Photovoice-Through Photographs to Feelings: Investigation of Experience Reporting in a Randomized Controlled Study

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Abstract : Background: Finding words to report what you have been through may be challenging, especially when dealing with stressful or highly emotional experiences. Photovoice (PV) represents a possible way of facilitating experience reporting. In this approach, people take photos about a particular topic (in our study: worries about the future) and talk about the topic based on the photos. So far, the benefits of Photovoice have been quantitatively insufficiently tested. There is a lack of randomized controlled trials investigating PV in comparison to other methods. This study aimed to fill this research gap. Methods: 65 participants took part in the study and were randomly assigned to the PV group, the writing group (WG), or the control group (CG). The PV group received the task to take photos of worries regarding the future for one week and send max. 5 of them to the interviewer before the interview. The WG had to write down the worries about the future and send max. 5 of them to the interviewer before the interview. The control group did not receive a specific assignment. The semi-structured interview consisted of six open-ended questions and was applied to all future worries. The questions included the content of the future worries, the meaning, and how the worry expressed itself emotionally and physically. The interview was recorded and later transcribed. After the interview, online questionnaires were filled out. They covered a range of variables such as access to emotional content, ability to describe feelings, the extent of self-disclosure, and relationship quality. Results: Contrary to our hypotheses, one-way ANOVA revealed no differences between the three conditions concerning all variables (access to emotional content, ability to describe feelings, the extent of self-disclosure, and so on), all p's > 0.14, BF_{01} = 1.78-7.66. In a subsequent step, the words in the transcribed interviews were analyzed. The LIWC program counted how many emotional words occurred in the text and assigned them to predefined categories. Planned contrasts revealed that the PV reported more negative emotional words compared to the two groups $t(62)$ = 2.62, p = .011, and also compared to the WG only, $t(62)$ = 2.36, p = .022, BF_{01} = 0.62. Conclusions and implications: The applied self-report instruments did not reveal any differences between the groups. However, the PV group used more negative emotional words than the other two groups. The discrepancy between self-report and observation variables regarding emotionality is noticeable. It is suggested that the highly educated and above-average female sample may not have needed PV to access emotional content. It is possible that the approach would yield clearer results in a clinical sample. This and other approaches are currently being investigated in a follow-up study.

Keywords : photovoice, controlled randomized study, online intervention, emotional awareness, self-disclosure, data triangulation, interviews

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