

Can your mood change how susceptible you are to social influence?



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Abstract

When thinking on a certain opinion, people typically take the opinion itself into account before deciding. However, there are more factors in choosing an opinion than just the opinion itself. One key component of decision making is a person's mood. Emotions as a whole, no matter how intense they are, have a grand impact on how people decide on things. This also influences opinions, as opinions in themselves are decisions. However, there are other forces at play that influence decisions; social influence. Commonly known as peer pressure, social influence is an outside force (usually seen as friends or family) that influences someone's decisions. For instance, if a friend influences you to do drugs or smoke, that is a form of social influence. What this social influence does is make someone more susceptible to choose something or choose to do something. This can also influence the opinions of others. We discovered that, when you feel a certain way, your decisions and susceptibility to social influence will differ.

Introduction

- ❖ Emotions tend to influence decision making since they deliberate the future directions of these decisions.¹
- ❖ Transient emotions (a type of emotion that appears in a short, underlying burst) are influential to making decisions; these emotions can become a basis for future decisions.⁴
- ❖ A consumer of a product will be afflicted by social influence due to trusting those around them.⁷ This influence can extend to affecting opinions on things.
- ❖ Our research delves into the question of how emotions can make a person more susceptible to this social influence by looking into how it can influence a person's opinions.
- ❖ Due to the nature of emotional variation, we believe that negative emotions will lead to more susceptibility, while positive emotions will lead to less susceptibility.

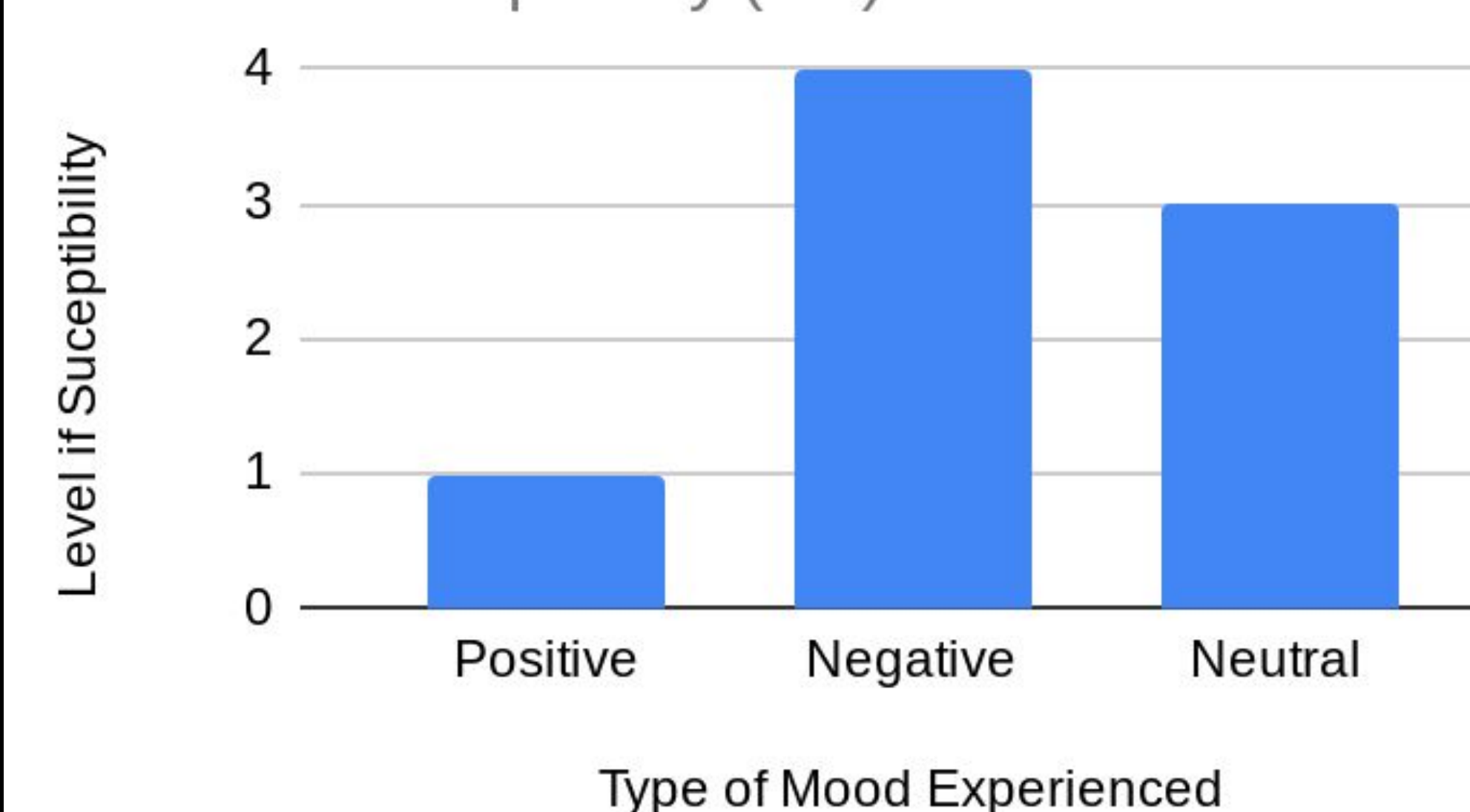
Methodology

- We had participants take our survey which is a mix of different personal and emotional surveys in one. These surveys would include the POMS survey (Profile of Mood States) and the Emotional Regulation survey.
- These studies can help us understand how people's mood can affect their decisions by asking them questions about their feelings or having them see where they stand on certain issues while being compared to other answers. We use the emotion regulation survey to really get a sense of the emotions our participants are feeling. The survey tries to identify two distinct types of emotions: the emotions you feel inside (emotional experience) and the emotions you express through the way you talk, act, or behave during the day (emotional expression).
- Through the profile of mood states, we tried to identify which feeling the participant is feeling at the time, which we can use as our base to identify if your mood had become worse or more better.
- In the social influence task, we see them conduct something similar to what our experiment would look like. In this experiment, they have participants do a three part task for each question, first they answer the questions, second they look at the answer from the general public after answering the question, and third they answer the questions again. These tasks combined can cover all the aspects that are important to complete our study which is the mood the participant has before the experiment (profile of mood states), the feeling they are experiencing towards doing this study (emotion regulation survey), and how their mood has changed which will help our observations (social influence task).
- To make sure participants were comfortable with the surveys and the tasks, we made sure to make anything and everything anonymous; gender, race, and names stayed out of consideration. Participants were also allowed to change their information sharing settings; they could share their responses or they could keep their responses to themselves.
- The task at hand involves either a video and then their task or simply a task without any mood altering video; as this may get boring, the videos will not have to be watched in their entirety.

Results

Since we haven't collected data yet, there are some hypothetical results that we can explore. There is one of the more rudimentary results that people tend to believe; negative emotions lead people to being more susceptible to social influence while positive emotions lead people to being less susceptible to social influence. Negative emotions, such as sadness or fear, can lead you to becoming more susceptible to what people say or do. For instance, if you experience fear from being bullied at school, you will tend to want to listen to what those bullies say due to the fear of getting harmed. This could also change your opinions due to not wanting to be ousted by those around you due to any fear. In contrast, feeling a positive emotion such as happiness will usually lead people to not really care what others think of them allowing them to not be easily influenced. From what we've gathered so far in our study, our results for this experiment were that people's moods do affect if they are susceptible to social influence. There are many factors that take place when making a decision such as mood, opinion, and feelings. Other emotions like transient emotions or incidental emotions also play a role in our decision making process by leading you to a more sad decision or into a totally different direction that leads you away from your initial decision. An example that we have identified as part of our research are e-consumers, these consumers are based online and have no idea if the product they're buying is good or not. They would most likely look at the reviews and sum up if they should make their purchase or not. There is also the consideration of the consumer's mood while looking at the reviews could sum up their final decision of whether to buy the product or not. We see this everyday since many people including ourselves shop online constantly, this proves our hypothesis correct, and finalizes our research for this study. Our findings throughout this study do vary since participants can tend to stick to their opinions or the videos can have little to no effect on them, resulting in no change happening through the experiment. Below is a graph with a rough draft of our results. This would be what we believe would occur in our results; as you can see, Negative emotions had a higher level of susceptibility while positive emotions have a lower level of susceptibility.

Level of Susceptibility (1-4) vs Mood Variation



Conclusion/Discussion

Overall, emotions are able to manipulate how people are affected by social influence in many different ways. Many negative emotions may lead someone to being more susceptible to social influence, while many positive emotions may lead someone to being less susceptible. However, there are some exceptions to this rule. People who experience negative emotions like anger or sadness may make a person less susceptible to social influence since they might not want to listen to other people, while some positive emotions, such as happiness, would allow for someone to be more susceptible to social influence, as they would want to listen to people more. Alas, emotions aren't the only factors that make social influence such a powerful force in multiple ways. There are other factors, including the personality of a person, the time of day, the type of opinion, etc. Overall, the experiment could lead to other experiments in terms of how emotions can impact the human body/brain. These experiments could include studies on how emotion can influence bias, how social influence can affect performance in school, or even how emotion or social influence can influence how gullible someone can be.

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