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**RADICAL ATTITUDES MODERATE THE RELATIONSHIPS OF
AGGRESSIVENESS AND TOLERANCE WITH EMOTION
REGULATION**

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Abstract

In the previous study based on review of different cognitive components that could be lead to radical attitudes we suggested six cognitive components of radical attitudes: the propensity to defend one's opinion at any cost, black-and-white thinking, impulsive decision making, the idea of the acceptability of a public expression of aggression and interest in its public manifestations, self-confidence, the belief in easy correctability of personal mistakes. The aim of the study was to reveal relationships between radical attitudes and cognitive strategies of emotion regulation under stressful situation as well as possible moderation effects of radical attitudes on the relationships of aggressiveness, impulsivity and tolerance with emotion regulation strategies. 219 adults 18-60 years old filled Radical Attitudes Questionnaire the Tolerance Index, the Bass-Perry Aggression Questionnaire, Barrett Impulsivity Scale, Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire and also evaluated their readiness to commit extreme actions for various reasons. According to the results, radical attitudes are related both to readiness to extreme actions and to higher other-blame and lower ruminations, acceptance and putting into perspective under stressful situations. Moderation analysis allows to suggest that radical attitudes might facilitate expression of aggressiveness in extreme behavior, expression of impulsivity in other-blaming and suppress expression of tolerance in positive reappraisal, focus on planning and low catastrophizing.

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Keywords: Radical attitudes, cognitive strategies of emotion regulation, aggressiveness, impulsivity, tolerance.



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1. Introduction

Contemporary society with its rapid changes, indefinite and transitory rules and boundaries is characterized by acute interest to “normative” forms of thinking, emotion regulation and behavior that could be related to spread of radical forms of ideologies and behaviors that could transform to such extreme forms as public acceptance of support for aggressive actions, extremism, terrorism etc. Based on review of different cognitive components that could lead to radical attitudes we suggested to define radicalism (Rasskazova, Emelin, & Tkhostov, 2018) as a personal style that manifests itself in interaction with other people in that in certain social situations only one option (actions, behaviors, events) is considered as correct and acceptable, and a person is ready to defend it at any cost, including aggressively and with the use of extreme action.

2. Problem Statement

Six cognitive components were suggested in the model: the propensity to defend one’s opinion at any cost, black-and-white thinking, impulsive decision making, the idea of the acceptability of a public expression of aggression and interest in its public manifestations, self-confidence, the belief in easy correctability of personal mistakes. Previous research supported factor validity of the new 54-items of Radical Attitudes Questionnaire and its discriminant validity. Reliability of scales varied from .62 to .79 for different components. Five out of seven components (except for black-and-white thinking) were related to subjective readiness for extreme actions for their beliefs and values, and four out of seven (opinion defending, acceptability of expressing aggression, self-confidence, low cost of error) remained after statistical control for tolerance impulsiveness or aggressiveness and respondents.

3. Research Questions

This study suggests that the role of radical attitudes in self-regulation may be merely indirect as a direct one. High radical attitudes might precipitate people to be ready for aggressive and intolerant actions and to more easily and quickly express their aggressiveness and deficit of reflection in some behavior.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to reveal relationships between radical attitudes and cognitive strategies of emotion regulation under stressful situation as well as possible moderation effects of radical attitudes on the relationships of aggressiveness, impulsivity and tolerance with emotion regulation strategies.

It was **hypothesized** that radical attitudes would buffer relationships of tolerance with positive reappraisal, putting into perspective and refocus on planning while facilitating relationships between aggressiveness, readiness for extreme behavior and other blaming.

5. Research Methods

219 adults living in Moscow or Moscow region (83 males, 126 females, 10 didn't report gender) 18-60 years old (mean age 37.58 ± 13.92 years old) filled Radical Attitudes Questionnaire (Rasskazova et al., 2018), the Tolerance Index (Soldatova & Shaigerova, 2008), the Bass-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992), Barrett Impulsivity Scale (Patten, Stanford, & Barratt, 1995), Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2002) and also evaluated their readiness to commit extreme actions for various reasons (Swann, Gomez, Seyle, Morales, & Huici, 2009; Rasskazova et al., 2018). In this study we used total scores on aggressiveness, tolerance and impulsivity as psychological factors of choosing forms of communication with others under stressful circumstances and in the situations provoking aggressive or extreme forms of behavior for some reasons. Six scales of Radical Attitudes Questionnaire (Opinion Defending, Impulsivity in Decisions, Acceptability of Public Aggression, Self-Confidence, "Black-And-White" Thinking, Low Price of Mistake scales) were combined to create the general index (Cronbach's alpha was .74).

Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Garnefski et al., 2002) is a measure of different cognitive strategies of emotion regulation under stressful circumstances. It includes nine scales: Self-blame, Refocus on Planning, Positive Reappraisal, Catastrophizing, Acceptance, Rumination, Positive Refocusing, Putting into Perspective, Other-blame.

To assess subjective readiness to extreme actions we used the approach of items-descriptions from social psychological studies (for instance, Swann et al., 2009) but asked participants to appraise likelihood of each behavior (e.g., "I could sacrifice my life", "I'm not hesitating to get involved in a fight", "I can go on to harm other people") for four different reasons (to insist own opinion, beliefs, values; to help other people; to help friends and relatives; to restore justice, stand up for undeservedly offended; Cronbach's alphas .79-.85)

Data were processed using correlation and moderation analyses in SPSS Statistics 23.0.

6. Findings

6.1. Correlations of radicalism, aggressiveness, impulsivity and tolerance to subjective readiness to extreme behavior and emotion regulation

Any forms of extreme behavior are more typical for males than for females ($t=2.24-2.36$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2=.02-.05$). Females are more frequently ruminate about stressful situation ($t=-3.41$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.05$). There are no other differences in emotion regulation strategies between males and females. Elder people are less ready for extreme actions to insist their opinion or for their friends, also they rarely ruminate and self-blame under stress (Table 01). However, all these correlations are weak.

Both readiness to extreme actions to insist one's opinion and for friends are higher in those with more radical attitudes and higher aggressiveness. Tolerance is related to the readiness to extreme actions for other people while impulsivity is weakly related to the readiness to extreme actions for the truth only.

Radical attitudes are related to lower ruminations but higher other blaming under stress. There are also weak negative correlations between radicalism, acceptance and putting into perspective. The more aggressive people are, the more frequently they catastrophize and blame others and less frequently reappraise situation positively under stress. As aggressiveness, impulsivity is related no catastrophization

and other blaming as well as lower positive reappraisal and refocus on planning. Tolerance correlates to positive reappraisal, acceptance, rumination, putting into perspective and less catastrophization and other-blaming.

Table 01. Correlations of radicalism, aggressiveness, impulsivity and tolerance to subjective readiness to extreme behavior and emotion regulation

| Subjective readiness to extreme behavior and emotion regulation | Age | Radicalism | Aggressiveness | Impulsivity | Tolerance |
|---|--------|------------|----------------|-------------|-----------|
| Readiness to extreme actions for the truth | -.21** | .40** | .36** | .17* | .02 |
| Readiness to extreme actions for the others | -.11 | .07 | .10 | .04 | .20** |
| Readiness to extreme actions for friends | -.16* | .18** | .20** | .03 | .07 |
| Readiness to extreme actions for the justice | -.08 | .12 | .15* | .07 | .13 |
| CERQ – Refocus on Planning | -.01 | .11 | -.01 | -.18** | .02 |
| CERQ – Positive Reappraisal | -.13 | -.04 | -.18** | -.17* | .30** |
| CERQ – Catastrophizing | .05 | .02 | .36** | .30** | -.16* |
| CERQ – Self-blame | -.18* | -.06 | .12 | -.02 | .11 |
| CERQ – Acceptance | -.03 | -.13* | .03 | .12 | .22** |
| CERQ – Rumination | -.14* | -.25** | .09 | -.01 | .17* |
| CERQ – Positive Refocusing | .07 | .08 | .00 | .13* | .05 |
| CERQ – Putting into Perspective | -.03 | -.15* | -.09 | -.08 | .26** |
| CERQ – Other-blame | -.12 | .29** | .48** | .44** | -.29** |

*Note - $p < .05$, ** - $p < .01$.

6.2. Radical attitudes as a moderator of relationships between psychological factors, emotion regulation and extreme behavior

Moderation analysis reveals (Table 02) that radical attitudes are not only related to higher readiness to extreme actions for the truth but they also facilitate positive effect of aggressiveness on such readiness (simple regressions: $\beta = .21$, $p < .05$ for those with low radical attitudes and $\beta = .32$, $p < .01$ for those with high radical attitudes). Moreover, the relationship between impulsivity and other-blaming is stronger in those having radical attitudes (simple regressions: $\beta = .31$, $p < .01$ for those with low radical attitudes and $\beta = .53$, $p < .01$ for those with high radical attitudes)

On the contrary, it seems that radical attitudes could buffer negative effect of aggressiveness on putting into perspective that is prominent only in those with low radical attitudes (simple regressions: $\beta = -.27$, $p < .01$ for those with low radical attitudes and $\beta = .19$, $p < .05$ for those with high radical attitudes). The positive effect of tolerance on positive reappraisal is also lower in people with radical attitudes (simple regressions: $\beta = .39$, $p < .01$ for those with low radical attitudes and $\beta = .20$, $p < .05$ for those with high radical

attitudes). Similarly, negative relationship between tolerance and catastrophizing as well as positive relationship between tolerance and refocus on planning disappear in those with high radical attitudes (simple regressions: $\beta=-.29, p<.01$ and $\beta=.21, p<.05$, respectively, for those with low radical attitudes and $\beta=-.06, p>.20$ and $\beta=-.09, p>.20$, respectively for those with high radical attitudes).

It is interesting that radicalism is related to lower ruminations only in those with high impulsivity (simple regressions: $\beta=-.08, p>.20$ for those with low impulsivity and $\beta=-.34, p<.01$ for those with high impulsivity).

Subjective readiness to extreme actions for others and for justice were predicted by male gender ($\beta=-.15, R^2=3.3\%, p<.05$ and $\beta=-.17, R^2=3.5\%, p<.05$, respectively) and higher tolerance only ($\beta=.21, \Delta R^2=4.2\%, p<.01$ and $\beta=.15, \Delta R^2=2.1\%, p<.05$, respectively) and there were no moderation effects. Similarly, readiness to extreme actions for friends was predicted by male gender, younger age ($\beta=-.22$ and $\beta=-.14, R^2=7.4\%, p<.01$) and higher aggressiveness ($\beta=.15, \Delta R^2=2.2\%, p<.05$).

Self-blame is predicted by younger age ($\beta=-.18, R^2=3.3\%, p<.05$), higher aggressiveness and lower impulsivity ($\beta=.18$ and $\beta=-.17$, respectively, $\Delta R^2=3.0\%, p<.05$) and these effects are not moderated by radical attitudes. Acceptance is predicted by female gender ($\beta=.15, R^2=2.3\%, p<.05$) and higher tolerance ($\beta=.19, \Delta R^2=3.5\%, p<.01$). Positive refocusing is not predicted by psychological variables.

Table 02. Radical attitudes as a moderator of relationships between psychological factors, emotion regulation and extreme behavior: results of moderation analysis

| Independent variables | Readiness to extreme actions for the truth | Refocus on planning | Positive reappraisal | Catastrophizing | Ruminations | Putting into perspective | Other blame |
|--|--|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Step 1 | | | | | | | |
| Age | -.21** | -.11 | .00 | .00 | .26** | .09 | -.07 |
| Gender | -.18* | -.03 | -.15* | .06 | -.18** | -.05 | -.10 |
| <i>Step 1</i> ΔR^2 | 8.7%** | 1.3% | 2.2% | .4% | 8.6%** | 1.0% | 1.8% |
| Step 2 | | | | | | | |
| Radicalism | .32** | .16* | .05 | -.13 | -.29** | -.07 | .08 |
| Aggressiveness | .24** | - | - | .35** | .28** | .03 | .27** |
| Impulsivity | - | -.20** | -.20* | .18* | -.13 | - | .30** |
| Tolerance | .19** | .06 | .30** | -.09 | - | .23** | -.20** |
| <i>Step 2</i> ΔR^2 | 17.4%** | 5.3%* | 11.7%** | 19.5%** | 8.9%** | 6.2%** | 33.3%** |
| Step 3 | | | | | | | |
| Interactions between radicalism and aggressiveness | .14* | - | - | - | - | .16* | - |
| Interactions between radicalism and impulsivity | - | - | - | - | -.14* | - | .21** |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| Interactions between radicalism and tolerance | - | -.15* | -.14* | .18** | - | - | - |
| Step 3 ΔR^2 | 1.6%* | 2.0%* | 1.7%* | 2.8%** | 1.9%* | 2.3%* | 4.4%** |

* - $p < .05$, ** - $p < .01$.

7. Conclusion

In general, radical attitudes are related not only to the readiness for extreme actions (for the truth and for friends) but also to higher other-blame and lower ruminations, acceptance and putting into perspective under stressful situations. We could suggest that radical attitudes serve as a “defense” in stressful situations facilitating more active behavioral position at the price of not considering perspective and the problem too much. Interestingly, at least some of cognitive “mistakes” described in the cognitive therapy and included in our formulation of radicalism (e.g., “black-and-white” thinking, insisting opinion at any price etc.) seem to subjectively simplify the world by creating stereotypes in perception (Beck, 2011). Instead person with radical attitudes hold external locus of control (Rotter, 1966) easily blaming other in the problems. It should be noted that other blame is also related to aggressiveness, impulsiveness and low tolerance suggesting that there is general mechanism of poor emotion regulation underlying blaming others but not self under stress. However, correlations between radical attitudes and ruminations, acceptance, putting into perspective are not explained by other psychological factors included in the study.

Radical attitudes seem to facilitate relationships between aggressiveness and readiness to extreme behavior, impulsivity and other-blaming and buffer the relationship between tolerance and positive reappraisal, refocus on planning and low catastrophizing. These data are in line with our hypothesis about that radical attitudes may lead to easier expression of aggressiveness in extreme behavioral forms and to harder expression of tolerance in “productive” forms of emotion regulation as positive reappraisal, focus on planning and low catastrophizing. However, result that negative correlation between aggressiveness and putting into perspective change to positive in those with high radical attitudes allows to primarily suggest that some cognitive aspects of radical thinking (including instating opinion, self-confidence, readiness of mistakes might prevent an impact of aggressiveness on decision-making changing them to less emotionally-based ones.

Thus, radical attitudes are related both to readiness to extreme actions and to higher other-blame and lower ruminations, acceptance and putting into perspective under stressful situations. Moderation analysis allows to suggest that radical attitudes might facilitate expression of aggressiveness in extreme behavior, expression of impulsivity in other-blaming and suppress expression of tolerance in positive reappraisal, focus on planning and low catastrophizing.

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