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Manipulating Emotions through Virtual Reality: Investigating Misattribution of Physiological Arousal

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The two-factor theory of emotion lays the foundation for exploring the manipulation of human emotions. However, it remains controversial due to debates surrounding both the theory itself and the methods used to induce physiological arousal. This study proposes utilizing Virtual Reality (VR) technology, combined with VR survival horror games as an alternative approach for inducing arousal. Conversation-based suggestive cues were applied to provide emotional labels, aiming to validate the misattribution of arousal. The impact of cues on emotional cognition was accessed through self-report questionnaires and the recording of physiological indexes (heart rate, skin temperature). The results revealed that (a) the VR can serve as an effective tool to manipulate human emotions; (b) suggestive cues significantly influenced corresponding emotional cognition under arousal; (c) negative cues (Anger) led to unexpectedly higher positive emotional ratings (Courage) compared to a no-cue condition.