

# **The Effectiveness of Soothing Images and Videos in Improving University/ College Students' Mood**

Siu Ching WONG, University of Edinburgh, 2020

**Background:** Mental health issues among students in higher education demand cost-effective and accessible support. Compassionate imagery was tested to be safe and effective for university students in addressing their issues without clinical supervision. However, studies showed that some individuals might benefit less from imagery. The concern might be resolved with the use of externally presented positive stimuli (EPPS). Although evidence has shown the effectiveness of EPPS in emotion induction, little attention has given to soothing stimuli which are EPPS related to concepts in Compassion-Focused Therapy.

**Aims and Hypotheses:** The current study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of soothing videos and pictures in evoking emotional responses among students in higher education. It was hypothesised that both soothing videos and pictures would evoke the proposed mood changes, while soothing videos might evoke more prominent mood changes than soothing pictures.

**Methods:** Participants (n=91) studying in diverse countries were recruited through online advertisement. They were randomly assigned to either watching soothing videos (n=48) or viewing soothing pictures (n=43). The whole data collection process was online without supervision. ANOVAs and correlational analyses were used for examining the hypotheses.

**Results:** Results showed that both soothing videos and pictures significantly reduced positive affect, negative affect, state depression and state anxiety, while soothing videos did not evoke more prominent mood changes than soothing pictures. Also, results showed that high depressive symptoms associated with a larger reduction in negative affect, state depression and state anxiety.

**Conclusion:** The findings highlight the potential use of soothing videos and pictures in reducing university/ college students' psychological distress.

**Keywords:** mental imagery, mood, soothe, students, higher education

