

## Hypnosis in Pakistan: A mysterious phenomenon for the unaware

Muneeba Shakil

Madam, ever since the introduction of hypnosis as an intervention for a number of mental health issues in Pakistan, people have been curious to know as to what is Hypnosis and what are the mechanisms that underpin the process of hypnosis. Hypnotherapists from Pakistan often come across the most curiously asked question i.e. "What happens under hypnosis and how does it work?"

Ironically, as soon as someone hears the term 'Hypnosis' or 'Hypnotherapist', the imagery in their minds is that of a mysterious hypnotist dressed up in a suit with a pocket and a watch in his hand who takes away people's consciousness, messes with people's minds or takes his subjects into a state of trance. This pre-conceived fictional image of a hypnotherapist has been induced by movies, comic books and television where it is portrayed that the tranced person complies to his master even if the suggestions are unethical abiding by his evil biddings. This is the opposite of actual hypnosis where the hypnotized has an absolute free will and is actually more aware of what is happening to him being hyper-attentive to suggestions.<sup>1</sup>

Generally unknown to a layman, it is confused with stage hypnosis which is a hypnotic induction on stage performed to amuse audience. Hypnosis however, is a genuine psychological phenomenon used as a therapeutic intervention with the objective to heal people. "It is a state of high focus and concentration associated with muscular relaxation and heightened suggestibility where a person under hypnotic trance uncritically accepts positive suggestions."<sup>2</sup>

People under hypnosis enter into a sleep like state with their minds fully alert and responsive to positive suggestions, whereas, body is completely relaxed. Generally, hypnosis is feared because of the myth of being taken under control; revelation of secrets, and getting stuck at a younger age. People also believe that hypnotist needs pendulum to take anyone into trance; however, they are not dependent on aids and are a

guiding force to keep the state maintained by guiding the subject through instructions. Trance can also be achieved through excitation with open eyes, the phenomena known as "Waking Hypnosis". In Waking Hypnosis, hypnotized subjects usually appear to be awake to the people around them still hypnotized responding to the directions of the hypnotist.<sup>2</sup>

Waking hypnosis can be defined as eliciting hypnotic responses without a formal induction. It is still hypnosis without the whole relaxation method. Lay persons usually misunderstand hypnosis and think that it is not possible to hypnotize someone with open eyes. People generally link hypnosis to relaxation of mind and body. Hypnosis is only the bypass of the logical part of the mind that judges our experiences and wrapping the mind around an idea achieved through fixation and narrowing of attention both.<sup>3</sup>

Lay persons believe that only weak-willed people with below average intelligence can be hypnotized. On the contrary highly intelligent people are the best subjects for hypnosis because of their good concentration and attention level. In fact, anyone can go into trance except:

- ◆ Infants and children under 4 years because of their lack of concentration,
- ◆ Psychotics as their reality contact is already impaired,
- ◆ Withdrawn subjects as no rapport can be established, and they can't concentrate,
- ◆ Developmentally challenged (low IQ person) and,
- ◆ Lastly paranoid, distrustful and suspicious people.

Pakistani health professionals and general population is not very optimistic about this approach to treatment as the field lacks empirical evidence. However, in clinical practice it has proved to:

- ◆ Implant a healthy belief in the subconscious mind.
- ◆ Maintain and nurture healthy relationships.
- ◆ Install positive beliefs and behaviour.
- ◆ Quit smoking, lose weight, eliminate unwanted habits, overcome fears, phobias and mental illnesses.

.....  
COMSATS University Islamabad, Lahore Campus, Pakistan.  
Correspondence: Email: muneebashakeel@cuilahore.edu.pk

◆ Increase confidence and Motivation

Hypnosis is also used in medical sciences as a technique for inducing relaxation and reducing reaction to pain. It is sometimes employed as an alternative to anaesthetics as well.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it is the need of time to educate our people about this approach to treatment as stressors and mental illnesses are increasing rapidly. It is a means to get better quickly with less expenditure.

**Disclaimer:** None to declare.

**Conflict of Interest:** None to declare.

**Funding Sources:** None to declare.

### References

1. Harris T. How Hypnosis Works. [Online] [Cited 2018 September 05]. Available from: URL: <http://science.hoestuffworks.com/science-vs-myth/extrasensory-perceptions/hypnosis.htm> .
2. Kreiter J. The Difference between Hypnosis and Trance. [Online] [2018 September 07]. Available from: URL: <http://johnkreiter.com/the-difference-between-hypnosis-and-trance/>
3. Namara AM. Is there any scientific explanation for hypnosis? [Online] 2015 [Cited 2015 August 20]. Available from: URL: <http://www.sciencefocus.com/qa/there-any-scientific-explanation-hypnosis>.

<https://doi.org/10.5455/JPMA.42839>

---