

Abstract

The relationship between attributional style and clinical depression was well established. The present study aimed to investigate whether attributional style also predicts current depressed mood through belief inflexibility as a mediator in a non-clinical sample. Belief flexibility was conceptualised as the ability to utilise evidences in making attribution, as measured by the Bias Against Disconfirmatory Evidence task. Two hundred and ninety-seven university undergraduate students completed a measurement battery including depressive mood scales and attributional style questionnaire, and two computer tasks that measures cognitive flexibility and belief flexibility. While the results supported that attributional style predicts belief inflexibility and depressed mood, belief flexibility was not found to be associated with depressive mood. Alternative explanations, including methodological limitations and modification of the theoretical model were suggested. Present findings might imply that attributional style is associated with automatic negative processing biases commonly observed among patients with depression. Further studies investigating the effect of attributional style on automatic and effortful information processing, and how biases affect depressive mood are expected.

Keywords: attributional style, belief flexibility, depressed mood, explanatory flexibility