Author's response to reviews

Title: Combining attention training with cognitive-behavior therapy in Internet-based self-help for social anxiety: study protocol for a randomized controlled trial

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear editors in chief,

We would like to thank you and the reviewer for the valuable feedback on our manuscript MS: 1333873951799910 “Combining attention training with cognitive-behavior therapy in Internet-based self-help for social anxiety: study protocol for a randomized controlled trial”. We have now revised the manuscript in accordance to the editorial corrections and to the suggestions of the reviewer (see below). All changes that we made in the revised version of our manuscript are marked in yellow.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide further clarification.

With kind regards,

Johanna Boettcher

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**Reviewers comments**

For reasons of clarity, the expression “attention / control” should be avoided as it can be misunderstood. Instead, the meaning of the slash sign should be explained as is appropriate in each case.

We thank the reviewer and corrected this throughout the manuscript.

**Recruitment and procedure**

First paragraph, 6th sentence: To avoid misunderstandings, the word “All” should be replaced by “Both” as there will be only two interviewers.

Corrected accordingly.

Second paragraph, 1st sentence: Again, to avoid misunderstandings, authors are recommended to add “at the end of week 2” and “at the end of week 11”.

We changed it accordingly.

**Attention training and control training**

Fifth paragraph, 3rd sentence: It is not evident that the intervention will consist of 14 sessions in the version of the table, that appears when clicking the link in the manuscript, as only 10 sessions are shown there. It seems that the missing part is the post-training assessment of attention bias, and if this include four sessions (both faces and words, and both 500ms and 1000ms) it will add up to 14 sessions. However, if that is the case, the authors need to explain how they will compare a pre-training assessment with only two variables, with the post-training assessment with four variables.

We clarified on p. 10: “The intervention will consist of 14 sessions of either treatment or placebo exercises. As evident from table 1 – each session will encompass 192 trials. The attention bias will be assessed in two additional sessions, one before (day 0) and one after (day 15) the training.”
Outcome measures and Statistical analyses

For me it is not possible to understand which is the primary outcome measure and which are the secondary outcome measures. When reading the first sentence of the section “Outcome measures”, it seems clear that the LSAS is the primary outcome measure. However, in the first paragraph of Statistical analyses, it seems to be explained that scores from what are called “secondary social anxiety scales” will be integrated with the LSAS into a “social anxiety composite”, which is not part of the “secondary outcome measures”. So which are then the secondary outcome measures?

We agree and corrected on p. 11: “We will use a composite score of the following three self-report measures of social anxiety as primary outcome: the self-report version of the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale [LSAS, 52], the Social Phobia Scale, and the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale [SPS & SIAS, 64]. In addition, as secondary outcome measures, we will administer the MADRS-S to assess depressive symptoms, and the Quality of Life Inventory [QoLI, 55].”

Discussion

Last section, 3rd sentence: Authors are recommended to reconsider the expression: “we strongly hypothesize”. Apart from being semantically questionable, there is no need to make this ‘strong’ statement in this context.

We changed it accordingly.

References:

The journal’s instructions have not been followed for any or some of the references regarding the following aspects:

1. Journals’ names should be abbreviated: all references, except #70;
2. Key words in journals’ names should start with capital letter: Ref #17, 22, 46, 47, 53, 54, 60, 65 (also when abbreviated);
3. Titles of books and reports should be in italics: Ref #48, 56.

There are also two other corrections:

Ref #20 and 61 have now been published (otherwise they could not have been included).

We applied the appropriate corrections to the reference section and realised all other editorial corrections.