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The Relationship Between Rumination and Task Switching

Abstract

Rumination is the tendency for perseverative thinking, characteristic of some clinical disorders like depression. There has been previous research exploring whether rumination is related to the perseverative thinking that is hypothesized to affect task-switching performance. Some evidence suggests that people who ruminate more have greater difficulty inhibiting prior task sets. The present study investigates this relationship further by assessing switch costs and response congruency effects as measures of perseveration in task switching. Subjects completed a shortened version of the Ruminative Responses Scale and then performed semantic categorization tasks on word stimuli in a task-switching context. Replicating previous results, there were reliable switch costs and response congruency effects on task-switching performance. However, rumination scores were not significantly correlated with any of the task-switching effects. This suggests that the cognitive mechanisms associated with perseveration in task switching might be different from those associated with the perseverative thinking exhibited by people with ruminative tendencies.

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