Incremental Mindset of Anxiety Intervention
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Introduction

Implicit theories are beliefs we hold about ourselves that are unarticulated but highly influential. An incremental mindset of personal attributes means a person believes that such attributes are malleable (Dweck & Legget, 1988). Incremental views can lead to benefits in emotional and mental health.

People with entity mindsets view personal attributes as fixed and unchangeable. Entity views often result in poorer emotional regulation skills and negative emotion (Dweck & Legget, 1988).

In past research, Schleider and Weisz (2016) cultivated an incremental mind-set about personality. Participants who were taught to have an incremental mindset were better buffered against social stressors and recovered faster than controls (Schleider & Weisz, 2016). However, no study has sought to cultivate an incremental mindsets of anxiety as an anxiety-reducing intervention.

Method

Hypothesis: It is predicted that participants in the incremental mindset group will experience lower anxiety over time than those in the control group.

Expected Results

- Results will be analyzed using a mixed factorial ANOVA comparing pre-post intervention changes across the two conditions.
- An interaction effect is expected in that experimental participants will show more change in anxiety scores than controls.
- We will also analyze whether a change in implicit theories mediates the impact of the incremental mindset cultivation.

Figure 1. Hypothetical representation of findings that support the hypothesis. The experimental group (left) has a larger overall decrease between pre-red) and post-PANAS (gold) scores than the control group (right).

Control:
Intervention teaching Supportive Therapy methods using video training

Experimental:
Incremental mindset intervention about general anxiety using video training

Three weeks after receiving the intervention, reassess:
- Implicit Theories of Anxiety
- PANAS and BAI

Intervention components:
1. Presentation about the brain’s capacity to change
2. Testimonials from older students using intervention
3. Completing a worksheet of everyday strategies to implement intervention
4. Letters written to younger students by participants to engage them in self-persuasion

Implications

If the results support the hypothesis, this means that implicit theory training can be used as an intervention for student anxiety. As the intervention is so brief (under an hour), significant effects would suggest real-world value.

The intervention can be entirely computerized; therefore it can be run by a single interventionist and administered to a number of students. Anxiety is highly comorbid with depression making up two of the most common mental health struggles. Therefore, a brief intervention may buffer more people from being affected by anxiety and/or depression. This would warrant further research into incremental mindset interventions.

References


N =~ 80
undergraduate introductory psychology students randomly assigned to experimental or control conditions

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