SENSORY ISOLATION IN FLOATATION TANKS AS A METHOD OF PROMOTING ESP PHENOMENA

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Background: Research into psi-conducive conditions has used methods that restrict sensory input, including meditation, dream ESP, and the Ganzfeld procedure (Baptista, Derakhshani, & Tressoldi, 2015). A related but underexplored approach involves floatation tanks, where participants lie in a dense Epsom salt solution that minimises sensory and postural input, inducing deep relaxation (Lilly, 1969, 1972). This isolation may heighten awareness of internal experience ("inperience") and intuitive or extrasensory processes, though few studies have examined ESP under such conditions (e.g., Rogo, 1980; Schwartz, 1983). A pilot by Cooper, Saunders, and Hitchman (2020) using 12 telepathy trials with one participant yielded mixed but encouraging results. The present study extends this work using a precognition design to enhance methodological control and explore practice effects as participants adapt.

Aims: To conduct formal trials that (1) implement refinements recommended by Cooper, Saunders, and Hitchman (2020); (2) recruit a larger sample for greater statistical power; and (3) examine relationships between altered states in floatation and psi performance. Refinements include use of the Highly Sensitive Person Scale (Kjellgren et al., 2009), in-tank vocal reports, and assessment of temporal, practice, and consciousness-depth effects.

Methods: This preregistered study (KPU 1073) comprised two phases with 10 participants per phase. Each participant completed four trials (80 total). Participants completed online questionnaires on demographics, prior psi and floatation experience, and relevant traits. Each trial consisted of a 50-minute float in complete darkness and silence, with mentations verbalised via intercom. Reports were reviewed post-session before completing subscales of the Abbreviated Phenomenology of Consciousness Inventory (PCI; Pekala, 1991). A remote co-experimenter randomly selected target video sets using random.org. Participants then rated four clips for similarity (0–99) and received feedback on the randomly chosen target. An independent blind judge provided parallel similarity ratings.

Results: Across 80 trials, floater judging produced a 27.5% hit rate, not significantly above chance (25%). Independent judging showed similar results. However, post-float PCI scores revealed a significant correlation between altered state intensity and target accuracy (r = .308, p = .006).

Conclusions: While overall hit rates were at chance, deeper altered states of consciousness were linked to improved psi performance, suggesting floatation may facilitate psi-conducive awareness.

Keywords: Sensory isolation, Floatation, Altered states of consciousness, Extrasensory perception, Precognition

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