

## Perception of the impact of a positive psychological intervention in a group in a non-clinical population

Joana Pereira<sup>1</sup>, Sónia Alves<sup>2</sup> & Carla Fonte<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Centro de estudos em ciências sociais e do comportamento (FP-B2S), Universidade Fernando Pessoa, Portugal, 16321@ufp.edu.pt

<sup>2</sup>Centro de estudos em ciências sociais e do comportamento (FP-B2S), Universidade Fernando Pessoa, Portugal, salves@ufp.edu.pt

<sup>3</sup>Centro de estudos em ciências sociais e do comportamento (FP-B2S), Universidade Fernando Pessoa, Portugal, cfonte@ufp.edu.pt

### ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND:** Currently, the concept of mental health no longer refers only to the absence of mental disorders, but also to the presence of positive elements, namely indicators of positive feelings and functioning<sup>[1]</sup> such as well-being, effective functioning in individual life and effective functioning in community life<sup>[2]</sup>. Positive psychological interventions involve simple behavioral and self-administered cognitive strategies and consist of simple, regular, and intentional practices designed to promote the happiness and well-being of the individual who practices them<sup>[3]</sup>. With proven efficacy in increasing positive emotions, well-being and satisfaction with life, in both clinical and non-clinical populations, psychological interventions have gained increasing interest in their study over the last decade. However, in Portugal there are only a few studies regarding positive psychological interventions. Due to its effectiveness and ease of application, the use of positive psychological interventions can be considered as a complementary strategy in the promotion and treatment of mental health. **OBJECTIVE:** The present study aimed to analyze the impact perceptions in students of higher education, of the application of a positive psychology program, aiming to promote well-being in daily life. **METHODS:** A total of 12 students from a university in the north of the country participated in this study. Over 6 weeks, participants assessed the sessions they attended, as well as the program. The data collected were qualitatively analyzed through content analysis and the resulting categories presented according to their frequency of occurrence per session and in the global evaluation of the program. **RESULTS:** In general, the program was well accepted by participants. Intra-session activities, positive group interaction, sharing and reflection were the most frequently mentioned categories in the responses given throughout the program, as more appreciated elements. The specific objectives of the sessions to foster reflection and learning on the

various subjects was, in most sessions, achieved. **CONCLUSIONS:** The participants consider that the realized learning promoted a change mainly in the way of thinking, concretely, changing the perceptions to a greater focus on the positive. This indicates that the program has contributed to the learning of strategies for the promotion of well-being.

**Keywords:** *positive psychological interventions; well-being; content analysis.*

**References:**

- [1] Keyes CLM, Shapiro AD. Social Well-Being in the United States: A Descriptive Epidemiology. In: Brim OG, Ryff CD, Kessler RC, editors. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur foundation series on mental health and development. Studies on successful midlife development. How healthy are we?: A national study of well-being at midlife. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 2004. p.350-372.
- [2] Lamers SM, Westerhof GJ, Bohlmeijer ET, Klooster PM & Keyes CL. Evaluating the psychometric properties of the mental health continuum-short form (MHC-SF). *Journal of clinical psychology.* 2011; 67(1): 99.
- [3] Layous K & Lyubomirsky S. The how, why, what, when, and who of happiness. In: Gruber J, Moskowitz JT, editors. Positive emotion: Integrating the light sides and dark sides. New York: Oxford University Press; 2014. p.473-495.
- [4] Lyubomirsky S, Layous K . How do simple positive activities increase well-being?. *Current directions in psychological science.* 2013; 22(1): 57.