THE EFFECT OF MODERATE TASK-IRRELEVANT, NEGATIVE EMOTION ON CLASSROOM TEST TAKING PERFORMANCE IN A NON-ClinICAL POPULATION

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Abstract
The present study addresses the role of moderate task-irrelevant negative and positive emotion on verbal memory retrieval during academic testing in the classroom. It is argued that moderate task-irrelevant negative emotion in a non-clinical population is sufficient to hinder memory for academic information, whereas positive task-irrelevant emotion is not affected. Prior to the task, subjects completed a brief questionnaire to determine their emotional status and confidence in taking the upcoming test. A significant interaction was found between intensity of emotion and its valence. Specifically, respondents who expressed moderate levels negative task-irrelevant emotions scored lower during a classroom test than did those who expressed low task-irrelevant negative emotion, whereas no significant difference was found between those who expressed low and moderate positive emotion. It was concluded that those experiencing moderate levels of task-irrelevant negative emotion experienced a distraction of attention. Furthermore, it is suggested that future studies may investigate whether inoculation to performance decrements would occur if a motivating reward is anticipated for test success.

Keywords: academic achievement; anxiety; memory; negative emotion; non-clinical

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