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**THE POWER OF EXPECTATION: HOW ANTICIPATION PREDICT THE
PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO AFFECTIVE TOUCH**

Keywords: affective touch; anticipation; physiological responses; expectations; perceived versus actual changes

Touch is the first sense to develop in humans and plays a pivotal role throughout life in emotional well-being, stress reduction, and the formation of social relationships. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between expectations and the perceived and actual physiological changes triggered by affective touch. In the experiment, the heart rate, respiratory rate, and fingertip temperature of 71 participants were measured across three different experimental conditions: fast stroking, slow stroking, and attention. The results showed that expectations predicted the perceived changes, but they did not align with the actual physiological measurements. Additionally, there was no significant correlation between the perceived and actual changes. This suggests that cognitive processes, such as anticipation, play a significant role in shaping subjective experiences, and that expectations can greatly influence the interpretation of bodily sensations, even when no actual physiological change occurs.
