

Understanding responses to disparaging racial humor: The role of social dominance, authoritarianism and egalitarianism

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INTRODUCTION

This research examines social dominance orientation (SDO), authoritarianism and egalitarianism as antecedents to feelings of offense and confrontation intentions among Chinese Singaporeans, a dominant racial group, upon exposure to jokes that disparage Malay and Indian Singaporeans, which are racial minority groups.

PROCEDURE

Participants: Chinese Singaporean students at National University of Singapore ($N = 216$, 65.7% female, $M_{age} = 21.25$, $SD_{age} = 3.34$) completed the study in person.

Design: Participants were randomly assigned to read jokes disparaging either the racial majority group or one of the two racial minority groups.

1. Social Dominance Orientation: We assessed *SDO* using a 16-item measure (Ho et al., 2015). Participants rated their support for each statement on a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly oppose, 7 = Strongly favor). Examples include “Some groups of people must be kept in their place,” and “No one group should dominate in society (reverse-coded).” Scores were averaged, with higher scores indicating greater support for group dominance ($\alpha = .88$, $M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.88$).

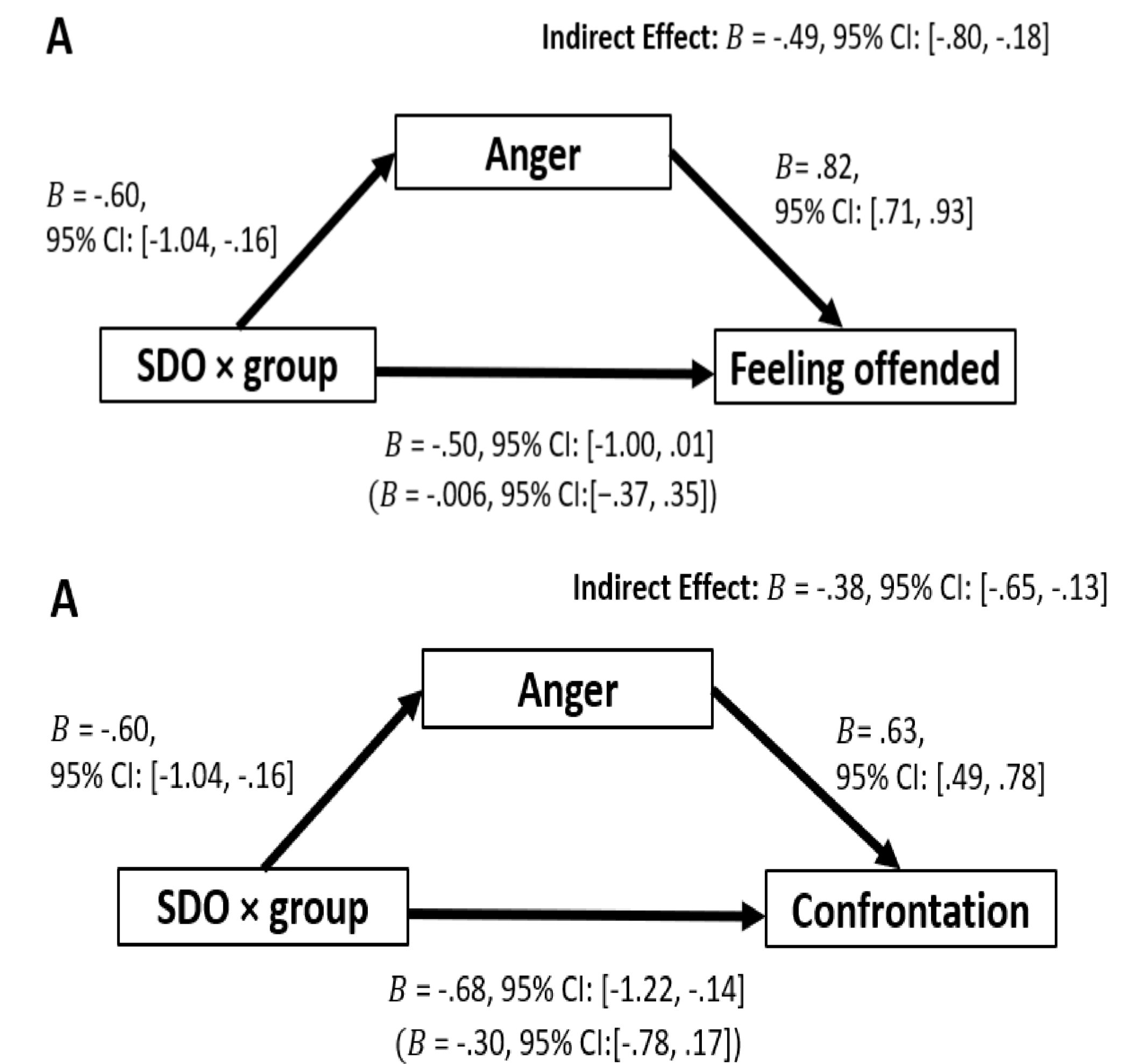
PROCEDURE (cont'd)

2. Authoritarianism. As prior research has demonstrated that these items tap into core values of authoritarianism such as conformity and tradition (Roets et al., 2015), and they are valid in Asian countries (Liem et al., 2011; Sagiv & Schwartz, 1995; See et al., 2020), *Authoritarianism* was measured using items in the Schwartz Value survey (Schwartz et al., 2012). Participants responded on a 6-point scale (1 = Not like me at all, 6 = Very much like me). An example is “Having order and stability in society is important to her.” Scores on these items were averaged, and higher scores reflected greater authoritarianism ($\alpha = .88$, $M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.63$).

3. Egalitarianism. Following prior research (e.g., van Berkel et al., 2015), *egalitarian values* were also assessed via items in the Schwartz Value survey (Schwartz et al., 2012). A sample item is “He thinks it is important that every person in the world have equal opportunities in life.” Scores on these items were averaged, and higher scores reflected greater endorsement of egalitarian values ($\alpha = .88$, $M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.63$).

Jokes. The following jokes were presented in a random order: “What’s the difference between garbage and a [race] person? Garbage gets picked up.”, and “Why do only 10% of [race] people make it to heaven? Because if they all went, it would be hell.” These jokes were adapted from previous research (e.g., Ford et al., 2020; Hodson et al., 2010).

RESULTS



GENERAL DISCUSSION

Relative to authoritarianism and egalitarianism, SDO was more reliable in predicting reactions to jokes disparaging racial minority groups. SDO consistently predicted greater feelings of offense and confrontation intentions for jokes targeting racial minority groups. This was due to greater anger.

REFERENCES

Available upon request