Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională
ISSN: 2066-7329 | e-ISSN: 2067-9270
Covered in: Web of Science (WOS); EBSCO; ERIH+; Google Scholar; Index Copernicus; Ideas RePeC; Econpapers; Socionet; CEEOL; Ulrich ProQuest; Cabell, Journalseek; Scipio; Philpapers; SHERPA/RoMEO repositories; KVK; WorldCat; CrossRef; CrossCheck

2024, Volume 16, Issue 4, pages: 334-360 | https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/16.4/918
Submitted: July 17, 2024| *Accepted for publication:* October 23, 2024

Methods and Techniques of Subconscious Manipulation on Students' Psychological Well-being in Educational Contexts

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Abstract: ***Background:*** *Many educators consider learning and teaching to be more vital school factors than implementations of awareness programs to prevent hidden communication tactics that negatively influence students' mental health. It is challenging to identify concealed forms of communication on a subconscious level as a cause of mental health problems among youth and students in higher educational contexts. The study determines methods, techniques, and technological means relevant to subconscious communication and their impact on students' psychological well-being in academic environments.*
Methods: *This reflective study comprised several papers on subconscious communication and a critical appraisal to answer formulated research questions. Traditional literature reviews have been supplemented by critical reflection.*
Results: *The study discovered the various methods and techniques of subconscious manipulation that may guide students and educators in detecting early signs of technology-driven subconscious communication. Finally, the study proposed multidisciplinary research that can help address the challenges of the subconscious influence on students' psychological well-being.*
Significance: *The results of this study may contribute to promoting students' and educators' awareness and understanding of subconscious communications in educational environments.*

Keywords: *ICT; higher education; methods; psychological well-being; subconscious communication; techniques.*

How to cite: Jakovljević, M., Karaćic, M., & Matijašević, B. (2024). Methods and Techniques of Subconscious Manipulation on Students' Psychological Well-being in Educational Contexts. *Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională, 16*(4), 334-360. https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/16.4/918

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Introduction

The debate on the importance of subconscious communication continues (Van Dijk, 1996; Fahrenfort, 2009; Gustafson, 2017; Schubiner & Betzold, 2019). Wilson (2002) states that most thoughts, emotions, and memories reside in our subconscious (Pierson, 2022). There is little evidence of research on communication on a subconscious level through technological means (Packard, 2007; Mucchielli, 2003; Stanciugelu, 2010) aimed toward destabilizing students' emotional, social, and cognitive functioning. Implications of concealed auditory communications on youths' psychological well-being are multiple. However, it is difficult to identify hidden forms of communication on a subconscious level as a cause of mental health problems among youth and students in educational contexts.

Many educators consider learning and teaching to be more vital school factors than implementations of awareness programs to prevent hidden communication tactics that negatively influence students' mental health. Mental health is "a state of successful cognitive function resulting in adapting to change and coping with everyday stresses of life" (Herrman & Jané-Llopis, 2012).

The appropriate academic climate must be created to develop a proper learning environment free from concealed manipulative influences (Stanciugelu, 2010; Smith, 2018). However, insufficient research has been conducted on current psychological manipulative methods and techniques (Mucchielli, 2003; Braiker, 2004; Tegan, 2023) and their impact on students' psychological well-being. Furthermore, there is a lack of awareness programs to prevent and detect early signs of external manipulative subconscious tactics (Buss, 2005; Mitnick, 2003). Consequently, there is a scarcity of knowledge and inadequate understanding of current technology underlying communication on a subconscious level that prevents a positive learning climate in schools and colleges. This gap has been addressed in the paper.

Based on the above discussion, a study was conducted to identify methods and technological means relevant to communication on the subconscious level and their impact on students' psychological well-being in educational environments. This research aims to derive methods and techniques of social intrusions on a subconscious level to detect early signs of hidden subconscious manipulation that impede students' emotional, social, cognitive, and work-action competencies. The emerging research question set in this paper is:

RQ1: What are the subconscious communication methods and techniques?

The article is structured as follows: The "Research methodology" section covers the critical and reflective research design. The "Theoretical framework" highlights multiple issues of subconscious manipulation and current methods and technologies. "The Methods of Subconscious Communication" proposes methods and techniques for communication on a subconscious level. The "Discussion" section outlines the discussion with the answers to research questions. The paper ends with "Conclusions" and "References".

Research methodology

The study approach

This research study encompasses the critical analysis and reflective synthesis of scientific literature on methods and techniques of subconscious manipulation in educational environments (Bordens & Aboot, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The study assisted the researchers in producing a comprehensive list of methods and techniques to aid vulnerable youths and students in higher educational contexts.

Critical reflection implemented in this study includes evaluations of the authors' viewpoints on the phenomena of subconscious manipulation and comparisons with ideas presented by other researchers in contemporary literature (Koch & Harrington, 1998; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Fook, 2004). It assisted the researchers in producing novel constructs, namely methods and techniques of subliminal communications that cannot be identified on the conscience level and, therefore, impossible for early detection and prevention measures. The necessity of examining hidden methods and techniques of subliminal influence is critical for vulnerable youth in all educational contexts, and this requires creative and critical reflection (Rosaldo, 1994; Smyth & Shocklock, 1998; Rossiter, 2005; Morley, 2008) in comparison with current research findings. Critical reflections designate paths for transformation far from rigid thinking (Morley, 2008).

Changing how we construct our decisions concerning the problem of subconscious manipulation may generate an innovative foundation for novel ideas and rectifications in educational environments since subconscious manipulation methods and techniques have been insufficiently reported in current research. Critical reflection adopted in this

study is about interpreting own assumptions and critically evaluating research outcomes and ideas in contemporary literature (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Fook,1996, 2002, 2004; Koch & Harrington, 1998). Thus, in this study, traditional literature reviews by Snyder (2019) have been enhanced by critical reflection rather than a systemic research methodology.

Sampling and search procedures

The researchers searched the websites of accredited journals and databases *of Google Scholar, PubMed, Scopus, and Academia.edu,* as well as other online resources on subconscious manipulation and related themes. Researchers of this study used the "snowball" technique to search for the bibliographies of published research documents (Ritchie et al. 2003; Bordens & Aboot, 2002). Search criteria are engrossed in the essential notion of manipulation and subliminal influence using technological means that may result in students' psychological problems. There were, in total, 25 papers included in this study.

The authors initially enlisted search keywords and strategies and further advanced through brainstorming. The subsequent search phrases were chosen: "subconscious communication, subliminal manipulative methods, manipulative techniques, emotional manipulation, technological means." The authors applied a search iterative process, improving the search phrases. Search criteria encompass the core phenomena of subconscious manipulation and methods and techniques that align with the research questions.

Data analysis

Analysis of documentary data was done using reflective synthesis. Several significant themes emerged relevant to subconscious manipulation methods and techniques in higher education (e.g., Kothari, 2004; Kuldas et al., 2013). The analysis concerns coding, identifying themes, and forming categories (Tesch, 1990; Noble & Smith, 2013).

Researchers conducted data analysis through phases of preparation, organization, review of data, derivation of initial descriptive codes, reviewing descriptive codes, merging codes into themes, and their presentation (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). The synthesis and analysis of the applicable documentary sources are in synergy with critical researchers' reflections, and vital methods and techniques of subconscious communication are designed for HE. The reflective data analysis was performed through the following stages: preparation,

organization, review of data, creating initial descriptive codes, reviewing descriptive codes, combining them into themes, and cohesively presenting themes (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Stuckey, 2015).

Researchers applied the process of organizing, structuring, and interpreting the data into evocative themes. For this, they used descriptive color coding, which helped to be reflexive, critical, and rigorous while keeping the research questions in mind. Once coding was accomplished, the data were inspected to formulate themes and draw conclusions linked to the research questions (Noble & Smith, 2013; Bowen, 2009). The synthesis and analysis of the theoretical concepts and a combination of practical and reflective experiences produced crucial methods and techniques of subconscious communication applicable to HE.

The assessment of trustworthiness

The assessment of trustworthiness encompassed peer/colleague examinations, the obligation of the researchers to perform the study, the declaration of the researchers' biases, and a detailed description of the researched phenomenon. Analytical pattern matching and making inferences strategies were tracked in this study (Fook, 2004; Snyder, 2019; Tesch, 1990) to ensure internal validity. The data collection and analysis processes were applied simultaneously and in an iterative way. In addition, a detailed description of the subconscious manipulation research phenomenon, which was embedded in an in-depth literature study as a theoretical and conceptual perspective, promoted the external validity of this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Theoretical framework: methods and techniques of subconscious communication on students' psychological well-being

Communication channels and students' psychological well-being

Communication, as a vital societal factor and its impact on mental health, has been notably evident during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Different modes of communication have had varying effects on the public's general consciousness and the mental health of children and young people. The potential for improving young people's mental health has been shown by online communication via different virtual platforms within the education system (Agrawal & Krishna, 2021). It has been shown that depending on the sample of respondents, virtual and

online environments have different results that connect young people's mental health, including their well-being.

The research by Liu et al. (2022) showed that telephone and SMS text communication positively affected individuals' well-being. On the other hand, communication via social networks, instant messaging, and communication in online games can hurt the well-being of individuals. Previous research has not shown continuity in the results of the mentioned area. In general, communication in a virtual environment is negatively associated with mental health (Newson et al., 2021). The research by Anthony et al. (2023) shows that virtual communication on social networks with larger groups of friends and best friends positively affects students' well-being. However, prolonged online communication can negatively impact students' well-being.

Along the same lines, Lyyra et al. (2022) conclude that students' well-being is worse in a sample of Finnish adolescents if they maintain continuous contact with friends exclusively online. On the other hand, all those who continued to communicate and interact with friends online and live showed a higher level of perceived well-being. All of the above indicates that there are uniform results that can factually show the connection between online communication and the mental health of young people.

Online communication has proven helpful for intervening with people with mental health problems in crises such as Covid-19. Rutkowska (2022) proposes that online communication during COVID-19 has positively affected their mental health. Despite specific restrictions, it has been shown that this form of communication was necessary and desirable, which was ultimately positive for people who had difficulty with mental health.

The broader communication framework in the context of the education system has shown that live communication is better for mental health. Although the general atmosphere during COVID-19 probably contributed to this, it is significant that online communication is negatively associated with students' mental health (Butnaru et al., 2021).

In this regard, it is clear that future studies for helping students with mental health difficulties should move towards ensuring an environment that would enable communication based on a regular human environment. In this context, researchers need to investigate communication on a subconscious level further. According to (Kadum

et al., 2023), the best way to overcome communication difficulties is active listening, in which there is no judgment. Still, the teacher uses empathy to understand the students' experiences, feelings, and perspectives.

The hidden hand of manipulation: Subconscious communication

In addition to the importance of appropriate communication for the psychological well-being of students and educators, there is a crucial issue of manipulation on the subconscious level that has been evident since the 1950s. Subconscious communication refers to transmitting messages, ideas, or emotions without the sender or receiver being fully aware of the exchange. This form of communication often occurs through nonverbal cues, body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, and other subtle signals processed subconsciously by both parties (Foucault, 1972; Mitnick, 2003; Mucchielli, 2003; Packard, 2007). In interpersonal interactions, subconscious communication can significantly convey underlying feelings, attitudes, and intentions, sometimes even more so than explicit verbal communication. For example, someone may say they're fine verbally, but their body language might suggest otherwise, indicating they're upset or uncomfortable.

Understanding subconscious communication can enhance interpersonal relationships, allowing individuals to pick up on subtle cues and better interpret the true meaning behind someone's words or actions. However, it's important to remember that subconscious communication isn't always accurate and can be influenced by various factors, including cultural differences, personal biases, and individual experiences (Van Dijk, 2006; Smith, 2018).

Current research doesn't deliver in-depth arguments, methods, and techniques of invisible subconscious influences, and it does not explain subconscious communication and how young people become targets. The consequence is an indirect, concealed control of individuals that is much easier through "the hidden hand of persuasion since our society is driven on impulse by stimulus-response and conditioning" (Packard, 2007).

Subconscious and overt manipulation

Researchers (Packard, 2007; Smith, 1998) believe that people are becoming more easily and willingly pacified by overt manipulation, whether consciously aware of it or not. "No longer is the aim to play on

our subconscious level" (Smith, 1998). Youths are particularly vulnerable due to a lack of knowledge in this domain, and their desires, needs, and drives have been investigated to find points of vulnerability.

Students use "language to interact with others, and their mental state reflects their choice of words and sentence structure" (Fine, 2006). Kuldas et al. (2013) estimate that students may not consistently possess conscious awareness, control, or intention to learn. Additionally, they may struggle to effectively organize perceptual, cognitive, and emotional learning processes in a timely and continuous manner. They are prone to depression, anxiety, fear, and other undesirable mental states, feelings, and behavior (Turner et al., 1993; Herrman & Jané-Llopis, 2012).

There are multiple methods and techniques of coercive influence (Stanciugelu, 2010; Simon, 1996; Buss, 2005). Despite this, current research does not explain the explicit process and how manipulative communication enters the subconscious mind. Also, the methods for a successful invisible transmission of auditory stimuli are unknown. Moreover, it is unclear how subconscious messages expand to a broader network environment and become contagious but are not noticed by the targeted person and others in the social group. Up-to-date techniques are used for the manipulation and destruction of individuals and families, including educational institutions.

Technological means of hidden subconscious communication

Technological ideas and proposals on the invisible control of young people have been growing (Martinez & Schilling, 2010; Packard, 2007), highlighting bioelectric implants that can change people's perceptions. Since the 1970s, low electromagnetic frequencies (EMF) have been used on individuals to transfer silent audible signals, e.g., sounds and voices. Smith (1998) points out that "words, phases sensations, images, emotions could be directly inserted in the biological targets as internal states emotions, thoughts, ideas." Therefore, shallow sounds can be broadcasted using physical or technological transmission, which the current research does not explain well.

There is little research data on methods of hidden voice transmission or broadcasting processes since victims are unaware of concealed transmissions. In "Electric Brain," author R. Douglas Fields underscores the transformative potential of advancements in brain science, highlighting how these developments have the potential to reshape society (Fields, 2020). The transmission process tremendously

damages a target individual's emotional, social, and cognitive functioning.

Smith (1998) explains the impact of low EMF on brain functioning: "Low electromagnetic frequency corresponds to brainwave rhythms, used for external brain stimulation by electromagnetic means. An external signal generator can entrain brain patterns, overriding the standard frequencies of the brain's operation. The outside signal captures or retunes the brain to harmonize with the external signal. It causes changes in brain wave patterns, originating changes in the brain chemistry, which then causes changes in thoughts and emotions. If used intentionally, it can induce desired states, meditation, and even euphoria. Used unknowingly against an individual, it is the primary mechanism of radio intracerebral mind control ".

It is possible to broadcast hypnotic commands using radio waves on a subconscious level and transmissions of microwave or extremely low frequencies (EMF) messages. For example, under a post-hypnotic command to perform some act, the subject will do it and rationalize it as his idea (Smith, 1998; Marcel, 1983). Thus, in addition to the exploitation of other technological means, hypnosis has been used as a method of concealed influence on the subconscious level. Little has been known about hypnotic methods (Kuhn & Russo, 1970).

Subconscious manipulation in educational contexts

Educational processes allow the teacher to influence the academic subject, namely the student. Accordingly, it can be said that education inherently aims to manipulate, but with the goal of the individual's progress. However, the question arises: are there situations where this manipulation is negative in education? A limited amount of available scientific literature addresses this issue (Sentse et al., 2014). What has been shown so far is that manipulation in an educational context is often manifested through environmental influence. One of the prominent examples is bullying, usually directed towards a vulnerable, underrepresented, and unprotected group of students.

In addition to bullying, Meriläinen et al. (2016) point out that teasing is also a way to negatively affect an individual, which can lead to negative consequences in terms of the development of internalized behavioral disorders. Teasing can take various forms and represents a step towards manipulation. Significantly, manipulation occurs as a targeted action directed toward a person in a subordinate position,

whether hierarchically or in terms of capacity to understand manipulation, and it can also happen subconsciously (Beck, 2010). Jakovljević and Nkopodi (2023) propose the Model Coercive Control (MCC) model to empower individuals and society, which aims to prevent and reduce manipulation in an educational context.

Subconscious manipulation in social networks

Educational environments in which the upbringing of children and young people is performed are very important as factors of upbringing (Karačić, 2021a). Free time is both a microsystemic and macrosystemic factor that can impact individuals differently depending on various utilization modes (Matijašević & Maglica, 2022). The bioecological model theory provides the most comprehensive insight into protective and risk factors in an individual's environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), which suggests that free time is a struggle between risk and protective factors. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, what is particularly significant is the increase in free time spent in virtual space by children and adolescents (Cho et al., 2023; Khalaf et al., 2023). Social media platforms are a primary means of spending free time for children and adolescents in the virtual world.

The potential risk posed by free time on social media platforms lies in manipulative factors that may be present in this environment. Keenan (2022) researched methods of manipulation on social media and concluded that there is a range of manipulation tactics on social media platforms. The first among them is "deep fake," which involves creating false videos or photos aimed at manipulating the opinions and emotions of content users. Another manipulation tactic stems from so-called "social bots" that disseminate misinformation or various forms of hate speech. These bots mimic human speech and behavior on social media but are programmed to manipulate opinions about a particular individual or current societal issues.

The third manipulation tactic is marketing manipulations and advertising, which target specific groups of people on social media platforms through algorithms to promote specific products, opinions, and political views (Walker et al., 2019). The risk for young people and children lies in the insecure and often uncontrolled virtual environment of social media, particularly for unformed young individuals, which can serve as a compelling manipulative factor that ultimately becomes developmentally risky. This assertion is supported by scientists' prediction that the future of

social media will be even more exposed to manipulation (Rainie et al., 2020).

Given the abovementioned factors, it is imperative to equip children and adolescents with the requisite knowledge and competencies to discern and counter manipulative tactics within the virtual sphere, particularly on social media platforms. Furthermore, fostering their participation in alternative forms of leisure devoid of virtual engagement is paramount.

Subliminal communication and subconscious manipulation

Traditionally, metacognition & higher mental abilities are thought to be exclusively linked to consciousness. However, many researchers support that subconscious processes may hold the keys to higher forms of intelligence (Drigas, Mitsea., & Skianis, 2022).

Subliminal communication encompasses messages that are concealed.

Thus, subliminal communication refers to techniques and tools used to convey messages or stimuli to individuals below the threshold of conscious perception and to influence attitudes, behaviors, or decisions without the individual being aware of the manipulation (Gibbons, 2009). Subliminal messages are stimuli below the sensitivity threshold; they are not perceived consciously; they are functioning below the level of conscious awareness registered at the subconscious level (Tanasic, 2021). Subliminal messages expose individuals to visual and auditory stimuli below the threshold of conscious perception (Drigas et al., 2022). Subliminal messaging involves presenting stimuli such as images, words, or sounds rapidly or in a manner masked by other stimuli, making it difficult for the conscious mind to perceive. The idea is that these subliminal messages can influence behavior or attitudes without the individual consciously recognizing them.

Additionally, psychologists and researchers have conducted experiments to explore the effects of subliminal stimuli on perception, cognition, and behavior (Marcel, 1983). Hypnosis, while not strictly subliminal communication, involves inducing a trance-like state in which individuals are highly suggestible and may be more receptive to subliminal messages or suggestions (Gibbons, 2009; Wilson, 2002).

Teachers and parents can use general and special education subliminal teaching techniques to instill higher-level needs & motives,

accelerate students' performance, reduce gender stereotypes, and unfold students' existing but underdeveloped abilities (Pierson, 2022).

Leaders and mentors can also utilize subliminal communication to build trust, inspire, and provide humanity with innovative ideas. ICTs offer the ideal environment for implementing subliminal training. However, more research is needed (Drigas et al., 2022). Thus, in contemporary literature, little has been produced in terms of detailed explanations of methods and techniques of subconscious manipulation, as these are researched superficially. In addition, subconscious manipulation subjects are missing from the current HE curriculum. The above research findings provide a solid conceptual and theoretical background in creating a systematic list of methods and techniques for subconscious manipulation in educational contexts. It will be discussed in the following sections.

Methods and techniques of subconscious manipulation

The study aimed to derive methods and techniques to influence students' and educators' awareness of detecting, preventing, and rectifying subconscious manipulation tactics. Accordingly, our study was based on theoretical perspectives (Pierson, 2022; Holender & Duscherer, 2004; Jakovljević & Nkopodi, 2021) and research on communication and psychological well-being (Agrawal & Krishna, 2021; Liu et al., 2022) to clarify methods and technological means used in manipulating educational environments.

Subsequently, the list of primary methods and techniques are derived based on conceptual and theoretical framework (Sentse et al., 2014; Meriläinen et al., 2016; Beck, 2010; Jakovljević & Nkopodi, 2023; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Keenan, 2022; Walker et al., 2019; Rainie et al., 2020; Drigas et al., 2022; Gibbons, 2009; Tanasic, 2021; Martinez & Schilling, 2010; Marcel, 1983; Kuhn & Russo, 1970; Wilson, 2002; Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2015; Foucault, 1972; Mitnick, 2003; Mucchielli, 2003; Packard, 2007; Van Dijk, 2006; Smith, 2018; Turner et al., 1993; Herrman & Jané-Llopis, 2012).

The study's results may explain a lack of knowledge on how manipulative communication messages go in the subconscious mind through the invisible transmission of auditory stimuli to the individual and a broader network environment.

Techniques of subconscious manipulation

The forming and widening subconscious influence using subliminal messaging has been done through multiple manipulation techniques and laws (e.g., electromagnetic frequency (EMF) and other digital and technological means (Calef & Weinshel, 1981; Marcel, 1983; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Mucchielli, 2003; Cialdini, 2009; Beck, 2010; Kahneman, 2011; Simon, 2011; Stanciugelu, 2010; Kajkić, 2020; Seda & Rafayel, 2021). Through reflective and critical analysis of the literature, twenty-five vital techniques of subconscious communication applicable to HE were identified as follows:

Bribing – the manipulator offers the victim material or immaterial rewards for compliance or loyalty (Mattei et al., 2015).

Chain reaction –the perpetrator sets off events or reactions that lead to the victim's manipulation, often by exploiting interconnected social dynamics (González-Bailón et al., 2014).

Channeling - directing the victim's thoughts, emotions, or actions through subtle cues or suggestions, often without their conscious awareness (Gehl & Lawson, 2022).

Deprivation – the manipulator withholds essential resources, emotional support, or social interaction to weaken the victim's resistance and increase compliance (Gkinopoulos et al., 2023).

Different levels of information (10 levels) - providing the victim with varying levels of information to control their understanding and manipulate their actions based on their perceived knowledge (McCornack, 1992).

Disinformation - spreading false or misleading information to confuse, mislead, or control the victim's perception of reality (Fallis, 2015; Graham & Dutton, 2019).

Encouraging false beliefs - promoting incorrect or unfounded beliefs to manipulate the target's behavior and decisions (Ceci et al., 1994).

Emotional games - are a manipulation strategy where the manipulator causes the victim to act impulsively, reflexively, and automatically. Emotional games aim to confuse people, so they behave as the manipulator desires (Kajkić, 2020).

Emotional deprivation- according to Simon (2011), withholding emotional support or validation creates a sense of inadequacy or dependence in the target, making them more susceptible to manipulation.

Gaslighting- is a manipulation strategy where the perpetrator causes the victim to question their mind and perception of reality,

leading them to believe they are crazy. While often associated with marriages, gaslighting can occur in any life relationship. (Calef & Weinshel, 1981)

Habit forming - encouraging the victim to develop new habits or routines that align with the manipulator's goals (Mazar & Wood, 2022).

Imitation - mimicking the victim's behavior to create rapport and gain their trust, making it easier to influence them (Barrera & Buskens, 2007).

Interrogation and intermediation -using questioning techniques to extract information from the victim or mediate interactions to control the flow of information and influence outcomes (Abraham & Bamber, 2017).

Language games – using manipulating language to confuse, mislead, or control the target's understanding and responses (Simon, 2011).

Leadership legitimacy - establishing oneself as a legitimate authority figure to gain the victim's obedience and trust (Cialdini, 2009).

Lying - manipulators lie to and about the victim, often encouraging others to spread falsehoods to diminish their status or gain an advantage (Seda & Rafayel, 2021).

Modeling- demonstrating specific behaviors or attitudes for the victim to imitate, guiding them to adopt the manipulator's desired actions (Yin et al., 2021).

Social cornering - the victim feels trapped or without options, forcing them to comply with the manipulator's demands (Hoyle & Sanders, 2007).

Social ridicule - using mockery or derision to belittle and undermine someone's self-esteem, causing them to conform to the manipulator's desires (Janes, 1997).

Social isolation - cutting off the victim from social support networks, leaving them vulnerable and more susceptible to manipulation (Simon, 2011).

Social work infiltration - infiltrating the victim's professional or social circles to influence their behavior or decisions from within (Polakis et al., 2012).

Social blockade - hindering the victim's social interactions or opportunities, making it difficult for them to seek support or escape the manipulative influence (Björkqvist et al.,1992)

Social contagious dependency - fostering a dependency in the victim on the manipulator through social interactions, making the victim reliant on the manipulator for validation and support (Yuzhanin, 2020).

Social dependency - creating a situation where the victims depend on the manipulator for social interaction or support, making them more susceptible to control (Yuzhanin, 2020).

Social pressure – the manipulator is applying peer pressure or societal expectations to coerce the victim into conforming to the manipulator's desires (Xie et al, 2002).

Social backups - establishing a network of allies to reinforce the manipulator's influence and apply collective pressure on the target (Xie et al., 2002).

Reeducation - indoctrinating the victim with new beliefs or values that align with the manipulator's objectives, often through repetitive teaching or conditioning (Smith, 2013).

The law of attraction - leveraging the victim's desires and aspirations to draw them into the manipulator's influence, often by presenting the manipulator as the gateway to achieving those goals (Losier, 2007).

The manipulation techniques utilize various psychological and social mechanisms to influence individuals' behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. The described techniques are the building blocks that specify the practical methods or procedures carried out during the subconscious manipulation. The techniques are a foundation for deriving subconscious manipulation methods presented in the next section.

Subconscious manipulation methods

The study derived nine methods that pose a threat in educational contexts due to their subconscious characteristics and invisible influence on vulnerable youths. In the following paragraphs, nine crucial manipulation methods are described:

Method 1: Auditory signals and blocked vision are pillars of subconscious manipulation - Concealed auditory signals are subconscious communication that requires blocked vision, a state similar to hypnosis. The vision is blocked so that the person only pays attention to constant auditory stimuli reinforced with false promises instilled in subconsciousness.

Method 2: Subliminal messaging sent via offline and online technological means - Subconscious auditory messages are transferred offline and

online by physical subjects and a variety of technological means, e.g., electromagnetic waves (EMF) of low frequency at predefined places, reinforced by the physical presence of assistants who exhibit mannerism, emotional arousal in a repetitive manner, to develop a manipulative habit.

Method 3: Inducing fear as a control mode - Fear and all negative emotions, e.g., distress, jealousy, anger, and anxiety, are the primary tools to keep an individual under constant surveillance, to continue performing subliminal messages, and to remain under control.

Method 4: Distractions to maintain the manipulation cycle - Constant continuous interference, e.g., social, financial, and emotional, keeps the individual in a psychological cage. An individual cannot focus on any action beyond the prescribed subconscious manipulation.

Method 5: Utilising the law of deception - Many tactics are applied for the victim to follow further manipulative instructions. It is used in individual and network subconscious manipulation, e.g., an individual is promised to receive material rewards or to meet top-class people.

Method 6: Social punishment - Different forms of social punishment are applied, e.g., ridicule, mockery, dis-accreditation, isolation, and other forms of ego and self-esteem destruction.

Method 7: Application of different language forms - The use of language, for example, new names or similar names that correspond to the manipulated person and their role, is invented, influencing the union of individuals in the network.

Method 8: *The physical presence of manipulators* is visible everywhere as their purpose is to intimidate the person and their network, to keep on the line of low functioning, and to ensure that they have a leader who is either stupid, spoiled, narcist, or an ethical decadent.

Method 9: Endless intermediations and interrogations - Manipulators or their assistants are placed where a victim routinely visits, such as shops, beaches, and sports facilities. It is necessary to create a feeling of following and submissiveness.

The methods and techniques are not exhaustive; they work in synergy and are critical for subconscious manipulation. The methods and techniques can be expanded with other manipulation mechanisms in the future testing process.

Discussion

In this article, multiple issues regarding subconscious manipulation were discussed (e.g., communication channels and students' psychological well-being, subliminal messaging, methods and techniques of subconscious manipulation). The theoretical framework provided a basis for deriving methods and techniques on subconscious manipulation (Agrawal & Krishna, 2021; Smith, 1998; Packard, 2007), which may be a critical aid to students' psychological well-being. Numerous studies have examined the dynamics associated with manipulation on a subconscious level in educational and other environments (e.g., Stanciugelu, 2010; Simon, 1996; Buss, 2005).

This study was performed to understand the role of subconscious communication and its impact on psychological well-being. Few models on subconscious manipulation exist (Martinez & Schilling, 2010; Jakovljević & Nkopodi, 2021, 2023) that may be crucial to investigating awareness issues and the subject of subconscious manipulation.

This article argues that a lack of awareness training on subconscious communication and subliminal messaging is a cautionary sign of insufficient students' psychological well-being in educational contexts. This study, supported by the research findings (Keenan, 2022; Rainie et al., 2020; Drigas et al., 2022; Gibbons, 2009; Tanasic, 2021; Martinez & Schilling, 2010; Marcel, 1983; Kuhn & Russo, 1970; Wilson, 2002), highlights the importance of understanding subconscious communications methods and techniques to protect students' and educators' psychological well-being in educational contexts.

Research question one, " *What are the methods and techniques of subconscious manipulation?*" proposes crucial components in subconscious manipulation that led to the creation of nine methods, namely, "Auditory signals and blocked vision as pillars of subconscious manipulation; subliminal messaging via offline and online means; inducing fear as a control mode; distractions to maintain the manipulation cycle; social punishment; a variety of language forms; the physical presence of manipulators and endless intermediations and interrogations. "

Additionally, twenty-five techniques were formulated as follows: " Bribing; Chain reaction; Channelling; Deprivation; Different levels of information; Disinformation; Encouraging false beliefs; Emotional games; Emotional deprivation; Gaslighting; Habit-forming; Imitation; Interrogation and intermediation; Language games; Lying, Modelling;

Social ridicule; Social isolation; Social cornering; Social work infiltration; Social blockade; Social contagious dependency; Social dependency; Social pressure; Social backups; Reeducation; The law of attraction".

The devised methods and techniques contribute to the manipulative atmosphere to distract students from the learning environment and present the answer to the research question (RQ1). These methods and techniques have been drawn from researchers' theoretical framework and creative insight to answer the research question. Although the methods and techniques are depicted as separate entities, they interact synergistically. The methods and techniques are essential and shape the whole picture of subconscious manipulation.

Derived methods and techniques are not currently encompassed in the HE curriculum, which impacts students' awareness and psychological well-being. Researchers of this study argue that understanding the devised methods and techniques regarding subconscious manipulation may empower students' and educators' awareness and knowledge in preventing and detecting early signs of subconscious manipulation that negatively influence their psychological well-being.

Pedagogical aspects regarding upbringing and regular communications in HE relevant to psychological well-being issues about external manipulative influences are not included in the curriculum at educational institutions (Kadum et al., 2023; Jakovljević & Nkopodi, 2021, 2023; Karačić, 2021). With the growing education sector and national authorities who care about students' mental well-being, there has been a heightened emphasis on determining appropriate responses (Campbell et al., 2022). Thus, the formulated methods with a profound description of current techniques may positively influence the HE curriculum decision-makers and initiate students' well-being awareness about imposed subconscious communication and the threat on their minds and networks.

Conclusions

This study has explored the various subconscious communication challenges, examining methods and techniques and understanding the impact of covert communication on students' and educators' psychological well-being. The following are tentative conclusions based on an in-depth literature review that led to the derivation of methods and techniques:

- The derived methods and techniques are not currently incorporated into the curriculum to inform and prevent subconscious intrusions in HE.
- Research findings, e.g., Smith (1998), indicate that words, phrases, sensations, images, and emotions can be broadcasted using physical or technological transmission, which has not been discussed in educational environments. The current research does not explain how it negatively influences students' psychological well-being.
- There is a need for a curriculum change in Higher Education since little research has been done on methods and techniques of hidden subconscious manipulation that tremendously damage a target individual's emotional, social, and cognitive functioning (Fields, 2020).
- Adequate awareness programs should be created within HE and other educational domains for students and educators as preventive measures against psychological manipulation on the subconscious level (Mitnick, 2003; Buss, 2005).
- Pedagogy training and regular communications (Kadum et al., 2023) should flourish within educational domains as preventive measures against manipulative intrusions.

The emphasis of this study was to illuminate that awareness programs and initiatives are of fundamental importance to the development of students' psychological well-being free from any manipulation influence. The derived methods and techniques may offer an insight into physical and technology-driven subconscious communications (Calef & Weinshel, 1981). The researchers of this study suggest multidisciplinary research to help address the issue of subconscious communication in educational environments.

In light of the above discussion, it can be concluded that the youth and educators need adequate awareness and training measures to enhance their defense against the protrusion of subconscious manipulation technologies that damage their mental well-being. The study may be a pillar in establishing educational contexts free from manipulation using subconscious methods, techniques, and technologies.

Limitations and future research

Communication channels and overall communication are crucial to human interaction in society. Previous research has shown that face-

to-face communication is consistently associated with better mental health than virtual communication.

Even though our research on subconscious manipulation offers valuable proposals, some significant limitations exist. The study identified various methods and techniques of subconscious intrusions but didn't apply any practical examinations and testing. For a comprehensive insight into subconscious communication on students' well-being, it is also essential to expand the viewpoints to include those of students, educators, parents, and community members. Further research should examine these practical challenges, offering real-world suggestions to enhance awareness of subconscious manipulative methods and techniques in higher education.

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