

In need of psychological research and the value of methodological training in Psychology undergraduates



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ABSTRACT

Psychology undergraduate students often fall prey to widespread misconceptions about the human mind. Here we examined whether student perceptions of psychology as a scientific discipline may predict common myths held in psychology. For this purpose, the scales Psychology As a Science (PAS), measuring the degree to which respondents view psychology as a science, and Psychology Information Questionnaire (PIQ), quantifying endorsed myths in psychology, were employed. PAS can be divided into three subscales: (1) respondents' willingness to place psychology in the same conceptual of functional framework as the hard sciences; (2) beliefs regarding the need for psychological research and the value of methodological training; (3) views of determinism and belief in the predictability of behaviour. Our sample comprised 51 psychology undergraduate students with an average age of 22 years. Overall, these results indicate that our students demonstrated a high number of erroneous beliefs about psychology. Multiple regression analysis also revealed that only beliefs regarding the need for psychological research and the value of methodological training predicted in a statistically significant way common misconceptions about psychology. This investigation, therefore, suggests that offering a rigorous curriculum and extensive support to develop an interest in solid psychological methodology might help train psychology students to be less gullible and more skeptical about mind myths.

CONCLUSIONS

Importantly, a significant proportion of psychology students hold doubts about the status of psychology of a science.

This investigation suggests that offering a rigorous curriculum and extensive support to develop an interest in solid psychological methodology might help train psychology students to be less gullible and more skeptical about mind myths.

INTRODUCTION

Widespread consensus exists that effectively communicating the status of psychology as a science is fundamental in college teaching, mainly given that Psychology students often hold plenty of misconceptions and lack of critical thinking regarding the field of psychology and the human mind in particular.

In this study, therefore, we set out to investigate whether student perceptions of psychology as a scientific discipline may predict common myths held in psychology.

METHODOLOGY

Psychology As a Science (PAS) scale: measures the degree to which respondents view psychology as a science

Psychology Information Questionnaire (PIQ): quantifies endorsed myths in psychology. PAS can be divided into three factors: (1) respondents' willingness to place psychology in the same conceptual of functional framework as the hard sciences; (2) beliefs regarding the need for psychological research and the value of methodological training; (3) views of determinism and belief in the predictability of behaviour.

Our sample comprised 51 psychology undergraduate students at European University of Madrid with an average age of 22 years.

RESULTS

Questionnaires		Min	Max	Mean (\pm SEM)	Items
PIQ		1.98	5.36	3.86 (\pm 0.11)	45
PAS	Total	55	99	76.57 (\pm 1.44)	15
	Factor 1	2.25	7	5.67 (\pm 0.14)	4
	Factor 2	2.80	6.80	4.90 (\pm 0.14)	5
	Factor 3	3.83	7	4.90 (\pm 0.10)	6

Table 1. Descriptive data for the PIQ and PAS questionnaires

PAS	Beta	t	p-value
Factor 1	-0.03	-0.23	0.82
Factor 2	-0.58	-4.39	p<0.001
Factor 3	0.05	0.35	0.73

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis. DV: PIQ scores