

### **Abstract**

Dehumanization is a social perception that affects how people attribute humanness to others. Although dehumanization is found to be caused by social, psychological and demographic factors, the predictive power of cognitive factors on dehumanization is understudied. The present study examined the mediating effect of dehumanization on the relationship between ego-depletion and preference for harsh actions. Trait self control was hypothesized as a moderator to the ego-depletion—dehumanization relationship. Together, a moderated mediation model was tested. Participants (N = 120) were randomly assigned to the control group and the ego-depletion group. Stroop color-naming task was utilized to deplete the participants. Two vignettes of the stigmatized groups were used to test the generalizability of the proposed model. In short, vignette 1 described a criminal and vignette 2 described a new immigrant. Results suggest that ego-depleted participants were more likely to dehumanize stigmatized groups than normal participants across vignettes. Ego-depleted participants only preferred harsher actions on stigmatized groups in vignette 1. The mediating effect of dehumanization was only significant in vignette 1. The moderating effect of trait self control was nonsignificant across vignettes. Overall, our findings give insights on how dehumanization can be triggered by cognitive overload, and subsequently leading to preference for harsh actions.

*Keywords:* Ego-depletion, trait self-control, dehumanization, preference for harsh actions, stigmatized groups