

# Fall Showcase 2019

## The Effect of Expressive and Reflective Writing on Perceived Stress, Self-Efficacy, and Approaches to Studying Among Social Work Graduate Students

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Social Work

### Background of the Study:

When students undergo stressful events and inhibit their thoughts and feelings related to their stressful or upsetting experience, those events may serve as cumulative stressors over time, increasing the risks of stress-related physical and psychological problems that may negatively affect academic achievement.

### Purpose of the Study:

To explore whether expressive and reflective writing can be an effective coping strategy for MSW students, which may help them change their approaches to studying.

### Qualitative Findings:

The experimental group participated in at least 5 weekly expressive and reflective writings and a total of 139 writings were collected and analyzed through the Atlas.ti computer program.

Four tentative themes emerged from thematic coding processes guided by the grounded theory approach:

- (1) stress and anxiety triggered by a variety of life experiences;
- (2) family and social support as coping resources;
- (3) the importance of self-care for health;
- (4) self-determination, self-regulation, or self-efficacy.

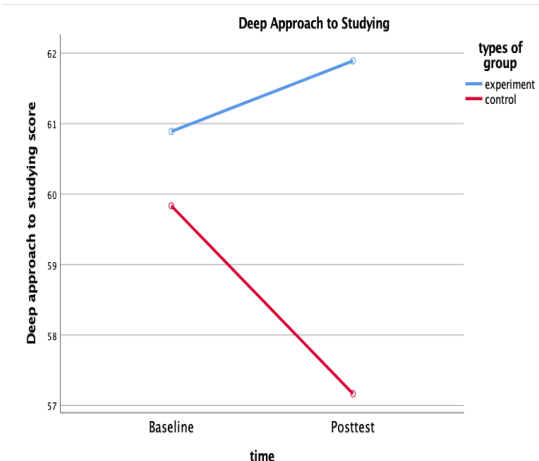
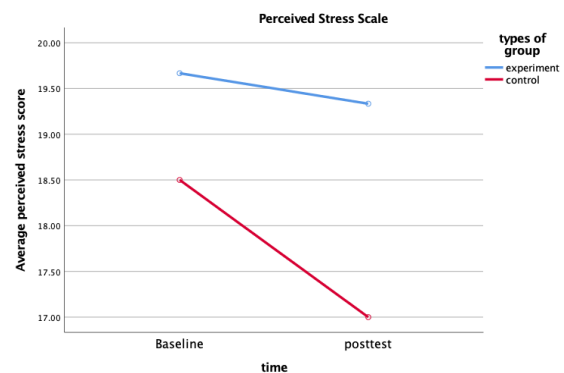
Table 1: Means at baseline and posttest assessment as a function of condition

Outcome Measures	Experimental Group (n=9)		Comparison (n=6)	
	Baseline M(SD)	Posttest M(SD)	Baseline M(SD)	Posttest M(SD)
PSS	19.67 (5.10)	19.33 (4.74)	18.50 (6.47)	17.00 (5.55)
GSES	30.89 (3.55)	30.22 (3.56)	33.17 (3.66)	34.33 (3.39)
DA	60.90 (8.33)	61.89 (8.02)	59.83(7.20)	57.17 (6.37)
SA	84.33 (5.55)	84.56 (6.29)	78.17 (6.31)	81.67 (12.61)
SAA	52.44 (7.49)	48.44 (8.75)	47.67 (10.69)	42.33 (8.66)

### Quantitative Findings:

Participants in the experimental group reported

- lower scores in self-reported perceived stress and surface apathetic approach to studying (lack of purpose and fear of failure)
- and higher scores in deep approach to studying (more intrinsically motivated to seek meaning and interested in ideas) and strategic approach to studying (more organized studying and time management) at posttest.
- However, there were no statistically significant interaction effects on all dependent variables



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