

Peer Review

Review of: "A Case Series of Virtual Reality-Based Social Interactions for Adolescents with Psychiatric Disorders in a Television Program: Insights from NHK's Project Alien"

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1. Independent researcher

Thank you for the opportunity to peer review this manuscript. The researcher reports their utilization of a publicly broadcast TV program (Project Aliens, NHK) with an embedded virtual reality (VR)-based intervention for adolescents receiving outpatient mental health care. While the quantitative findings are modest and the qualitative changes are promising, the nature, content, and procedures of the VR intervention could benefit from a more detailed description, as could some of the participant selection criteria.

Specific comments:

1. Please describe the content and nature of the Project Aliens television program. It is unclear how the TV program relates to the intervention.
2. Please describe the virtual reality component of the intervention. It is not clear how the VR metaverse functions. It is also not clear if the VR experience was immersive (e.g., head-mounted display) or more akin to a 2D video game (e.g., tablet).
3. Please describe the role of the Moon Rabbit in more detail. Was this “virtual navigator” an automated computer-controlled agent following a fixed script? Or was the Moon Rabbit puppeteered by study staff or a therapist to guide the participants through the program? In either case, what steps did the Moon Rabbit take to interact with and respond to participants?
4. Please describe the NHK producers' selection criteria in more detail. Only 3 participants were hand-selected out of 15 eligible patients, indicating some specific selection methods that would

be relevant for scientific transparency and replication purposes.

5. The episode was recorded on July 13–14. Does this mean the study only ran for 1–2 days? The intervention steps and durations are generally unclear.
6. Please consider reformatting Figure 3 for readability. For example, a thicker black border around the positive bars would be easier to distinguish from the white background of the graph. Replacing “a b c” with “Cityscape Spaceship Spaceport” on the horizontal axis would also improve readability.
7. Please provide demonstrative quotes for positive, negative, and neutral statements associated with Figure 3. The three scenes seem very different, and it would be valuable for research to see the participants' statements directly.
8. As this mental health intervention was administered as part of a nationally aired TV program, it seems to merit greater detail on the ethical considerations taken to ensure participant consent and protections. For example, did the participants have editorial control over the final presentation of the episode? Were the participants' reactions solicited once the episode had aired? What impact did the airing of the episode have on their wellbeing beyond the day of recording?

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.