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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN HYPNOTIC PHENOMENA

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Abstract

The present study investigated gender differences in four components, of hypnotic phenomena- Creative imagination (imaginative suggestibility), Absorption (focalized attention), subjective experience (depth of Trance state.) and hypnotisability (as trait) on samples of 150 females and 150 males (age range 10 to 22) Harvard Group scale for Hypnotic susceptibility A (HGSHS: A) provided scores for subjective experience (SE) and Hypnotisability. Creative Imagination Scale (CIS) and Tellegen Absorption Scale (TAS) were used to index imaginative suggestibility and absorption respectively obtained data were analyzed using descriptive statics, t-ratios, and person's intercorrelations. Between groups comparison revealed females scoring significantly higher on absorption, subjective experience and hypnotisability than males on creative imagination also females obtained higher mean scores statistically not significant) than males. Inter-correlations among four components in both data have been found to be significantly positive depicting substantial overlap among them and supplementary to each other. It provides empirical support to multifaceted nature of hypnosis and its pluralistic paradigms.

Keywords: Hypnotic phenomena, Gender differences

Introduction

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Since the reception of the concept of hypnosis, scholars have strived to answer the pre most prominent question about what is hypnosis? And what is its nature (Forrest, 1999; Pekala and Kumar, 2005; Pekala et al, 2010; Wickramasekera II, 2015; Wark and Reid, 2018; Dell, 2021), but still this question persists. Early clinical practitioners like Braid, Charcot, Bernheim, Freud, Sigmund. Conceptualized hypnosis as a state of altered consciousness based on their observations of clients in clinical setting adopting case study or monolithic approach. Subsequent scholars (Hilgard, 1977; Bowers 1992; Kihlstorm, 2003; Woody and Bowers 1994) called state theorists then conceptualized hypnosis as a state consisting of trance, focalized attention and altered consciousness. Non-state or trait theorists have attempted to theories hypnosis in terms of individuals beliefs, expectations, imaginations, and personality dispositions

(Sarbin, 1950; Barber,1969; Lynn, 1977; Spanos, 1991; Cardena and Terhune, 2014; Peter et al., 2014) leading to the emergence of individual differences in hypnosis as the field of research. Simultaneously some scholar conceptualized hypnosis as a procedure (Shor and Orne, 1963; Weitzenhoffer and Hilgard, 1959, 1962, 1967; Hilgard et al., 1979; Green et al., 2005 consisting of two components: introduction and first suggestion. Some others took hypnosibility as a product comprising of two elements i.e., attitude and aptitude (Spanos, 1991; Piccione et al., 1989, Barnier and McConkey, 2004. With the set of 20th and rise of 21st century a shift appeared from monolithic to pluralistic approach in the field of hypnosis research leading to the supposition that hypnosis is not an unitary construct rather is a multifaceted and complex phenomena (McConkey et al., 1980;

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Balthazard and Woody, 1992) consisting of altered state of consciousness (trance), expectations and suggestibility, absorption, and dissociation. Multi-dimensionality and complexity of hypnosis has also been advocated by some other researchers as well (Nash, 2005; Sadock and Sadock, 2015; Wark and Reid, 2018); Dell, 2021). These findings led to the conceptualization of hypnosis as a process that starts with induction procedure continues with whatever is transpired while the individual is hypnotized ends with termination of hypnosis, and testing of posthypnotic suggestions.

Now it is generally agreed that hypnosis is a process as well as natural ability consisting of various hypnotic phenomena such as induction, trance state, altered consciousness, absorption, dissociation, imaginative suggestibility, and compliance of posthypnotic suggestions. It is also now well established empirically that trait of hypnotisability causes observable and indexable individual differences, and during process of hypnosis, trait of hypnotisability is transformed into state; experiences of hypnotic trance, absorption, dissociation, and suggestibility are converged, so, these hypnotic phenomena are positively correlated with each other. Another important issue pertaining to hypnosis since early time has been gender differences in it. Literature in this regard has revealed equivocal findings. Some researchers (Hilgard, 1965; Weitzenhoffer and Weitzenhoffer, 1958; Peter et al., 2014; Sadock and Sadock, 2015) have reported no gender differences. Kihlstorm et al., (1980) reported that gender of subjects did not influence relationship between personality and hypnosis. Peter et al., (2014) also could not find significant gender differences in any aspect of hypnotic process. On the other hand, some researchers (Malei and Hilgard, 1964; rampage, 1977) found significant relationship between positive attitude to hypnosis and hypnotic ability among females Geiger et al., (2014) also found sex

to be significant moderator of relationship between hypnosis and intelligence. Some other researchers (Cardena et al., 2007; DePascalis et al., 2000; Rudski et al., 2004, Scacchia and De Pascalis, 2019) have also reported females to be high hypnotizable.

Objective of study

The present study intends to ascertain the multidimensionality of hypnosis and gender differences in it if any. Compatible to research objectives it has been **hypothesized** that (1) Females are expected to score higher on measures of hypnotic phenomena than males; and (2) components of hypnotic process are expected to correlate positively to each other.

SAMPLE AND METHODOLOGY

Participants:

Sample consisted of 150 female and 150 male senior secondary and college students (Age range: 17 to 20; mean age = 18.5 years selected from senior secondary schools and degree colleges of Kurukshetra Dist. Haryana. After the introduction of research plan to them by the investigator, those who volunteered to participated willingly were included in the sample. The majority of the subjects were locals to the hypnosis, with no prior history of neurological or psychological issues, and they did not use any medications.

Materials:

Following tests/measures were used for data collection:

Harvard Group Scale for Hypnotic susceptibility: Form A (HGSHS: A) has been developed by Shor and Orne (1962) as an adaptation of the original individually administered scale, the Stanford Hypnotic Susceptibility Scale. Form A (Weitzenhoffer and Hilgard, 1959).

It has been adapted for the promotion and facilitation of empirical research in the area of hypnotic susceptibility making it for group administration with self-report scoring.

HGSHS: A consists of self-scorable 12 items which are presented to the subjects with standardized induction, and hypnotic susceptibility is indexed in terms of number of items responded by the subject. Induction and hypnotic texting usually take 50 minutes. As a whole, scale can be completed in 70 minutes with careful planning. Generally higher scores are obtained with self-scoring system than observer's scoring systems. Scale can be For scoring each of the item is counted once. Total score on scale can be 12 pluses.

Creative Imagination Scale (CIS)

Wilson and Barber (1978) developed it as an index of imaginative suggestibility comprised of 10 items. CIS can be administered individually or in group in either of these ways (1) without specific preliminaries, i.e., subjects are simply told that they are taking a test of creative imagination; (2) using a standard hypnotic induction, and (3) after specific preliminary instructions such as test motivational instructions (Barber, 1969), Human Potential Instructions (Barber et al., 1974). Administration of whole scale usually takes 18 to 20 minutes during which subjects are instructed to keep their eyes closed. Construct and factorial validities have been ascertained. Factor structure of CIS depicts that all the ten items have loaded on the same factor with loadings ranging between .52 and .74 accounting for 46% of variance. Correlation of CIS score with Barber's suggestibility scale points the construct validity equal to .60 ($p < .01$) CIS scores have also been found to be significantly related to those of hypnotic responsiveness (Scacchia et al., 1978), imagery, suggestibility and absorption (Barber & Wilson, 1978). It is a very useful tool for and categorization of individuals in low medium, high medium

and high creativity imaginative groups. In the preset study standard procedure of oral presentation was adopted and a single score has been obtained high score reflects higher imaginative suggestibility.

Tellegen Absorption Scale (TAS) : has been developed by Tellegen and Atkinson (1979) for indexing the trait of absorption i.e., focused attention deployment, and is considered widely used research tool (Roche and Mcconkey, (1990). It is a self-report questionnaire consisting of 34 true false dichotomous items on which subject rates one's response on a 5-point Likert scale (from 0=Never to Never to 4= very often). While responding subject depicts one's tendency to focus on and become absorbed in various sensory and imaginative experiences. TAS consists of nine subscales which tap separate aspects of absorption, namely, (1) responsiveness to engaging stimuli, (2) responsive ness to inductive stimuli, (3) tendency to think in image, (4) ability to experience vivid and suggestive images, (5) tendency for cross model experience, (6) ability to become absorbed in own thoughts and imaginings,

(7) tendency to experience past vividly, (8) experience of expanded awareness, and (9) experience altered state of consciousness. Authors (Tellegen and Atkinson, 1974, 1992) have reported very good reliability and validity; and closeness to hypnotisability.

Procedure

Participants were tested in small groups (15-20) after informing the general aim of the study. HGSHS: A was administered first with establishment of proper rapport and then by giving the 11 specific instructions for the respective items strictly according to the prescription mentioned in manual. Items were presented through audiotape in the voice of female to the female subjects and in the voice of male to the male voice. Subjects provided their

self-rating (scoring). Two scores were obtained one of subjective experience (SE) indexing experimental aspect of hypnosis or depth of hypnotic trance state; and second of hypnotisability (Hyp) indexing behavioral aspect or trait of hypnotisability. After one walk of the first testing rest of the tests i.e., creative imagination scale (CIS) and Tellegen absorption (Scale (TAS) were administered in separate sessions following the respective procedures prescribed by the test authors. CIS was administered without prior induction, with a view to tap imaginative suggestibility. On a self-scoring form, subjects described their experiences by rating each of the ten items on a scale from 0% (Not at all the same as the real thing, score of 0) to 90% (Almost the same as the real thing, score of 4). Single score for imaginative suggestibility (total score) was obtained from CIS. Tellegen Absorption scale was also administered in single session in group setting strictly according to the instructions and administrative procedure prescribed in test manual. Since the TAS items are in true/false format, so total number of true responses provide absorption score.

Statistical Analyses

Statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (mean, SD, skewness and kurtoses) were obtained to ascertain the normalcy of data in both male and female samples. Critical Ratios (CR or t-ratios) were obtained for understanding the significance of mean differences between male and female participants. Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficients were computed among /between the variables used in the study from the raw scores of both male and female subjects.

Results

Results are reported in two sections (i) Between Groups Comparison, and (2) Relationship among measures of Hypnotic

Phenomena. 1. Between Group Comparison: Two groups of subjects (male and female) have been compared in terms of their mean scores on various measures. Significance of mean differences has been ascertained applying critical Ratios (CR) or t-ratios.

Table – 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Critical Ratios for gender differences

Variables Female (N=150) Males (N=150)

variable	Female		Male		T-ratio	Significant level
	mean	SD	Mean	SD		
CI	25.48	5.66	25.26	5.16	.35	NS
Ab	23.41	4.60	21.78	3.74	3.37	P<.01
SE	8.33	1.54	7.67	1.59	3.65	P<.01
Hy	36.17	6.75	34.21	7.40	2.39	P<.05

CR

Table 1 here depicts that females have scored significantly higher on absorption an index of Depth of focalized attention (FM = 23.41, SD = 4.60; MM = 21.78, SD = 3.74; CR = 3.37 p < .01), subjective experience or experiential aspect of hypnosis (depth of trace state) (FM = 8.33, SD = 1.54; MM = 7.67, SD = 1.59; CR = 3.65 p <.01) and hypnotisability; a trait, for behavioral

aspect of hypnosis than their counterpart male subjects. (FM = 36.17, SD = 6.75, MM = 34.21, SD = 7.40; CR = 2.39 p < .05). On measure of creative imagination (imaginative suggestibility) also female subjects have obtained higher mean scores than males (though mean difference could not achieve significance level statistically). This finding pertaining to gender differences in the present study implies that females tend to have high level of capacity to lower the peripheral awareness leading to deep focalized attention, higher orientation to introject the signals and information as such without critical judgement, to experience deep trance state in which suggested objects

or situations are accepted as real, and to have natural ability to experience suggested alterations in physiology, sensations, emotions, thoughts and behaviour. The present findings are corroborative to some earlier findings depicting females to be highly hypnotizable than males; and contrary to those which have depicted no gender differences in hypnotisability and hypnotic phenomena. Intercorrelations among measures of hypnotic phenomena (both males and females data). After ascertaining that obtained data from both female and male participants are almost normally distributed, Pearson's Product moment correlation coefficients among / between all the four variables hypnotic phenomena were computed through SPSS. Degree of freedom being 148 (N-2) in each data, coefficients of .159 and .208 have been found to be significant at .05 and .01 probability levels respectively. (q) Intercorrelations among four variables of hypnotic phenomena in females data (table 2).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and intercorrelations

Table 2

var	C I	Ab	SE	Hy p	Me an	S D	S k	Ku
CI		.192	.220	.354	25.48	5.66	-.26	.403
Ab			.291	.311	23.41	4.60	-.21	.398
SE				.608	8.33	1.54	-.92	.879
Hy p					36.37	6.75	-.13	.584

Table 2 depicts that intercorrelations among four variables of hypnotic phenomena are in general positive ranging between .192 and .608. All the six

correlations are significantly positive above .05 probability level. Creative Imagination (Imaginative suggestibility) has corresponded positively with absorption ($r = .192$ $p < .05$). Subjective experienced ($r = .220$ $p < .01$), and hypnotisability ($r = .354$ $p < .01$). Absorption has marked Significant positive association with creative imagination ($r = .192$ $p < .05$), subjective Experience ($r = .291$ $p < .01$), and hypnotisability ($r = .311$ $p < .01$). Subjective Experience has yielded significant positive relationship with creative imagination ($r = .220$ $p < .01$), absorption ($r = .291$ $p < .01$) and hypnotisability ($r = .600$ $p < .01$). Hypnotisability is significantly and positively correlated with CI ($r = .354$ $p < .01$), absorption ($r = .311$ $p < .01$) and subjective experience ($r = .608$ $p < .01$). The present finding here depicts that all the four measures of hypnotic phenomena have shared substantial amount of variance among them and are supplementation to each other not one and same. It implies that hypnosis is a multifaceted phenomena, and during hypnosis, the trait of hypnotisability is transformed and converged into other hypnotic states such as imaginative suggestibility, focalized attention, and depth of hypnotic trance. Intercorrelations among four variables of hypnosis in males data are also positive ranging between .448 and .812 with all being significant beyond .05 probability level.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations (Males)

var	C I	Ab	SE	Hy p	Me an	S D	S k	Ku
CI		.448	.509	.427	25.27	5.16	.42	.38
Ab			.338	.372	21.78	3.74	.36	-.20
SE				.812	7.66	1.59	-.16	.85
Hy p					34.21	7.40	-.73	2.93

$r = .159$ $p < .05$, $r = .208$ $p < .01$

Creative imagination (imaginative suggestibility) has correlated positively with absorption (focalized attention), subjective experience (depth of hypnotic trance) and hypnotisability with respective coefficients of .449 ($p < .01$), .509 ($p < .01$), and .427 ($p < .01$). Absorption has marked positive association with C1 ($r = .448$ $p < .01$), subjective experience ($r = .338$ $p < .01$), and hypnotisability (.372 $p < .01$). Subjective Experience has correlated positively with creative imagination ($r = .509$ $p < .01$), (absorption (.338 $p < .01$) and hypnotisability) $r = .812$ $p < .01$). Hypnotisability has compounded Positively with C1, Absorption, and subjective experience with coefficients of .427 ($p < .01$), .372 ($p < .001$) and .812 ($p < .01$) respectively. Obtained correlations among four measures of hypnotic phenomena depict sustained amount of variance sharing among them and supplementary to each other.

DISCUSSION

As per what was being hypothesized regarding gender differences in hypnotic phenomena here in the present study female participants have outperformed the males on all the four measures of hypnotic phenomena, i.e., creative imagination (imaginative suggestibility), absorption (focalized attention), subjective experience (experiential aspect or depth of trance state) and hypnotisability (behavioural aspect or trait). This finding is contrary to the earlier ones (Hilgard, 1965; Weitzenhoffer and Weitzenhoffer, 1958; Kihlstorm et al., 1980; Peter et al., 2011; Sadock and Sadock, 2015) depicting no. gender differences in any aspect of hypnotic process, and confirmatory to those (Malei and Hilgard, 1964; Rampage, 1977; Geiger et al., 2014) depicting significant gender differences in magnitude of hypnotics also. And its relationship with other psychological dispositions (personality, intelligence, attitudes empathy, expectancy etc.). Present finding provides empirical support to specific previous studies (Cardena et al.,

2007. DePascalis et al., 2000; Rudski et al., 2004, Malei & Hilgard, 1964; Rampage, 1977; Scacchia and De Pascalis, 2019) which have reported females to be significantly high on various components of hypnotic process than males, obtained gender differences in phenomena in the present study females being higher than males) can be understood in line with biopsychosocial model of hypnosis (Jensen et al., 2015) contending that in determining the gender differences in hypnotic process a combination the personality, contextual, religious, spiritual, interactional and social cultural variables is involved. For example, males may be less reactive and/or more resistant than women when hypnotic phenomena are assessed by a male researcher and vice-versa. In this regard, researches have evidenced that researcher's sex can have effects on subject's resting state brain activity as a function of their individual differences in personality dispositions (DePascalis et al., 2018). So, further studies should be oriented to examine the systematically the impact of researcher's gender on hypnotic process. Here in the present study the positive and significant intercorrelations among four components of hypnotic process in both data i.e. imaginative suggestibility, absorption, subjective experience (depth of trance state) and hypnotisability (a trait, a behavioural compliance) corroborate previous findings (Hilgard, 1965;

McConkey et al., 1980, Monterio et al., 1980; Tellegen, 1979; Balthazard and Woody, 1992; Brown and From, 1986; Kihlstorm, 2003; Woody et al., 2005; Nash, 2005; Wark & Reid, 2018; Elkins et al., 2015; Dell, 2021) contending that hypnosis is not an unitary construct rather is a multidimensional and complex phenomena consisting of altered state of consciousness (trance), suggestibility, absorption (focalized attention) dissociation and hypnotisability (behavioral compliance). It implies that the trait of hypnotisability causes observable individual differences. And during hypnotic process, the trait of hypnotisability is

transformed into state, experiences of hypnotic trance, absorption, dissociation, experiences of hypnotic trance Absorption, dissociation, and suggestibility are converged. Therefore, these components of hypnosis are positively related to each other, and the scales used for these components are providing indices in the same domain but do not measure the same construct. In other words imaginative suggestions during induction elicit an active response set which enables the participants to experience various hypnotic phenomena and increases the hypnotisability (compliance to post-hypnotic suggestions).

Conclusively, findings of the present study have provided the significant information about the gender differences in hypnotic phenomena. These are also in line with predictions obtained from integrative models (Jensen et al., 2015; Lynn et al., 2015), Componential models (Woody et al., 2005), response set model (Lynn & Green, 2011), and pluralistic paradigms (McConkey et al., 1980; Nash, 2005; Kihlstorm, 2003; Wark& Reid, 2018, Elkins et al., 2015; Dell, 2021). Despite the relevance of these informations about gender differences, and multidimensionality of hypnosis, the present findings can't be consider generalized. For generalization, more large-scale studies are required on heterogeneous and large samples incorporating the variables pertaining to both hypnotic researchers and participants.

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