

The effects of mood on short term memory psychology essay



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Can mood affect how much and what someone is able to remember when trying to retain information? The study is going to include a self-report, along with a short story and recognition test to see what and how much of a short story is retained and its relationship to the emotions someone is feeling at the time of reading and completing the experiment. In this study we will use a positive, negative, and mix between both questionnaires with certain adjectives that are skewed to those types of emotions. After the participants will read a short story and be tested on recognition and their ability to memorize content from the story. The words that are remembered from the story will also be tested to see whether it relates to the mood of the participant. Research is being conducted in order to find a relationship between the ability to learn and retain information and the mood and emotions of a participant and its effect on memory. This can be used in the education field to see how negative self-image/ emotions toward oneself affects their learning ability of what and how much they are able to retain and recognize. This will allow teachers to see how the emotion of the student and even the teacher can affect the amount of learning and memory can be done in the class room. This research can also be used to see more about what people with poor self-image and negative emotions about themselves focus on and retain in their brain as a cycle of remembering negative parts of information and feeling negative emotions themselves. Recollection is the ability retrieve information of things like attributes. (Drakeford, et. Al, 2008) According to research done in a study, major depressive disorder can display a deficiency in recollection and familiarity, effecting memory. (Drakeford, et. Al 2008) through the experiment, results found that MDD can affect the recognition memory and reduce its ability as well as the rate of

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remembering. We can take this information as a sign that moods and emotions do affect someone's memory processes and how they remember things. In this study, research will not only be about the amount of information recognized but also the content of what they memorize and their ability to remember positive or negative words in correlation to their emotions. In a study called Mood- Congruent Memory and Natural Mood: New Evidence, the experimenters are researching how mood can affect not only how much but what you remember; like people with positive emotions will remember more happy things than sad things and vice versa. (Mayer et. Al, 1995) Mood congruency can be connected to another effect called mood congruency judgment which says that material that matches your mood will have more priority to be remembered than material that doesn't correlate with how you are feeling (Mayer et. Al, 1995). In the experiment I will be conducting, participants will not know what they will need to do with the short story I give them besides reading it. It is shown that involuntary memory, memory that you don't try to retain, is more specific and more related to your emotions and have a higher mood impact on a person. (Watson, et. Al, 2013). Another study to help back up the hypothesis for my experiment is an experiment to see how the difference between schizophrenia patients and healthy patients and their ability to remember certain aspects of a video shown. Of the results, the schizophrenic patients could not remember as much as the healthy ones. Many research experiments suggest that people with schizophrenia do worse than healthy people on recall and recognition tests. (Peters, et. Al, 2012) Emotion and mood is located in the limbic system of the brain which also includes the memory center, the hippocampus, and the fear center, the amygdala, which

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would explain the relationship between mood and memory. (Phelps, 2012)

Looking at depression as it correlates with negative emotions of anxiety, fear, and sadness, it proven to affect cognition in many ways including long term memory. In table 1 of the Working Memory and Emotion: Ruminations on a theory of depression, depression affects the ability to learn. Anxiety affects cognition but it affects with the distraction of anxiety and fear on learning because throughout the day and throughout someone's mental processes are consumed with their negative thoughts. (Baddeley, 2013) This correlates to the study that will be done because some of the words of the self-reporting questionnaire include fear and sadness. These words make up the negative emotions that people feel which can lead to depression and other mental health problems. People who tend to know their emotions and be more aware of them tend to have a better ability to keep away negative thoughts and eventually cognitive reactivity. Cognitive reactivity is the ability to have negative emotions keeps popping up and can be a precursor for depression (Raes, 2009). These thoughts can be distracting as I've stated before on the cognitive ability of a participant which may be able to be shown in the experiment that I am planning on conducting. Positive emotions, unlike negative emotions are wanted in the mind and can be better when trying to focus rather than dwelling and distracting oneself with negative mood and emotion like worry. Although mood seems to closely relate to what we remember, it has also been shown that it depends on the situation and context of the testing. In an experiment by Forgas and Eich, it was found that there was a very strong relationship between mood and memory, but in a specific study done in the experiment, participants witnessed an aggressive encounter between two confederates and were

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given a questionnaire day later. People were then given misleading or controlled information and it was found that people with more positive moods accounted false information more often than people with negative moods. A positive mood made it easier to tell false information as true in a report unlike people with negative moods who almost all of the time reported the misleading information as false and not believing the false information given. Although this shows the opposite of my hypothesis, it helps give back ground information on the fact that different scenarios like retaining information in a scary situation can decrease your ability to report true information with a more positive mood than a negative one. (Forgas, Eich, 1998)

Methods:

The participants will be Clemson university students, who are within the ages of 18-24. There will be 15 females and 15 males who will be recruited from classes, dorm, organizations, and friend groups. There will be no discrimination of major or academic level. This will be a between group study meaning that each person will be objected to one variable. The participants will be randomly assigned to different conditions and they will include, one condition including the more negative survey, the other one with the more positive survey, and then the control group which will have a survey with a mix of the positive and negative questions before the memory test. For example, the questionnaire will include adjectives like love, pride, joy for the positive questionnaire and words like anxiety, sadness, and guilt for a more negative questionnaire. The control group's questionnaire will contain a mix of these same words. For this test, the different sections of the Subjective

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Emotion Rating Scale will be used to give different affects to the participant; negative, positive or an equal amount of positive and negative ratings. This will be administered in a quiet place with just the experimenter and the participants to eliminate as many distractions as possible. The participants will not need to give their name on either survey or recognition test; they will only need to identify themselves as female or male to keep privacy and increase reliability of answers to the questionnaire. We will first start off giving the participant a random questionnaire. It could be the positively affiliated one, the negatively affiliated one, or the one including both negatively and positively affiliated adjectives. They will each have 3 minutes to finish them in order to allow everyone the same time to think and self-evaluate. Secondly, once all of them are done taking this self-reporting survey, they will be given the Interpretation and Recognition for Words in a short story. They will only be given the short story to read first before being given the test of recognition and interpretation. At the maximum, 10 minutes will be given to complete the reading of the short story. This is to allow everyone enough time to read the story but to also keep participants from intentionally memorizing certain parts of the story, like the bolded words. Once they have read the story they will wait 30 seconds before getting the recognition and interpretation part of the experiment in order to keep it consistent between participants. The participants will have 5 minutes to complete this section. Once they have completed the last part they will be able to leave.

Results:

I will calculate each of the variables using what was given for the questionnaires and tests. In the Subjective Emotion Rating Questionnaire, the words are measured on a 9 point scale which goes from 0 to 8 with 0 meaning not at all to 8 which is extremely. The Interpretation and Recognition of Words in a short story will be measured using a 7 point Likert scale with 1 being "totally negative" and 7 being "totally positive". I will also add up the total number of word recognitions the participant got correctly in order to see how many words were remembered from the short story. I will use descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation when separating the self-report questionnaires between positive, negative, and control group adjectives along with the mean and standard deviation of the recognition and interpretation testing in order to see the relationship between the positivity or negativity of the self-report and the negativity/positivity, as well as the amount of recognized words in the short story. We expect to find that people given the more positive questionnaire and with more positive emotions will retain more information and be able to recognize more words along with have a more positive interpretation of the story while the people given a negative questionnaire will recognize less words and have a more negative interpretation to the short story.