The Role of Situational Attribution Training in Reducing Automatic In-Group Stereotyping in Females

Authors : Olga Mironiuk, Małgorzata Kossowska

Abstract : The aim of the present study was to investigate the influence of Situational Attribution Training on reducing automatic in-group stereotyping in females. The experiment was conducted with the control of age and level of prejudice. 90 female participants were randomly assigned to two conditions: experimental and control group (each group was also divided into younger- and older-aged condition). Participants from the experimental condition were subjected to more extensive training. In the first part of the experiment, the experimental group took part in the first session of Situational Attribution Training while the control group participated in the Grammatical Training Control. In the second part of the research both groups took part in the Situational Attribution Training (which was considered as the second training session for the experimental group and the first one for the control condition). The training procedure was based on the descriptions of ambiguous situations which could be explained using situational or dispositional attributions. The participant's task was to choose the situational explanation from two alternatives, out of which the second one presented the explanation based on neutral or stereotypically associated with women traits. Moreover, the experimental group took part in the third training session after two- day time delay, in order to check the persistence of the training effect. The main hypothesis stated that among participants taking part in the more extensive training, the automatic in-group stereotyping would be less frequent after having finished training sessions. The effectiveness of the training was tested by measuring the response time and the correctness of answers: the longer response time for the examples where one of two possible answers was based on the stereotype trait and higher correctness of answers was considered to be a proof of the training effectiveness. As the participants' level of prejudice was controlled (using the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory), it was also assumed that the training effect would be weaker for participants revealing a higher level of prejudice. The obtained results did not confirm the hypothesis based on the response time: participants from the experimental group responded faster in case of situations where one of the possible explanations was based on stereotype trait. However, an interesting observation was made during the analysis of the answers' correctness: regardless the condition and age group affiliation, participants made more mistakes while choosing the situational explanations when the alternative was based on stereotypical trait associated with the dimension of warmth. What is more, the correctness of answers was higher in the third training session for the experimental group in case when the alternative of situational explanation was based on the stereotype trait associated with the dimension of competence. The obtained results partially confirm the effectiveness of the training.

Keywords : female, in-group stereotyping, prejudice, situational attribution training
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