

Abstract:

Depression, as one of the most widespread mental illnesses, is responsible for the disability of a large number of people, so it is necessary to pay attention to its diagnosis and treatment. Part of the broad depressive symptomatology is also a cognitive deficit that is shown as an impairment of the cognitive functioning of an individual, including distortion of thinking. This distortion can also be observed in the written presentation of the patients. Expressive writing as a useful therapeutic technique could provide the opportunity to identify cognitive distortions through written text. These distortions can manifest in a higher prevalence of the use of absolute words, self-focused language (SFL), often manifested by personal and possessive pronouns, as well as emotionally negative words. On the contrary, there are few positive emotional and cognitive words in texts of depressive patients. The research was carried out in an intercultural context, so the studied cultures of Czech republic and Mexico were presented. The research extracted words from texts of expressive writing for selected categories in both languages. That can be further used to build a basis for the dictionary to study this phenomenon. The statistical analysis confirms the equivalence of this phenomenon in both samples, except for SFL, which is higher in the Mexican sample. This finding might be due to the particularity of the language in its grammatical meanings. The research shows a significantly higher use of selected word categories in the clinical population. However, it did not confirm the effect of cognitive words that do not differ between the control and the clinical groups. Nevertheless, this may occur due to other factors. In addition, the relationship of the scores in the tests of depression was tested. This happens to be significant for all categories except for cognitive words. The association with cognitive tests was also studied. It has been shown to be related to self-assessment in tests of rumination but also to impairment in the memory test. The findings may help the future use of the technique as a diagnostic tool for depression.

Keywords:

depression

expressive writing

cognitive distortions

intercultural comparison study