

Revisiting the Faking Issues of the CRT-A with Koreans

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Abstract

The Conditional Reasoning Test for Aggression (CRT-A) is an implicit assessment for aggression. The CRT-A is known to be resistant to response distortion. We revisited LeBreton et al.'s (2007) studies on the faking issues of the CRT-A with the Korean population. We divided 488 Korean college students into three groups and asked them to take the CRT-A under different instructions. Results showed that Koreans were able to identify aggressive alternatives when the purpose of the test was fully disclosed, and the students were less likely to select aggressive alternatives if they were told that the CRT-A was a personality test.

Keywords: CRT-A, Aggression, Faking, Implicit measure, Assessment

1. Introduction

Individuals routinely perform activities based on what they believe is right or appropriate. This judgment, belief, or idea is not the same for everybody. Even in the same situation, people can make different judgments, and they act accordingly. Even if the actions or judgments may not seem acceptable or reasonable to others, most individuals are ready to justify their actions. Thus, aggressive individuals and non-aggressive individuals make different decisions in similar situations, and both parties have reasons for their actions that seem reasonable and rational to them. The reasoning biases that aggressive individuals use to make their actions appear rational and sensible are called "Justification Mechanisms" (JMs; [1]). James classified implicitly aggressive individuals' biases into six JMs (Table 1): hostile attribution bias, potency bias, retribution bias, victimization by powerful others bias, derogation of target bias, and social discounting bias. JMs are based on theory from previous research, not on only empirical results. James, McIntyre, Glisson, Green, Patton, LeBreton, et al. (2005) contends that JMs are in place for implicitly aggressive individuals' reasoning processes. These individuals are not only aggressive but also ready to justify their aggressive dispositions [2]. These processes tend to happen outside of their awareness. Based on the six JMs, CRT-Aggression (CRT-A) consists of 22 seemingly inductive reasoning items with three bogus items included for face validity. Each item has a short premise followed by four alternatives: One alternative is attractive to implicitly aggressive individuals, one is a pro-social alternative, and two are illogical alternatives. James and his colleagues validated the measure, which showed promising validity in predicting employee absenteeism; counterproductive behaviors such as a theft, sabotage, and work performance [3]; perception of injustice [4]; and obstructionism by basketball players [5].

Table 1. Justification Mechanisms for Aggression

1. Hostile attribution bias's core is an implicit assumption that (like oneself) people tend to be motivated by a desire to harm others (Anderson, 1994; Tedeschi & Nesler, 1993; Toch, 1993). This latent bias is instrumental in shaping conscious attempts to explain why others behave as they do. Such explanations show a strong predilection to attribute behavior to malevolent purpose and harmful intent (cf. Crick & Dodge & Coie, 1987). Even benign or friendly acts may be credited to hidden, hostile agendas designed to inflict harm. The attributions of hostile intent are central to the aggressive person's attempts to rationalize his or her own hostile behaviors as acts of self-defense intended to ward off physical or verbal attack.
2. Potency bias is grounded in the implicit assumption that interactions with others are contests to establish dominance versus submissiveness (Anderson, 1994; Gay, 1993; Millon, 1990). This bias unconsciously shapes framing; the actions of others pass through a perceptual prism primed to distinguish (a) strength, assertiveness, dominance, daring, fearlessness, and bravery from (b) weakness, impotence, submissiveness, timidity, compliance, and cowardice (James & Mazerolle, 2002). Such framing promotes reasoning that the use of aggression to dominate others demonstrates strength, bravery, control, and fearlessness. Not active person may thus rationalize aggression by reasoning (a) that aggression in an act of strength or bravery that gains respect from others and (b) that to show weakness is to invite powerful others to take advantage of you.
3. Retribution bias centers on an implicit assumption that exacting retribution is of greater consequence than preserving or maintain a relationship. This bias surfaces as a proclivity to favor retaliation as a more rational behavior than reconciliation (cf. Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Dodge, 1986; Laursen & Collins, 1994). For example, aggression is seen as justifiable if it is intended to restore or to exact retribution for a perceived wrong. Retaliation is thus assumed to be more reasonable than forgiveness, vindication appears more reasonable than reconciliation, and obtaining revenge appears more reasonable than maintaining a relationship. This bias often underlies justifications for aggression engendered by wounded pride, challenged self-esteem, and perceived disrespect (cf. Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996).
4. Victimization by powerful others bias has an a nucleus an implicit assumption that the powerful will inflict harm of the less powerful (Averill, 1993; Finnegan, 1997; Toch, 1993). This assumption underlies a conscious proclivity to see oneself as the victim of inequity, exploitation, injustice, and oppression by those who are more powerful in one's life (e.g., parents, teachers, supervisors, employing organizations, or institutions such as the Internal Revenue Service). Framing of events, hypotheses about cause and effect, and confirmatory searches for evidence both engender and reinforce inferences that people are being victimized by powerful others. This reasoning furnishes the foundation for justifying acts of aggression as warranted corrections of inequities or legitimate strikes against oppression.
5. Derogation of target bias consists of an unconscious tendency to characterize those one wishes to make (of has made) targets of aggression as evil, immoral, or untrustworthy (cf. Wright & Mischel, 1987). To infer or associate such traits with a target makes the target more deserving of aggression.
6. Social discounting bias has at heart an implicit assumption that social customs restrict free will and the opportunity to satisfy needs. Reasoning shaped by this latent bias reflects disdain for traditional ideals and conventional beliefs (cf. Finnegan, 1997; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998; Millon, 1990). For example, attempts to identify the most logically plausible causes of social events typically lean toward the cynical and critical. Reasoning will further evidence a lack of sensitivity, empathy, and concern for social customs, often accompanied by the absence of rational prohibitions against behaving in socially unorthodox ways. Socially deviant behavior intended to harm others is rationalized by inferring that it allows one to attain freedom of expression, release from the shackles of social customs, and liberation from confining social relationship.

Sources: James, R. L., McIntyre, M. D., Glisson, C. A., Green, P. D., Patton, T. W., LeBreton, J. M., Frost, B. C., Russell, S. M., Mitchell, T. R. & Williams, L. J. (2005). A Conditional Reasoning Measure for Aggression. *Organizational Research Methods*, 8, 69-99.

One of the strengths of the CRT-A is that it does not allow faking or responses that are simply socially acceptable [6-7] while self-reported measures do [8-9]. Therefore, when researchers and practitioners use self-report measures, they find that socially desirable responses are not valid for assessing one's personality, especially when they are looking for non-aggressive employees. For instance, one study by Rosse, Stecher, Miller, and Levin (1998) found a significant difference between the neuroticism scores of job applicants and those of job incumbents [10]. As job applicants want to impress their prospective employers, they tend to respond in a socially desirable way while job incumbents who already have a job are less likely to do so.

LeBreton, Barksdale, Robin, and James (2007) also investigated faking issues associated with the CRT-A. In two of their experimental conditions, the researchers revealed the purpose of the CRT-A: to identify

individuals who are unconsciously ready to justify their aggressive tendencies [6]. The first group was asked to respond in a most unfavorable way, and the respondents were able to select aggressive responses. Their scores were significantly higher than those of the control group (i.e., those following the normal instructions). The other group was also told that the CRT-A is used to identify aggressive individuals and to find the most logical alternatives. Unexpectedly this group selected more aggressive alternatives than the control group. Even after the participants were told that the CRT-A was meant to identify aggressive individuals, when they were asked to select the most logical alternative they selected aggressive alternatives more often than the control group. LeBreton et al. (2007) suggested that a small number of participants in the experimental group may have adopted a different definition of aggression (e.g., assertiveness vs. hostility) [6]. If this is true then if researchers just tell participants that the CRT-A is a personality assessment and that they should select the most logical response, the results may not be the same. To further investigate the faking issues of the CRT-A with different instructions, this study modified the instructions and re-tested with individuals outside English speaking countries. We formulated the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1) The mean score of experimental group 1 (i.e., instructed to select aggressive responses from the personality measure that appeared to be a reasoning test) will be higher than that of the control group (normal instruction).

Hypothesis 2) The mean scores of experimental group 2 (i.e., instructed to select the most logical response from the personality measure that appeared to be a reasoning test) will be lower than that of the control group (normal instruction).

2. Research Method

2.1. Participants

Across three groups, 547 Korean college students participated in this study. For a cross-cultural comparison, students who had lived in foreign countries for more than 36 months were excluded for a further analysis. In addition, following the guidelines of the CRT-A, participants who selected more than five illogical alternatives were dropped. This led the final usable data to 488 cases. The control group was composed of 271 Korean college students; 41% were male and their mean age was 20.9 years. One hundred and ten Korean college students were assigned to the first experimental group; 37% were male and 20.4 years was their mean age. In the second experiment group there were 107 Korean college students; 39% were male and their mean was 20.3 years.

2.2. Procedure

2.2.1. Translation

The most popular translation process, shown to be successful since the 1960's, is back-translation [11-13]. The author of this study, whose native language is Korean and who is familiar with the CRT-A, translated the original measure into Korean. In addition, to enhance the reliability of the Korean CRT-A for Korean native speakers, a Korean college professor was asked to review the Korean CRT-A. Then a third person, one who is completely unfamiliar with the English CRT-A measure and blind to the purpose of the study, was asked to back-translate it into English. Finally, a native English-speaking student familiar with the CRT-A was asked to check the equivalency of the meanings in the original version of the CRT-A and the back-translated version. Any discrepancies between the Korean CRT-A and the original CRT-A was resolved by changing the wording in the Korean CRT-A.

2.2.2. Conditional Reasoning Test for Aggression

The CRT-A consists of twenty-five items with three bogus items. For each item, premises and reasoning tasks are followed by four possible solutions (alternatives). Aggressive alternatives were scored +1 and pro-

social and illogical alternatives were scored 0. High scores indicate highly aggressive personalities. A sample item is presented in Table 2. In this question, alternatives a) and c) are illogical responses. The pro-social alternative from the sample item is b) “It offers no way to settle a conflict in a friendly manner,” and the aggressive alternative is d) “People have to wait until they are attacked before they can strike,” which is based upon the retribution bias. Implicitly aggressive individuals tend to believe that retaliation is more effective than reconciliation for maintaining a relationship. From an aggressive individual’s perspective, a problem of the “eye for an eye” approach is that they need to wait to attack others rather than try to resolve the issue in a friendly manner. As the retribution bias is embedded in the cognitive processes of unconsciously aggressive individuals’ cognitive processes, they think their beliefs are reasonable and sound; thus, they justify their belief in retribution.

The control group took the CRT-A following the normal instructions and the participants in experimental group 1 took the CRT-A following the instructions: “The CRT-A appears as a reasoning test, but the test actually assesses individuals’ underlying personality (i.e. aggression). Please select an aggressive alternative from each of the CRT-A items.” Experimental group 2 took the CRT-A following the instruction “The CRT-A appears as a reasoning test, but the test actually assesses individuals’ underlying personality. Please select the most logically appealing alternative.”

Table 2. Illustrative Conditional Reasoning Problems

The old saying, “an eye for eye,” which means that if someone hurts you, then you should hurt them back. If you are hit, then you should hit back. If some burns your house, then you should burn their house.

Which of the following is the biggest problem with the “eye for eye” plan?

- a. It tells people to “turn the other cheek.”
- b. It offers no way to settle a conflict in a friendly manner.
- c. It can be used only at certain times of the year.
- d. People have to wait until they are attacked before they can strike.

Sources: James, R. L., McIntyre, M. D., Glisson, C. A., Green, P. D., Patton, T. W., LeBreton, J. M., Frost, B. C., Russell, S. M., Mitchell, T. R. & Williams, L. J. (2005). A Conditional Reasoning Measure for Aggression. *Organizational Research Methods*, 8, 69-99.

3. Results

The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and planned comparison were used to detect significant mean score differences between the control group and the experimental groups. There was a significant main effect on the CRT-A scores between the control group and the experimental groups: $F(2, 487) = 417.14, p < .001$ (Table 3). Hypothesis 1 was supported; there was a statistically significant mean score difference on the CRT-A between the control group and the first experimental group, $F(1, 380) = 677.96, p < .001$. When the participants were told the true purpose of the test, they were able to identify aggressive alternatives. Hypothesis 2 was also supported because the mean scores between the control group and the second experimental group were statistically and significantly different: $F(1, 377) = 4.43, p < .05$. Once participants were told the test assessed one’s personality, they were less likely to choose aggressive alternatives in the direction LeBreton et al. expected.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for the CRT-A

Group Type	N	M	SD	F
Control Group	271	6.08	2.15	
Experimental Group1	110	14.02	3.73	417.14***
Experimental Group 2	107	5.56	2.16	

Note. *** $p < .001$

4. Discussion

This study revisited LeBreton et al.'s (2007) study to investigate the faking issues of the CRT-A [6]. The results demonstrated that when the purpose of the CRT-A was fully revealed, participants were able to select the same aggressive alternatives just as English speakers showed in LeBreton et al.'s study; Koreans in the first experiment group scored significantly higher than Koreans in the control group. The seemingly aggressive alternatives to English speakers also seemed to be aggressive responses to non-English speakers. Furthermore, when Koreans were told that the CRT-A was a personality survey and that they should find the most logical response, they were less likely to choose aggressive alternatives. This was in the opposite direction of the findings of LeBreton et al. This study strengthens LeBreton et al.'s suggestions that in their study participants seemed to understand aggression in a positive way so that after the word aggression was dropped and they were told that it was just a personality survey, participants were less likely to choose aggressive alternatives in this study.

This study strengthens the faking resistance aspect of the CRT-A with people from different countries. Koreans were able to identify aggressive or unfavorable alternatives when they were told to do so. Thus, this study with the Korean CRT-A will provide a new approach to indirectly assess aggressiveness. Limitations of this study are that this study may not provide comparability of the KCRT-A with the original CRT-A. Future studies need to explore a factor structure of the KCRT-A and whether or not it confirms the factor structure of the original CRT-A. Furthermore, validity of the Korean CRT-A needs to be investigated with the Korean population. The KCRT-A needs to be validated in predicting passive aggression, such as lying, stealing, sabotage, absenteeism, or grievances, with the Korean population.

5. Conclusion

This study provides useful information in understand faking issues with the personality assessments. Response distortion on the self-reported measures is prevalent and respondents can fake their responses if they are motivated to do so [14-17]. This could be due to the transparency of items on the self-reported personality survey. Even if participants are not told the measures are a personality survey they can easily find out the purpose of the survey if they read the items on the self-reported personality measures (i.e., NEO-PI). Conversely, people cannot see through the purpose of each item on the CRT-A nor they know the CRT-A is a personality survey. Thus, they cannot distort their responses on the CRT-A. Once they understand the purpose of the CRT-A, they are less likely to choose aggressive alternatives in order to present themselves in a socially desirable way. Therefore, if the purpose of the CRT-A is not fully known, the CRT-A will remain resistant to faking.

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