The effect of entertaining movie scenes on positive emotion in distressed students during pandemic Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

Pandemic is a life event strongly associated with uncertainty, ambiguity, and loss of control. Each of which triggers emotional distress that has become a growing topic in research studies related to stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of previous studies have proven a possible effect of providing a stimulus that involves cognitive processes on emotional responses. Movie scene is one of the most effective methods used in Mood Induction Procedures (MIP). Positive emotion that reflects the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic and active could also be raised with this method. A total of 60 sophomore year students of the Faculty of Psychology at Padjadjaran University with emotional distress were selected using convenience sampling. Participants were divided into two groups, in which one group received treatment in the form of entertaining movie scenes, and the other group did not. Both groups filled out PANAS (Positive and Negative Affect Schedule) questionnaire to provide measurement result of the positive emotion they experienced. Independent sample t-test was performed and it showed a significant result that the provision of movie scenes affected positive emotion in participants who were experiencing distress.

Keywords: Movie Scenes; Distress; Positive Emotion; Students; MIPs

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic as declared by the WHO (World Health Organization) in March 2020 has resulted in a number of new concern in mental health. Based on the psychological perspective, pandemic is a life event strongly associated with uncertainty, ambiguity, and loss of control. Each of which triggers stress and emotional distress including anxiety, depression, and anger (Ensel & Lin, 1991; Pearlín et al., 1981; Shanahan et al., 2020). One study conducted in China in early January and February found that 54% of the participants perceived that the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is moderate and severe, and the remaining participants reported symptoms of anxiety and depression (Wang et al., 2020; Cullen et al., 2020).

Emotional distress has become one of the growing topics in research studies related to stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. Emotional distress is defined as a negative mood such as anxiety, depression, trauma symptoms, and global stress (Fisher et al., 2020).
According to Pfefferbaum and North (2020), extensive research on mental health during disaster has established that emotional distress impacts the population. The distress can be experienced by people who are not even at high risk for contracting COVID-19 (Montemurro, 2020).

Another impact of the pandemic is the school closure nationwide, which has resulted in online learning process or known as distance learning. According to several studies, there is a significant relationship between student stress level and the frequency of implementing distance learning in higher education (Putri et al., 2020). The stress experienced by students might be influenced by the fear of contracting COVID-19, boredom due to social distancing, and difficulty in understanding lecture material (Argahani, 2020). Assignments given by lecturers is another factor resulting in stress experienced by students during distance learning (PH et al., 2020).

One study stated that a method used to generate positive and negative emotions in an experimental study is Mood Induction Procedures (MiPs) (Fernández-Aguilar et al., 2018). Based on a research conducted by Gerrard Hezz in Fernández-Aguilar et al., (2018), the most effective method to arouse an emotion is through the exposure to movie scenes with affective content. However, there has been no study on generating positive emotion in people who are experiencing stress. Hence, the researchers would like to examine if entertaining movie scenes could affect emotion in the sophomore year students of the Faculty of Psychology at Padjadjaran University who were experiencing distress.

Several studies have proven the possible effect of providing a stimulus that involves cognitive processes on emotional responses. Thus, the researchers would like to further determine this topic, specifically to examine the effect of entertaining movie scenes on positive emotion in the sophomore year students of the Faculty of Psychology at Padjadjaran University who are experiencing distress.

2. METHODS

The design used in this study was two-group posttest only with an experimental approach. There were two groups participated, including control group who was not provided with treatment, and experimental group who was provided with treatment. By treatment means the provision of a collection of entertaining movie scenes. This research design allowed researchers to examine the effect of providing treatment on the dependent variable by comparing the measurement result of emotion between control group and experimental group.

Population in this study was class of 2019 students of the Faculty of Psychology at Padjadjaran University. A total of 60 sample were selected using convenience sampling as a non-probability technique approach. A preliminary assessment using Kessler psychological distress scale (K10) instrument was distributed first to determine one characteristic of the participants, which was being in distress. It was assessed from the minimum total score of 20 in the Kessler psychological distress scale (K10) instrument. If the total score did not reach 20, the student would not be selected to be the participant.
Two instruments were used in this study, including Kessler psychological distress scale (K10) and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). The two instruments were distributed on Google Form and had been adapted into Indonesian. The Kessler psychological distress scale (K10) was used to determine the level of distress experienced by students. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items using Likert scale, ranging from 1-5. The researchers also provided additional question about the causes of perceived distress. A try out for this instrument was carried out to several students in class of 2018 of the Faculty of Psychology at Padjadjaran University. Reliability of the instrument that had been adapted into Indonesian showed that the instrument had a Cronbach alpha = 0.860, meaning the instrument was reliable. Validity test was also performed and there were several invalid items, including 1, 7, and 10.

The second instrument was Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). It was used as an evaluation between the groups provided with and not provided with a collection of entertaining movie scenes. The instrument consisted of 10 positive emotions and 10 negative emotions. The instrument used Likert scale ranging from 1-5. The researchers also provided additional questions about other emotions experienced after watching the collection of movie scenes. Reliability of the instrument had Cronbach alpha = 0.749, meaning the instrument was reliable. Validity test was also performed and there were several invalid items, including 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 17.

This study was conducted on Zoom video conference media. After ensuring all participants were present, the researchers began to inform purpose of the study and distributed the informed consent to participants. In control group, filling out the informed consent was followed by filling out PANAS questionnaire. In experimental group, participants were provided with a collection of entertaining movie scenes before filling out PANAS questionnaire. The movie scenes provided were Benny playing around in the coffee shop (“Benny & Joon” movie), during the Judy training scene (“Zootopia” movie), during the 'dog and cat' scene (“Milly & Mamet”), and during the mereun scene (“Imperfect”). The first movie scene referred to a research conducted by Fernández-Aguilar et al., (2018), and the other three movie scenes were selected based on experience and consideration of the researchers.

Assumption tests were performed to determine statistical analysis to be used. The assumption tests performed were normality test and homogeneity test. Normality test of the data in this study was performed using Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test with criteria of p-value > 0.05 for normal distribution. Homogeneity test was performed using Levene’s Test for Homogeneity of Variance with a criteria of p-value > 0.05 for homogeneous variance between groups. Based on assumption tests, data in control group and experimental group were normally distributed and homogeneous. Therefore, the statistical analysis used was independent sample t-test to determine the difference in the effect of providing entertaining movie scenes on emotion.
3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A total of 60 students participated in this study. Majority of the participants were female (n = 48) and the remaining were male (n = 12). Majority of the participants were 19 years old (75.4%), followed by 20 years old (14.8%), and finally 18 years old (9.8%). The participants were class of 2019 students of the Faculty of Psychology at Padjadjaran University with mild stress (51.7%), moderate stress (45%), and severe stress (3.3%). Table 1 describes the frequency and proportion of participants’ stress.

Table 1. Frequency and proportion of stress in participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants reported the causes of their stress and personal problems. Self-evaluation, friendship, and family were the most dominant causes, took up around 50%. Academic problem (36.67%) was the second most common cause followed by others such as environment, monotonous life, and unexpected problems (31.67%), and non-academic problems (18.33%).

Examining the effect of providing entertaining movie scenes on positive emotion in participants who were experiencing stress was carried out using an independent sample t-test. The result showed a significant difference, t (58) = -1.784, p < 0.05. Participants who were provided with entertaining movie scenes (M = 30.80, SD = 7.078) on average produced more positive emotions than participants who were not provided with movie scenes (M = 27.87, SD = 5.569). The effect size was 0.923 indicating a strong effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference was -6.225 to 0.358. Fig. 1 illustrates the data distribution on the total score of positive emotion in the two groups.

This study revealed that entertaining movie scenes could generate positive emotions to students who were experiencing stress. The effect of this study was strong. This is in line with previous research which stated that movie scene is one of the most effective techniques for increasing positive emotion (Fernández-Aguilar et al, 2018). The result is also in accordance with a meta-analysis study conducted by Westermann et al, (1996), showing that displaying positive movie scenes could have a strong effect on eliciting positive emotions.

![Fig. 1. Data distribution of the total score of positive emotion in the two experimental groups](image-url)
A total of 63.3% participants in experimental group reported that they felt happy and entertained when watching the movie scenes. Meanwhile, 60% participants of the control group felt anxious, bored, and tired.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, entertaining movie scenes can generate positive emotions in students who are experiencing distress. The significant difference in the result between control group and experimental group indicates a significant effect of providing entertaining movie scenes.

The selected collection of movie scenes is expected to stimulate positive emotion measured through PANAS (Positive and Negative Affect Schedule) questionnaire. However, the collection of movie scenes used in this study did not represent the spectrum of target emotions contained in the instrument. Thus, one additional question was also provided in order to examine more emotions experienced by the participants in addition to the emotion choices mentioned in the instrument.

Despite the design used in previous studies was comparison—that were neutral, negative, and positive movie scenes—this study used positive movie scenes only to the experimental group and did not provide any movie scene to the control group. The process of conducting this study faced several difficulties such as selecting participants that apparently took quite long time. Limitation of this study is that the sampling technique used was convenience sampling. Therefore, it is inappropriate to validate the grouping of participants into a stress group.

Another difficulty faced during data collection was collecting participants with a balanced gender composition, which in turn the researchers were unable to examine the difference in the treatment effect between gender. During the movie scene provision, the researchers realized that sense of humor could also play a role in emotional assessment, resulting in extreme data in the experimental group. Limitation on the movie scenes used could also affect emotion that arose in participants. Some target emotions were not stimulated by the provided movie scenes.

This study used a two-group posttest only design. However, this method has several shortcomings. Comparison of the results between control group and experimental group only provided a general picture that there was an effect of entertaining movie scenes. If only pretest was carried out before data collection, the researchers would then be able to determine how significant the difference was.

Reference:


