Reviewer's report

Title: Perceived outcomes of spiritual healing and explanations - a qualitative study on the perspectives of German healers and their clients

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Reviewer: Corina Guethlin

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting study on experiences of healers and their clients. However, the scope of the study seems to be rather limited, as healers and clients are representing a highly selective group. Therefore, the results give a narrative account of healers' words and conceptualizations, but innovative insights seem to be limited.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

Background:

“Important questions”:
As these questions are incorporated into the aim of the paper, there seems to be no need to give also exemplary questions
Sample:
1. What was the recommendation based on? "Good" healers? Experienced healers? Please give more details.
2. “a variety of”: What is meant by this?
3. “contact with their clients”. It seems important to know how healers selected these clients, e.g. were all clients contacted or a random sample?
4. the int guideline was longer and contained other questions as well? Please give entire interview guideline

Interview guideline:
5. “The following interview questions were related to the aim of this paper:” Does this mean that the interview guideline was longer and more comprehensive? Did you only analyse the answers to these questions?
6. “What you can achieve with a client? What is the client's task like?” I do not understand Item No 7 on the interview guideline.

Data collection:
7. “Written memos of the interviews and participatory observations.”
Unfortunately, I could not work out from the methods, what was observed nor how and where these observations took place. Please give account of the
participatory observations.

Data analyses:

8. “Theory generation” is mentioned here. This leads to the question if content analysis was used to create a theory, and how this was done.

Results:

9. “In total 15 healers and 16 clients participated in this study. We conducted and analyzed 24 interviews with healers and 20 interviews with clients; in addition we conducted and analyzed eight participatory observations of healing sessions”. Again, one would wish to know how interviewing 15 healers could result in 24 interviews and if the observations were done in the practices of the interviewed healers. Were clients interviewed who participated in the observed sessions?

10. “christian science”: what does this mean?

2.) Changes of self concepts and values

11. „carpe diem“: is this a verbal quote? Carpe diem and meaningful purposes seem to differ according to my understanding.

3.) Client-healer relationship

12. “And then I met [the healer] and found out that this woman is actually the first and only person I've ever met that really does what she says (...) and is following a very high standard of ethics (...).”(A_H2_K1; client). It is not clear from this quote how this may have acted as an outcome or may have influenced the healing process.

13. The same goes for “were considered as important components”. It is not clear here to what these components are related, i.e. “components” of what?

Discussion

14. “Regardless of the healers and clients backgrounds and spiritual orientation, this experience was reported by nearly all interviewed subjects. It is important to note that the perceived outcomes and explanations presented here correspond very closely to the original narrations of our interviewees.” This part of the discussion leads to 2 questions: 1) It is interesting to see that there seems to be no experience of irritation whatsoever. Could you elaborate on this? 2) What is meant by “correspond closely to original narrations”? Did you use verbal quotes also in the text below the quotes given? Where?

15. “Stabilization of the sense of coherence”

16. Although sense of coherence might be a relevant aspect when positive outcomes of medical or psychological crises are explained, here it seems that – due to the absence of measuring any outcomes – the whole paragraph on sense of coherence could be dismissed.

References:
17. It would be probably good to translate German titles and give also English translations of references used.

- Minor Essential Revisions

In some instances the English language sounds a bit odd. Please have someone review the English.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests