

Assessing the role of hostile attribution in liking anger to aggressive behavior in driving context

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*Este trabalho foi desenvolvido com o apoio da Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia
– UIDB/00443/2020, Centro de Investigação Interdisciplinar em Justiça*



Abstract

Aggressive behaviors have serious social, economic, and emotional consequences. Prior research has highlighted the heterogeneous nature of aggression and its situational stability. Within this scope, aggressive driving behavior is understood as a specific manifestation of aggression, and in a dynamic environment as driving, cognitive processes, such as attribution, may play an essential role in adopting aggressive responses.

Different Social Information Processing (SIP) models have been developed to explain individual differences in aggressive behavior, empathizing the central role of hostile attribution bias (HAB) – tendency to interpret the intent of others as hostile when social context cues are ambiguous. Nevertheless, only a limited number of studies have examined the link between Hostile Attribution Bias and aggression among adults, with even fewer focusing in driving context, and how the relationship between anger and aggressive driving behaviors can be mediated by HAB.

Given this background, and using Social Information Processing as framework, this study, conducted with 278 drivers, aims to analyze i) the link between anger, hostile attribution and aggressive behavior within driving context; and ii) the mediating effect of hostile attribution in the relationship between anger and driving aggressive behavior. Results demonstrated a positive association between Hostile Attribution Bias, anger, and enactment of an aggressive responses. Moreover, hostile attribution partially mediates the relationship between anger and the display of an aggressive responses.

Results will be discussed considering the literature of the domain, namely Social Information Processing and the integration of negative emotions in this Model, emphasizing the importance of cognitive behavioral interventions to prevent aggressive driving behavior.