"Nosotros vs. Ellos" ¿Puede el Mindfulness romper el favoritismo hacia el propio grupo? Un estudio exploratorio

RESUMEN

El objetivo principal de esta investigación es comprobar si el Mindfulness, en concreto la *Meditación Mindfulness* (Atención plena), reduce el sentimiento de pertenencia grupal, produciéndose un aumento de la desidentificación con el endogrupo que disminuye el Favoritismo Endogrupal. El comienzo de este estudio se sitúa en enero de 2020, con la interrupción repentina de recogida de muestra en marzo por el estado de alarma provocado por el coronavirus. Se utiliza un diseño intrasujeto con dos factores (*Identificación Grupal* x *Intervención Meditación*), con una muestra voluntaria y aleatoria de 63 personas de entre 18 y 60 años de edad. Se aplica *el Paradigma del Grupo Mínimo* para activar la identificación con el grupo y medir el favoritismo endogrupal, incluyendo una tarea de *Meditación Mindfulness.* Se lleva a cabo una comparación de medias para muestras relacionadas Pre-test/Post-test. Los resultados muestran diferencias significativas entre los recursos repartidos entre el endogrupo y el exogrupo, disminuyendo el favoritismo Endogrupal en el reparto de recursos. La investigación permite concluir que se observa una disminución del favoritismo endogrupal tras la realización de Meditación Mindfulness, en otras palabras, esta técnica parece desactivar la cognición "Nosotros vs. Ellos", generando un reparto más equitativo de recursos. Sin embargo, se considera importante ampliar la muestra, dado que el tamaño del efecto del estudio es pequeño y no permite generalizar los resultados. Por tanto, el estudio permite concluir que en una primera exploración el Mindfulness parece romper las barreras para una relación inclusiva entre grupos y deja abierta una interesante línea de investigación.

Palabras clave: Relaciones intergrupales, Paradigma del Grupo Mínimo, Favoritismo Endogrupal, Meditación Mindfulness.

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research is to check whether Mindfulness, in particular Mindfulness Meditation, reduces the feeling of group belonging, resulting in an increase in deidentification with the endogroup that decreases Endogrupal Favoritism. The start of this study is in January 2020, with the sudden interruption of sample collection in March due to the alarm state caused by the coronavirus. An intrasubject design with two factors (Group Identification x Meditation Intervention) is used, with a voluntary and random sample of 63 people between 18 and 60 years of age. The Minimum Group Paradigm is applied to activate identification with the group and measure endogroup favoritism, including a Mindfulness Meditation task. A comparison of means is performed for pre-test/Post-test related samples. The results show significant differences between the resources distributed between the endogroup and the exogroup, decreasing The Endogroup favoritism in the distribution of resources. The research concludes that a decrease in endogroup favoritism is observed after the realization of Mindfulness Meditation, in other words, this technique seems to disable cognition "We vs. They", generating a more equitable distribution of resources. However, it is considered important to enlarge the sample, since the size of the study effect is small and does not allow the results to be generalized. Therefore, the study concludes that in a first scan mindfulness seems to break down the barriers to an inclusive relationship between groups and leaves open an interesting line of research.

Key words: Intergroup relations, *Minima Group Paradigm,* Endogrupal Favoritism, Mindfulness Meditation.

"We vs. Them" Can Mindfulness break favoritism towards the own group? an exploratory study

UNIVERSITAT JAUME I

TFG PSYCHOLOGY (PS1048) 2020
Student: Andrés Fernández Peris
Mentor: Rosana Peris Pichastor

INTRODUCTION

Since Tajfel's (1970) works with the theory of Social Identity, research has corroborated the process of *Endogroup Favoritism*, which explains "the tendency to appreciate the members of the ingroup in a pleasant way and to consider them as equals with shared similarities, just for the fact of belonging to it", to the members of the ingroup for the fact of belonging to it (Dobbs & Grano, 2001). On the contrary, the members of the outgroup are perceived in a different and unpleasant way, with disregard and underestimated. As pointed out by Turner & Browny (1978), the process of separation in own and other groups is a natural part of the human experience, as well as the tendency to favor the endogroup more than the exogroup. Generally, Endogroup Favoritism refers to the tendency to favor, or assess more positively, the members of the own group (endogroup) with regard to another group where they do not belong regardin perceptions, attitudes, and behavior.

On the other hand, in the last decade there has been a large number of studies about the Mindfulness and its effects on psychological well-being, affecting separately to basic activities of daily living, the emotions, decisions, etc. (Karremans & Papies, 2017). But, what do they mean when they speak of Mindfulness? In fact, it could be that any said that any person being aware of when is aware of what they are feeling, doing or thinking, is doing Mindfulness. In this line, the Mindfulness meditation consists in being aware of what is in the mind in every moment, starting by the concentration, which generates serenity and, with it, understanding of reality; thus reaching self-consciousness. That is to say, be attentive to what you are thinking and feeling at the exact moment and keeping the attention in an active way. Recent studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of interventions based on Mindfulnes Meditation to increase empathy, compassion, and prosocial behavior (Luberto, Shinday, Son, Philpotts, Park, Fricchione & Yeh, 2018). Lueke & Gibson (2016) showed that the practice of mindfulness reduces the implicit bias, and with it, the discriminatory behavior. Therefore, it can be expected a reduction of the trends that favor to the members of the own group, and a more equitable distribution of resources.

Objective and hypothesis

The objective of this research has been to check if Mindfulness, specifically *Mindfulness Meditation*, reduces the feeling of group belonging, leading to an increase in disidentification with the group that would decrease *Endogroup Favoritism*. The next **Hypothesis** has been formulated:

H_1. The task of Mindfulness Meditation is expected to reduce the tendency to Endogroup Favoritism.

METHOD

Desing

It has been used a design with two factors: Group Identification (Endogroup vs Outgroup) x Meditation Intervention (Pre-Post).

Participants

voluntary participation, without receiving any type of reward. 63 adults between 18 and 60 years (M=26 , STD of 8.5.), of which 55.6% were women and 44.4% men. The 42.9% had an average of 47 hours of experience in meditation.

Experimental Variables and Experimental Procedure

Independent Variable

Mindfulness Meditation, keep the mind in a state of full consciousness that arises to pay attention, with intention, at the present time, without judgment. Was implemented through a task of *Mindfulness* Meditation.

Dependet Variable

Endogrupal Favoritism, defined as the tendency to favor the endogroup more than the outgroup. Operationalized through a task of allocation of resources, where 2 response strategies improved the endogrupo. These were: 1) *Maximun difference in favor of group member*: give the subject of endogrupo the maximum possible amount without taking into account the exogrupo and 2) *Maximun for group Benefit*: distribute the resources to obtain the greatest advantage endogroup with respect to the outgroup. Pre-treatment and Post-treatment measure.

Procedure

We use *Minimal Group Paradigm* (MPG; Tajfel, 1970), which shows that even when group membership is reduced to cognition (We vs. They), the endogroup is favored. To do this, the participants do not know each other or interact throughout the experimental session. The PGM was applied as follows:

1) MPG: *Group Identification Phase*: participants were divided into *Omega Group* and *Beta Group* based on a trivial criterion (preference for a drawing). The only information they received was their group membership (i.e. No. 32 of the Omega Group). Its objective was to reduce group perteance to a cognition: We (Endogruo) vs They (outgroup) and activate the norm of Endogroup favoritism.

2) MPG: *Resource Sharing Phase* (Measure of Endogroup Favoritism, Pre-treatment). Participants performed a point distribution task between a member of the endogroup and one of the exogroup. For this purpose, 3 arrays were used divided into 2 rows of points; the row above corresponded to the points that gave the endogroup member and the bottom row to the exogroup. Therefore, the cast between the two was united. The following matrix is an example, appearing in color the choices that assumed Endogrupal Favoritism.

Reward Matrix Example

The member nº 6 *Omega Group* distributes rewards between a member of its own group and a member of the outgroup. These numbers are rewards for:

Member nº 17 Omega Group	25	23	23	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10
Member nº 5 Beta Group	22	20	19	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7

- Maximum difference in favour of group member (23/19)
- Maximum for group benefit (25/22)

1) **Treatment was applied** (Mindfulness Meditation Task). All participants participated in a 20-minute Meditation session, during which they lay on a mat with their eyes closed and paying attention to breathing and without judgment. When the mind wandered they had to guide the attention back to breathing

2) MPG: Resource Sharing Phase (Measure of Endogrupal Favoritism, Post-Treatment). The previous task was repeated and Endogrupal Favoritism was re-measured.

RESULTS

T-Test - Paired samples of Pre-test / Post-test

		M	N	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Cohen´s d
Matriz 1	Endo. Favo. (Pre-test)	6,9048	63	11,35031	1,377	62	,173	
	Endo. Favo. (Post-test)	4,7937	63	10,76308				
Matriz 2	Endo. Favo. (Pre-test)	3,8254	63	5,12596	2,308	62	,024*	0,025
	Endo. Favo. (Post-test)	2,4921	63	5,42358				
Matriz 3	Endo. Favo. (Pre-test)	6,3651	63	11,15767	1,005	62	,319	
	Endo. Favo. (Post-test)	4,9048	63	8,95457				
	Endo. Favo. (Pre-test)	17,0952	63	21,43686	2,040	62	,046*	0,033
	Endo. Favo. (Post-test)	12,1905	63	20,47332				

DISCUSSION

Faced with little research on the relationship between Mindfulness and intergroup relationships, the objective of this pilot study was to check whether Mindfulness Meditation (MM) reduces the feeling of group belonging, decreasing the tendency to favor the members of the group itself (Endogrupal Favoritism). The results of the mean comparison show that there was a significant decrease in Endogroup Favoritism (M. 12.19, SD 20.47) after performing the MM compared to the one before (M. 17.09, SD 21.43) to perform the MM; t(22)2,040, p. 0.46. It should be noted that, although the differences are statistically significant, the size of the effect is very small (Cohen's d-0.033) and, although the hypothesis is met, the results are short-range. Previous studies have found that MM improved implicit attitudes automatically activated towards a stigmatized group (Kang, Gray & Dovidio, 2013). For their part, Wallmark, Safarzadeh, Daukantaite & Maddux (2013) point out that MM activates empathy and improves intergroup relations. In this context, our results could go in the direction of Lueke & Gibson's proposal (2016). These authors found that MM develops the ability to eliminate cognitive bias from the stereotype before the opportunity to express it arises. Thus, in our study the practice of MM would have disabled the cognition "We vs. Them" and therefore would have decreased the Endogrupal Favoritism measured after its application.

However, the scant sample is a limitation of the study. Therefore, it is necessary to expand the sample to check if our results are generalized, opening up the possibility of turning Mindfulness Meditation into a way for the establishment of inclusive intergroup relationships, by disabling the cognitive bias of group membership, so that Allport's (1954), or Turner & Reynolds (2012) claim that "people tend to favor the group itself as the norm" ceased to be the expected behavior in intergroup relations.

REFERENCIAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS

Allport, G. W. (1954). The nature of prejudice. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Dobbs, M. & Grano, W. D. (2001). Outgroup Accountability in the Minimal Group Paradigm: Implications for Aversive Discrimination and Social Identity Theory. *Society for Personality and Social Psychology*, *27*(3), 355-364.

Kang, Y., Gray, J. R. & Dovidio, J. F. (2013). The Nondiscriminating Heart: Lovingkindness Meditation Training Decreases Implicit Intergroup Bias. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 143*(3), 1306-1313. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0034150

Karremans, J. C. & Papies, E. K. (Eds.). (2017). *Mindfulness in social psychology.* Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315627700

Luberto, C. M., Shinday, N., Son, R., Philpotts, L. I., Park, E. R., Fricchione, G. L. & Yeh, G. Y. (2018). A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of the Effects of Meditation on Empathy, Compassion, and Prosocial Behaviors. *Mindfulness, 9*(5), 708- 724.

Lueke, A. & Gibson, B. (2016). Brief Mindfulness Meditation Reduces Discrimination. *Psychology of Consciousness: Theory, Research and Practice, 3*(1), 34-44. https://doi.org/10.1037/cns0000081

Tajfel, H. (1970). Experiments in intergroup discrimination. *Scientific American, 223*(5), 96-103.

Turner, J. C. & Brown, R. (1978). Social status, cognitive alternatives and intergroup relations. En H. Tajfel (Ed.), *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 201-234). Londres: Academic Press.

Turner, J. & Reynolds, K. (2012). Self-categorization theory. In P. A. Van LangeA. W. Kruglanski & E. T. Higgins *Handbook of theories of social psychology: volume 2* (Vol. 2, pp. 399-417). London: SAGE Publications Ltd doi: 10.4135/9781446249222.n46