

# RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BONDING PSYCHOTHERAPY

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# THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The therapy focuses on addressing unmet emotional needs, often originating from early life experiences, by fostering deep, supportive relationships in a therapeutic setting. This approach is particularly effective in helping individuals navigate issues related to emotional closeness, intimacy, and interpersonal functioning.

Röhricht et al. (2014): positive impact on emotional regulation and patients' emotional awareness

Pazzagli et al. (2017): effectiveness in treating trauma and attachment disorders, improvements in patients' attachment security

Holmes and Slade (2018): reductions in depressive and anxiety symptoms

Benecke et al. (2017): exhibited improved emotional stability, reduced impulsivity, and enhanced relational capacities, in BPD treatment

Mikulincer and Shaver's (2016) and Strauss et al. (2019): confirmed that therapeutic alliances formed in group settings significantly enhance the effectiveness of the therapy, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support, leading to better treatment outcomes and long-term benefits.

Siegel et al. (2020) suggest that body contact can facilitate psychological healing inducing positive neurobiological changes that support long-term emotional well-being.

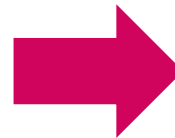
There remains a significant gap in the literature regarding how Bonding Psychotherapy specifically influences attachment styles, perceived well-being, and epistemic trust, all of which are critical factors in psychological health and therapeutic outcomes.

## Clinical effectiveness:



Subjective perceived experience  
(owned by those who have  
experienced the Bonding Group)

- Therapists
- Participants



## Empirical demonstration and communicability of clinical efficacy:



- Scientific Method
- Statistical Language
- *Address scientific and professional community*

# AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

To investigate empirically the impact of "BP Groups" participation, through the pre-post administration of a battery of self-report questionnaires

1. study 1: Research question: *are there any differences between people who participate for the first time vs. more time in BP groups?*
2. study 2: Research question: *how people feel pre vs post BP intensive group participation?*

# HYPOTHESIS (transversal to study 1 and study 2):

- HP1: BP improves perceived state of well-being and mood (Kats, 2004; Maertens, 2006; Fisseni, Stauss, von Wahlert, Mestel, 2008);
- HP2: BP improves perceived recognition, awareness and self-regulation about one's emotions (Stauss ed Ellis, 2007);
- HP3: BP brings to the perception of a more secure attachment style in subjects who participated in multiple BP groups (Casriel, 1972);
- HP4: higher levels of epistemic trust produce a better improvement of wellbeing, throughout BP (exploratory hp).



*(Breathe in... breathe out)*

# MATERIALS & METHODS

# PROCEDURE

- 1) The protocol was approved by the Interdepartmental Ethics Committee for Psychological Research, number 3512/dated 24.04.2020
- 2) Recruitment of therapists or agency, and their participants;
- 3) Two weeks before group, therapist receives email with a link to pre-post questionnaires;
- 4) Therapists, one week before, sent participants a G-form link of 'pre-questionnaires', including informed consent;
- 5) The therapist at the end of the group, sends the link of the post questionnaires to be completed within a maximum of 7 days.

# BP TREATMENT: *what we mean by BP group*

## DURATION

- "Half-day group" (4/6 hours)
- "One-day group" (6+ hours)
- "Intensive group" (2/3 residential days, "marathon")

## USED TECHNIQUES

- Movement (expressive movement, bioenergetic techniques, dance...)
- Bonding (mat-exercise or similar)
- Attitude and schemas

# SAMPLES RECRUITMENT

## Inclusion Criteria:

- Individuals experiencing some difficulties with emotional regulation, perceived well-being, or epistemic trust;
- Informed consent and voluntary participation;
- Individuals currently undergoing other forms of psychotherapy were included (but this variable was controlled).

## Exclusion Criteria:

- Severe psychiatric disorders requiring immediate intervention (e.g., acute psychosis).

## STUDY 1:

N=129 first time participation vs. 55 more than once BP participation (baseline)

## STUDY 2:

N=48 pre vs post BP intervention participation (min 6 hours)



## STATE VARIABLES

- Perceived Wellbeing
- Emotional self-regulation
- Satisfaction
- Usefulness

## STRUCTURAL VARIABLES

- Attachment Style
- Epistemic trust

# MEASURES

Anamnestic schedule: independent variables

WHO-5 Well-being Index (WHO, 1998) → 5 items, Level of general well-being from 1 to 100; internal validity  $\alpha=.95$

RQ Relationship Questionnaire (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 2001) → 4 items in Semantic Differential Scale (1-7), aims to detect prevalent attachment style: Free, Dismissing, Entangled, Disorganized/Fearful; internal validity  $\alpha=.93$

DERS-36 Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (Gratz & Roemer, 2004) → 36 items, Likert Scale 1-5, 5 factors: Non acceptance of emotions, Difficulty in distraction from negative emotions, Lack of trust in relationships, Low emotional control, Difficulty in emotion recognition, Low self-awareness; internal validity  $\alpha=.85$

Epistemic Trust Scale (from ETMCQ -Epistemic Trust, Mistrust and Credulity Questionnaire; Liotti, et al., 2023) → 5 items; internal validity  $\alpha=.87$

Perceived Satisfaction and Usefulness were measured on a 1-7 Likert scale

# DATA ANALYSIS

- 1) study 1 - Baseline level: comparison between 129 persons before their first PB group vs. 55 before their second or more BP group (independent t-test)
- 2) study 2 - Pre-post N=48 group comparison (GLM Wilk's Lambda)



# RESULTS & DISCUSSION

# RESULTS (I): Descriptives study 1 baseline. *Research question: there are any differences between people who participate for the first time vs. more time in BP groups?*

129 participants for the 1st time take part into different BP groups treatment\*:

55% females

Age range 20-61, mean age 38,24 (sd 8,9)

\*"Half-day group" (4/6 hours), "One-day group" (6+ hours), "Intensive group" (2/3 residential days, "marathon"); The BP were delivered from 5 different therapists

55 participants take part again into BP groups treatment\*:

58% females

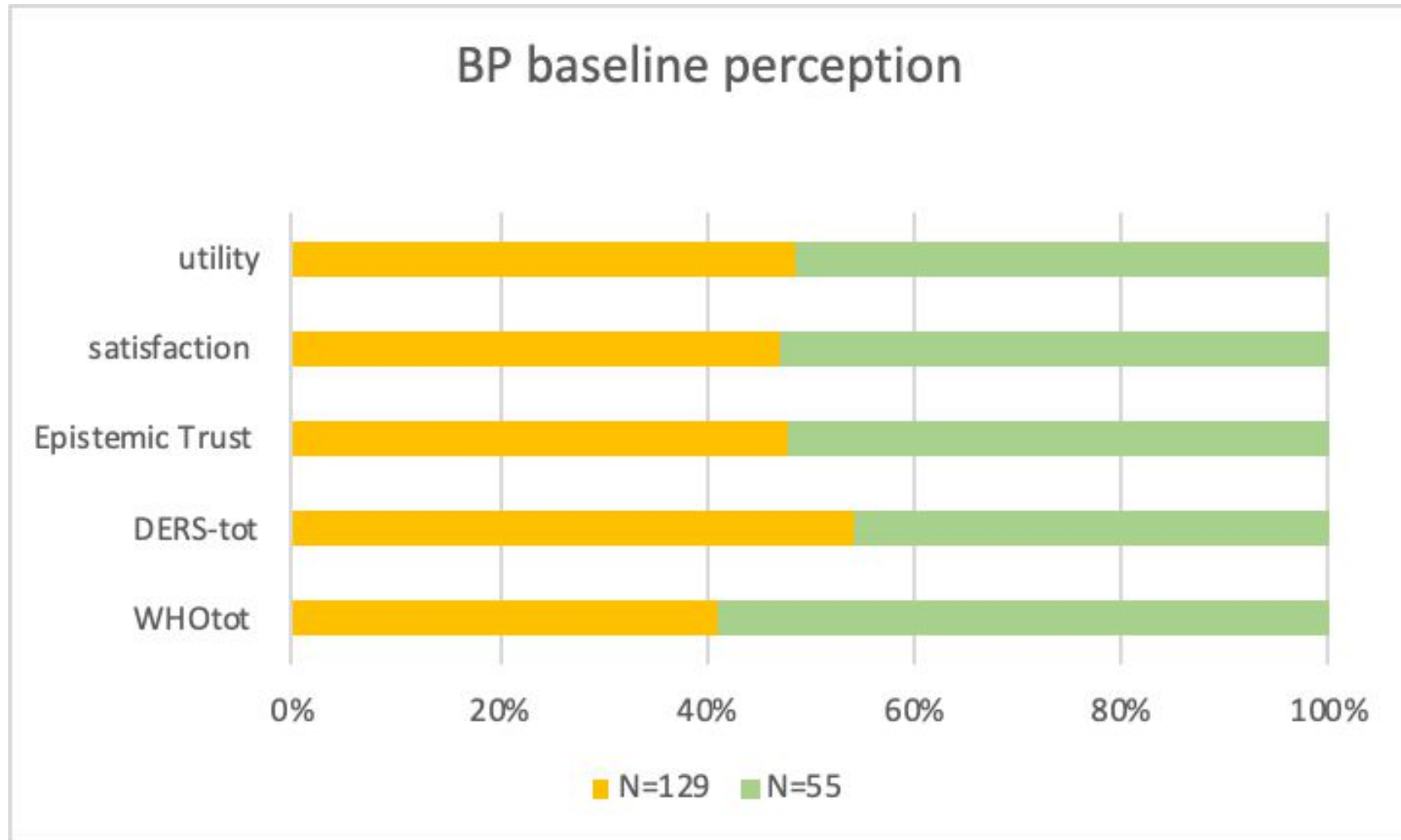
Age range 20-61, mean age 39,31 (sd 9,3)

\*"Half-day group" (4/6 hours), "One-day group" (6+ hours), "Intensive group" (2/3 residential days, "marathon"); The BP were delivered from 5 different therapists

# RESULTS (II): T-test comparison study 1

	First BP experience (N=129)		More than 1 BP group participation (N=55)		T-test	P Sign.
	Mean	DS	Mean	DS		
<b>Satisfaction (1-7)</b>	6,05	1,08	6,92	0,74	-3,31	<,001
<b>Utility (1-7)</b>	6,20	1,07	6,82	0,83	-2,10	0,02
Free (1-7)	3,19	1,72	3,36	1,89		
Dismissing (1-7)	3,92	1,87	3,75	1,91		
Entangled (1-7)	3,42	1,86	3,56	2,02		
Disorganised (1-7)	2,45	1,61	2,28	1,66		
<b>WHO tot (1-100)</b>	52,43	23,19	75,45	28,67	-4,73	<,001
<b>Non acceptance of emotions (1-DERS, 1-5)</b>	2,05	0,88	1,54	0,80	1,82	0,04
Difficulty in distraction (2-DERS, 1-5)	2,90	0,94	2,81	0,92		
<b>Lack of trust in one's own emotion (3-DERS, 1-5)</b>	2,44	0,70	2,03	0,77	2,23	0,01
Low emotional control (4-DERS, 1-5)	2,10	0,77	1,98	0,89		
Difficulty in emotion recognition (5 DERS, 1-5)	2,39	0,76	2,01	0,65	2,00	0,02
Low self-awareness (6 DERS, 1-5)	2,07	0,95	1,53	0,66	3,34	<,001
<b>Epistemic Trust (1-7)</b>	5,27	1,35	<b>5,76</b>	1,09	-1,72	0,04

# RESULTS (III): study 1 perception at baseline



## RESULTS (IV): Descriptive study 2: *Research question: how people feel pre vs post BP intensive group participation?*

From an original sample, we extracted the 48 subjects who underwent to pre-post BP group evaluation (no relevant differences in general distribution)

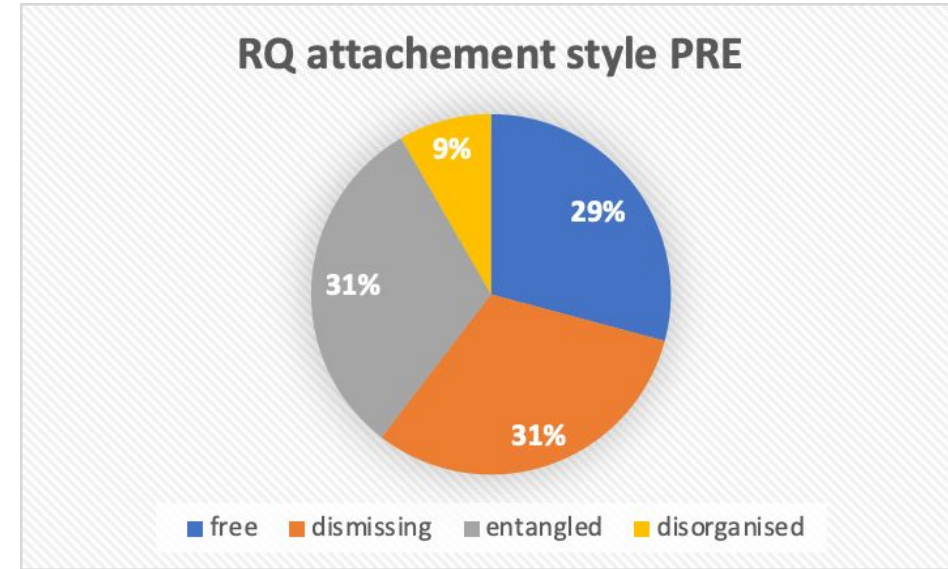
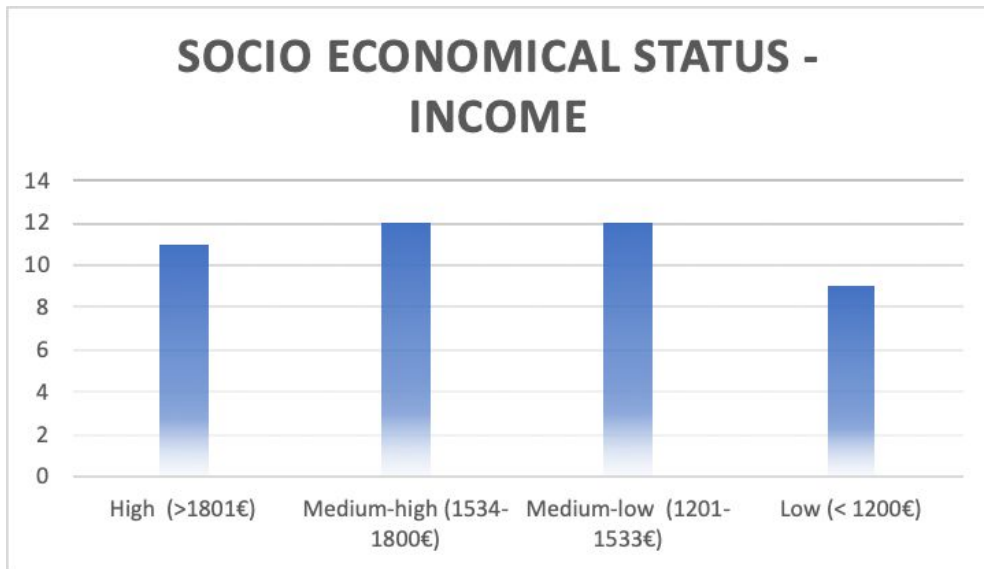
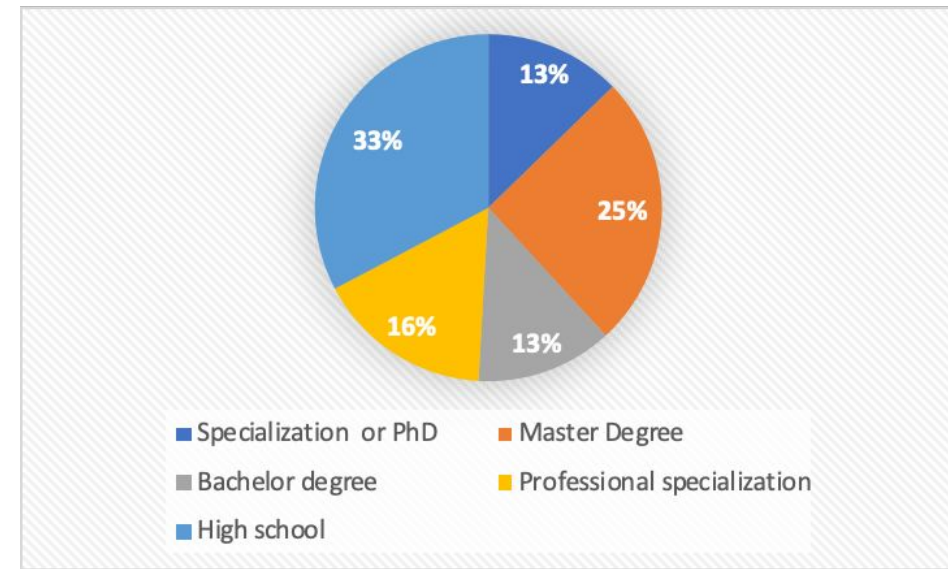
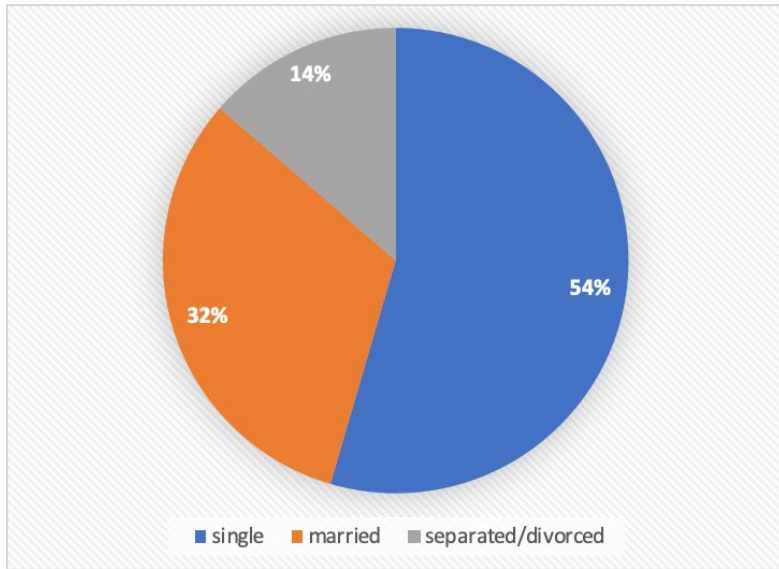
47 were Italians (58% women), 81% had COVID in 2020-23

Mean age 38,32 ys (ds=9,5) - range 20-61

36 individuals had already participated in at least one Bonding group before (66.7%)

83,3% had a personal psychotherapy (lasting from 1 to 3 ys, 75% in course yet)

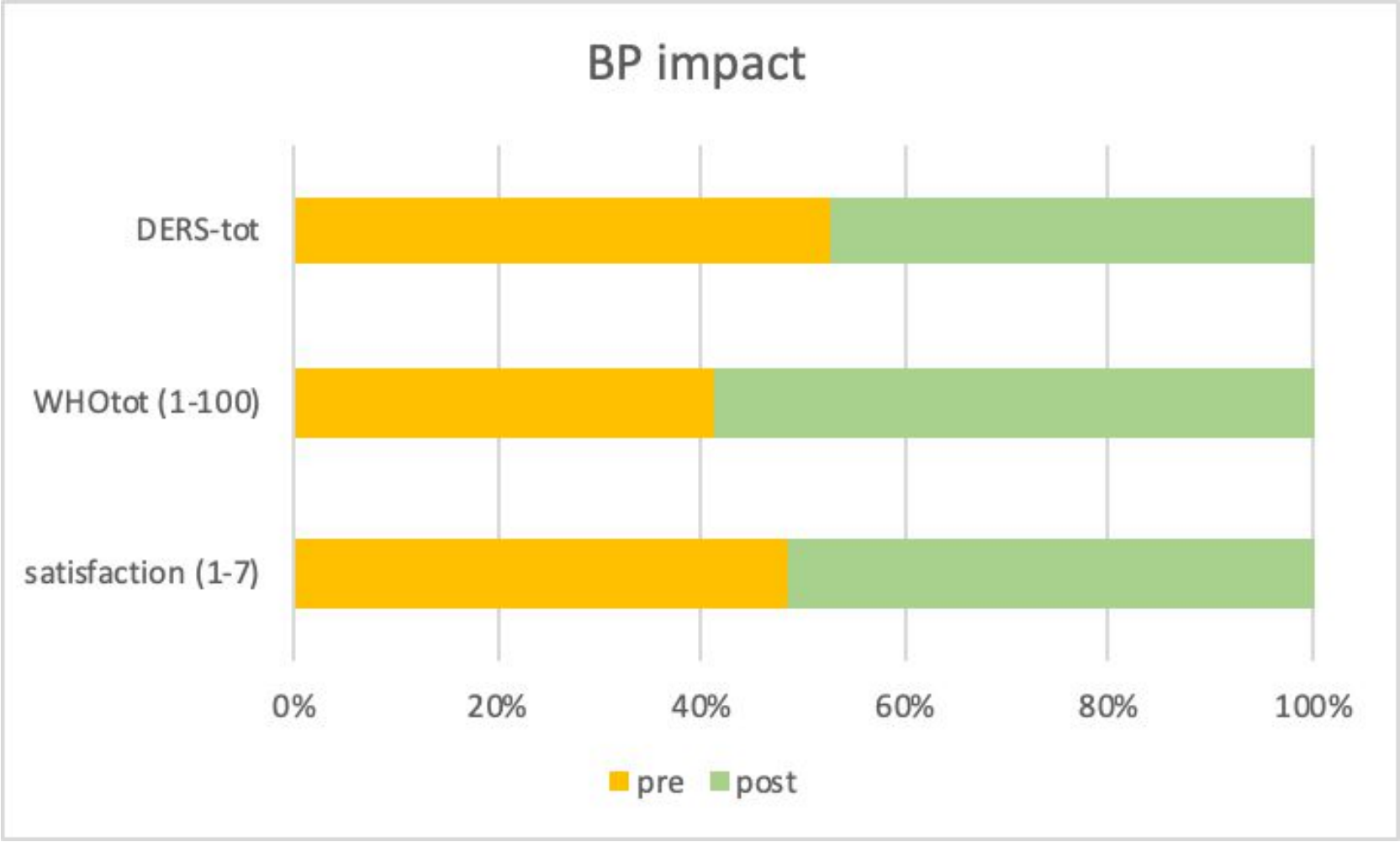
# RESULTS (V): descriptives study 2



# RESULTS (VI): study 2 pre post BP intervention

	PRE		POST			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Wilk's Lambda	P Sign.
<b>Satisfaction (1-7)</b>	6,10	1,02	6,52	0,74	7,88	0,007
Utility (1-7)	6,35	0,91	6,52	0,83		ns
Free (1-7)	3,33	1,93	3,46	1,89		ns
Dismissing (1-7)	3,63	1,93	<b>3,85</b>	1,91		ns
Entangled (1-7)	<b>3,48</b>	1,98	3,60	2,02		ns
Disorganised (1-7)	2,44	1,64	2,35	1,66		ns
<b>WHOTot (1-100)</b>	50,33	19,75	72,25	28,67	29,78	<,001
<b>Non acceptance of emotions (1-DERS, 1-5)</b>	2,02	0,87	1,79	0,80	5,14	0,028
Difficulty in distraction (2-DERS, 1-5)	2,03	0,87	2,78	0,92		ns
<b>Lack of trust in one's own emotion (3-DERS, 1-5)</b>	<b>3,00</b>	0,98	2,17	0,77	15,89	<,001
Low emotional control (4-DERS, 1-5)	2,43	0,76	1,97	0,89		ns
<b>Difficulty in emotion recognizement (5 DERS, 1-5)</b>	2,08	0,91	2,14	0,65	7,73	0,008
<b>Low self-awareness (6 DERS, 1-5)</b>	2,33	0,76	1,65	0,66	10,26	0,002
Epistemic Trust (1-7)	5,45	1,21	5,60	1,09		ns

# RESULTS (VII): study 2 BP impact pre-post



# Perceived attachment style (N=44)

		<i>RQ «POST»</i>			
		<i>Free</i>	<i>Entangled</i>	<i>Fearful/disorganized</i>	<i>Avoidant</i>
<i>RQ «PRE»</i>	<i>Free</i>	9	2	1	2
	<i>Entangled</i>	2	9	2	1
	<i>Fearful/disorganized</i>	1	4	9	0
	<i>Avoidant</i>	0	0	1	1

# DISCUSSION (I)

## Study 1:

More than one participation in BP experience seems to increase 'Satisfaction', 'Usefulness', and "sense of well-being"; moreover, people increase their emotional regulation skills in particular with respect to Emotion Acceptance, Confidence, Recognition and Awareness; finally, there is a improvement in Epistemic Trust.

## DISCUSSION (II)

Study 2:

Comparing longitudinally pre-post test experience, BP intervention seems to impact specifically on STATE VARIABLES, bringing an increase perception of well-being and better emotional regulation; in particular, it seems to increase emotion acceptance and to reduce the lack of trust in one's own emotion.

The BP experience increases the sense of satisfaction / agency, in this group that start from a quite high level of epistemic trust.

STRUCTURAL VARIABLES do not being impacted from BP, however some "reflection" / "awareness" on personal attitudes (self-attachment style description) hit about 45% of the participants that change their self-description.

# LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Small Samples size and high number of people in personal therapy, number of previous BP experiences, different intense of intervention (6 to 20 hs)...  
→ increase recruitment and sample size, looking for higher homogeneity

Self- report → add some clinician report, multiple informant tools or interviews

Longitudinal → add follow up to more then 1 week

Just Italians → wide participation, others countries (US, Slovenia, Germany, the Netherlands... who else would like to participate?)

If you are interested in joining us,  
write to:

[isbpresearchgroup@gmail.com](mailto:isbpresearchgroup@gmail.com)

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- ★ Belluno Solidarity Center (CeIS)
- ★ All the patients that participated!!



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