

POSTER

DOES SURVIVING PAIN LOWER YOUR RISK AVOIDANCE?

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ABSTRACT

Risk taking and risk avoidance have been extensively studied in evolutionary behavioural sciences. Previous studies suggest that people wearing tattoos are more likely to engage in risk-taking behavior and sensation seeking than people without tattoos. This study set out to explore the immediate effects of obtaining a first tattoo on risk-taking behavior among women. Thirty female participants underwent treatment across two consecutive days, receiving a small tattoo and engaging in a casual 20-minute conversation. The sequence of treatments was randomized. Participants opted for a predetermined design for their tattoo, professionally applied to their arm. Arousal physiology (heart rate, skin conductance, & skin temperature) was measured throughout the interventions. Questionnaires (risk-taking tendencies, impulsivity, and sensation-seeking) and pain thresholds measurements were taken before and after each intervention. A control group of thirty women, who were not interested in getting tattoos, completed identical questionnaires to control for self-selection bias.

This study's findings enhance comprehension of the correlation between tattooing and risk-taking behavior among women, offering insights into the immediate aftermath of obtaining a tattoo and potentially directing future investigations into lasting behavioral impacts of tattoos. Enduring an uncomfortable to painful, and potentially dangerous experience might result in lowering avoidance behavior therefore making it more likely to engage in similar behavior in the future. From an evolutionary viewpoint, adjusting risk avoidance based on individual learning appears to be adaptive to find the optimal approach to exploit environmental affordances.