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Does Spirituality Affect Your Amount of Regret?

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INTRODUCTION

Regret is a common emotion that people experience when they reflect on their past decisions and realize that the outcomes could have been different had they made a different choice (Beike, Markman & Karadogan, 2009; Kahneman & Tversky, 1982; Roese & Summerville, 2007). Every decision, no matter how significant or important it is, may lead to an experience of regret. Current research intends to identify factors that may intensify (or mitigates) one's experience of regret.

Prior research suggests failed actions (e.g., changing an initially correct answer on a multiple-choice exam to a wrong answer), results in more regret than failed inactions (e.g., sticking to the wrong answer and missing the question) (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007; Zeelenberg, Van dijk, & Manstead, 1998).

Subsequent work challenged the generality of this action affect demonstrating that greatest life regrets stems from the (failed) inactions (Connolly & Reb, 2003; Gilovich & Medvec, 1995; Koehler & Prentice, 2003). When people are asked to reflect on their past experiences, it is the inactions they report regretting more (i.e., "I wish I spent more time before my dad passed away").

Research suggests that spirituality has a positive effect on emotional wellbeing, especially with regards to managing depression and anxiety (Brown, Carney, Parrish & Klem, 2013; Yamada, Lukoff, Lim, & Mancuso, 2020). Spiritual Beliefs correlates positively with Hope/Optimism, which supports the notion that spiritual people have a more positive attitude towards life (Silvia & Pereira, 2017). This positive world view could potentially play a part in mitigating the negative effects of regret.

HYPOTHESES

Through this research, we will explore the role of spirituality on the amount of regret one may experience stemming from (failed) actions and (failed) inactions.

- What hurts people the most?: Regret stemming from actions or inactions?—We expect to replicate the robust action effect. That is, participants will report experiencing regret more from their failed actions.
- Is there a difference in the amount of regret experienced based on spirituality? In general, we hypothesize that higher levels of spirituality will reduce the amount of regret experienced.
- Will the amount of regret experienced from actions and inactions change as a function of one's spirituality? We hypothesize that less-spiritual participants will report experiencing more regret when the negative outcomes stem from their actions.

METHOD

Participants

Sixty students at Governors State University will be recruited in exchange for course credit.

Materials

First, participants will be asked to complete Intrinsic Spirituality Scale (ISS) (Allport & Ross, 1967). Then, they will be presented with a stock market scenario, adopted from Kahneman and Tversky (1982), in which they will imagine as if they were losing money as a result of changing the company they invested (actions) vs keeping (inactions). Following the scenario participants will respond several questions along a 7-point scale (1= None at all, 9= Very much) to rate their post decisional emotions.

Design

Participants were randomly assigned to conditions of a 2 (Spirituality: low vs. high) x 2 (Decision Type: Actions vs. Inactions) between-subjects factorial design.

Procedure

On arrival at the lab, participants will receive a booklet containing all the instructions and tasks that were relevant for their participation. The participants will be presented with a scenario in which they were required to imagine as if they invested stocks in a company. All participants will be told that they will lose \$1,200.

The manipulation of Decision Type will be achieved by having them imagine losing money either as a result of changing companies (failed action) or deciding to keep the same company (failed inaction).

Following the scenario, all the participants rated the extent to which they would experience regret, disappointment, personal responsibility for the outcome, the degree to which they had the opportunity to prevent the outcome in the past.

DESIGN

Participants were randomly assigned to conditions of a 2 (Spirituality: low vs. high) x 2 (Decision Type: Actions vs. Inactions) between-subjects factorial design.

Results



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