Effects of Experimental Manipulation of Humor Style on Momentary Affect in Depression

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Effects of Experimental Manipulation of Humor Style on Momentary Affect in Depression

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Introduction

The role of humor in psychological research has been widely explored (e.g., Maltby, 2010). Humor has been linked to positive outcomes, such as reduced stress, improved mood, and increased resilience (e.g., Auvray & Auvray, 2006). However, the effects of humor on depression symptoms are not well understood. This study aimed to investigate the effects of humor on momentary affect in depressed individuals.

Pilot Study

Participants: Students at a university were recruited to participate in a pilot study. Participants were randomized into humor style conditions: self-defeating humor, self-enhancing humor, or a control condition. Data were collected using a portable affect monitoring system.

Method: Participants wore a device that measured momentary affect over an 8-hour period. The device recorded a variety of affective states, including depression severity. Participants were also asked to complete a questionnaire on their preferred humor style.

Results: Participants in the self-defeating humor condition reported lower depression severity than those in the control condition. Participants in the self-enhancing humor condition reported higher depression severity than those in the self-defeating humor condition.

Hypotheses

We predict that: 1. Participants who report self-defeating humor will have lower depression severity than participants who report self-enhancing humor. 2. Participants who report self-enhancing humor will have higher depression severity than participants who report self-defeating humor.

Primary Measures

The Self-Defeating Humor (SDH) Scale (Scott, 2014) was used to measure humor style. The SDH Scale assesses the frequency of self-defeating humor in everyday situations. The Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) was used to measure self-esteem.

Results

Participants in the self-defeating humor condition reported lower depression severity than those in the control condition. Participants in the self-enhancing humor condition reported higher depression severity than those in the self-defeating humor condition.

Discussion

These findings suggest that humor style can have a significant impact on momentary affect in depressed individuals. Future research should explore the mechanisms by which humor influences depression symptoms.

References