

Abstract

Abstract of thesis entitled:

Background. Based on clinical observation and some initial research findings, externalising or self-serving attributional style has been a candidate of existing theoretical models of persecutory delusions. However, the surge of scientific studies over the decades did not seem to foster a more unified picture of their association. Despite continuous research effort, solution has yet to be reached. This study argued that the current attributional style measurements might have missed out the essence of paranoid thinking as an idiosyncratic process. Personal Significance (PS) items were therefore constructed based on the Internal, Personal and Situational Questionnaire (IPSAQ). They altogether examined the effect of personally significant events on attributions.

Method. Twenty-four patients with persecutory delusions and twenty-four matched healthy control individuals were recruited in this study. All participants were administered the IPSAQ with PS items, and several clinical and cognitive measures. Participants were also invited to complete a seven-day Daily Diary Form for Attribution (DDFA), a pilot measure on attributions.

Results. The results did not suggest any attributional biases in patients with persecutory delusions based on the conventional measurements on IPSAQ. Upon hierarchical linear modelling, healthy control participants but not the patients showed a strong tendency to make external attributions for personally impactful events.

Conclusion. Evidence of a general attributional tendency in patients with persecutory delusions was not identified in current analysis. Using the information provided by PS items, group interaction on how one will responds to personally significant events was noted. This study provided original and novel findings that demonstrated the necessity to consider personal significance when studying attributional tendency in persecutory delusions.