Impact of personality and media on terrorism perception

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INTRODUCTION

Previous research has shown
  • The impact of personality on the use of the media (Żywica & Danowski, 2008)
  • the importance of the media in terrorism perception (Wieviorka & al., 1987)
  • the impact of terrorist attacks on behavior, cognition and affects (Courbet & Fourquet-Courbet, 2003)
  • Several types of victims, such as direct and indirect victims (Besser & Priel, 2010)

AIM

Evaluate the influence of
  • Personality (Big Five dimensions)
  • Gender
  • Avoidance
  • Share of the event
  • The media on terrorism perception

METHODOLOGY

Sample: 90 participants (56 women & 34 men)
  • Online questionnaire
    N = 60
    Sociodemographic questions
    Big Five Inventory (BFI-Fr)
    Terrorism perception questionnaire (PDT)
    ➢ Focused on the Paris attack on the 13th of November 2015 and the Brussels attack on the 22nd of March 2016.
    10 items/situations, Likert scale
    « J’évite les transports en commun tels que l’avion, le métro, le bus ou encore le train depuis les attentats. »
    Score from 0 to 40 (low impact of the event big impact of the event)
  • Online questionnaire + semi-directive interview
    N = 30
    Interview on terrorism perception, health state before and after the event, symptoms, reaction to images of the event, importance given to the media sharing information about the attack.

RESULTS

Personality dimensions
  • High level of openness is correlated to a low level of wariness (r = -0.236, p = 0.025)
  • High level of consciousness is correlated to a lesser use of the media (r = -0.274, p = 0.008)
  • High level of agreeableness is correlated to a high security feeling (r = -0.289, p = 0.005)
  • High level of neuroticism is correlated to a high insecurity feeling (r = 0.302, p = 0.004)

Gender
  • Women feel more insecure, worried and were more impacted by the attack compared to men (u = 594,00, p = 0.003)

Avoidance
  • People who tend to avoid the location of the event were more impacted by the event than the ones who do not avoid (u = 20,00, p = 0.05)

Share of the event
  • People who needed to share information about the event were more impacted by it (u = 46,00; p = 0.017)

The media
  • People who used visual information were more impacted by the event than the ones who used written information (u = 32,00, p = 0.799)

CONCLUSION

Our results showed that openness and agreeableness lead to a lower terrorism perception, as well as access to written information about the event, whereas neuroticism and access to visual information lead to a higher terrorism perception.
Concerning the strengths and limits of the study, its strenght resides in the integration of personality. However, there are some limits such as selective bias (voluntary participation, women>men, age) and a social desirability bias.
For further research, we could evaluate coping strategies as well as control perception. Then, from the PDT questionnaire, we could make two distinct tests: one about the use of the media and one about the impact of the attacks on their behavior and affects. Finally, as our results showed that younger people – especially female student - tend to use more social networks and therefore were more confronted to information about the event and that terrorism perception is the highest for the non-employed female sample, we could study the influence of age and profession on terrorism perception.

REFERENCES