

# 认知固执导致持续应激的认知与神经机制\*

罗禹 李金津 潘文浩 马欣欣 张禹\*\*  
(贵州师范大学心理学院, 贵阳, 550025)

**摘要** 认知固执 (perseverative cognition, PC) 是一种重复或长期的消极认知表征, 既能够使用量表测量, 也可以通过实验诱发。认知固执会导致持续应激反应, 进而影响个体的身心健康。其导致持续应激反应的认知机制体现在个体难以识别安全信号, 高认知固执个体会表现出低心率变异性的显著特征; 在脑机制方面主要表现为前额叶的抑制控制功能失调、杏仁核与前扣带回的病理性改变以及前额叶-杏仁核的连接减弱。未来研究应深入探讨认知固执的影响因素以及干预措施, 同时需要进一步分析内隐认知固执的测量方式及其对个体的影响。

**关键词** 认知固执 持续应激反应 身心健康 认知机制 脑机制

## 1 引言

应激是个体在各种内外环境因素及心理社会因素刺激时所出现的全身非特异性反应。研究发现, 应激能增强个体的意识水平、提高精神警觉、甚至能提升行为和认知表现 (Crum et al., 2017; Jamieson et al., 2018)。但是, 应激带给个体的并非只有好处, 若应激源尚未出现或应激源消失后, 应激反应仍持续较长时间, 就可以认为个体产生了持续应激反应。McEwen 和 Wingfield (2003) 认为持续应激反应可以预测未来的致病状态或器质性疾病。已有研究表明认知固执 (perseverative cognition, PC) 是导致持续应激的关键因素 (Ottaviani et al., 2016)。

PC 是一种重复或长期的消极认知表征, 分为外显 PC 和内隐 PC (Verkuil et al., 2010)。目前, PC 多在应激研究领域使用, 外显 PC 指个体对应激源有意识的思考, 其中担忧 (worry) 和冗思 (rumination) 是外显 PC 的关键认知过程。担忧是对未来事件的负面预期, 会使个体在应激事件发生前出现长时间

的应激反应; 冗思则是对过去事件的重复消极认知, 会导致个体在应激事件发生后无法停止持续的应激反应 (Flett et al., 2016)。内隐 PC 是个体对应激源的无意识和自动处理, 如注意高度警觉和对应激信息的重复检索 (Brosschot et al., 2010)。PC 还是多种情绪障碍疾病的典型特征。担忧是广泛性焦虑症 (generalized anxiety disorder, GAD) 的核心特征 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders V, DSM-5), 冗思则是重度抑郁症 (major depressive disorder, MDD) 的典型特征 (Nolen-Hoeksema, et al., 2008)。同时, 二者也是社交焦虑 (Miers et al., 2014)、创伤后应激障碍 (Seligowski et al., 2015) 等情绪障碍疾病的关键特征。PC 主要通过调节心理应激源或将其本身作为一种慢性应激源来延长应激反应, 从而导致个体患病 (Brosschot et al., 2006)。

当前国内尚未关注 PC 与持续应激反应的关系。本文通过梳理已有研究, 介绍了 PC 的研究方法、对身心健康的影响以及 PC 导致持续应激反应的认知和脑机制。并在前人研究基础上, 提出 PC 的干预方法和未来的研究取向。

\* 本研究得到教育部人文社会科学项目 (17YJC190032)、贵州省教育厅高校人文社会科学项目 (2020SSD016) 的资助、贵州省科技计划项目 (黔科合 LH 字 [2017]7367 号) 和贵州省教育厅青年科技人才成长项目 (黔教合 KY 字 [2018]132) 的资助。

\*\* 通讯作者: 张禹, E-mail: yuzhang331@163.com

DOI:10.16719/j.cnki.1671-6981.20210106

## 2 PC 的研究方法

### 2.1 PC 的客观测量指标

心率变异性 (heart rate variability, HRV) 是 PC 的客观测量指标 (Kocsel et al., 2019)。HRV 是指相邻心跳间时间间隔的变化, 能够用于测量个体自主神经功能的强弱 (Shaffer & Ginsberg, 2017)。

已有研究发现, 受前额抑制控制功能失调的影响, 高 PC 个体会表现出低 HRV 的特征 (Ottaviani et al., 2017), HRV 水平越低的个体冗思和担忧程度越高 (Carnevali et al., 2018; Verkuil et al., 2009)。同时, 通过实验室诱发的 PC 也伴随着 HRV 的负向变化 (Aldao et al., 2013)。还有研究发现, 长期处于低 HRV 的个体在应激源 (如威胁刺激) 消失后仍会出现持续性的应激反应 (Porges, 1992)。综上, HRV 可以作为反映个体 PC 变化的有效测量指标。

### 2.2 PC 的测量工具

以往研究使用不同测量工具对 PC 的认知过程进行评估。如, 测量担忧的宾州忧虑问卷 (Penn State Worry Questionnaire, PSWQ) 和测量冗思的冗思反应量表 (Ruminative Response Scale, RRS)。随着 PC 得到应激领域的重视, 有学者开始探索 PC 认知过程的共同结构, 并开发出 PC 的测量工具:

一是 McEvoy 等人 (2010) 编制的重复性思维问卷 (Repetitive Thinking Questionnaire, RTQ), 问卷包括重复消极思维和缺乏重复思维 2 个维度, 得分越高代表重复性思维的水平越高。采用该问卷的研究发现, 重复性思维与焦虑、抑郁和愤怒等负性症状相关 (Mahoney et al., 2012)。同时他们开发出简版的 RTQ-10, 其信效度较高 (McEvoy et al., 2010)。

二是研究者较多采用的持续性思维问卷 (Perseverative Thinking Questionnaire, PTQ)。该问卷由 Ehrling 等人 (2011) 根据持续性思维的操作性定义进行编制, 共 15 个题项, 包括持续性思维的核心特征、低效性与捕获心智的能力 3 个维度, 量表得分越高表示持续性思维的水平越高。该量表已在英语、德语、法语等文化背景下得到广泛应用 (Devynck et al., 2017)。

综上, PTQ 是当前广泛应用的 PC 测量工具, 其因素结构和信效度良好, 并且有多语言的翻译版本, 香港学者丁家浚也翻译了繁体汉语版本 PTQ, 但其信效度未在中国内地得到验证。针对上述情况,

修订或开发出适用于我国本土文化背景下的 PC 测量工具是未来研究方向之一。

### 2.3 诱发 PC 的方式

已有研究大多通过情景想象等方式诱发个体的冗思或担忧, 进而研究 PC 对个体的影响。

Nolen-Hoeksema 和 Morrow (1993) 采用情绪调节诱发程序进行冗思诱发, 他们通过 45 条不同的指导语进行操控, 要求个体回想过去做过的一项重要任务, 但这项任务最后是失败的结果, 或者说比预期做得差。同时, 要求个体在回想过程中要将注意力集中在以症状、情绪和自我为中心的想法上。如, “如果别人发现你在比赛中的表现, 你会有什么感觉? 为什么你会有这种感觉。”在控制条件下, 则要求个体不要将注意力集中在以症状、情绪和自我为中心的想法上。如, “一排陈列的洗发水瓶子” (Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1993)。该诱发程序及其改良版被广泛应用于后续研究中 (Ferdek et al., 2016)。

研究者使用的担忧诱发方式并不统一, 主要有以下两种: (1) 指导被试选择一个会让其感到担忧的话题, 并在一定时间内集中想象并且保持担忧的状态。这种方式需要提前确定三个令被试担忧话题, 以便在之后的实验中使用。诱发担忧的过程中, 提示他们将注意力集中在自己的呼吸上。然后, 指导被试开始想象这三个主题, 持续的时间一般在 10 分钟左右, 要求其尽可能地融入到担忧状态中。相关的行为和神经科学研究都采用过这种诱发方式 (Montero & León, 2002; Thayer et al., 1996)。

(2) 采用指导语引导被试进入担忧状态。为了对比担忧和冗思对实验任务的影响, 研究者参照诱发冗思的指导语编写了诱发担忧的指导语 (Lewis et al., 2019)。该方式要求被试想象将来要做的一项重要任务, 并且这项任务的结果可能会影响未来的生活。诱发过程中需要生动地想象这一事件及其造成的影响, 如, “如果别人发现你在接下来的活动中表现不佳, 你会有什么感觉? 为什么会有这种感觉。”这种诱发操作不仅程序简便, 还可以在同一研究中对对比担忧和冗思两种认知过程。

对比 PC 的诱发方式发现, 担忧和冗思主要根据时间焦点来区分 (即担忧是面向未来的, 而冗思是面向过去的)。目前, 国内暂无规范的修订版本, 开发出适用于我国本土文化背景下的 PC 诱发材料是未来的研究方向。

### 3 PC 导致持续应激损害身心健康

#### 3.1 PC 对个体身体健康的影响

元分析研究发现,PC 和急性应激源会导致生理系统过度活跃,对个体产生负面影响(Clancy et al., 2016)。虽然 PC 对皮质醇的影响同急性应激源相当(Ottaviani et al., 2016),但对心率和血压等指标的影响低于急性应激源(Brindle et al., 2014)。下面我们从外显和内隐 PC 角度分别论述其对个体身体健康的影响。

外显 PC 会增加个体罹患疾病的风险。例如,对经历 9/11 袭击的美国公民进行调查发现,对恐怖主义的过度担忧导致原本健康的个体出现了一系列心血管问题(Holman et al., 2008)。冗思与担忧不同,它通过影响个体的健康风险行为来损害身体健康。例如,冗思可能会导致个体不健康的饮食行为,从而增加心血管疾病和肥胖等风险(O'Connor et al., 2014)。

内隐 PC 会干扰睡眠时的身心恢复过程,进而增加应激事件对个体的损害。白天的应激事件会以各种方式在睡眠中表现出来,并持续干扰睡眠中的身心恢复(Radstaak et al., 2014)。其中,担忧很可能导致个体睡眠中的 HRV 降低。例如,第二天要公开演讲的被试,前一晚的 HRV 会明显降低(Hall et al., 2004)。同时,情绪认知活动也会在睡眠中继续。例如,非快速眼动睡眠的皮层觉醒(值降低)与应激和冗思负相关(Hall et al., 2007)。由于个体在睡眠中不会有意识的担忧和冗思,因而很可能是对应激源的无意识认知表征导致了心血管活动增加(Brosschot et al., 2010)。

#### 3.2 PC 对个体心理健康的影响

PC 不仅严重影响个体的身体健康,还会损害个体的记忆、情绪和注意等心理认知过程。

PC 会损害个体的工作记忆。有研究表明,冗思会损害低工作记忆容量个体在负性情绪状态下的工作记忆表现(Curci et al., 2013),冗思还会导致个体在工作记忆任务中难以处理负性刺激(Joormann et al., 2011)。此外,有证据表明高特质冗思可能与更差的工作记忆刷新能力有关(Nishimura et al., 2020)。

PC 会损害个体的情绪调节过程。研究发现,冗思会干扰个体情绪调节相关脑区的活动,加剧个体的抑郁症状(Fowler et al., 2017)。Ferdek 等人(2016)

的研究选择了具有高低冗思倾向的两组健康被试,他们发现高冗思组在冗思诱发状态下更难以调控自身的负性情绪。此外,与低特质担忧个体相比,高特质担忧个体的情绪调节能力更差,更难处理由负性刺激带来的消极情绪(Neudert et al., 2017)。

PC 还会损害个体的注意控制能力。注意控制(attention control)是指个体为完成任务要求的目标,对优势反应、习惯性行为或无关行为进行抑制,以适应不断变化的环境,主要包括认知灵活性和抑制控制(Chrysikou, 2019; Eysenck et al. 2007)。PC 会导致个体的认知灵活性降低。在认知灵活性的研究中,被试需要在诱发 PC 的前后完成一项跟踪任务。该任务中的反应时是认知灵活程度的测量指标,反应时越长则表明被试越难抑制负面想法且认知灵活性越低(Ottaviani et al., 2013);相反,没有诱发 PC 的个体认知灵活性更高且能更好地抑制负面想法(Gillie et al., 2015)。在儿童发展研究中,高 PC 的儿童也表现出低认知灵活性,在诱发 PC 后完成追踪任务的反应时更长,并且受母亲特质冗思水平等因素的影响(Ottaviani et al., 2017)。同时,冗思会损害个体的抑制控制能力,高抑郁冗思个体难以抑制负性刺激的干扰(Joormann, 2006)。此外,担忧也会损害个体的抑制控制能力。研究发现,与低焦虑个体相比,担忧会使高焦虑个体的抑制控制功能降低(Eysenck et al., 2007)。

### 4 PC 导致持续应激的认知机制

上述研究发现 PC 会影响个体的身心健康,但大多忽略了 PC 导致持续应激反应的认知机制。

有部分研究者认为 PC 导致持续应激反应的认知机制是负性注意偏向。通常个体会粗略且迅速地扫描环境中的威胁,一旦发现潜在威胁,个体就会立即作出无差别的应激反应(LeDoux, 2000)。当环境中的威胁刺激消失,个体的应激反应会被抑制。同样,在面对新异、模糊的中性刺激时,个体无法确定其安全性,出于自我保护,他们也会将此类刺激当成负性刺激来对待(Gerin et al., 2012)。从进化的角度来看,个体的负性偏向是适应性的,有利于他们的生存发展(LeDoux, 2000)。因此,将负性注意偏向作为 PC 导致持续应激反应的认知机制具有一定的局限性。

Verkuil 等人(2010)提出了 PC 的综合理论(comprehensive theory),他们认为应激来自于发



现目标的潜在威胁, 应激反应是对此类潜在威胁的默认反应, 个体只有识别出安全信号才能抑制应激反应。如果没有检测到安全信号, 个体会认为重要目标仍受到威胁, 应激反应就会持续 (Brosschot et al., 2016)。面对新异、模糊的中性刺激时, 健康个体能迅速判断这些刺激物的安全性, 并抑制相关的生理反应, 但 PC 个体难以判断此类刺激是否安全。Ruiz-Padial 等人 (2003) 的研究发现具有低 HRV 特征的非临床被试不仅对负性图片表现出较强的情绪反应, 对中性图片也表现出与负性图片相同的反应。同时研究者使用情绪视频刺激也得到了相似的结果 (Bos et al., 2013)。综上所述, 难以识别安全信号是 PC 导致持续应激反应的关键认知机制。

## 5 PC 导致持续应激的脑机制

PC 导致个体无法识别安全信号从而产生持续应激反应, 这一过程与监控潜在威胁和应对威胁的脑区相关, 包括前额叶、前扣带回 (Ochsner & Gross, 2008)、杏仁核 (Verkuil et al., 2010) 等。

应激反应主要受前额叶的监控和抑制控制 (Fuster, 2015)。PC 使个体反复表征一切疑似威胁的刺激, 反映在大脑层面就是前额叶抑制功能减弱 (Ottaviani, 2018)。应激反应的产生是“去抑制”的过程。在没有应激源时, 个体的应激反应是被抑制的, 而应激源出现时, 前额叶的抑制控制功能迅速降低, 应激反应的抑制被解除、交感神经兴奋通路被打开 (Arnsten, 2015), 个体的身心得以迅速激活。随着应激源消失, 应激反应重新受到前额叶的抑制, 以便后续的生理恢复。但 PC 会降低前额叶的抑制控制功能, 使个体长时间处于生理唤醒状态, 最终导致个体产生持续的应激反应 (Verkuil et al., 2010)。当前学者对 PC 导致持续应激的脑机制研究主要从以下方面进行:

PC 与大脑形态变化的关系。PC 与中枢自主神经网络 (central autonomic network, CAN) 核心区域 (杏仁核与前扣带皮层) 的病理性改变有关 (Beissner et al., 2013)。Makovac 等人 (2016) 测量了诱发 PC 后 GAD 患者和健康被试的 HRV 水平, 结果发现 GAD 患者的 HRV 水平低于健康被试, 其 HRV 水平与前扣带皮层和副扣带皮层的灰质体积正相关, 在健康组中则没有发现这种关系。同时, 在跟踪任务中发现, GAD 患者更难抑制负面想法, 这可能与双侧杏仁核体积增大有关 (Beissner et al., 2013)。

PC 与脑功能连接变化的关系。PC 同前额叶 - 杏仁核的连接减弱以及杏仁核 - 默认脑网络 (default mode network, DMN) 的连接增强有关 (Makovac et al., 2016), 前额叶 - 杏仁核连接减弱可能意味着前额叶对杏仁核的调控作用降低。Makovac 等人 (2016) 的研究发现, 在诱发 PC 后健康被试的 HRV 水平降低, 且前额叶 - 杏仁核的功能连接减弱, 这些变化主要与被试的 PC 水平相关。在这项研究中, 左侧杏仁核和膝下前扣带回以及右侧杏仁核和尾状核之间的功能连接减弱均能正向预测被试的 HRV 水平。随后的研究发现, PC 能负向预测一年后杏仁核和腹内侧前额叶皮层之间的连接, 同时可以正向预测杏仁核、腹侧被盖区与左丘脑的耦合 (Makovac, Watson, et al., 2016)。

## 6 研究展望

对 PC 的研究已经取得了很多有价值的成果, 但心理学领域对 PC 的探索还十分有限, 未来的研究可以从以下角度进行深入地探讨。

### 6.1 PC 的影响因素

已有研究认为, PC 可能会受到遗传和环境因素的影响。前人发现脑源性神经营养因子 (brain-derived neurotrophic factor, BDNF) 中多态性 Val66Met 基因可能与个体的冗思差异相关。在母亲患抑郁症的青春期女性中 Val66Met 基因与较低的冗思水平相关 (Hilt et al., 2007)。针对健康个体的研究则发现, Val66Met 基因携带者的冗思水平更高 (Beevers et al., 2009)。虽然基因很可能是影响 PC 的因素之一, 但两者的关系还未得到一致性结论。此外, PC 可能受环境因素的影响。研究表明, 过度控制的父母教养方式以及包办型的家庭氛围可能会制约儿童的独立性, 进而导致儿童出现冗思倾向 (Hilt et al., 2012)。Ottaviani 等人 (2017) 也发现家庭氛围等外界环境因素与儿童 PC 水平相关。尽管父母教养方式与家庭氛围能够在一定程度上解释 PC 的成因, 但无法解释 PC 长期负性认知的特点。部分研究者从童年期负性经历入手发现, 冗思倾向可能是压力性事件长期内化的结果 (Young & Dietrich, 2015)。尽管研究发现遗传与环境因素均与 PC 有关, 但两者是否对 PC 存在交互影响, 是否存在 PC 易感人群等问题还未得到解答。

### 6.2 PC 的干预

PC 会损害个体的生理和心理健康, 因而需要采

取相应的干预措施。首先，减少与恐惧相关的记忆能降低 PC。有研究利用耳廓分支刺激迷走神经来减少 PC。研究者首先将一个几何形状与尖叫声相联系，让被试经历恐惧条件反射，然后进入消退阶段。结果表明，迷走神经刺激能促进恐惧记忆的消退 (Burger et al., 2017)。其次，可以利用认知行为疗法来降低 PC。认知行为疗法可以减少自我批判，提高个体的 HRV、降低 PC (Kirby et al., 2017)。最后，可以通过增强个体抑制控制功能来干预 PC。第一种是自下而上的方式(从副交感神经到大脑)。最具代表性的是 HRV 生物反馈疗法，它通过指导个体来提高自身 HRV，达到增强抑制控制功能的目的 (Lehrer & Gevirtz, 2014)。第二种是自上而下的方式(从大脑到副交感神经)。当前，最新且无创的方式是经颅直流电刺激法 (transcranial direct current stimulation, tDCS)，它通过增加左背外侧前额叶的兴奋来调节个体的抑制控制功能，并提高静息状态下的 HRV (Makovac et al., 2017)。

目前，研究中使用的干预类型、群体都不尽相同，上述干预方法也处于探索阶段。还需要进一步验证这些干预方法的有效性和适用性，将其有针对性地运用于干预 PC 的过程中。

### 6.3 内隐 PC 的研究

PC 有外显和内隐两种类型，但已有的研究主要关注外显 PC，对内隐 PC 的研究较为单薄。

当前暂无精确测量内隐 PC 的方法。尽管已有研究测量了情绪相关的内隐认知，并探讨了操纵内隐认知的方法 (Brosschot et al., 2016)。但与应激相关的无意识认知 (如：内隐 PC) 尚未得到深入研究，未来还应继续探索内隐 PC 的测量方法。例如，改进无意识认知的测量范式、采用 ERP 或 fMRI 等技术获取测量内隐 PC 的客观生理指标。

当前研究较少关注清醒状态下内隐 PC 对个体的影响。有证据间接表明，情绪障碍 (GAD、MDD) 病人清醒时可能存在内隐 PC。例如：担忧状态下情绪障碍个体会过度处理负面信息 (Mathews & MacLeod, 2005)，并且大部分是在无意识情况下发生的。清醒状态下健康群体同样可能存在内隐 PC，例如：担忧对个体生理造成的影响会一直延续到它结束后两小时，且与情绪、生活方式等因素无关 (Pieper et al., 2010)。但现有研究无法说明清醒状态下内隐 PC 会影响个体的哪些方面，未来可以通过量化指标分析内隐 PC 对个体的影响。例如，

通过实验范式诱发内隐 PC，然后考察个体在情绪、注意等方面的变化情况。

### 参考文献

- Aldao, A., Mennin, D. S., & McLaughlin, K. A. (2013). Differentiating worry and rumination: Evidence from heart rate variability during spontaneous regulation. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 37*(3), 613-619.
- Arnsten, A. F. T. (2015). Stress weakens prefrontal networks: Molecular insults to higher cognition. *Nature Neuroscience, 18*(10), 1376-1385.
- Beevers, C. G., Wells, T. T., & McGeary, J. E. (2009). The BDNF Val66Met polymorphism is associated with rumination in healthy adults. *Emotion, 9*(4), 579-584.
- Beissner, F., Meissner, K., Bär, K. J., & Napadow, V. (2013). The autonomic brain: An activation likelihood estimation meta-analysis for central processing of autonomic function. *Journal of Neuroscience, 33*(25), 10503-10511.
- Bos, M. G. N., Jentgens, P., Beckers, T., & Kindt, M. (2013). Psychophysiological response patterns to affective film stimuli. *PLoS ONE, 8*(4), e62661.
- Brindle, R. C., Ginty, A. T., Phillips, A. C., & Carroll, D. (2014). A tale of two mechanisms: A meta-analytic approach toward understanding the autonomic basis of cardiovascular reactivity to acute psychological stress. *Psychophysiology, 51*(10), 964-976.
- Brosschot, J. F., Gerin, W., & Thayer, J. F. (2006). The perseverative cognition hypothesis: A review of worry, prolonged stress-related physiological activation, and health. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 60*(2), 113-124.
- Brosschot, J. F., Verkuil, B., & Thayer, J. F. (2010). Conscious and unconscious perseverative cognition: Is a large part of prolonged physiological activity due to unconscious stress? *Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 69*(4), 407-416.
- Brosschot, J. F., Verkuil, B., & Thayer, J. F. (2016). The default response to uncertainty and the importance of perceived safety in anxiety and stress: An evolution-theoretical perspective. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 41*, 22-34.
- Brosschot, J. F., Verkuil, B., van der Ploeg, M. M., & Thayer, J. F. (2016). Measuring the unreportable: Tests of unconscious stress and cardiovascular activity. *International Journal of Psychophysiology, 108*, 15.
- Burger, A. M., Verkuil, B., Fenlon, H., Thijs, L., Cools, L., & Miller, H. C. (2017). Mixed evidence for the potential of non-invasive transcutaneous vagal nerve stimulation to improve the extinction and retention of fear. *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 97*, 64-74.
- Carnevali, L., Thayer, J. F., Brosschot, J. F., & Ottaviani, C. (2018). Heart rate variability mediates the link between rumination and depressive symptoms: A longitudinal study. *International Journal of Psychophysiology, 131*, 131-138.
- Chrysikou, E. G. (2019). Creativity in and out of (cognitive) control. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences, 27*, 94-99.
- Clancy, F., Prestwich, A., Caperon, L., & O'Connor, D. B. (2016). Perseverative cognition and health behaviors: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, 10*, 534.
- Crum, A. J., Akinola, M., Martin, A., & Fath, S. (2017). The role of stress mindset in shaping cognitive, emotional, and physiological responses to challenging and threatening stress. *Anxiety, Stress and Coping, 30*(4), 379-395.
- Curci, A., Lanciano, T., Soleti, E., & Rimé, B. (2013). Negative emotional experiences arouse rumination and affect working memory capacity. *Emotion, 13*(5), 867-880.
- Devynck, F., Kornacka, M., Baeyens, C., Serrra, É., das Neves, J. F., & Gaudrat,

- B. (2017). Perseverative thinking questionnaire (PTQ): French validation of a transdiagnostic measure of repetitive negative thinking. *Frontiers in Psychology, 8*, 2159.
- Ehring, T., Zetsche, U., Weidacker, K., Wahl, K., Schönfeld, S., & Ehlers, A. (2011). The Perseverative Thinking Questionnaire (PTQ): Validation of a content-independent measure of repetitive negative thinking. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry, 42*(2), 225-232.
- Eysenck, M. W., Derakshan, N., Santos, R., & Calvo, M. G. (2007). Anxiety and cognitive performance: Attentional control theory. *Emotion, 7*(2), 336-353.
- Ferdek, M. A., van Rijn, C. M., & Wyczesany, M. (2016). Depressive rumination and the emotional control circuit: An EEG localization and effective connectivity study. *Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Neuroscience, 16*(6), 1099-1113.
- Flett, G. L., Nepon, T., & Hewitt, P. L. (2016). Perfectionism, worry, and rumination in health and mental health: A review and a conceptual framework for a cognitive theory of perfectionism. In F. M. Sirois & D. S. Molnar (Eds.), *Perfectionism, health, and well-being* (pp. 121-155). Cham: Springer.
- Fowler, C. H., Miernicki, M. E., Rudolph, K. D., & Telzer, E. H. (2017). Disrupted amygdala-prefrontal connectivity during emotion regulation links stress-reactive rumination and adolescent depressive symptoms. *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience, 27*, 99-106.
- Fuster, J. M. (2015). Anatomy of the prefrontal cortex. In J. M. Fuster (Eds.), *The prefrontal cortex* (pp. 9-62). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Gerin, W., Zawadzki, M. J., Brosschot, J. F., Thayer, J. F., Christenfeld, N. J. S., Campbell, T. S., & Smyth, J. M. (2012). Rumination as a mediator of chronic stress effects on hypertension: A causal model. *International Journal of Hypertension, 2012*, 453465.
- Gillie, B. L., Vasey, M. W., & Thayer, J. F. (2015). Individual differences in resting heart rate variability moderate thought suppression success. *Psychophysiology, 52*(9), 1149-1160.
- Hall, M., Thayer, J. F., Germain, A., Moul, D., Vasko, R., & Puhl, M. (2007). Psychological stress is associated with heightened physiological arousal during NREM sleep in primary insomnia. *Behavioral Sleep Medicine, 5*(3), 178-193.
- Hall, M., Vasko, R., Buysse, D., Ombao, H., Chen, Q. X., & Cashmere, J. D. (2004). Acute stress affects heart rate variability during sleep. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 66*(1), 56-62.
- Hilt, L. M., Armstrong, J. M., & Essex, M. J. (2012). Early family context and development of adolescent ruminative style: Moderation by temperament. *Cognition and Emotion, 26*(5), 916-926.
- Hilt, L. M., Sander, L. C., Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Simen, A. A. (2007). The BDNF Val66Met polymorphism predicts rumination and depression differently in young adolescent girls and their mothers. *Neuroscience Letters, 429*(1), 12-16.
- Holman, E. A., Silver, R. C., Poulin, M., Andersen, J., Gil-Rivas, V., & McIntosh, D. N. (2008). Terrorism, acute stress, and cardiovascular health: A 3-year national study following the September 11th attacks. *Archives of General Psychiatry, 65*(1), 73-80.
- Jamieson, J. P., Hangen, E. J., Lee, H. Y., & Yeager, D. S. (2018). Capitalizing on appraisal processes to improve affective responses to social stress. *Emotion Review, 10*(1), 30-39.
- Joormann, J. (2006). Differential effects of rumination and dysphoria on the inhibition of irrelevant emotional material: Evidence from a negative priming task. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 30*(2), 149-160.
- Joormann, J., Levens, S. M., & Gotlib, I. H. (2011). Sticky thoughts: Depression and rumination are associated with difficulties manipulating emotional material in working memory. *Psychological Science, 22*(8), 979-983.
- Kirby, J. N., Doty, J. R., Petrocchi, N., & Gilbert, P. (2017). The current and future role of heart rate variability for assessing and training compassion. *Frontiers in Public Health, 5*, 40.
- Kocsel, N., Köteles, F., Szemenyei, E., Szabó, E., Galambos, A., & Kökönyei, G. (2019). The association between perseverative cognition and resting heart rate variability: A focus on state ruminative thoughts. *Biological Psychology, 145*, 124-133.
- LeDoux, J. E. (2000). Emotion circuits in the brain. *Annual Review of Neuroscience, 23*, 155-184.
- Lehrer, P. M., & Gevirtz, R. (2014). Heart rate variability biofeedback: How and why does it work? *Frontiers in Psychology, 5*, 756.
- Lewis, E. J., Blanco, I., Raila, H., & Joormann, J. (2019). Does repetitive negative thinking affect attention? Differential effects of worry and rumination on attention to emotional stimuli. *Emotion, 19*(8), 1450-1462.
- Mahoney, A. E. J., McEvoy, P. M., & Moulds, M. L. (2012). Psychometric properties of the Repetitive Thinking Questionnaire in a clinical sample. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 26*(2), 359-367.
- Makovac, E., Meeten, F., Watson, D. R., Garfinkel, S. N., Critchley, H. D., & Ottaviani, C. (2016). Neurostructural abnormalities associated with axes of emotion dysregulation in generalized anxiety. *NeuroImage: Clinical, 10*, 172-181.
- Makovac, E., Meeten, F., Watson, D. R., Herman, A., Garfinkel, S. N., Critchley, H. D., & Ottaviani, C. (2016). Alterations in amygdala-prefrontal functional connectivity account for excessive worry and autonomic dysregulation in generalized anxiety disorder. *Biological Psychiatry, 80*(10), 786-795.
- Makovac, E., Thayer, J. F., & Ottaviani, C. (2017). A meta-analysis of non-invasive brain stimulation and autonomic functioning: Implications for brain-heart pathways to cardiovascular disease. *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews, 74*, 330-341.
- Makovac, E., Watson, D. R., Meeten, F., Garfinkel, S. N., Cercignani, M., Critchley, H. D., & Ottaviani, C. (2016). Amygdala functional connectivity as a longitudinal biomarker of symptom changes in generalized anxiety. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience, 11*(11), 1719-1728.
- Mathews, A., & MacLeod, C. (2005). Cognitive vulnerability to emotional disorders. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, 1*, 167-195.
- McEvoy, P. M., Mahoney, A. E. J., & Moulds, M. L. (2010). Are worry, rumination, and post-event processing one and the same? Development of the Repetitive Thinking Questionnaire. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 24*(5), 509-519.
- McEwen, B. S., & Wingfield, J. C. (2003). The concept of allostasis in biology and biomedicine. *Hormones and Behavior, 43*(1), 2-15.
- Miers, A. C., Blöte, A. W., Heyne, D. A., & Westenberg, P. M. (2014). Developmental pathways of social avoidance across adolescence: The role of social anxiety and negative cognition. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 28*(8), 787-794.
- Montero, I., & León, O. G. (2002). Clasificación y descripción de las metodologías de investigación en Psicología. *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology, 2*(3), 503-508.
- Neudert, M. K., Stark, R., Kress, L., & Hermann, A. (2017). Trait worry and neural



- correlates of emotion regulation. *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*, 225(3), 214-222.
- Nishimura, H., Hasegawa, A., Nishiguchi, Y., Tabuchi, R., Matsumoto, N., Masuyama, A., (in press). Relationship between trait rumination and imbalanced working memory: Analysis at the latent variable and individual task levels. *Current Psychology*.
- Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Morrow, J. (1993). Effects of rumination and distraction on naturally occurring depressed mood. *Cognition and Emotion*, 7(6), 561-570.
- Nolen-Hoeksema, S., Wisco, B. E., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). Rethinking rumination. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 3(5), 400-424.
- Ochsner, K. N., & Gross, J. J. (2008). Cognitive emotion regulation: Insights from social cognitive and affective neuroscience. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17(2), 153-158.
- O'Connor, D. B., Armitage, C. J., & Ferguson, E. (2014). Randomized test of an implementation intention-based tool to reduce stress-induced eating. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 49(3), 331-343.
- Ottaviani, C. (2018). Brain-heart interaction in perseverative cognition. *Psychophysiology*, 55(7), e13082.
- Ottaviani, C., Lonigro, A., Cioffi, B., Manzi, D., Laghi, F., & Baiocco, R. (2017). Family functioning and parents' dispositions moderate the affective, attentional and physiological consequences of rumination in children. *Biological Psychology*, 127, 220-228.
- Ottaviani, C., Shapiro, D., & Couyoumdjian, A. (2013). Flexibility as the key for somatic health: From mind wandering to perseverative cognition. *Biological Psychology*, 94(1), 38-43.
- Ottaviani, C., Thayer, J. F., Verkuil, B., Critchley, H. D., & Brosschot, J. F. (2017). Can't Get You Out of My Head: Brain-Body Interactions in Perseverative Cognition. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 11, 634
- Ottaviani, C., Thayer, J. F., Verkuil, B., Lonigro, A., Medea, B., Couyoumdjian, A., & Brosschot, J. F. (2016). Physiological concomitants of perseverative cognition: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 142(3), 231-259.
- Pieper, S., Brosschot, J. F., van der Leeden, R., & Thayer, J. F. (2010). Prolonged cardiac effects of momentary assessed stressful events and worry episodes. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 72(6), 570-577.
- Porges, S. W. (1992). Vagal tone: A physiologic marker of stress vulnerability. *Pediatrics*, 90(3), 498-504.
- Radstaak, M., Geurts, S. A. E., Beckers, D. G. J., Brosschot, J. F., & Kompier, M. A. J. (2014). Recovery and well-being among Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) pilots. *Applied Ergonomics*, 45(4), 986-993.
- Ruiz-Padial, E., Sollers III, J. J., Vila, J., & Thayer, J. F. (2003). The rhythm of the heart in the blink of an eye: Emotion-modulated startle magnitude covaries with heart rate variability. *Psychophysiology*, 40(2), 306-313.
- Seligowski, A. V., Lee, D. J., Bardeen, J. R., & Orcutt, H. K. (2015). Emotion regulation and posttraumatic stress symptoms: A meta-analysis. *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*, 44(2), 87-102.
- Shaffer, F., & Ginsberg, J. P. (2017). An overview of heart rate variability metrics and norms. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 5, 258.
- Thayer, J. F., Friedman, B. H., & Borkovec, T. D. (1996). Autonomic characteristics of generalized anxiety disorder and worry. *Biological Psychiatry*, 39(4), 255-266.
- Verkuil, B., Brosschot, J. F., Gebhardt, W. A., & Thayer, J. F. (2010). When worries make you sick: A review of perseverative cognition, the default stress response and somatic health. *Journal of Experimental Psychopathology*, 1(1), 87-118.
- Verkuil, B., Brosschot, J. F., Putman, P., & Thayer, J. F. (2009). Interacting effects of worry and anxiety on attentional disengagement from threat. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 47(2), 146-152.
- Young, C. C., & Dietrich, M. S. (2015). Stressful life events, worry, and rumination predict depressive and anxiety symptoms in young adolescents. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, 28(1), 35-42.

# The Cognitive and Neural Mechanisms of Perseverative Cognition Leading to the Prolonged Stress Response

*Luo Yu, Li Jinjin, Pan Wenhao, Ma Xinxin, Zhang Yu*  
(School of Psychology, Guizhou Normal University, Guiyang, 550025)

**Abstract** Perseverative cognition is that the repeated or chronic activation of the cognitive representation of one or more psychological stressors. Stress is a systemic non-specific adaptive response induced by various internal and external environmental stimuli. Although stress response is an adaptive response help us face the ever-changed ecological demands, the prolonged stress response before and after the stressful event is harmful to our health. Perseverative cognition is an essential factor that causes a prolonged stress response, it usually consist of two types: explicit and implicit. The perseverative cognition can be measured by heart rate variability (HRV) and scales, and can also be induced in the laboratory through standardized procedures.

Perseverative cognition can be thought of as a mediator or a pathway by which the stressor exercises its effects on the physical and psychological healthy. The relationship between perseverative cognition and our healthy can be explained in two ways. Firstly, some study found that perseverative cognition plays an important role in the stress–disease process. Both explicit perseverative cognition and implicit perseverative cognition have a negative impact on physical healthy. Secondly, perseverative cognition is regarded as one of the most critical influences on psychological healthy. Some cognitive processes is seriously damaged by perseverative cognition, such as working memory, emotion regulation etc.

Previous studies have shown that the critical cognitive mechanism of perseverative cognition is that people cannot recognize safety signals in the environment, which leads to a prolonged stress response. People can actively inhibit stress response when they confirm that safety has been established. While those who fail to recognize a safety signal make undifferentiated stress responses to the threat and neutral stimuli. Perseverative cognition interferes with the recognition of the safety signals, leading to prolonged stress response. This process is associated with brain areas that monitor for potential threats, including the prefrontal cortex, the anterior cingulate gyrus, and the amygdala. The prefrontal cortex monitors external threats, and lift the inhibition of the stress response when external threats are recognized. Perseverative cognition leads to the dysfunction of the prefrontal cortex, people fails to inhibit the stress response in the absence of an apparent threat stimulus. After the stress response and perseverative cognition last for an extended period, the more focal problem is the pathological changes of the brain, such as the larger volume of core Central Autonomic Network (CAN) regions and the weaker connection between the amygdala and prefrontal cortex.

The evidence reviewed in the current article suggests that future research needs to systematically investigate the critical influencing factors of perseverative cognition. At the same time, we should focus on the intervention methods of perseverative cognition. The early action on perseverative cognition intervening has not reached the clinical level. Last but not least, we need pay more attention to implicit perseverative cognition. For example, we can adopt a more new research paradigm and cognitive neuroscience technique to explore it. There were pieces of evidence that the implicit perseverative cognition is associated with the impairment of the physical and physiological recovery at night. Those studies, however, failed to demonstrate the harmful effect of the implicit perseverative cognition on the physical and physiological health.

**Key words** perseverative cognition, prolonged stress response, physical and psychological health, Cognitive mechanism, neural mechanisms