Reviewer’s report

Title: An Evaluation of Large Group Cognitive Behaviour Therapy with Mindfulness (CBTm) Classes

Version: 1 Date: 27 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Lena Wimmer

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript, which is now entitled "An Evaluation of Large Group Cognitive Behaviour Therapy with Mindfulness (CBTm) Classes", has clearly benefitted from the revision, as it is now more accurate and balanced. However, the authors should still address a few issues to increase transparency of reporting:

Background:

- p. 5 l. 48ff.: "It is thought one is better able to regulate their emotions and thoughts after entering a relaxed and attentive state with mindfulness, thus making it easier to apply CBT skills": To the best of my knowledge, this is only one rationale for incorporating mindfulness into CBT, and it is inconsistent with the finding that mindfulness-based interventions that do not involve CBT, such as MBSR, have been found to be effective in treating anxiety and depression. This means that mindfulness is based on (a) specific mechanism(s) for reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression that go(es) beyond preparing clients for CBT. Please provide at least one further rationale why one should link CBT with mindfulness.

Methods:

- p. 8 l. 18f.: You now report that "Sessions were led by two staff psychiatrists who received training in CBT and mindfulness": To assess the quality of instruction it would be good to get more information about the psychiatrists' training: What was the level of experience with mindfulness? Were they certified MBSR or MBCT teachers, etc.?

- p. 9 l. 26f.: "They could also seek out recorded instructions for the other meditations but no specific direction was given for this": There are two ways in which I find this approach to be problematic. First, if clients used exercises at their own discretion, this complicates assessment of treatment adherence, because it is eventually not clear what exactly clients were practising. Second, leaving the choice of meditations to clients' discretion carries the risk of adverse effects. There are guided meditations of uncertain quality freely available online, and it cannot be
assumed that clients were able to judge the quality without further instruction. This is compounded by recent warnings about potential adverse effects of meditation even when correctly applied, e.g.


This should be acknowledged in the limitation section of the discussion.

- p. 13 l. 24-32 "the effect of the gap between baseline and the first attended class (a binary dummy variable that is coded 1 after the gap has occurred), and the effect of the gap between the last attended class and follow-up (a binary dummy variable that is coded 1 starting with follow-up)". I do not understand why the "gaps" were treated as dummy variables - did not each participant experience "gaps" between baseline/first class and between last attended class/follow-up? If so, both gap variables would have to be coded 1 for each participant, and as a result would not carry information. Please correct me if I see this incorrectly.

- p. 13 l. 33 f. "These same variables were used as random effects in the model as these effects are likely to vary between individuals". To my knowledge, in a mixed model one and the same variable is to be treated as either fixed or random but not both.

- Regarding my comment on the original submission: 'The order in which the steps of the analytical approach is presented does not match the order that is given in abstract, introduction, and results. For instance, the results section reports acceptability before changes in anxiety and depressive symptoms, in the analytic strategy section the order is reversed. I think the article would be easier to read if the order was kept the same throughout.'

I am sorry for having caused confusion here. The comment referred to the following: In the analytical strategy section, the last paragraph (p.14, l. 11-15), after describing how changes in clinical symptoms were tested, describes how baseline predictors of class completion were assessed. In contrast, the results section reports baseline predictors of class completion before changes in clinical symptoms are reported. This means that the general flow of each section is not, but should be Acceptability --> Anxiety and Depressive symptoms.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No
Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:
Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.
I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal