

Testing a methodological formula for consistent hit rates: Matching psi ability to task difficulty

ABSTRACT:

Background and Aims

Two studies investigate “task difficulty” as a moderator variable in experimental psi research, consistent with traditional learning theory.

Method and Results:

Study 1 measured Transliminality, Paranormal Belief (New Age Philosophy), Intuitive Thinking, and self-reported paranormal abilities and experiences (Anomalous Experiences Inventory), and one run of 25 trials of a newly published psi task using 124 hospitality professionals. The perceptual-personality variables (except intuitive thinking) conformed to a probabilistic Rasch hierarchy that itself corresponded to a Rasch hierarchy of self-reported paranormal abilities, experiences, and hit rate on the computerized task. Those scoring above mean-chance expectations on the psi task also scored suggestively higher on the Rasch measure of psi ability than those scoring at or below mean-chance expectations. Study 2 tested the predictive validity of these conclusions in a convenience sample of 153 hospitality professionals independent from Study 1. Participants completed the same measures from Study 1 and completed the same psi task. Those with expected trait ability inferred from the Rasch measure of psi ability (“targets”) scored significantly higher on hit rate on the computer task than “controls” with scores inferring low psi ability as inferred from the Rasch measure. Overall hit rate of the “targets” on the psi task was suggestive and in the predicted direction, albeit non-significant.

Conclusions

Cumulative results suggest validate “task difficulty” as a potentially important mediating variable neither previously considered nor controlled for in experimental psi studies. Matching participants’ estimated psi abilities for psi to the estimated difficulty level of specific psi tasks may overcome replication issues in parapsychology.

Keywords

Psi, Intuition, Rasch scaling, Sheep-goat effect, Moderator variables, Task difficulty

Published Work:

Lange, R., & Houran, J. (2015). “A picture is worth a thousand words:” perceptual-personality profiling via a free-response imagery task. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 17, 387-402.

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