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Effect of 8 week meditation training on happiness

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to see the effect of mindfulness meditation on children's happiness. Twenty-eight boys in the age range 14 to 16 years served as a sample in the experiment. They were divided into 2 groups of 14 subjects each. One group was given mindfulness meditation training for 20 minutes in the morning and evening for five days a week till eight weeks. The other group served as control. Data on happiness was collected on the subjects in both the groups before and after the training by using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. The data so obtained was statistically analysed by using the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with SPSS ver 22.0. The results suggested that the meditation had a significant impact on increasing happiness.

Keywords: Meditation, happiness, analysis of covariance

Introduction

Persuasive advocacy for meditation intervention and efficacy research among children and adolescents have been made on the basis of their diverse usefulness and beneficial effects observed in adults. This panegyric argument for embedding empirical attention on meditation interventions has been corresponded with increased mass interest and assent of these practices. This article is all about the effect of meditation on happiness in 8 week time duration. Before going further, understanding of terms used in the article is required. Meditation- "it is a state of continuous dynamic consciousness without any obstruction (Adiswarananda S 2007) ^[1]" or "keeping the mind focused uninterruptedly on a subject for certain length of time (Gheranda Samhita) ^[13]". Meditation is a state of inner absorption in which the mind of the meditator flows continuously and spontaneously toward the object of meditation (Prabuddha B, 1980). The word meditation is used to describe practices that self-regulate the body and mind, thereby affecting mental events by engaging a specific attentional set (B. rael cahn & john polich, 2006). To reach the state of meditation there are some techniques but they are basically classified into two types—mindfulness and concentrative—depending on how the attentional processes are directed. Most meditative techniques lie somewhere on continuum between the poles of these two general methods (Andresen, 2000; Shapiro & Walsh, 1984; B. A. Wallace, 1999).

Happiness—According to Aristotle "Happiness is main purpose of life". He stated happiness is a goal in itself and that depends on virtue. Happiness is a positive concept that is vital and important in maintaining health (Cohen, 2002) ^[6]. According to Hills and Argyle (2001) ^[10], happiness is a multidimensional construct comprising both emotional and cognitive elements. Argyle said that happiness is a combination of existing positive feeling, non-existence of negative emotions and life satisfaction. Number of studies have shown both physical and physiological benefits of being happy. Happy people tend to cope better with threatening information (Aspinwall & Brunhart, 1996) ^[2]. Happy people tend to be more self-focused, forgiving, energetic, and creative as compared to depressed people (Myers & Diener, 1995; Myers, 1993; Veenhoven, 1988) ^[12, 11, 20]. Happy people are significantly less likely to be affected by diseases (Veenhoven 2007; Zautra 2003; Siahpush *et al.*, 2008) ^[21, 14, 17]. This study was conducted with the objective to find out whether mindfulness meditation enhances children's happiness. Meditation training had been given to the experimental group and placebo to the control group, 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes in the evening, 5 days a week and for 8 weeks in totality. Though some studies reveal that mindfulness has been associated with higher levels of life satisfaction (Brown & Ryan, 2003) ^[3], agreeableness

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(Thompson & Waltz, 2007) [19], conscientiousness (Giluk, 2009; Thompson & waltz, 2007) [19], vitality (Brown & Ryan, 2003) [3], self-esteem (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Rasmussen & Pidgeon, 2010) [3, 8], empathy (Dekeyser, Raes, Leijssen, Leysen, & Dewulf, 2008), sense of autonomy (Brown & Ryan, 2003) [3], competence (Brown & Ryan, 2003) [3], optimism (Brown & Ryan, 2003) [3], and pleasant effect (Brown & Ryan, 2003) [3] but this study is focusing on 14 to 16 age group school going adolescents.

Materials and Methods

Aim of this study was to investigate whether mindfulness meditation intervention was effective in increasing happiness in 8 weeks. A sample of 28 school boys age ranged from 14 to 16 years were randomly selected for the study from the RKVM Sharda Balgram school in Gwalior. Two groups viz. experimental and control were formed. Each group had 14 boys. Before starting the experiment, due permission was taken from the authorities to conduct the experiment. Subjects in the experimental group was given mediation training for 20 minutes in the morning as well as in the evening for 5 days in a week and at the same time control group was given a placebo without mediation training. Before starting the experiment, happiness of the subjects in experimental and control groups was tested by using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ). Twenty nine-item questionnaire was propounded by psychologists Michael Argyle and Peter Hills (2002) at Oxford University. Argyle *et al.* (2002) reported Cronbach’s alpha as 0.90 for this questionnaire. This questionnaire is assessed on 6 Likart scale. The OHQ has been criticized as a measure of happiness because it assesses a wide range of factors related to positive well-being such as self-esteem, sense of purpose, social interest and kindness, sense of humour and aesthetic appreciation (Kashdan, 2004). Questionnaire scores were used to measure the effect of meditation on happiness.

Table 2: ANCOVA table for the data of happiness in both groups of treatment

Source	Sum of squares	DF	Mean square	F	(p-value) sig.
Pre-happiness	1.023	1	1.023	14.307	.001
Groups	2.946	1	2.946	41.204	.000
Error	1.787	25	.071		
Corrected total	5.998	27			

The F – value(41.204) for group is significant at 5% level. Thus, we may conclude that the effect of meditation training

Administration of Questionnaire and collection of data

All the essential information regarding the questionnaire was given to the participants and doubts were also cleared before administration of questionnaire by the research scholar. The Questionnaire was administered to the subjects of both the groups. The questionnaires were collected after being filled up by the participants.

Statistical procedure

Data collected in the study was analysed by using the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) by using the SPSS ver 22.0 to investigate whether there is any significant difference between the groups. The ANCOVA technique was applied due to increase precision in comparing both the groups by controlling the covariate. In this study pre-experiments scores on happiness in the both the groups served as a covariate.

Result

To address the research question null hypothesis that the “happiness is same in the experimental and control groups” was tested against the research hypothesis that the “happiness in the experimental group was higher than that of the control group”. The results so obtained are shown in Table 1, Table2, Table 3 and Figure 1. Table 1 shows that the mean scores of meditative and control groups on happiness after the treatment was 4.2463 and 3.57 respectively. The mean scores of happiness is higher in meditative group in comparison to that of control group after the treatment. Thus, it seems that the level of happiness had increased due to meditation. By using the results, we will investigate whether this increase could be considered as significant.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of happiness score after the treatment

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Meditation	4.2463	.31715	14
Control	3.5714	.33994	14
Total	3.9089	.47133	28

was significantly responsible for enhancing level of happiness

Table 3: Adjusted mean and standard error of happiness score in both the groups

Group	Adjusted Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Meditation	4.234	.072	4.087	4.381
Control	3.584	.072	3.437	3.731

The adjusted mean and standard error of the criterion variable in both groups have been shown in table. The mean scores on happiness was obtained in both the treatment groups after adjusting for the covariate. In ANCOVA differences in the

post-testing means are compensated for the initial differences in the scores. By eliminating covariate (pre scores on happiness) effect we got the true effectiveness of meditation on happiness.

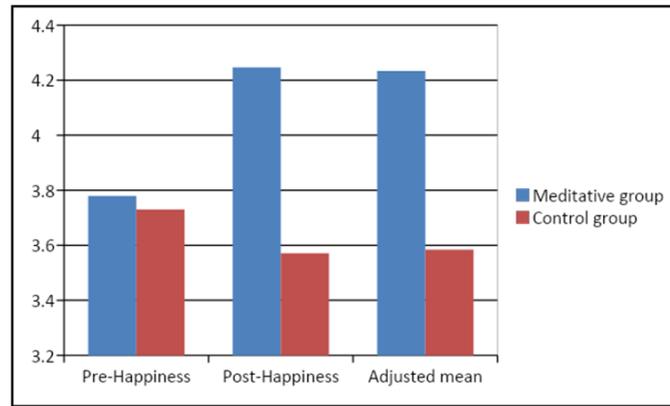


Fig 1: The above diagram shows the changes in mean values of happiness before and after the treatment in both meditation and control group

Discussion and Findings

Happiness denotes a state of mind associated with the success or satisfaction of desires or needs. Some predictor of happiness suggests having a brighter look and being content with what one has are related to happiness and it is a life force. As per the Hindu scriptures' meditation is a state of mind where one attains the true happiness. Result of the study showed that significant difference exists between experimental and control group on happiness. Hence meditation is helpful in enhancing level of happiness. Meditation exerts significant effect on enhancing happiness Daniel Campos *et al.* (2015). According to Bhikkhu (2010) mindfulness is a concept stemming from Buddhist philosophy which is practiced to achieve enduring happiness. Paul Ekman *et al.* (2005) in their article named "Buddhist and Psychological Perspectives on emotion and well-being" explained that in Buddhism, a clear distinction is made between affective state that are directly aroused by the experience of pleasurable stimuli (sensory, as well as aesthetic and intellectual) and Sukha, which arises from the attentional, emotional, and cognitive balance of the mind and almost similar distinction is made by Sheldon *et al.* (2004)^[16] and Holly *et al.* (2008) in their articles found a strong negative correlation between stress and happiness which means by reducing stress happiness can be increased and meditation reduces stress. Happiness of children is well suited to research because they can identify and use emotions in complex social environments.

Conclusion

Effect of 8-week meditation training significantly increases the level of happiness in comparison to that of control group. By meditation one can enhance their level of happiness.

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