

Effectiveness study of a positive psychological intervention in young adults

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: The current definition of (positive) mental health as encompassing high levels of well-being and reduced levels of psychopathology^[1,2] as given rise to a growing interest in the development of activities and programs of positive psychological intervention that allow to promote an increase of well-being and reduction of psychopathology, taking into account the individual, social and economic benefits that higher mental health entail^[3]. **OBJECTIVE:** The objective of this study was to test the effectiveness of a positive psychological intervention in a non-clinical sample, in the promotion of well-being. **METHODS:** The developed program (entitled “Bem-me-quero”) dealt with topics such as gratitude, optimism, spirituality, mental rumination and social comparison reduction, kindness and forgiveness and had a duration of six weeks. The sample, selected by convenience in a non-random manner, consisted of 24 participants, subdivided into experimental group and comparison group, both consisting of 12 participants each. **RESULTS:** The experimental group had a mean age of 22 years ($SD = 2.98$), with 91.7% female and 8.3% male. The comparison group had a mean age of 24.17 years ($SD = 7.54$) and was composed of 75% female and 25% male. The evaluation was performed in two moments - pre and post intervention - with a temporal spacing of six weeks, using as well-being evaluation measures the MHC-SF (adaptation for the Portuguese population is submitted for publication)^[4] and the EADS-21^[5] as a measure of psychopathology (validated for Portuguese population). The results point to a marginal improvement in social well-being ($Z = -1.653$, $p = 0.098$) and a significant reduction in anxiety levels ($Z = -1.983$; $p = 0.047$) in the experimental group, suggesting benefits of participating in the program. **CONCLUSIONS:** The format of the therapy

and its inherent mechanisms seem to have contributed to these results, since group interventions allow the creation of a safe environment for sharing experiences and promoting learning through the experiences of others, fostering hope and thus serving as mediator of the change process. In addition, with regard to psychopathology, the existence of exercises aimed at diminishing mental rumination and social comparison may have contributed as a protection factor for the experience of lower levels of anxiety. These results support international studies on the effectiveness of such programs and reinforce the relevance of developing programs of this nature for the promotion of mental health.

Keywords: *well-being; mental health; positive psychological interventions; effectiveness evaluation*

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