

Impact of personality and media on terrorism perception

DE CUYPER Marine, DELHALLE Marine, BLAVIER Adélaïde

Centre of psychological trauma and forensic psychology, University of Liège, Belgium

INTRODUCTION

Previous research has shown

- The impact of personality on the use of the media (Zywica & 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 Novembre 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 to 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 ($r = -0,236, p = 0,25$)
- High level of consciousness is correlated to a lesser use of the media ($r = -0,274, p = 0,008$)
- High level of agreeability 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 agreeability 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 strenghts and limits of the study, its strenght resides in the integration of personality. However, there are some limits such as selective biais (voluntary participation, women>men, age) and a social desirability biais.

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

- Besser, A. & Priel, B. (2010). Personality vulnerability, low social support, and maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation under ongoing exposure to terrorist attack. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 29*(2), 166-201
- Courbet, D. & Firket-Courbet, M-P. (2003). Réception des images d'une catastrophe en direct à la télévision : Etude qualitative des réactions provoquées par les attentats du 11 Septembre 2001 aux États-Unis au travers du rappel de téléspectateurs français. *European Review of Applied Psychology, Elsevier, 2003, 53*(1)
- Wieviorka, M. & Wolton, D. (1987). *Terrorisme à la une : Média, terrorisme et démocratie*. (Au vif du sujet). Paris : Gallimard
- Zywica, J. & Danowski, J. (2008). The Faces of Facebookers: Investigating Social Enhancement and Social Compensation Hypotheses; Predicting Facebook™ and Offline Popularity from Sociability and Self-Esteem, and Mapping the Meanings of Popularity with Semantic Networks, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, Volume 14, Issue 1, Pages 1–34*

CONTACT

adelaide.blavier@ulg.ac.be
marine.decuyper@student.uliege.be