interactions between the cause of aggression and the social systems, both in nature. Interactions between the cause of aggression and the control variables were significant, and all interactions are relevant to each other. All these factors contributed significantly to each other.

**VII. The effect of the uncontrolled systems**

In order to assess the impact of uncontrolled aggression on the C.I., we used a multiple regression analysis. According to the findings, all the factors contributed to the uncontrolled aggression, and the interactions between the factors were significant. The factors include police's lack of control, social systems, and lack of support for authorities. All these factors contributed significantly to each other.

**VIII. The effect of the uncontrolled systems on the C.I.**

In this final section, we examine the impact of uncontrolled aggression on the C.I. The factors included police's lack of control, social systems, and lack of support for authorities. All these factors contributed significantly to each other. All these factors contributed significantly to each other.
References

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