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Equanimity moderates approach/avoidance motor-responses and evaluative conditioning

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Abstract

A growing body of research investigates equanimity as an outcome of meditation practices. Equanimity has been defined as a stable and impartial mental state or trait, regardless the affective valence of stimuli or situations (Desbordes et al., 2015). Few experimental studies focused on its understanding. After created and validated an equanimity questionnaire (EQUA-S, N = 265), we conducted a laboratory study (N = 38) to examine the effect of equanimity on both approach-avoidance motor-behavior with positive and negative stimuli (Rougier et al., 2018) and evaluative conditioning. While classical approach/avoidance and evaluative conditioning effects were significantly reproduced with evidence in favor of H1 among the participants with a low level of equanimity (N = 17), evidence in favor of H0 was found among those with a high level of equanimity. Thus, equanimity seems to moderate automatic cognitive responses toward valenced stimuli.