

College Students' Anxiety Levels when Perceived Experience the Spotlight Effect

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Abstract

The purpose of this study will be to explore college students' anxiety levels and their perceived experience of the spotlight effect. Specifically, when a college student believes she or he is receiving negative attention and being judged from their peers based on physical appearance. Previous research has not taken a deep look into the college population when it comes to the spotlight effect. The research study could benefit the general public, by providing an opportunity to become more educated on social psychology and discover ways to help one on how to cope with their anxiety.



Hypothesis

There will be an increase in participants' anxiety levels when believing that they are receiving negative attention from their peers.

Introduction

- Myers and Twenge (2017) define the spotlight effect as a belief when one will overestimate the amount of attention, she or he is receiving from others based on physical appearance or behavior.
- Tubbs et al. (2019) characterizes anxiety as uncontrollable feelings of fear and anxiousness, and results in interrupting both everyday physical and psychological functioning.
- Zhan et al. (2015) performed a study that showed that the participants overestimated how many individuals in their environment would detect the counterfeit apparel.

Methods

- Participants were 21 female and 10 male undergraduate students from Southern Adventist University.
- Participants responded from a questionnaire consisting of 3 sections.
 1. Social Comparison Survey
 2. Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21)
 3. Demographic Information
- Participants were given a score for each of the following variables: anxiety and social comparison.

Results

1. Correlations
 $r(31) = .063, p = .367$
2. One-way ANOVA
 $r(31) = .679, p = .515$
3. Independent Samples T-test
 $t(30) = .261, p = .754$

Results are inconclusive and further research is needed.

Discussion

- This could benefit people who are not educated on social psychology or how one's anxiety levels can increase when experiencing the spotlight effect.
- This study could be beneficial for future researchers interested in the relationship between anxiety levels and the spotlight effect.
- Future research could include a larger sample size, other campuses in the country, and further research can benefit college students in knowing the spotlight effect and decreasing anxiety levels.

References

- Tubbs et al. (2019). Mindfulness moderates the relation between trauma and anxiety symptoms in college students. *Journal of American College Health*. 67(3), 235-245. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2018.1477782>
- Zhan et al. (2015). Using the spotlight effect to curb counterfeit consumption: An experimental investigation. *Emerald Group Publishing*. 33(4), 556-574. <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.southern.edu/10.1108/MIP-04-2014-0076>