

Abstract

The relationship between auditory verbal hallucinations and negative affects has been examined using clinical interviews and questionnaires. Considering the momentary nature of the two constructs, moment-to-moment investigation is ecologically more valid in capturing their relationship. Previous literature theorized beliefs about voices as habitual cognitive appraisals impacting on behavioural responses to voices. However, how these beliefs contribute to the momentary affective responses to voices remains uncertain. The current study aimed at investigating (i) the moment-to-moment relationship between occurrence of auditory verbal hallucinations and affective disturbances and (ii) how one's interpretation of voices impacts on these temporal relationships. Frequent voice hearers ($n = 33$) with a diagnosis of a schizophrenia spectrum disorder were recruited from local hospitals. They were first interviewed to identify the omnipotent, malevolent and benevolent beliefs held towards voices. Their experiences of hearing voices and moment-by-moment positive and negative affects were then assessed at 10 random moments each day over a six-day period using the experience sampling method. The relationship between momentary experiences was analysed using multilevel regression modelling. Participants reported a higher level of negative affect during hallucinatory moments than non-hallucinatory moments. Time-lagged analyses revealed that negative affect intensified in the moment before and after hallucinations. Most participants considered their voices as omnipotent, malevolent, and tended to resist them. Contrary to the hypotheses, beliefs about voices did not moderate the relationship between hallucinations and affects, either at the same moment or across moments. This study informs the interaction between a person's psychotic experiences, affective processing and appraising style.

Keywords: auditory verbal hallucinations, momentary affects, beliefs about voices