

Persecutory delusion is a common subtype of delusions characterised by anticipation of threat. Since paranoia is an idiosyncratic experience, previous research studying the phenomenology of persecutory delusions has been centred around the context of the individual's anomalous and paranoid experience. However, the present research focused on the individual's appraisal of everyday experiences which are not necessarily related to content of persecution, attempting to explore psychological mechanisms involved beyond the context of paranoia. The present study specifically investigated the cognitive appraisals of risks in everyday negative and neutral events.

The first objective of the present study was to revise a measurement of risk perception in perceived likelihood of events happening to oneself, and incorporated items that addressed risk perception on three additional dimensions. These additional dimensions included perceived intentionality, controllability, and harm. The second objective was to compare individuals with persecutory delusions with healthy controls. It was expected that paranoid individuals would perceive negative events to be more likely to happen to themselves. The third objective was to examine the difference between patients and healthy controls on the additional dimensions of risk perception. It was expected that patients would perceive events to be significantly more intentional and harmful, but less controllable.

The fourth objective was to investigate the relationship between risk perception and the clinical measures of persecutory delusions and depression. As observed in previous studies (e.g., Freeman et al., 2012), severity of persecutory delusions was expected to be positively associated with perceived likelihood ratings of negative events in patients. The role of

depression in affecting the different dimensions of risk perception was also studied. Lastly, the study aimed to compare patients with persecutory delusions and healthy controls on state anxiety and explore the effect of trait worry in risk perception.

The present study had several significant findings in relation to the study objectives. Paranoid patients were found to perceive negative social events to be more likely to happen and perceive negative personal events to be more intentional. They were also found to misattribute neutral events to be significantly more harmful. Regarding the affective processes involved in risk perception of everyday events, depression was found to have an important role to play. Depression severity was found to be predictive of the cognitive appraisals involved in risk perception. These cognitive and affective processes involved in risk perception of non paranoia-related events advanced the understanding of the underlying mechanisms in persecutory delusions. The findings also provided insights into future research on the cognitive-affective processes in the maintenance of persecutory delusions, as well as the development of psychological interventions for people with paranoia.