The Impact of Metacognitive Beliefs on the Testing Effect

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Though testing in education is a contentious issue, research in cognitive psychology has found that testing can be beneficial in the learning process. The testing effect refers to the improved memory seen when a person uses retrieval practice (e.g., taking a test) compared to when they restudy information (e.g., rereading it). While some researchers have encouraged an increase in testing to aid learning, many students do not view testing as an effective way to learn information. The purpose of the current study was to explore how beliefs about the efficacy of testing (i.e., retrieval practice) impact the testing effect. Despite the experimental design replicating previous testing effect studies, no testing effects were observed in this study, which has important implications for online experimentation. However, participants' beliefs were effectively manipulated, and belief in the efficacy of retrieval practice appeared to influence the effort put into the study phase of the task, indicating that this experimental design is valid and the topic should be explored more.