

COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY (CBT) FOR REDUCING IMPLICIT BIAS

Maria Eugenia Calvo Prieto
Sha Tin College
Hong Kong S.A.R.

Background:

An implicit bias refers to unconsciously held thoughts, attitudes, or beliefs towards a group of people or social identity. These biases have detrimental effects on various sectors of society, including healthcare, education, and the workplace. Strategies have been designed to mitigate the impacts of these biases, but there is limited data on successful long-term interventions.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) has been proven effective in changing negative or irrational thinking patterns, particularly in mental health settings; however, the use to reduce implicit biases has not been extensively researched.

Objectives:

This paper aims to show how CBT techniques can be extrapolated to identify implicit biases, elicit the situations that exacerbate them, and reduce their impact on behavior.

Methods:

A systematic review was performed, using the predetermined search terms, such as “implicit bias” and “CBT” on PubMed and Google Scholar with various iterations to broaden sensitivity while maintaining specificity. Articles were restricted to peer-reviewed literature focused on social stereotypes and prejudices against groups of people.

Results:

The first mechanism involved in mitigating implicit bias is identifying and promoting awareness of them and the scenarios that may be impacted by them, which can be accomplished through peers that bring patients into CBT and individuals completing the Implicit Association Test (IAT). CBT strategies can then be implemented to reduce implicit bias, such as guided discovery (e.g., Socratic questioning), keeping a data log to record all positive interactions with social identities one is biased against, and systematic desensitization (i.e. being exposed to the groups of people and utilizing mental imaging, stereotype replacement, and perspective-taking to reduce avoidance behaviors).

Implications:

CBT strategies can be used to provide practical interventions to reduce the impacts of implicit biases, through a highly structured, continuous, and methodical approach, which can be used by patients even after treatment has finished.

Full List of Authors

Maria Eugenia Calvo Prieto, Paul Matthew Lewis

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Identify implicit bias and recognize scenarios that may be impacted by them.

2. Apply cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) for identifying and mitigating implicit biases in individuals.