

The Inattentive Blindness Paradigm: A Breaking Wave for Attentional Biases in Test Anxiety

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Abstract : Test anxiety results from concerns about failure in examinations or evaluative situations. Attentional biases are known to pronounce the symptomatic expression of test anxiety. In recent times, the inattentive blindness (IB) paradigm has shown promise as an attention bias modification treatment (ABMT) for anxiety by overcoming practice and expectancy effects which preexisting paradigms fail to counter. The IB paradigm assesses the inability of an individual to attend to a stimulus that appears suddenly while indulging in a perceptual discrimination task. The present study incorporated an IB task with three critical items (book, face, and triangle) appearing randomly in the perceptual discrimination task. Attentional biases were assessed as detection and identification of the critical item. The sample (N = 50) consisted of low test anxiety (LTA) and high test anxiety (HTA) groups based on the reactions to tests scale scores. Test threat manipulation was done with pre- and post-test assessment of test anxiety using the State Test Anxiety Inventory. A mixed factorial design with gender, test anxiety, presence or absence of test threat, and critical items was conducted to assess their effects on attentional biases. Results showed only a significant main effect for test anxiety on detection with higher accuracy of detection of the critical item for the LTA group. The study presents promising results in the realm of ABMT for test anxiety.

Keywords : attentional bias, attentional bias modification treatment, inattentive blindness, test anxiety

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