

Review: Effect of Positive Affirmation on stress and academics in students

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Abstract

Auto recommendations are a collection of particular self-administered procedures for enhancing mental health, self-assurance, and problem-solving skills. This cognitive process is thought to give people power over their own cognitive and physical conditions. The neurocognitive mechanisms and psychological ideas that underlie autosuggestion are poorly understood, despite its potential significance for basic science and clinical applications, such as in rehabilitation, stress reduction, or pain therapy.

Stress is frequently brought on by mental health issues. By sending suggestions to the subconscious mind, hypnosis can assist in changing the state of mind. Stress is lessened as a result. A professional hypnotist is needed if hypnosis to be used to combat stress. The same principles underlie self hypnosis. The relaxation response is the basis for how this stress management therapy functions. It aids in physical relaxation and allows the stress hormone to decrease. Additionally, it diverts the focus away from undesirable thoughts. This relaxes the body, which ultimately aids in reducing stress. The goal of the chapter is to discuss whether autosuggestion can enhance academic achievement and lessen exam-related stress in students.

Key words: Stress, Academics, Autosuggestion, performance, positive reinforcement

BACKGROUND

Exams are a regular component of academic life in high school or college. The phrase "Student exam stress is creating mental health time bombs" has been used occasionally (1). While experiencing some stress is totally normal, excessive amounts will hinder performance. The requirement to take exams for schools, colleges, or competitive exams weighs heavily on students' minds and puts them under a great deal of stress. Either exam phobia or melancholy sets in for them. The British Association for Counseling and Psychotherapy and the Family Doctor Association have both noted a worrying increase in exam-related stress and are looking for assistance with such services. Exam anxiety is becoming more common. Exam anxiety is becoming more common. Exam stressors include societal pressure for the best outcome and future development, emotional immaturity, low self-esteem, negative thoughts, and the use of anxiety-stimulating substances like tea, coffee, cola, and other beverages prior to the exam. Student suicide attempts are more frequent around exam or results time, thus in these situations, they may require counselling, antidepressants, or additional family support (2).

Stress causes specific psychological and physiological responses in the body. Mild stress is good for cognitive function and tasks, but chronic, compounded stress can cause neuropsychiatric conditions like anxiety and depression. They are therefore the two halves of the same coin. Exams serve as a stressor and activate the hypothalamic-pituitary adrenal axis, which raises the amount of cortisol and is reflected in saliva (3). Students' performance is hampered by stress, which changes their emotional and cognitive functioning via adrenaline and glucocorticoids (4). They are portrayed in different ways and differ from person to person. While test stress in students can result in drug and alcohol misuse, shaky hands, and suicidal thoughts, early symptoms include tense muscles, palpitations, dry mouth, headache, loss of appetite, and sleep deprivation. Therefore, it is important to start good counselling for the pupils as soon as possible in order to lower their stress levels. It is preferable to avoid exam stress than to alleviate it. A little incentive to boost self-confidence is the best way for any adolescent to prevent exam anxiety, along with a methodical, consistent, organised, planned, and regular effort from the start of the academic session. The development of pupils' self-confidence and enhancement of their academic achievement may be significantly aided by auto suggestion.

Auto recommendations are a collection of particular self-administered procedures for enhancing mental health, self-assurance, and problem-solving skills. They come in positive and negative varieties. Repeating the same set of suggestions to a participant over the course of several sessions is often how auto suggestions are used clinically. This type of self-inflicted suggestion directs people's own ideas, emotions, and actions. It instils a happy attitude by fostering positive thoughts, and as a result, auto recommendations can have an effect on conditioning, moral judgments, and conduct. It also promotes a healthy lifestyle and enriches the workplace. Additionally, it aids in overcoming numerous phobias, which will immediately enhance their holistic development by enhancing their general sense of wellbeing in daily life (5).

Students can reduce their tension during exams using a variety of methods, including breathing exercises, complementary therapies like yoga, meditation, etc. Students lack the motivation to practice it frequently, therefore a straightforward method like positive autosuggestion may not only assist to increase their confidence but also aid to reduce tension, which will improve their performance in tests. To the best of our knowledge, this has not been tested, so conducting a study to examine how autosuggestion affects students' stress levels and academic performance is justified(6).

A young boy's mind might experience a great deal of stress as a result of landmark exams like the tenth board exams, which define a child's future, profession, and the rat race associated to meet the expectations in order to achieve in examinations. Therefore, our study focused on class tenth students (Class X) at Pandith Government Higher Secondary School in Mangalore, where 54 of the students had moderate perceived stress scales and only 4 had mild stress prior to autosuggestion(6). This finding was supported by Subramani et al., who claimed that government school students experienced moderate stress as compared to private school students because of the excess homework, projects, and other academic-related assignments (7). With autosuggestion practise, this outcome altered, and more students reported experiencing mild stress.

In our study, it was found that the administration of positive autosuggestion significantly reduced the perceived stress score, and the students' academic performance also improved (6). This suggests that repeated autosuggestion has the capacity to subtly create an affirmative statement or a trained thought process with repeated enchantment causing a psychological feedback wherein the negative thoughts are transformed into positive thoughts and an improvement in mood. The phrase "Every day, in every way, I am growing better and better," used by French psychologist and pioneer of autosuggestions Emile Coue to teach conscious autosuggestions, was repeated repeatedly while maintaining entire faith and mental focus. The individuals felt they could accomplish any objective with this (8). People who practised both autosuggestion and meditation had significantly lower HR, SBP, and DBP than those who merely meditated. The focus of this study, however, was not just on the influence of autosuggestion on these variables (9). Positive suggestion techniques were combined with medical procedures that resulted in a significant decrease in pain and a quicker healing process, both of which were accomplished in an efficient manner, supporting the idea that autosuggestion has a significant impact on the body's response to medical ailments (10). The adage "fake it till you make it" is appropriate when discussing autosuggestions since the mind is fooled by these repeated mantras, and our bodies begin acting accordingly. Reddy et al. came to the conclusion that stress management techniques like mindfulness, feedback, psychotherapy, and meditation were helpful (11). Autosuggestion or autogenic training was suggested by Ikematsu et al. as a way to help college students in Japan acquire the English language. Positive autosuggestions about learning the language had to be regularly imposed to help students train their subconscious minds. Electroencephalography (EEG) was captured to assess their mental state. Positive findings led to the conclusion that AT or autosuggestion is superior to hypnosis and may become a crucial tool in teaching and learning (12).

Students in secondary and higher education institutions are more stressed out about their academics. According to Michaela C et al., the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conducted a poll with students between the ages of 15 and 16 in 72 countries, and 66% of pupils expressed stress over receiving poor grades and 55% expressed worry despite being well-prepared (13). In our study, the proportion of students who scored low on the stress scale rose and those who scored moderately stressed feel following autosuggestion. After autosuggestion, the perceived stress scale and students' academic performance did not significantly correlate. However, a negative correlation was found, indicating that higher levels of stress were associated with lower academic performance in students.

Stress and cortisol levels were found to positively correlate, indicating that stress causes a higher release of the stress hormone. Additionally, our study revealed that pupils with greater cortisol levels had a 50% chance of receiving a high academic score compared to those with lower cortisol levels. Because glucocorticoids are completely blocked when the adrenal cortex produces too much cortisol under stress, the hippocampus, amygdala, and prefrontal cortex are less able to retrieve memories and perform other cognitive activities. Additionally, it hinders the hippocampus' capacity to store and retrieve memories. They might change how information is stored in the hippocampus, which would lead to subpar test results (14). Many studies have reached the same conclusions and found evidence of the negative effects of stress on academic performance. Academic grades perform better when students are under less stress. According to an analysis of the autosuggestion practise score from our study, students who practised at least 50% of autosuggestion daily had an 85% higher chance of scoring low on the stress scale than those who practised less than 50% of autosuggestion daily. There is a dearth of research on the benefits of autosuggestion for lowering test anxiety and improving grades.

How did the students interpret unexpected happiness was the first PSS question in our study(6). After autosuggestion, the ratings indicated a 16% improvement in perception. The ability to govern the crucial aspects of their lives improved by 45% in response to question 2, which resulted in a substantial improvement in PSS score ($p=0.0019$). Other questions' improvements were statistically negligible. However, the percentage of improvement for questions 3 to 10 was 16%, 21%, 22%, 36%, 0%, 23.8%, 16%, and 36%, respectively(6). These results imply that pupils were more at ease and self-assured; they were also better able to deal with whatever situation arose. They were able to handle the tasks they were given.

According to studies, men and women handle exam stress differently. The perceived stress scale did not statistically differ between males and females in our study before or after autosuggestion, although the stress scale fell by 21% in males after autosuggestion. Cortisol levels between men and women also showed no statistically significant differences. Male students experienced more academic stress than female students, according to research by Prabu et al on higher secondary school students (16). Another finding from our study was that while there was no statistically significant difference in the academic performance of male and female students, the outcomes for males after autosuggestion improved by 13%. While Kaur et al. claimed that female students were more susceptible to academic stress and poor mental health than male students, our study also found no statistical link between marks and stress in boys and females (17). Deb et al. found that 37% of male students in grades 10 through 12 reported high levels of anxiety and 35% of them had exam-related stress (18). The relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement is good, however psychologists in Pakistan found that while girls outperformed males in terms of academic performance, males were found to have higher levels of self-confidence. Due to cultural norms and the greater degree of freedom granted to men in this population, men's self-esteem was higher in this situation (19). Matud et al., however, found that there were gender disparities in stress and coping style, with women demonstrating greater psychological discomfort and fewer coping methods than men (20). As stress is highly subjective and can be managed in a variety of ways, one study by Montiel et al. found that females exhibited less compliance behaviour and higher felt stress than males (21).

CONCLUSION

Autosuggestion had a considerable impact on students' grades and stress levels. Stress levels decrease and academic performance improves by autosuggestion. Autosuggestions could help students relax on test day, increase their self-esteem, and eventually improve academic performance. While some kids might not be mature enough to understand the importance of autosuggestion in daily life, students must focus, pay attention, and have faith in the assertions in order to follow autosuggestion. Since mental health is just as vital as physical health, they should be included in the higher secondary school curriculum so that it is practiced daily.

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