A pilot study of Voices Group for patients with distressing persistent auditory hallucinations

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Introduction
The Hearing Voices Group (HVG) is a psychological intervention specifically for patients with persistent auditory hallucinations despite having adequate medication treatment. The HVG is experiential in nature and incorporates the cognitive-behavioral principles, which has been empirically proven to be effective in reducing distress associated with auditory hallucinations. The HVG was delivered in 4 weekly sessions (1 to 1.5 hours each) and aimed at enhancing patients’ insight into their illness (e.g., the stress-vulnerability model) and equipping them with effective coping skills to manage their psychological distress associated with voices. The HVG was delivered by 2 clinical psychologists who specialize in psychological treatments for psychosis.

Objectives
(1) To improve patients’ insight into their experiences with auditory hallucinations (2) To enhance patients’ coping skills (3) To reduce the secondary symptoms associated with auditory hallucinations (e.g., stress, anxiety, and depression)

Methodology
A pre-test versus post-test design was used to examine the effectiveness of HVG. The assessment battery includes a clinician rating scale (PSYRATS) and three self-report inventories (DASS-21, Beliefs about Voices Questionnaire, and Beck’s Cognitive Insight Scale). Upon completion of the HVG, patients were asked to fill in a questionnaire to evaluate the group effectiveness and their subjective satisfaction about the group.
Result
All patients (n=8) considered the HVG helpful in expanding their coping repertoires, changing their beliefs about voices, and alleviating their psychological distress associated with voices. The average satisfaction rating on the HVG was 3.56, with 1 indicating very unsatisfactory and 4 indicating very satisfactory. In conclusion, the preliminary data suggests that the HVG is a feasible intervention modality for patients with persistent auditory hallucinations.