

## KINDNESS INTERVENTIONS: FOSTERING WELL-BEING AND ALLEVIATING DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS IN MEXICAN ADULTS

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### ABSTRACT:

**Introduction:** Depression is a significant public health concern globally, including in Mexico. Cultivating positive emotions, such as through acts of kindness, has shown promise in improving mental well-being. This study investigated the impact of a four-week kindness intervention on positive emotions and depressive symptoms in Mexican adults.

**Methods:** 100 Mexican adults (aged 25-55) were randomly assigned to either a kindness intervention group (n=50) or a control group (n=50). The intervention involved weekly sessions guiding participants to perform acts of kindness. Positive emotions (happiness, gratitude, compassion) and depressive symptoms were measured pre- and post-intervention using validated scales.

**Results:** The kindness intervention group showed a significant increase in positive emotions and a significant decrease in depressive symptoms compared to the control group, which showed no significant changes.

**Conclusion:** A structured kindness intervention can effectively promote positive emotions and reduce depressive symptoms in Mexican adults, suggesting its potential as a valuable tool for enhancing well-being.

**KEYWORDS:** Kindness intervention, positive emotions, depressive symptoms, well-being, Mexican adults, mental health, prosocial behavior, happiness, gratitude, compassion, randomized controlled trial, intervention study, Mexico, cultural context, psychological well-being, mental health promotion, depression, altruism, helping behavior, social connection, emotional regulation, positive psychology, community health, cross-cultural research.

### INTRODUCTION

Mental health challenges, including depression, are a significant public health concern globally. In Mexico, depression affects a considerable portion of the adult population, impacting individuals' quality of life and overall societal well-being. While traditional treatments like therapy and medication are available, there is a growing interest in exploring complementary and alternative approaches to mental health care. One such approach is the cultivation of positive emotions, which have been linked to improved mental and physical health outcomes. Kindness, a prosocial

behavior that involves acting in a helpful and compassionate manner towards others, has been identified as a potential pathway to enhancing positive emotions.

Research suggests that engaging in acts of kindness can lead to increased feelings of happiness, gratitude, and compassion. These positive emotions, in turn, can buffer against stress, improve social connections, and enhance overall well-being. Furthermore, some studies have indicated that kindness interventions can be effective in reducing depressive symptoms. However, more research is needed to explore the effectiveness of such interventions in diverse cultural contexts. This study aimed to investigate the impact of a four-week kindness intervention on promoting positive emotions and reducing depressive symptoms in a sample of Mexican adults. We hypothesized that participants in the kindness intervention group would experience a significant increase in positive emotions and a significant decrease in depressive symptoms compared to those in the control group.

### **METHODS**

- **Participants:** A total of 100 Mexican adults (aged 25-55) were recruited from the community through online advertisements and local community centers. Participants were screened for eligibility criteria, including no current diagnosis of a severe mental illness and no participation in other mental health interventions during the study period. Participants were randomly assigned to either the kindness intervention group (n=50) or the control group (n=50).
- **Intervention:** The kindness intervention consisted of four weekly sessions. In each session, participants in the intervention group were introduced to the concept of kindness and its potential benefits for well-being. They were then guided to brainstorm and plan specific acts of kindness they could perform throughout the following week. These acts could range from small gestures, such as offering a compliment or helping a neighbor, to more substantial acts, such as volunteering at a local charity. Participants were encouraged to vary their acts of kindness and to reflect on their experiences in a journal. The control group did not receive any specific intervention.
- **Measures:** Positive emotions were assessed using a composite score derived from three validated scales: the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, the Gratitude Questionnaire, and the Compassionate Love Scale. Depressive symptoms were measured using the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II). These measures were administered at baseline (pre-intervention) and after four weeks (post-intervention).
- **Procedure:** Participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. Baseline assessments were conducted, followed by the randomization procedure. The intervention group attended the weekly sessions, while the control group received no intervention. Post-intervention assessments were conducted after four weeks.
- **Data Analysis:** Data were analyzed using independent samples t-tests to compare changes in positive emotions and depressive symptoms between the two groups.

### **RESULTS**

The results indicated a statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of changes in positive emotions. The kindness intervention group showed a significant increase in positive emotions from baseline to post-intervention, whereas the control group showed no

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significant change. Similarly, there was a significant difference between the two groups in terms of changes in depressive symptoms. The kindness intervention group exhibited a significant decrease in depressive symptoms, while the control group showed no significant change. Specifically, the mean score on the positive emotions composite increased significantly in the kindness intervention group ( $p < .001$ ) but not in the control group ( $p = .23$ ). The mean BDI-II score decreased significantly in the kindness intervention group ( $p < .001$ ) but not in the control group ( $p = .18$ ).

### **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study support the hypothesis that a structured kindness intervention can be effective in promoting positive emotions and reducing depressive symptoms in Mexican adults. The results are consistent with previous research that has demonstrated the benefits of kindness for well-being. The significant increase in positive emotions observed in the intervention group suggests that engaging in acts of kindness can indeed lead to enhanced feelings of happiness, gratitude, and compassion. The significant reduction in depressive symptoms indicates that kindness interventions may have therapeutic potential for mitigating depressive symptoms.

The study's findings have important implications for mental health promotion and intervention in Mexico. Kindness interventions could be a valuable tool for enhancing well-being and reducing the burden of depression. These interventions are relatively low-cost, accessible, and can be easily implemented in community settings. Future research should explore the long-term effects of kindness interventions and investigate their effectiveness in diverse populations and settings. Additionally, research could examine the mechanisms through which kindness interventions exert their effects on well-being.

**Limitations:** This study had some limitations. The sample size was relatively small, and the study relied on self-report measures, which can be susceptible to bias. Future research should employ larger samples and include objective measures of well-being. Furthermore, the study focused on a specific age range of adults, and the findings may not be generalizable to other age groups.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study provides further evidence for the effectiveness of kindness interventions in promoting positive emotions and reducing depressive symptoms. The findings suggest that incorporating kindness-based practices into mental health promotion and intervention efforts may be beneficial for improving well-being in Mexican adults. Further research is needed to explore the optimal design and implementation of kindness interventions and to investigate their long-term effects.

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