

Meditation: critical analysis of the experience of young university students in their daily life and health

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Abstract: Introduction: Meditation has been a practice studied from different perspectives, especially from health, but little from qualitative methodologies that account for the subjective processes of change in everyday life. Objective: The following study pretends to get to know the meaning that a group of students attributes to the use of meditation in their daily life. Method: From a qualitative methodology, there is an investigation in the experience of university students who participated in a general training course in which ten meditation meetings were held. The recollection of data was done from semi-structured interviews to the participants, with the review of personal binnacles in which they reported their experience in every meditation. Results: The meditation practice had implications in the personal, relational and societal areas, emphasizing the well-being that the meditation generates in the short and medium-term, contributing to self-care, to self-knowledge and the change of the perspective on themselves, on others and the social reality, favoring the transforming actions in these areas. Conclusion: The meditation generates a rupture in the subject's daily life, experience that would have favored their critical thinking regarding their reality, which is complemented with other strategies from occupational therapy could contribute to the intervention processes, assuming a facilitating role for the transformation of individual life and social reality.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, Activities of Daily Living, Health Promotion, Occupational Therapy.*

Meditação: análise crítica da experiência de jovens universitários em seu cotidiano e saúde

Resumo: Introdução: A meditação tem sido uma prática estudada sob diferentes perspectivas, principalmente em saúde, mas pouco em metodologias qualitativas que explicam os processos subjetivos de mudança na vida cotidiana. Objetivo: O presente estudo apresenta os significados que um grupo de estudantes atribui a uma prática de meditação na relação com a sua vida cotidiana. Método: A partir de uma metodologia qualitativa, avaliou-se a experiência de estudantes universitários que participaram de um Curso de Formação Geral onde foram conduzidas 10 sessões de meditação. A coleta de dados foi feita a partir de entrevistas semiestruturadas, juntamente com a revisão de registros pessoais nos quais os alunos apontavam suas experiências após a realização de cada sessão de meditação. Resultados: A prática da meditação pelos alunos apresentou implicações no seu nível pessoal, nas relações interpessoais e na participação social, desta forma permitindo correlacionar a meditação ao bem-estar gerado a curto e médio prazos. Contribuiu também para a melhora no que diz respeito a: autocuidado, autoconhecimento, mudança na autopercepção, na percepção com relação aos outros e na realidade social, favorecendo assim ações transformadoras nestas áreas. Conclusão: A meditação permite uma pausa na vida cotidiana, favorecendo pensamento um crítico sobre sua realidade e, ao ser complementado com outras estratégias utilizadas pela Terapia Ocupacional, poderia contribuir aos diversos processos de intervenção, assumindo um papel facilitador para transformação da própria vida e da realidade social.

Palavras-chave: *Mindfulness, Atividades Cotidianas, Promoção da Saúde, Terapia Ocupacional.*

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Meditación: análisis crítico de la experiencia de jóvenes universitarios en su vida cotidiana y salud

Resumen: Introducción: La meditación ha sido una práctica estudiada desde diferentes perspectivas, en especial desde la salud, pero poco desde metodologías cualitativas que den cuenta de los procesos subjetivos de cambio en la vida cotidiana. Objetivo: El presente estudio pretende dar cuenta de los significados que un grupo de estudiantes atribuye a la práctica de la meditación en relación a su vida cotidiana. Método: Desde una metodología cualitativa, se indaga en la experiencia de estudiantes universitarios que participaron en un Curso de Formación General en el cual se realizaron 10 sesiones de meditación. La recolección de datos se realiza a partir de entrevistas semiestructuradas, junto con la revisión de bitácoras personales en las que relatan su experiencia tras cada sesión. Resultados: La práctica de la meditación tuvo implicancias en los ámbitos: personal, relacional y societal, destacando el bienestar que genera la meditación en el corto y mediano plazo, aportando al autocuidado, al autoconocimiento y al cambio de perspectiva respecto a sí mismos, a los otros y a la realidad social, favoreciendo acciones transformadoras en estos ámbitos. Conclusión: La meditación realizó un quiebre en la vida cotidiana de estos sujetos, experiencia que habría favorecido un pensamiento crítico respecto a su realidad, lo que siendo complementado con otras estrategias desde la terapia ocupacional, podría contribuir a los procesos de intervención asumiendo un rol facilitador para la transformación de la propia vida y de la realidad social.

Palabras claves: *Mindfulness, Actividades Cotidianas, Promoción de la Salud, Terapia Ocupacional.*

1 Introduction

The satisfaction of needs in a capitalist model is done by the incorporation into the productive system, organizing the time and the routine of the people according to their activities such as work and studies. However, the demands to fulfill these purposes expose the individuals to situations of mental suffering and impairment, which will respond to them as a functional and automatic way.

As a response to this crisis and the greater awareness that these conditions of life affect the person's well-being, there is the need to incorporate practices that favor integral health through the balanced incorporation of the various dimensions of being. Thus, the *meditation* opens the path, not only as an alternative practice to an alienating system, but also as an intervention tool, and in treatments focused on intervening the causes of the sufferings of people working on physical, emotional and psychological components. For this reason, the meditation has been extended in Western countries as an increasingly common practice to obtain physical, mental and spiritual well-being, as an alternative to health promotion.

For this investigation, meditation is

the process of being aware and observing what is happening at every moment in our body and our mind, fully accepting all the experiences that are present as they are now (FRANCO, 2009, p. 101).

Its goal is

not to (...) change the thought contexts, which is to develop a different attitude for the thoughts and feelings that are generalized in mind (FRANCO, 2009, p. 101),

being a useful tool for the regulation of emotions. Also, it intends to achieve a view of the reality and target world of prejudice and stereotypes, developing the capacity for analysis, integral management and daily experiences (GARCÍA, 2010).

Therefore, meditation has been used as a therapeutic tool from different subjects, showing effects such as anxiety and stress management; reduction of negative thoughts and sickness; development of positive values; and contribution to self-esteem and self-fulfillment (AGUILAR; MUSSO, 2008). It has been implemented in different age groups since childhood (BRITTON et al., 2014; POBLETE; VIDAL; GALLARDO, 2016) and older adults (SANTIAGO-CASTRO, 2017).

On the other hand, due to the transition of an exclusively biomedical health approach, considering the subjects from a holistic perspective, the need for more comprehensive health treatments has been added. This means to understand that individuals are also constituted as a process of health/illness in a dialectical relationship with their social, historical, political, economic and cultural context, and they are developed in a constant interplay between their needs and their satisfaction. (CUSTO, 2008). In this way, the incorporation of meditation as a therapeutic tool is a complement and even an alternative to some pharmacological treatments

(HODANN-CADEVILLA; SERRANO-PINTADO, 2016), which produce secondary effects and generally cause both physical and psychological dependence, completing the health condition (FRANCO, 2009).

Also, there is positive evidence of the application of meditation practices, relaxation and body techniques in general as therapeutic tools, in different groups of social and health services users, such as short-stay hospitals, therapeutic communities, prisons, etc. (BRITO, 2011; OLIVEIRA; ARAÚJO, 2013).

Even when there are positive physiological indicators of the effects on the organism after the exercise of meditation, we consider the subjective experience of its practice, and its incorporation in daily life as important, facilitating the acquisition of tools for personal development and facing life in new ways (BAJAJ; PANDE, 2015; CAMPOS et al., 2016), aspects that can only be referred by those who experience them in the search to meet certain needs.

Thus, more studies are needed about those people using meditation in their daily life or as a therapeutic tool (ROSAEN; BENN, 2006). Since Occupational Therapy (OT), this theme has been little explored, and scarcely mentioned as a therapeutic tool. There are two studies of Thompson (2009) and Rodríguez and Quintana (2015) and others that propose its incorporation as part of the professional training (ELLIOT, 2015; GURA, 2010; REID, 2013; STEW, 2011; STROH-GINGRICH, 2012).

We are day by day immersed in a daily life that responds to our functionality in the productive system; we perform assigned roles, apparently from our age and gender, we have established routines that allow functioning successfully, and through efficient performance we seek satisfaction, whether in economic or symbolic terms, such as self-efficacy, and the social status, among many others. All these meanings demand a meticulous organization among people, at macro-social levels as the political organization of a country, and at micro-levels as a family group (CASANOVA; RUSSI; CASANOVA, 2007; DE QUIROGA, 2007).

All this information above is the scene of *everyday life*, which from the point of view of social psychology is understood as

the space and the time in which the relationships that men establish between themselves and their nature as a function of necessities are manifested in the immediate and direct form, configuring what we have called as their concrete conditions of existence (DE QUIROGA, 2007, p. 10).

Daily life is structured based on reiteration, manifested in routines, habits, and customs. This repetition has promoted the adjustment and naturalization of circumstances, in an obvious and immutable way (CASANOVA; RUSSI; CASANOVA, 2007), and a self-evident and normal character. According to Ana Pampliega de Quiroga (2007) this is known as an *uncritical familiarization*, which takes care of a certain intersubjectivity seized, to gratify the emerging need that can become permanent, such as the political organization, the administration of national resources, the affective linkage, among other unquantifiable.

As daily life is a dynamic and dialectical process, the events reaffirm this uncritical familiarity, but it also happens to those that are a break of daily life; extraordinary events that due to their unpredictable and unexpected nature generate conscious reflective mechanisms and open the analysis (PERERA, 2013).

In the search for balance from events that produce a break in daily life, the individuals use different accommodation strategies, adaptive or maladaptive, requiring a cognitive and emotional effort, promoting effects that will promote the well-being or the subjective malaise. These strategies are not immediately the ones of spontaneous production, demanding a continuous and dynamic process, given the characteristics of how we relate; they require unlearning to reconstruct new meanings that are capable of satisfying the needs and demands of the context.

In this process, there is the opportunity to break with uncritical familiarity, to open the way to the questioning of everyday life (PERERA, 2013, p. 3). Thus, after breaking the obvious (stereotypes, automatisms, prejudices) and problematizing how reality is understood, there are spaces generated that develop the capacity to transform everyday life, in which the individuals are the main characters and actors in this change.

From a psychosocial approach located from a constructionist paradigm, the individuals are understood as a social subject, and their reality and their meanings attributed to this reality are configured from the intersubjective, that is, from the interpersonal links they establish. Thus, the psychological and the social maintain a close dialectical relationship, in which the psychological configures the social and vice versa, establishing interdependence.

All the above is shown in all relationship areas, private and public, and whose fundamental purpose is economic exchange, colloquially known as

consumption, promoting social stratification and determination, individualism, relegation to private space as development of free time, competitiveness, exitism, productivity, organizational hierarchy, automation of production processes, and the alienation to satisfy the need for purchasing power (DE QUIROGA, 2007).

The study of *daily life* offers the opportunity not only to theorize this process of naturalization of the concrete conditions of existence but also to allow the opposite process: the denaturation of the conditions. However, as mentioned above, to mobilize this process, it is required that the individuals first experience their apprehended daily life in a problematic way, able to develop effective denaturing strategies to finally start the transformation of their reality and existence, making criticism of everyday life (CASANOVA; RUSSI; CASANOVA, 2007; DE QUIROGA, 2007).

Occupational therapists carry out their work in the daily space of the individuals, so this topic is of much interest and importance for the profession, since in that space, subjectivity is born and developed, and it is also the place where transformations can occur.

In this sense, the understanding of the reality from the OT is a historically situated socio-particular reading. The OT is oriented to the intervention, not with pathologies or deviations from normality, but with individuals (individually and collectively) who have a unique daily life, and who have turned to make a particular subjectivity, which response to a socio-historical experience historically built (GUAJARDO, 2010).

In this way, the purpose of this research is to analyze the meanings that young university students give to their experiences of meditation for their daily life, from an OT perspective. In this sense, this research would contribute theoretically to disciplinary development by providing background information from a critical perspective on the possible effects of meditation. It can also be used as input for the foundation and validation of the use of this practice as a therapeutic tool. Also, it would contribute to exposing before the professional community the contributions of meditation in OT interventions from a qualitative approach, emphasizing the subjective experience of the people.

2 Methodology

This is qualitative research carried out from an interpretative paradigm, conciliating the reality as the result of the interaction between several variables of

the social, ideological, political and cultural structures. It does not seek to generalize from the findings, but to theorize from the narrative interpretation of the individuals (MARTÍNEZ, 2011).

The type and design of research is the exploratory (HERNÁNDEZ; FERNÁNDEZ; BAPTISTA, 2010) since although meditation has been explored by different subjects linked to the health field, based on studies of the physiological, behavioral and psychological effects produced by their practice, few studies have collected the subjective aspects and meanings of the individuals associated with the meditative practice or analyzed how they are linked to their daily life.

Seven out of 20 students were part of the study group from different courses in the health area at a Chilean university who attended a General Training Course (GTC), held in the second semester of 2017, which included ten sessions of meditation during one hour and a half. The sessions were in a large room isolated from outside noise, with adjustable natural lighting; the materials used were mattresses, blankets and music equipment; the temperature of the room was regulated depending on the weather trying to maintain it at about 20°C. The sessions were taken at the mid-morning (10:30 a.m.)

Before the invitation to the research, all ethical aspects were taken. The participants authorized their participation voluntarily signing an informed consent form (previously approved by the bioethics unit of the Institution) which explains the risks and benefits in their participation, and the means of collecting the information by a semi-structured interview, and the review of a blog in which they report the experience of the sessions.

The interviews were organized into two parts. The first part recovered the individual antecedents and their experience of meditation before the GTC, and the second part aimed directly to obtain information regarding the experienced process, including its implications in daily life in the *personal, relational and societal fields*.

Also, documentary research was used for data collection through the logbook, which in this case, it is a written record of the experience of the students in the practice of meditation, which was shared with the researchers at the end of the sessions. Thus, the documentary analysis sought to represent the document and its content differently from its original form, enabling its recovery and subsequent identification. The analysis of the information (interviews and logbook) was carried out through a mixed methodology between the analytical induction, which consists of the search for common patterns from previously established definitions,

and the grounded theory, for the identification of similarities from emerging categories, until there was a theoretical saturation of different categories (CORREA et al., 2014). After the categorization, the coding of the information and synthesis of the results are held to subsequently make a theoretical reading of this synthesis based on the theories exposed in the theoretical reference, especially the perspective on the daily life of De Quiroga (2007).

3 Results

The results have been organized into four categories. The first three categories were established before the data collection and corresponded to the fields or domains in which there were implications after the meditative practice (personal, relational, societal), all of them being referred from the perspective and experience of each participant. They were divided into subcategories approaching each area mentioned. The last category (others) is divided into subcategories related to other aspects contemplated by the participants regarding the meaning, criticisms, and projections of meditation.

3.1 Personal

a) Self-concept

The interviewees reported that meditation facilitated their possibility of self-contemplation without the influence and rigidity of the “ego”¹: identifying and accepting their defects and virtues without prejudice. They also were aware about personal aspects that they consider negative, such as unhealthy lifestyles, harmful attitudes towards themselves, physical discomforts, the size of the problems experienced in everyday life through introspection, which some participants described as disconnecting to connect with themselves, seeing, analyzing and understanding the associated meanings, accepting and forgiving themselves and, finally to know themselves.

[...] I feel that the current life in [...] it allows listening to me [...], which does not allow you to think a little slower, or a little more integral. Then, I feel that the meditation [...] is transformed in that, into a meeting with you to know yourself better, [...] to rediscover yourself [...] (E7).

Therefore, meditation could make people aware about whom they are and their acting in their daily lives, and make it easier to identify the relationship between physical, emotional, spiritual and/or energetic maladies, allowing them to search for solutions for them.

b) Self-care

Another important reason is related to making decisions to achieve their well-being through mental and physical self-care. In the mental self-care, the participants identified the feelings, thoughts, and attitudes that do not favor their integral well-being, so they can develop strategies that allow the breakdown of stress, find calm and tranquility, modulate their physical pain, and also perpetuate states of serenity to renew positive energies and eliminate harmful energies for mental well-being. In the physical self-care, some participants have expressed greater bodily awareness in physical ailments, by some repetitive trauma or emotional origin. Such self-perception has been described as “listening to signals from the body” as a way of taking care of the cause (s) of the discomfort and thereby reducing or eliminating it.

c) Disconnection with the medium

Some participants mentioned that their meditation allowed them to obtain such levels of abstraction that they describe as a disconnection with the environment to connect with their interior, progressively taking away the recurring thoughts at the beginning of the sessions. One participant even said to be present “only physically” in the place, referring it “as I was there, but was not”. Some participants also reported that this disconnection allowed them to cope with academic requirements, finding spaces to “not think and pause”.

d) Routine organization

Some interviewees mainly reported that their meditation allowed them to focus, that is, to establish a pause to think about the activities they had to do during the week and be able to be organized by establishing priorities, and also to facilitate a positive attitude regarding the availability of time to carry out all the activities.

e) Well-being

All the participants reported that the practice of meditation was a means to achieve a state of general well-being, balance, general tranquility, and a sense of peace. One of the participants admitted to having found happiness in this practice and speculated that if this practice was more massive, a healthier environment could be achieved. Another participant mentioned that meditation facilitated the encounter with oneself, generating well-being and allowing to given meaning to life.

I prioritized those things that made me very happy, and with the years of the university I left them (E7).

f) Feelings

The feelings described by the interviewees and experienced during the sessions were sadness, melancholy, and even shame. The participants referred to shame as a limitation in connection with the meditative practice due to lack of confidence within the group and the existence of prejudices with themselves for being exposed to unusual situations (shaking, dancing, making sounds, etc.). However, during other sessions, this shame was extinguished, since the group was adapting and developing greater confidence, as well as freeing from their prejudices. Also, some participants mentioned that by calming their ego, which resists visualizing the negative aspects of each one, they managed to accept and reconcile with themselves, as well as to be able to be more empathic. This mobilized the feeling of comfort during the session, peace, joy, and happiness; in some cases, happiness with tears and others, happiness as a spiritual journey where they only had to be there to experience these positive feelings.

3.2 Relational

a) Implications in the relationships

After the meditative practice, the interviewees reported having visualized an improvement in interpersonal relationships, both in the family sphere, peer group, and their partner, as well as with people in general. Some participants attributed it as a consequence of the personal process since when thinking before acting or seeing everyday situations with greater calm, this calm is transmitted and reflects in the relationship. This is explained by a change of perspective regarding the way they perceive and establish relationships with other people. Some interviewees referred to having felt that from them, they changed the way they relate, but they do not know if they see the change with those who interact daily. Others have received opinions from their family or peer group about it, which referred to a more calm or positive attitude. Other people incorporated meditation into their peer or family group, which produced a joint change in the relationship, improving the quality of the relationship.

[...] I am [...] super accelerated and I get stressed by everything, so it helped me [...] to calm down and look at things from another perspective, and to see them calmer [...], and also it influenced the relationships, that is, not to be always upset [...] because things are not going as you would like [...] (E5).

b) Re-meaning of experiences/relationships

The aforementioned perspective change also contributed to re-meaning the experiences or relationships they have established with some people, being able to see them in another way, accepting others with their virtues and defects, eliminating prejudices, valuing existing human diversity, and also identifying attitudes or own lifestyles considered negative or harmful, which could impact on the relationships with other people.

c) Conflict resolution

Along with the above, some interviewees reported that through the reflexivity acquired after their meditation, they were able to resolve existing conflicts in relationships with others, or they were able to face discussions with other people calmly, looking at situations in a more open and receptive way.

d) The atmosphere in the GTC

Some interviewees reported the meditation sessions within the GTC as an atmosphere of absolute respect, and containment, where they listened and understood each other without the need to establish a close affective bond, but simply by valuing and accepting diversity, and the multiplicity of actions and subjectivities in these sessions.

3.3 Societal

a) Value aspects

The participants identified a greater development or reinforcement of the values that are related to a change in the world view. These include empathy, understanding, tolerance, acceptance, and appreciation of diversity, reduction of prejudices, among others. Some participants extrapolate this change to society in general, saying that, if there were a massification in the meditative practice, society would become more inclusive.

[...] I [...] noticed a lot that in the group of meditation, it was an environment [...] of absolute respect, that is, at no time no one made fun of what the other people said, unless it was something really funny and that the person who said it would laugh (E1).

[...] I had a lot of time that my relationship with my parents in my house, [that] was very [...] far. Because I felt that they did not understand me, and how our relationship was bad, as well as without any reason [...] after the meditation I realized, as of course, they were right in some things they said, but not the way I thought. I understood them better (E3).

b) Understanding of reality

There are effects identified for the understanding of reality by the participants such as the development of a greater awareness of the lifestyle we have in our society, which is described as inhuman, chaotic, unhealthy, an automatic routine, a society characterized as fast and convulsed, sick, irritable. In this sense, by becoming more aware of this lifestyle, the participants take action on their daily lives, not being carried away by it and giving spaces to be with themselves, going step by step more leisurely and relaxed, and focused on their well-being and inner peace. Thus, the meditation favors spiritual development, giving a deeper and holistic meaning to their lives. This, in contrast to the alienating lifestyle that prevails in society, as mentioned above.

On the other hand, there is the consolidation of previous ideas in which we find those related to a spiritual and political notion of society. Some participants referred to understanding reality not only from the physical, material or concrete aspect, but there is “something beyond” of a transcendental nature, conceiving people as beings of energy, spiritual, part of nature and connected with it.

[...] It made a lot of sense of how I was looking at society. The connection with nature and the meditation fitted in the look I have of society. [...] There is so much chaos because in the end people lost [...] this connection as nature and the bond we had (E5).

Other participant reported the relationship between the meditation and her political view of reality, highlighting the usefulness of a practical approach to those who are in a situation of vulnerability and/or an “oppressed situation” by the capitalist system, giving the possibility to achieve a true well-being, understanding it in an integral way in the relationship with others and the world. Different from the conventional or stereotypical well-being that the system and the means of communication teach, it would be reached only in free time by costly leisure activities that many people cannot accede by their vulnerability and the scarcity of economic resources.

3.4 Other meanings in the daily life of the individuals

Besides the implications of the meditation in the different areas of the daily life of the individuals, results are obtained that are associated with the perception or conception of meditation as such, both from their appreciation as the observation of how it is valued or visualized by the different individuals or sectors of society.

a) Meanings associated with meditation

It is mostly understood as a practice with a function or utility and therefore satisfies a need. In that sense, the participants mentioned that it is a very good practice and a tool for life, the general well-being, full health and balance, a method of relaxing and self-knowledge. Also, they mentioned that it is a practice that contributes to finding inner peace, to avoid falling into anxiety crisis before academic responsibilities, and to be able to be calm to organize the week. Also, some of them considered it a “gift”, a pause in everyday activities that allows them to look at and connect with themselves.

Because of these, many of the participants considered that it is necessary to integrate the meditative practice as a habit into their lives, into everyday life, highlighting the importance of taking that space in spite of the enormous amount of activities within their routine, and the belief that having a habit of meditation generates changes. Regarding this, some said they wanted to integrate meditation as a constant practice, individually or to take classes, and others use it as circumstances warrant. Therefore, some participants have carried out concrete actions such as practicing meditation at least once a week individually, buying a “mat” and looking for somewhere to take classes. On the other hand, a participant reported having discovered certain ways of incorporating meditation into daily practices, which do not consist of a meditative practice but do allow maintaining the same mental dynamics as listening to music and walking.

However, many participants commented on the difficulties they have had to integrate meditation into everyday life, mainly referring that the lifestyle of this westernized society would avoid being able to take that personal knowledge space, and the meditation would not fit due to the shortage of time, since before the initiative to meditate other responsibilities as priorities appear.

Through the meditation we realize that we are all different, I can understand that others have other ways of looking at you, so someone who meditates can be a less discriminatory, more inclusive person, who does not notice the physical but our essence. With a change of worldview, the person can behave in a way that facilitates everyone's participation (E4).

b) Criticisms about stereotypes of the meditation

The view of the individuals regarding the appreciation and social perception of the meditation was seen as something little serious, more associated

with the esoteric, little valued, little explored, and conceived as something structured:

Sitting, with your legs crossed and fingers like a Buddha, sitting and silent with your eyes closed, [...] causes people not to try or explore other forms of meditation (E7).

As an example, some participants reported the effects they have obtained with meditation or proposing it to other people to solve conflicts, heard with skepticism and incomprehension receiving responses such as “you are crazy”. Also, it was mentioned that it would not be given much appreciation in the academic or scientific world, saying: “I do not know if it is so documented”.

c) Accessibility of meditation and its use in specific groups

In general, the participants said that the accessibility and popularity of the meditation should be increased: “to be taught and to be available to everybody, to bring it closer to people’s daily lives” (E2); and also mentioned that the “popularity of passive meditations drives away those who like the most active activities, some may like, but others may not” (E4).

Also, in the groups who might benefit from meditation, most participants agreed that it would be useful for everyone, although they also mentioned some specific groups. They said that if meditation were practiced from an early age, things would probably be seen from another perspective.

Among the specific groups mentioned, there are: people who constantly face stressful situations such as workers before starting their workday, factory workers, workers who attend clients; university students with a high academic load and students with secondary education; vulnerable people and groups, “in an oppressed situation, who have no chance of expanding their forms of well-being” (E7).

[Meditation] should be taught and available to everyone, bring it closer to people’s daily lives, my mother, for example [...] attends clients, gets stressed and has no instances like that. It should be taught [...] in companies [...]. People need to check a little, [...] not only adult people [...] but also in other generations [...]. People stopped looking at each other, realizing the things that were happening to them, things that people don’t want to see and don’t overcome. I taught my mother meditation [and] it helped her to observe. Before there were things that my mother preferred not to see not to suffer, and I better say that I see them and work them now (E4).

4 Analysis and Discussion

Daily life is constituted from the obvious, unquestionable, established, automatic that can lead us towards the monotonous, to a state of conformity that maybe we do not necessarily agree, but we also continue to meet our daily living needs (CASANOVA; RUSSI; CASANOVA, 2007). Thus, we immerse in an uncritical familiarity, emphasizing the satisfaction of needs imposed by the system, and relegating to the background and even hiding the higher needs, which include self-knowledge, self-performance, self-acceptance, and others, among others. Such a way of perpetuating everyday life is identified by the study participants mainly in the academic tasks and the accelerated pace of life that offers little or no space to meet those needs.

In this sense and analyzing the results described before, the meditation is configured as a means for the *satisfaction of higher needs* related to well-being, in two main areas. On the one hand, the practice of meditation could be considered as a *practice of self-care*, since it favors healthier states in the mental, emotional and bodily aspects in the short and medium-term, such as balance, general tranquility and a sense of peace. These states allow overcoming the concrete conditions of existence given by the social system, contributing to fulfilling the daily demands and responsibilities, contributing to diminish and/or counteract negative states in the face of stressful situations and allow mental clarity to organize activities, favoring well-being and interpersonal relationships.

On the other hand, the meditation *allows approaching the essential* for each individual since it contributes to self-knowledge in its broadest spectrum; in the development of identity and spirituality, the recognition of emotions and what triggers them, and the perspective regarding values and beliefs. Taking some time to be with themselves, taking a break in the routine promotes that the individuals can reflect on the way they are living, analyzing whether this way of relating to their environment and those who compose it really responds to their needs and purposes, visualizing possible actions to change aspects that are detrimental to their well-being, and strengthening those that promote it.

Also, the meditation favored the development of a change of perspective in the participants regarding the view of society, interpersonal relationships, and themselves. This can be understood as the analysis of the daily ways of feeling, thinking and acting that each individual has developed during his life in a thoughtless way and conditioned many times

by the sociocultural context (CASANOVA; RUSSI; CASANOVA, 2007) that when reconsidered, it is possible to carry out the criticism and consequently raise awareness about the need for change, which may be accompanied by the taking of concrete actions of daily life, “it installs a substantial modification in the forms of the need-satisfaction interplay” (DE QUIROGA, 2007, p. 19).

Therefore, the practice of meditation *contributes to the criticism of everyday life*. Based on this study, we understand it as a practice of an extraordinary event of daily life, understanding it as a break between one’s own needs and the mental representation of the needs imposed by society, which allows generating thoughtful and conscious processes.

Also, we visualized in the results of the research that changes in the personal sphere were materialized, such as the organization of daily life, integrating meditation as a habit or “think before acting”, and in the relational field, such as the resolution of conflicts between some participants and the improvement of family and couple relationships. In this sense, we understand the individual as a protagonist in the construction and transformation of his reality (CASANOVA; RUSSI; CASANOVA, 2007) and also we understood that the transformation occurs in the individual -on a personal level- and in his environment -on a relational and society level -, in a dialectical relationship. Regarding the social sphere, although transformative actions do not appear, the participants consolidated previous ideas and developed a greater awareness of the lifestyle, which from our perspective could also trigger a change in the exchange of subjectivities at the micro-social level.

Finally, we identified that the practice of meditation in a group favors the construction of environments that facilitate being themselves, reducing the fear of being judged and the possibility of judging others. Thus, by configuring spaces of trust and security, meditation facilitates the cohesion of groups, as it promotes a climate of both self-acceptance and acceptance of those who share a common space and activity.

5 Conclusions

The reports of shared experiences have allowed developing a process of analysis around the concept of everyday life. We considered them to be in this space, from which social relationships are inscribed, from which the transformative and emancipatory experiences of the different social actors to reconstruct

an intersubjectivity moved by justice and social equality. Deciding on the daily spaces from which we develop represents the transformative platform for denaturing what has been planted as natural, obvious and immovable, and the opportunity to promote a just society that does not perpetuate benefits to historically privileged groups.

Thus, meditation is a potential contribution to the intervention process in OT. On the one hand, it not only promotes greater well-being but also the development of a critical view towards daily life and social reality, together with the implementation of transformative action. On the other hand, its applicability could extend to a diversity of social groups historically vulnerable in their rights and health situation.

Based on these, it is important to ask about the role played by the OT in this process. We believe that this role is related to facilitating and accompanying the process of problematization of daily life, given that criticism must be intentional, directed, since it does not simply derive from the immanent naturalness of daily life (DE QUIROGA, 2007). In this sense, the challenge is that the new perspective adopted can be translated into concrete actions within their daily lives, and in this way producing transformations.

Although meditation could represent a tool to criticize everyday life and achieve well-being, we consider it necessary to be conjugated with other lines of intervention that aim at emancipation and social justice. In this sense, it is pertinent to consider models such as popular education, which has a conception that recognizes the role of the individuals in the construction and in the permanent critique of the most immediate social and cultural reality in which it is registered (BRITO, 2008). Therefore, when recognizing this role, we believe it is important to highlight the active-participatory methodology proposed by popular education, which includes dialogue and problematization and facilitates and promotes communication between theoretical and popular knowledge, as well as being characterized by being experiential, dialogic, and historical and community. When developed in a group context, such dialogue and problematization would be facilitated by the climate of trust and security that fosters the group practice of meditation, which is relevant in OT, since the subject frequently uses the group methodologies in its interventions, and an environment with these characteristics, would undoubtedly be a facilitator for participation, as well as for the achievement of the objectives set according to the needs identified by the group or organization.

Also, it is important to note that meditation can be a very important and beneficial element in people's health, but it is not completely determinant since health is the result of economic, social, cultural and political determinants, and not of the will of people in being healthy or living in healthy environments. In this way, meditation is a counter-hegemonic tool to the stressful conditions of everyday life, but not "the" way to solve all unfair areas.

Finally, we suggest expanding the number of studies regarding meditation in OT, particularly around different groups of individuals who experience psychosocial problems, not only from a quantitative view but also a qualitative view, relieving individual experience, as well as the meanings associated with its practice.

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Notes

¹ According to Buddhist philosophy, each person has an "I" in the sense of a set of ideas, concepts and feelings that arise from their personal experience. This "I" appears in the mind as fixed and independent. This not only perpetuates the separation between the person and their experience, but also catches them in the struggle and dissatisfaction. When it is understood that the ego is only a mental construct, mental and emotional afflictions lose the cause that gives rise to them (SAEZ, 2014).