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The Influence of Autosuggestion on Emotional Regulation

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Abstract: Emotional regulation shows the significant value of utilizing autosuggestion. Therefore, it is necessary to figure out how to use autosuggestion reasonably. The study used both online questionnaires and telephone interviews as the method to collect samples. It indicated that when people encounter problems, they would have negative emotions, such as anxiety and depression. Some people would choose to do something positive to alleviate anxiety. They will use positive autosuggestion to encourage themselves and reduce anxiety. Others might immerse themselves in that anxiety or use some negative autosuggestion to increase their anxiety. The finding suggested that autosuggestion could help in regulating emotions, but its effects were affected by individual's attitudes, which positive autosuggestion can diminish the influence of anxiety and increase self-importance and self-value, and negative autosuggestion will have the opposite effect.

Keywords: autosuggestion, emotional regulation, negative emotions

1. Introduction

With the popularization of psychological knowledge, people started to pay more attention to their mental health, in which how to regulate emotions has become a problem exposing to their views. Autosuggestion is one of the effective methods that people can easily implement to coping with stress. Previous scholars have precisely identified the meaning of autosuggestion. In the article, Dr. Hamlat explains that autosuggestion has the power to alter a person's mind or impose a new idea to that individual's brain [1]. These changes are always done in subconscious situation, but it is not impossible to consciously use autosuggestion to achieve some goals.

Trace back to the 20th century, the first concept that relevant to autosuggestion was raised by Sigmund Freud [2]. The analysis of ego is ample evidence to support that the influence of autosuggestion is undeniable. The reason that autosuggestion is important is that it can help people to regulate their emotions. People are facing different challenges need to overcome and the choices of life that they need to make every day and when they need to process these two things, they usually feel anxious. At this point, using an efficient emotional regulation method is necessary. Although autosuggestion cannot play a direct role in helping people to make a better life, it has ability to change people's emotions and thoughts to reach the same final goal. For example, autosuggestion can increase stress resistance. Unlike medications, autosuggestion has no side-effects [3]. Moreover, utilizing autosuggestion to raise the sense of self-esteem or self-importance will lead to a better mood. It can be used to eliminate negative thoughts and help people accept positive ones [1]. According to C. Scott Moss, by training sound psychotherapeutic practice patients

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could decrease negative emotional reactions and symptoms [4], which psychotherapeutic practice corresponded with the efficacy of autogestion. However, except for the ones who had learned this term, most people did not have a thorough understanding of what autosuggestion is and how to use it in the right way. Normally, they tried to use autosuggestion without knowing the functions and efforts. Under this situation it may lead to the opposite result. Therefore, it is important to figure out the relationship between autosuggestion and emotional regulation.

This study was focus on college students as the major sample to study such kind of social phenomenon. In addition, according to the interviewing some college students, the article also found out that various factors may lead autosuggestion have different effects and cause different results. These factors were also meaningful, because by knowing these factors would lead people to have a better understanding of different aspects of autosuggestion. In terms of the paper significance, this article can explore in what way autosuggestion can help regulate emotions and under what circumstances it may have a negative effect. In Gross and Thompson's model, the method of an emotional regulation strategy was shifting one's attention on the emotional features of the situation but not of the psychological state itself [5]. Under this circumstance, autosuggestion would be the first choice because it could regulate people's emotion by directing their attention to something else. By reading this paper readers would have a better cognition of the types of behavior they should do or avoid making autosuggestion effective in a positive way. The hypothesis is that the effect of autosuggestion is affected by individual's attitudes towards autogestion. If the result can come up with some specific conditional factors, autosuggestion can be better applied to psychotherapy.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The sample size of the questionnaire was 76, including 20 males and 56 females. 48 of them were undergraduate students, 5 were incoming college students, and the rest of them had just graduated this year. Ten interviewees were selected from the 76 participants. The average age of these 76 participants was 22 years old. They all had no bad addictions and are in good fitness. Thirty percent of them were superstitious. Most of them had no experience in learning psychology and they sometime had experience of using autosuggestion unintentionally. None of them was majoring psychology but some had taken one or two introductory psychology courses during the college years.

2.2. Material

The format was online questionnaire. There were 25 questions, most of them were focusing on identifying whether they would do anything related to autosuggestion and emotional regulation. In addition, the questionnaire would also include a survey of their physical and mental health. This questionnaire was created based on both previous literature on autosuggestion and depression as the background [6]. Because this questionnaire was used to screen whether there were people who could be used as a sample for follow-up interviews, it was important to know how they utilize autosuggestion daily. The outline of the interview was roughly divided into six different aspects of questions, each section containing two to six questions. The first module was applicable to understanding when they would use psychological suggestion and how often they use it. The second part was used to understand their state and mood. The third part was to figure out how they used psychological cues and whether they really understand psychological cues. The fourth part focused on emotional mediation. The fifth and last one was about sleep and whether their feelings were easily affected by others.

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3. Procedure

The questionnaire was sent via the Internet and some social software, such as WeChat and QQ. A total of 103 responses were received, 76 of which were valid. Among 13 identified respondents, 10 of them agreed to be interviewed and recorded. Four of them were men and six were women. These participants were divided into three categories. The first group was people who were used to using positive autosuggestion to actively change their negative state. The second was people who preferred to use negative autosuggestion and to immerse themselves in a negative state. The people in the last group rarely used autosuggestion. The interview duration was not the same for everyone, depending on the length of the questions answered by the interviewees. The reason was that some of them were more active in sharing their experiences, while others were introverted and shy. The average duration of the interview was about 20 minutes. The interview was conducted by phone, and the recording device was iPhone.

4. Result

Most people would have some levels of anxiety when they encounter big events. These events include various aspects. As a matter of fact, college students account for the largest number of participants, so exams, relationships and friendships have become the most obvious problem in this study, in figure one. While they were facing problems, some of them might try to use different methods to change their current negative state, such as using positive autosuggestion, looking for a psychologist, going to karaoke, eating, playing video games, and so on. They had the habit of consciously using autosuggestion to adjust their emotions and cooperated with other positive behavior strategies. One typical example was that before taking an exam, they would cheer themselves up and tell themselves in their hearts that they could do well in the exam. Another common phenomenon was that they talk to themselves when they were hesitant. Telling themselves what they should insist their choices, to strengthen their decisions. As a result, their emotions were effectively regulated, and there were also long-term positive effects, like better sleep qualities and healthier minds. According to what they said during the interview, their anxiety levels were also be reduced remarkably. On the contrary, for those who preferred to use negative autosuggestion or immerse themselves in that anxiety, they often felt tired in both physical and mental aspects. For example, they usually had low quality sleep and always have nightmares. Different from the previous group, these individuals would tell themselves that they cannot do well when facing the exam. They would be afraid that they may crack under the pressure. As a result, they exerted great pressure and anxiety on themselves unconsciously. Under these circumstances, these people were more likely to be affected by negative emotions and major events, resulting in depression and anxiety.

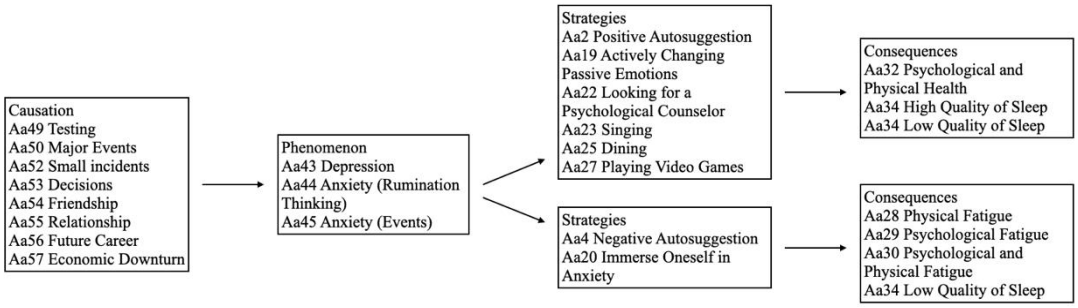

Figure 1: The modulation mechanism of autosuggestion on emotional regulation.

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5. Discussion

In a very practical sense, it is important for anxious people to actively regulate their negative emotions, by using positive autosuggestions. The effect of autosuggestion was affected by people's attitudes on the effects autosuggestion has been proved. In other words, whether participants believed that they could use autosuggestion to diminish their negative state, and whether the positive or negative autosuggestion they chose to use are significant. Most compelling evidence, according to Rhonda Byrne, he explained how the law of attraction implemented in people's life. People have the power to utilize their belief to attract positive things to their life and even achieve some goals [7]. For example, if a person believes and always thinks that he can pass a job interview, then he will be more likely to pass it. However, if he always thinks that he does not want to be rejected by the interviewer, he will be more likely to be rejected by the interviewer. The power of attraction could not be underestimated. Moreover, the effect of autosuggestion was affected by the frequency of using autosuggestion. Therefore, using positive autosuggestion frequently could lead people to evaluate themselves with a higher self-estimate. They would gradually have a good sense of themselves, which would lead them to have more confidence in doing things and work. To the end that, with a higher sense of self-importance and more confidence, people would have a better mood that could support them to regulate their emotions in an easier way. In contrast, if people were always surrounded by negative autosuggestions, they would automatically attract unfavorable emotions, like an endless loop.

Compared to Dr. Kanji's finding of Autogenic training, which was a type of autosuggestion that could help reduce anxiety levels of those patients undergoing coronary angioplasty, this paper showed that autosuggestion could be used in a more extensive way [8]. Autosuggestion not only played the role in reducing anxiety in surgical operations, but also could be used as a method of psychological therapy. Furthermore, using positive autosuggestions would also increase people's confidence and self-value. Even though utilizing autosuggestion could help regulate emotions, it is important to use it in the correct way. In other words, people must pay attention to whether the autosuggestion they use is positive or negative. For example, patients need to think that they can, rather than fear that they cannot [7]. Although these two thoughts seem like the same thing, the effects are different. Giving themselves some positive psychological hints could effectively reduce negative emotions and ease anxiety but giving negative ones would increase anxiety.

The reason why giving positive autosuggestion could produce positive effects is that people would focus on positive and happy things. These thoughts would make people focus on the good things. When they shifted their attention from test anxiety to happy thoughts, they would automatically reduce anxiety. As anxiety was reduced, their mood would be less depressed. When the negative emotions were eased, they could regulate emotions more effectively and more easily. On the other hand, if they gave themselves negative psychological cues, they would focus all their attention on the bad things so that they would pay more attention to the exam and aggravate their worries about the exam. In this way, negative emotions would increase, making emotional regulation more difficult. As a matter of fact, positive psychological hints could also improve self-worth. When people always had the thoughts about what they can do and what they had succeed, they would increase self-confidence. As David Robson has written in the book, "the way people think about the world can profoundly shape how they navigate it" [9]. Similar to the placebo effect, if people trust they can be cured, their illness will be eased. Under this circumstance, when their confidence increases, they will be more likely to succeed in this matter. With success, they will have more sense of self-value.

The effect of autosuggestion affected by individuals' attitudes towards autosuggestion has been well proved with strong evidence. Previous studies and books have clearly shown that positive

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autosuggestion can have a strong effect. From these documents, it is clear to see that some scientists have used experiments, like measuring state anxiety, to prove this view [8]. Give yourself positive psychological hints and let yourself believe that you can and can achieve extraordinary results. This view has also been confirmed by many famous scholars, like Sigmund Freud, David Robson, etc. Therefore, positive autosuggestion could be applied to both clinical treatment and daily self-treatment.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, utilizing positive autosuggestion to encourage oneself can effectively regulate emotions. Positive autosuggestion can reduce negative emotions and increase self-importance. Moreover, the research provides some insights into bring autosuggestion training to psychological therapy. This method can not only save costs, but also have no side effects. Psychological counselors can teach their patients how to use positive autosuggestion to cope with anxiety and encourage them to use this method to help themselves. Consequently, there is still much to be done to unify theory building and verification in the relationship between autosuggestion and emotion regulation. For example, conducting an experiment to find out if there is significant causation. Finally, there is still much to be done to improve the accuracy of the testing results in exploiting autosuggestion in clinical fields. The process of conducting experiment should be more developed and precise to find the exact benefits of positive autosuggestion.

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