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The Impact of Transcendental Meditation on Happiness and Self-Efficacy among University Students

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Abstract

Background: The transition from high school to university signifies a critical juncture in a young individual's life, characterized by a myriad of academic, social, and personal challenges. With the intensifying demands of higher education, the preservation of mental and emotional well-being emerges as a paramount concern.

Objectives: This study aimed to investigate the impact of Transcendental Meditation (TM) on the happiness and self-efficacy levels of university students. The research sought to analyse the transformative potential of TM in enhancing the psychological well-being and holistic growth of students as a complementary approach to traditional educational practices. Materials and Methods: The study enrolled 200 students aged 18 to 23 years who were not engaged in any form of meditation practice. Employing purposive sampling, participants were offered the opportunity to partake in the Transcendental Meditation (TM) training program provided by Maharishi University in Lucknow. These participants underwent a three-day initiation process for the TM training program, where personalized mantras were imparted, and they engaged in 20-minute meditation sessions twice daily. Data collection involved the utilization of Self-Efficacy scales developed by Mathur and Bhatnagar (2012), and Happiness scales devised by Rastogi and Moorjani (2016), as well as semi-structured interviews. Statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics, T-tests, and the Pearson Correlation Coefficient, were employed to evaluate the pre and post-data of happiness and self-efficacy. Results: The findings revealed a statistically significant difference between pre and post-data of happiness and self-efficacy among university students practising Transcendental Meditation (statistically significant at the 0.01 level). Additionally, a positive weak correlation was observed between Happiness and Self-Efficacy, highlighting the potential interconnectedness of these aspects. Conclusions: The findings contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the benefits of meditation in educational settings and highlight the potential value of integrating such practices into university programs.

Keywords: *Transcendental Meditation, Self-Efficacy, Happiness, Well-Being, Holistic growth.*

1. Introduction:

1.1. Background:

Meditation is a mental training that involves focusing one's attention on a particular object, thought, or activity to achieve a state of calmness and relaxation. It aims to create a connection between the body, mind, and spirit, and it has been practised for thousands of years in various cultures and religions[1]. The origins of meditation techniques can be traced back to some religious and spiritual practices, but now they are also used in clinical and educational settings without these components. Meditation is included among alternative and complementary interventions for health, and it is based on the awareness of present mental state processes and control of attention. It involves training the mind to focus on the present moment, without judgment or distraction, and to observe one's thoughts and emotions without getting caught up in them[2] .

Research has shown that regular meditation practice can have numerous benefits for both physical and mental health. It has been found to reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress, as well as improve sleep quality, cognitive function, and overall well-being. Meditation can also help individuals develop greater self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy towards others[1]. Meditation is a powerful tool that can help individuals achieve a state of calmness and relaxation, improve their mental and physical health, and develop greater self-awareness and empathy. It is a simple yet effective practice that can be incorporated into daily life and has the potential to transform one's overall well-being.

In many countries, the idea of introducing meditation in schools has emerged due to the significant stress experienced by children, such as performance pressure, competition, and problems in peer relationships[3]. These stressors have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and are risk factors for the early onset of mental health problems like anxiety or depression in children. Previous pilot investigations have shown that meditation techniques are feasible and acceptable for children and adolescents, and have good effects on anxiety, depression, behavioural symptoms, and somatic functioning in elementary school children[4]. Research has also shown that meditation can improve the emotional, social, and cognitive abilities of children[5]. Although further studies are required to confirm these results, they indicate that it is important to introduce meditation practices in educational settings due to their potential effects on the academic development of children[4,5,2].

University life can be both an exhilarating and challenging period for young adults. It's a time of intellectual growth, self-discovery, and often, heightened stress and anxiety. In the quest for personal and academic success, students face a multitude of pressures. Transcendental Meditation (TM), a specific form of mantra meditation, has been gaining recognition for its potential to positively influence the mental and emotional well-being of university students. In this article, the impact of TM on the happiness and self-efficacy of university students will be delve.

If people can learn to remain in the present moment and let go of unnecessary worries about the past or the future, they can find contentment and tranquillity even in challenging situations. The impact of Transcendental Meditation (TM) on brain activity using EEG was examined and it was found that TM practice improved a person's ability to handle difficult circumstances and decreased the effects of prior stressful occurrences[6]. Additionally, it was demonstrated that higher Brain Integration Scale scores—which are similarly adversely correlated with anxiety—were negatively correlated with both less fatigue and quicker habituation rates.

With their focus on cultivating a detached observation and awareness of consciousness contents, meditation techniques may be a powerful cognitive behavioural coping method for altering our reactions to negative life

circumstances without producing extreme stress[7]. Programmes for meditation have been shown in several trials to improve overall functioning and lessen anxiety[8] and depression in a range of patient demographics.

Research has demonstrated that mantra therapy is useful in controlling sleep issues and reducing the severity of symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder[9]. Positive results have come from studies on the effect of mantra chanting on psychological pain. Mantra chanting is one type of meditation that has been related to reduced stress, improved emotional regulation, and increased self-awareness[10]. Chanting mantras triggers the parasympathetic nervous system, which balances the fight-or-flight response brought on by stress and encourages a relaxation response. Chanting mantras has also been demonstrated to affect brain wave activity, leading to an increase in theta and alpha wave patterns.

These brainwave states are linked to states of deep relaxation, creativity, and meditation, all of which help people feel less anxious and think more clearly. Chanting mantras also has a strong impact on the psychosomatic link, which modifies the body-mind relationship. Mantra chanting also has a major effect on the psychosomatic link, which impacts the body-mind relationship. An increasing amount of evidence indicates that meditation practised widely has beneficial psychological and physical impacts[11]. In contrast, mantra meditation usually involves repeating (either silently or aloud) a pre-chosen word, phrase, or group of sounds for a set period every day in a quiet location.

The practitioner is instructed to gently and consistently focus on the chant, disengaging from all external and internal distractions. Mantra meditation has been used for many years by both religious and nonreligious traditions as a straightforward yet effective way to improve mental clarity and relaxation. Although Transcendental Meditation (TM) is the most well-known type of mantra meditation practice, many other traditions have also used it[9]. Frequent practice has been linked to improved well-being, the ability to overcome setbacks in life, and a deeper feeling of spiritual meaning and purpose. Chanting mantras offers therapeutic benefits that go beyond spiritual or religious contexts. It has been demonstrated to be beneficial in controlling hypertension and lowering stress and anxiety[12].

Transcendental Meditation (TM) is a type of meditation in which practitioners silently and mindlessly repeat a single mantra (a meaningless sound) [13]. Research on transpersonal meditation practitioners has shown patterns of elevated parasympathetic response that attenuate the stress response[14,15]. Enhanced alpha coherence on electroencephalography[15] and improved blood flow to the prefrontal cortex on functional magnetic resonance imaging are two suggested explanations for the relaxed alertness attained with TM[16].

Figure 1. Applications of Transcendental Meditation (TM)

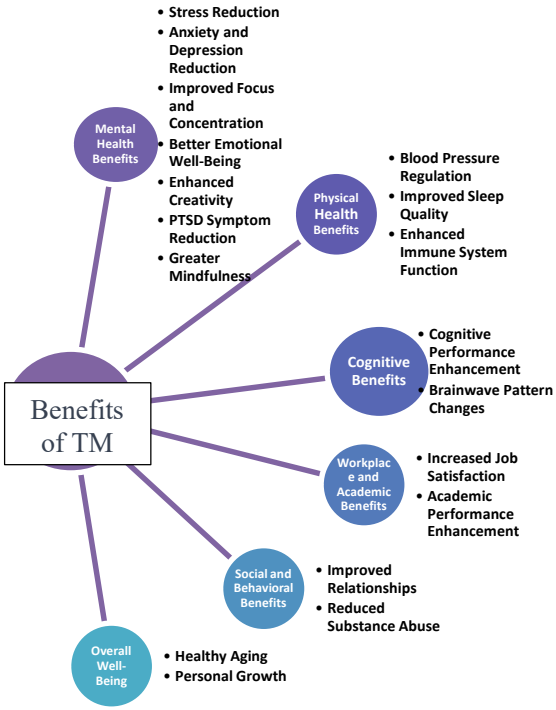


Figure 2. Benefits of Transcendental Meditation (TM)

Criticisms and controversies surrounding transcendental meditation:

Transcendental Meditation (TM) has been the subject of much scrutiny and debate since its introduction to the Western world by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the 1950s. Critics have raised a host of concerns about the practice, including accusations of cult-like behaviour, claims of false advertising and deceptive marketing practices, and concerns about the high cost of TM courses.

One of the most contentious issues surrounding TM is the lack of scientific evidence supporting the claimed benefits of the practice. While some studies have suggested that TM may have a positive impact on stress, anxiety, and cognitive function, others have been inconclusive or have found no significant effects. This has led some critics to question the scientific validity of the practice and to raise concerns about the potential risks of practising TM without adequate research.

Another area of controversy surrounding TM is the potential negative effects of the practice. Some former practitioners have reported experiencing psychological distress and even psychosis as a result of practising TM. While these reports are relatively rare, they have raised concerns about the safety of the practice, particularly for individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions.

Despite these criticisms, TM has also gained a significant following and has been embraced by many celebrities and public figures. Proponents of TM argue that the practice has numerous benefits, including stress reduction, increased creativity, and improved overall well-being. Overall, the controversy surrounding TM highlights the need for careful consideration and research before engaging in the practice. Individuals considering TM should be aware of both the potential benefits and the criticisms and controversies surrounding the practice before making a decision to engage in it.

Operational Definition:

Happiness and self-efficacy are complex constructs that can be operationally defined in various ways. In this study, happiness was defined in terms of career, subjective, social, spiritual, and emotional well-being.

Similarly, self-efficacy was defined in terms of self-regulatory skills, self-influence, self-confidence, social achievement, self-evaluation, self-esteem, and self-cognition. These operational definitions were used to explore the potential impact of Transcendental Meditation (TM) on happiness and self-efficacy among university students.

1.2. Rationale:

The rationale of the study is grounded in the recognition of the critical transition period experienced by university students. This transition is marked by multifaceted challenges, including academic, social, and personal pressures. With the growing demands of higher education, sustaining mental and emotional well-being becomes increasingly crucial.

The study aims to address this concern by investigating the effects of Transcendental Meditation (TM) on the happiness and self-efficacy levels of university students. Given the potential benefits of meditation on mental health, the study seeks to explore the transformative potential of TM as a complementary approach to traditional educational practices.

Moreover, the study aligns with the global interest in incorporating mindfulness practices, such as meditation, into educational settings to mitigate the stress and pressures experienced by students. The potential implications of this study extend to promoting holistic well-being and psychological growth among university students, which could have lasting positive effects on their academic performance, personal development, and overall quality of life.

The rationale of the study is substantiated by the need to address the mental and emotional well-being of university students, explore the potential of TM as an intervention, and contribute to the growing body of knowledge on mindfulness practices in educational contexts.

1.3. Objectives of the study:

- To study whether there is any positive impact of TM on Self-Efficacy
- To study whether there is any positive impact of TM on Happiness
- Can Transcendental Meditation be used as a tool to improve academic performance among university students?
- Can Transcendental Meditation be used to improve overall mental health and well-being?

1.4. Hypotheses:

- There will be a positive impact of Transcendental Meditation on the development of happiness of the students.
- There will be a positive impact of Transcendental Meditation on the development of self-efficacy of the students.
- There will be a positive relationship between Happiness and Self-Efficacy.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design:

Explanatory research design was used to meet the objective of the study.

2.2. Setting:

The study was conducted in Lucknow, India, and the setting primarily encompassed the campus of Maharishi University where the Transcendental Meditation (TM) training program was administered to the participants. The relevant dates for the study spanned over a period of approximately one year, including distinct phases:

Recruitment Period:

The recruitment of participants took place over the course of one month, starting from 1st February 2023 to 31st October 2023. During this time, 200 university students aged between 18 to 23 years were purposively sampled to participate in the TM training program.

Exposure:

Following the recruitment phase, the participants underwent a 3-day initiation process for the TM training program. This exposure period for the participants occurred from 1st February to 1st March 2023, during which they were provided with personalized mantras and instructed on the TM practice by the instructors at Maharishi University.

Follow-up and Data Collection:

After the exposure phase, the selected students engaged in the TM practice for a period of 6 months, constituting the follow-up period. Data collection for the study, involving the assessment of participants' happiness and self-efficacy levels, was conducted during this follow-up phase. The data collection phase spanned from 1st February 2023 to 31st October 2023, marking the conclusion of the study's observational period.

The study's setting was situated in Lucknow, India, with Maharishi University serving as the primary location for the TM training program. The recruitment, exposure, follow-up, and data collection periods occurred over the course of approximately one year, involving specific timelines for each phase of the study.

2.3. Participants

Eligibility Criteria:

1. University students aged between 18 to 23 years
2. Not engaged in any form of meditation practice

Sources and Methods of Participant Selection:

1. The study employed purposive sampling to select participants.
2. The selected students were offered the opportunity to partake in the Transcendental Meditation (TM) training program provided by Maharishi University in Lucknow.
3. The TM instructors facilitated a 3-day initiation process, imparting a personalized mantra to each student within small groups comprising 6-8 individuals.

Two hundred undergraduate students age group 18-23 years were chosen from the university Maharishi University to participate in a Transcendental Meditation training program. The selection process ensured that the participants were representative of the student population in terms of age, gender, and academic standing. After the introduction of Transcendental Meditation, the selected students were closely observed for six months to assess their progress and the effect of Transcendental Meditation on the development of their self-efficacy. The observation was conducted by trained Transcendental Meditation teachers who monitored the students' daily practice and progress. The teachers also provided support and guidance to the students throughout the program.

a. Variables

The study includes the following variables:

1. Independent variable: Participation in the Transcendental Meditation (TM) training program.

2. Dependent variables:

a. Happiness: Measured using the Happiness scales developed by Rastogi and Moorjani.

b. Self-efficacy: Measured using the Self-Efficacy scales developed by Mathur and Bhatnagar.

3. Control variables: Potential control variables could include demographics (age, gender), academic year, previous meditation experience, overall mental health, and life stressors.

Outcomes: The primary outcomes of the study are happiness and self-efficacy among university students practising Transcendental Meditation. These are measured using scales developed by Rastogi and Moorjani for happiness and Mathur and Bhatnagar for self-efficacy.

Exposures: The exposure in this study is the participation in the Transcendental Meditation (TM) training program provided by Maharishi University in Lucknow.

Predictors: The predictors in this study could include demographics of the participants such as age, gender, and academic year, as well as the frequency and duration of meditation practice.

Potential confounders: Potential confounder in this study might include the participants' any ongoing life stressors.

Diagnostic criteria: The diagnostic criteria for the outcomes of happiness and self-efficacy could involve standardized scales and questionnaires, such as the scales developed by Rastogi and Moorjani for happiness and Mathur and Bhatnagar for self-efficacy. These scales would be administered before and after the TM intervention.

b. Data sources/ measurement

Variable 1: Participation in the Transcendental Meditation (TM) training program.

Source of data: The source of data for this variable is the Maharishi University in Lucknow, which provided the TM training program to the participants.

Method of assessment: The method of assessment involves enrolment in the TM training program, which includes a 3-day initiation process facilitated by TM instructors, where participants are given a personalized mantra and instructed on the practice of TM.

Variable 2a: Happiness

Source of data: The source of data for the measurement of happiness is the scales developed by Rastogi and Moorjani.

Method of assessment: The assessment of happiness is conducted using the standardized Happiness scales developed by Rastogi and Moorjani, which may involve self-reported questionnaire responses before and after the TM intervention.

Variable 2b: Self-efficacy

Source of data: The source of data for the measurement of self-efficacy is the Self-Efficacy scales developed by Mathur and Bhatnagar.

Method of assessment: The assessment of self-efficacy is carried out using the standardized Self-Efficacy scales developed by Mathur and Bhatnagar, which may involve self-reported questionnaire responses before and after

the TM intervention.

Comparability of assessment methods: The assessment methods for happiness and self-efficacy are standardized through the use of scales developed by Rastogi and Moorjani and Mathur and Bhatnagar, respectively. If there are multiple groups, the assessment methods would be comparable across the groups, ensuring uniformity in the measurement of the variables of interest.

c. Measures

The Happiness scale (HS-RHM) developed by Rastogi and Moorjani was used in the current study (17) . The 62 valid items on this scale are distributed over the following five dimensions: Subjective well-being, Social well-being, Emotional well-being, Career well-being and Spiritual well-being. There are 62 items on this scale. Zero was the lowest possible score and 350 was the greatest. A higher score represented a better level of well-being and happiness.

The Self-Efficacy Scale (SES) developed and standardized by Mathur and Bhatnagar (18) was used in this study. This test consists of 22 items based on eight dimensions i.e. Self-Regulatory Skills, Self-Influence, Self-Confidence, Social-Achievement, Self, Self-Evaluation, Self-Esteem, and Self-Cognition with 15 positive Items (4,5,6,7,9,10,11,14,16,17,18,19,21,22) and 07 negative items (2, 3, 8, 12, 13, 15, 20). This is a Likert scale test. Positive items are scored for 5,4,3,2,1 and negative items are scored for 1,2,3,4,5. The range of minimum and maximum scores is 22-110. The total score obtained by a student is the measure of the self-efficacy of the student.

d. Intervention

To assess the impact of Transcendental Meditation on the student's holistic development and self-efficacy, the selected participants were closely observed for six months. During this time, the student's daily practice and progress were monitored by trained Transcendental Meditation teachers who provided them with continuous support and guidance throughout the program. Throughout five sessions (days), participants were taught the fundamental Transcendental Meditation method by a qualified, trained teacher. These sessions included one-hour introductory and preparation lectures, which were followed by one-on-one teaching and a one-on-one interview with the teacher. The final three sessions were group meetings for question-and-answer sessions and practice accuracy checks. Participants then attended twice-monthly group follow-up meetings for the remainder of the six-month lasting around an hour each time.

e. Bias

The study made efforts to address potential sources of bias through several measures:

i. ***Randomization:*** The study employed purposive sampling to enroll a sample of 200 students who were not engaged in any form of meditation practice. This process aimed to reduce selection bias and ensure the representation of a diverse group of university students.

ii. ***Standardized training program:*** The Transcendental Meditation (TM) training program provided by Maharishi University in Lucknow followed a standardized 3-day initiation process facilitated by TM instructors, ensuring consistency in the delivery of the intervention to all participants.

iii. ***Using S*tandardized tests:** Standardised tests were used for data collection to reduce selection bias.

iv. ***Control for confounders:*** The study included the consideration of potential confounders such as demographics, previous meditation experience, mental health, and life stressors. By controlling for these factors, the study aimed to minimize the impact of confounding variables on the outcomes of interest.

These efforts were implemented to strengthen the internal validity of the study and address potential sources of bias, thereby enhancing the reliability and rigor of the research findings.

2.9. Study Size

The study arrived at the sample size of 200 university students through purposive sampling.

2.10. Quantitative Variables: Data were collected in the numeric form. Outliers were excluded manually and with the help of SPSS V.26.

2.11. Statistical Method:

The statistical methods used in the study included descriptive statistics to summarize quantitative variables, such as means and standard deviations. Inferential statistical analyses, such as the T-test, were conducted to compare pre- and post-data on happiness and self-efficacy. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient has been used to explore relationships among variables.

3. Results:

3.1. Descriptive Data

Table No. 1: Demographical Information of the Participants (N=200)

Variables	Total (%)
Gender	
Male	55
Female	45
Age	
18-22	100
Religion	
Hindu	99.8
Other	0.2
Family Type	
Joint Family*	58.9
Nuclear Family**	41.2
Marital Status	
Unmarried	100
Married	0
Domicile	
Rural	61.8
Urban	38.2

Note 1 *Joint Family comprises members of three or more generations.
Note 2 **Nuclear Family comprises only parents and their children.

The data presented in Table No. 1 represents the demographic information of 200 participants who took part in the study. The participants were selected from the first year of undergraduate programs, except those who had not taken Mantra in their first year and are now in 2nd year were also selected. The majority of the participants were Hindu, with only 0.2% identifying as Other. Gender distribution was fairly balanced, with 55% male and 45% female participants. About 76.1% of the participants fall under the age group of 18-20, indicating a large number of teenagers and individuals in their early 20's. Additionally, 24.9% of the population falls under the

age group of 21-22, which suggests that there are still a significant number of young adults in their early twenties. The majority of participants belonged to joint families, which constituted 58.9% of the total. Nuclear families, which included only parents and their children, made up the remaining 41.2%. All participants were unmarried, and none were married. Finally, the study found that the majority of the participants hailed from rural areas, with 61.8% of the total. The remaining 38.2% were from urban areas.

Main Results

Paired t-test results

Descriptive Scores:

Table No. 2: Descriptive Scores for Self-Efficacy:

Score	*Pre Score (Before Intervention)*	*Post Score (After Intervention)*
Mean	70.65	78.83
SD	5.79	6.02
SEM	0.62	0.65
N	200	200

Paired t-test result of pre and post-data of Self Efficacy

- P value and statistical significance:
- The two-tailed P value is less than 0.0001

By conventional criteria, this difference is considered to be extremely statistically significant.

- Confidence interval:
- The mean of Group One minus Group Two equals -8.17

95% confidence interval of this difference: From -8.96 to -7.39

- Intermediate values used in calculations:
- t = 20.6240

df = 199

standard error of difference = 0.396

Table No. 3: Descriptive Scores for Happiness:

Score	*Pre-Score (Before Intervention)*	*Post Score (After Intervention)*
Mean	244.66	275.64
SD	22.13	17.89
SEM	1.56	1.26
N	200	200

Paired sample t-test result of pre and post-data of Happiness:

- P value and statistical significance:
- The two-tailed P value is less than 0.0001

By conventional criteria, this difference is considered to be extremely statistically significant.

- Confidence interval:
- The mean of Group One minus Group Two equals -30.99

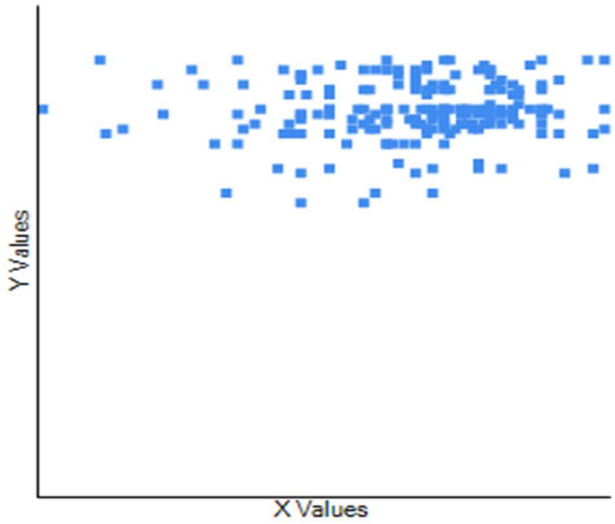
95% confidence interval of this difference: From -33.21 to -28.76

- Intermediate values used in calculations:

- t = 27.4831

df = 199
standard error of difference = 1.127

Graph No. 1: Correlation between Happiness and Self-Efficacy



- The value of R is 0.0555.
- It shows a positive correlation however the relationship between Happiness and Self-Efficacy was found to be weak.

Table no.2 presents the descriptive scores for self-efficacy before and after the intervention. Self-efficacy is a psychological construct that refers to an individual's belief in their ability to achieve a specific goal or task. It is commonly assessed in various fields, including education, health, and psychology.

The table shows that the mean self-efficacy score increased from 70.65 before the intervention to 78.83 after the intervention. The standard deviation of the pre-test scores was found to be 5.79, while the standard deviation of the post-test scores was 6.02. The standard error of the mean (SEM) for the pre-test scores was 0.62, while the SEM for the post-test scores was 0.65. The total number of participants was 200. A paired t-test was conducted to evaluate the pre and post-data of self-efficacy. The two-tailed P value was found to be less than 0.0001, indicating that the difference between the pre and post-test scores was statistically significant. This suggests that the intervention had a positive effect on the participants' self-efficacy beliefs. The mean difference between Group One and Group Two was found to be -8.17, with a 95% confidence interval from -8.96 to -7.39. The intermediate values used in calculations included t = 20.6240, df = 199, and standard error of difference = 0.396. These results suggest that the intervention had a significant impact on the participants' self-efficacy scores.

Table 3 provides the descriptive scores for happiness, specifically the pre and post-scores of Happiness. The mean pre-score is 244.66 and the post-score is 275.64, while the standard deviation for the pre-score is 22.13 and for the post-score, it is 17.89. The standard error of the mean (SEM) for the pre-score is 1.56 and for the post-score, it is 1.26. The total number of participants in the study is 200.

Furthermore, the paired sample t-test was conducted to analyze the pre and post-data of Happiness. The two-tailed P value is less than 0.0001, indicating that the difference between the pre and post-scores of Happiness is

statistically significant. By conventional criteria, this difference is considered to be extremely statistically significant. The mean of Group One minus Group Two equals -30.99, and the 95% confidence interval of this difference ranges from -33.21 to -28.76. The intermediate values used in calculations are t = 27.4831 and df = 199, while the standard error of the difference is 1.127.

Graph 1 shows the correlation between Happiness and Self-Efficacy was analyzed and the statistical value of R was found to be 0.0555. Although this value shows a positive correlation between the two factors, it indicates a weak relationship between them. This low P value confirms that the correlation between Happiness and Self-Efficacy is statistically significant.

DISCUSSION:

The value of R is 0.0555, indicating a positive correlation between Happiness and Self-Efficacy. However, this correlation is weak, which means that the relationship between the two variables is not strong. The two-tailed P value of Happiness is less than 0.0001, which implies that the probability of observing such a difference between Happiness and Self-Efficacy by chance alone is extremely low. This difference is considered to be statistically significant by conventional criteria. Thus, we can conclude that there is a significant difference between the levels of Happiness and Self-Efficacy (H1 Accepted). Similarly, the two-tailed P value of Self-Efficacy is also less than 0.0001, which means that the difference between Self-Efficacy and Happiness is also statistically significant (H2 Accepted).

Finally, the correlation coefficient shows a positive weak correlation between Happiness and Self-Efficacy. This implies that the level of Self-Efficacy has a positive impact on Happiness, but this impact is not very strong or significant. Thus, we can say that H3 is accepted, indicating a weak positive correlation between the two variables.

The present study's findings corroborate an earlier exploratory investigation suggesting that TM fosters the development of self-efficacy. Many other studies on TM have demonstrated improvements in the attributes linked to self-efficacy, such as "perseverance"[19], "optimism"[19], "problem-solving" and "resourcefulness"[20], "resilience"[21,20], and "self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-respect. Variations in these attributes indicate a person's inner growth and positively impact their perceived capacity to effect change in day-to-day living.

Positive Correlation Between Happiness and Self-Efficacy

In studies conducted in various countries, it has been observed that self-efficacy plays a significant role in determining happiness. For instance, research on employees in China revealed that self-efficacy has a positive impact on happiness, indicating that enhancing self-efficacy can contribute to improved employee well-being[22]. Similarly, a study on adults in the United States found a positive correlation between self-efficacy and happiness, with self-efficacy accounting for a substantial portion of the variance in happiness[23]. In India, a study on college students showed a positive association between academic self-efficacy and happiness, emphasizing the specific relevance of self-efficacy within academic contexts[24] Finally, research on high school students in Spain demonstrated that general self-efficacy was a significant predictor of subjective happiness, even after adjusting for factors such as self-esteem[25].

TM: Happiness and Self-Efficacy

The efficacy of Transcendental Meditation (TM) for stress reduction and mental health was explored in a study that found significant reductions in stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms among university students practising TM. TM was particularly effective in promoting well-being and enhancing self-efficacy. This suggests that integrating TM into mental health programs for students could improve overall happiness and academic performance[21]. Another study compared the effects of TM with other meditation techniques such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). Both approaches showed positive outcomes for mental health,

but TM was noted for its simplicity and accessibility, making it a favourable option for students. TM was also linked to sustained anxiety reduction and improved self-efficacy over time[26]. A pilot study investigated the effects of TM on university students experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety. The results showed that TM not only reduced stress and anxiety levels but also improved the participants' perception of their own capabilities, thereby boosting their self-efficacy. The structured and consistent practice of TM was highlighted as a key factor in these improvements[27] .

Furthermore, a meta-analysis found that students who regularly practised TM reported better mental health outcomes, including increased happiness and self-efficacy, even years after beginning the practice. These findings suggest that TM can have long-lasting benefits for students' mental health and overall life satisfaction[28,26].

A study focusing on high school students found that practising Transcendental Meditation (TM) significantly improved well-being and academic achievement. The researchers highlighted that regular TM practice led to increased happiness and reduced psychological distress, supporting cognitive functions and coping mechanisms[21]. Another study examined the effects of TM on mental health among university students, showing significant improvements in emotional and psychological well-being. The study used various scales, such as the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21) and the Positive Mental Health Scale (PMH), to measure outcomes. Results indicated that TM practice led to reduced depression, anxiety, and stress while enhancing overall positive mental health and happiness[29]. Statistically significant improvements were observed in emotional exhaustion, depression, anxiety, and mental well-being in a study[30]. Students enrolled in the meditation course reported higher levels of subjective happiness and mindfulness awareness[31].

In a separate long-term study on young women living in the slums of Kampala, Uganda, the effects of the TM technique were investigated. The study revealed significant positive changes in self-esteem, self-efficacy, gratitude, and reduction in tiredness. Additionally, the participants experienced physical health improvements, reduced stress and anxiety, and better family and community relationships[32].

In studies of adolescents and young adults, Transcendental Meditation (TM) has been found to have several positive effects. These include improved social-emotional learning and reduced psychological distress in African American students at a high-risk high school[33]; improved health-related quality of life in students at three regional universities in Cambodia[34]; reduced psychological distress and increased coping in college students[35]; decreased cortisol stress hormone levels in a preliminary study with college students[36]; increased self-esteem while reducing perceived stress, anxiety, anger, depression, and fatigue in high school students[37]; and results in improved general health and well-being[34].

Travis suggests that a change in perception is directly linked to the way the brain functions [38]. A person's cortical and cognitive development are interdependent. Studies have shown that Transcendental Meditation (TM), a consciousness-based approach, has a positive impact on brain coherence and integration. This enhanced brain integration, in turn, leads to a more expansive sense of self [39]. Practising TM regularly increases alpha1 EEG coherence both during the meditation and longitudinally outside of meditation[40,6]. This increase in EEG coherence is significant as it improves the coordination of different brain systems for cognitive processes and fine motor activity[41,42].

Research has shown that EEG alpha coherence during TM is correlated with several positive outcomes. These outcomes include increased creativity and pure consciousness[43], concept learning and neurophysiological efficiency[44], moral reasoning[35,40], emotional stability, and decreased anxiety[40]. Studies have also found that practising TM increases creativity, practical intelligence, field independence, decision time, and fluid intelligence over periods of six months to one year, and reduces mind wandering[45]. Furthermore, a randomized

controlled study reported that TM increases brain integration in just ten weeks[6]. This measure is the neurophysiological basis for the success of managers[46], athletes[47], musicians, creative people[48], and resilient police[49].

The findings indicate that a change in self-efficacy using the TM technique, and systematically accessing pure consciousness, can potentially result in a change in participants' perception of themselves. This shift in perception can lead to changes in their thinking and behaviour. However, further research is necessary to understand the mechanisms involved in TM, brain integration, and changes in perception.

Self-efficacy, or an individual's belief in their ability to achieve goals and succeed in different areas of life, plays a crucial role in achieving happiness, according to research studies[50]. When a person trusts in their abilities and has a realistic understanding of their relationship with the environment, it creates a condition for personal growth and happiness. However, this growth is not possible without moral and intellectual development. Studies have shown that self-efficacy beliefs can have a positive impact on emotional and interpersonal aspects of life, as well as social relationships, both in the present moment and over time[51]. This positive impact can lead to more positive thoughts and an overall increase in happiness.

Furthermore, physiological changes within the body may underlie the improvements observed in mental health factors. In other words, when a person has a higher level of self-efficacy, they may experience changes in their body that can contribute to improved mental health. These studies, part of a body of research on Transcendental Meditation, highlight the positive effects of TM on the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of young people.

Limitations of the Study:

1. Potential Bias:

99.8% of participants were Hindu, with a very small percentage i.e. 0.2% identifying as a religion other than Hindu. This could introduce bias in the study outcomes, as the cultural and religious background of participants may influence their perception and experience of Transcendental Meditation. This bias could affect the generalizability of the findings to a more diverse population.

2. Sample Size and Generalizability:

The study enrolled a sample of 200 students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. A larger and more diverse sample may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of Transcendental Meditation on university students' happiness and self-efficacy.

3. Self-Reporting and Social Desirability Bias:

The reliance on self-reported measures for happiness and self-efficacy may be susceptible to social desirability bias. Participants may have provided responses that they perceived as socially acceptable, leading to potential imprecision in the data related to their self-efficacy and happiness levels.

4. Lack of Control Group:

The study did not include a control group of students who did not undergo Transcendental Meditation. This limits the ability to make direct comparisons and draw definitive conclusions about the unique impact of Transcendental Meditation on happiness and self-efficacy among university students.

5. Short Observation Period:

The 6-month observation period may not capture the long-term effects of Transcendental Meditation on happiness and self-efficacy. Longitudinal studies with extended follow-up periods could provide a more nuanced understanding of the sustained impact of meditation practices on psychological well-being.

6. Potential Confounding Variables:

The study did not account for potential confounding variables, such as participants' lifestyle changes, academic workload, or external sources of stress, which could influence their reported levels of happiness and self-efficacy.

Addressing these limitations in future research may enhance the reliability and robustness of findings related to the impact of Transcendental Meditation on university students' psychological well-being.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The implications of the research on Transcendental Meditation (TM) are significant, as they suggest that this practice may have a range of potential benefits for individuals who practice it. However, it is important to note that research on TM is still ongoing, and many questions remain unanswered.

Based on the results of the analysis, it is recommended to focus on increasing the level of self-efficacy among individuals to improve their happiness levels as it is important. This can be done by providing opportunities for skill-building and training programs that help individuals develop confidence in their abilities. Since the correlation between happiness and self-efficacy is weak, it is also important to explore other factors that may contribute to happiness, such as social support, physical health, and positive emotions.

Further research can be conducted to investigate the relationship between happiness and self-efficacy in different populations and settings. This can help to identify specific strategies and interventions that are effective in promoting happiness and well-being. In addition, it may be helpful to provide individuals with tools and resources for measuring and tracking their levels of self-efficacy and happiness over time. This can help them to identify areas for improvement and monitor their progress towards achieving their goals.

One area of future research could be to explore the potential physiological and psychological mechanisms that underlie the benefits of TM. For example, researchers could investigate the impact of TM on brain activity, including changes in neurotransmitter levels and brain waves, as well as the potential role of mindfulness and relaxation in promoting well-being.

Another direction for future research could be to investigate the potential applications of TM in different contexts, such as individuals with chronic pain, anxiety, or depression. Additionally, long-term studies could help to shed light on whether the benefits of TM are sustained over time.

Overall, the research on TM highlights the potential benefits of this practice for individuals seeking to improve their physical and mental well-being. However, more research is needed to fully understand the mechanisms underlying these effects, as well as to identify the specific populations and contexts in which TM may be most effective.

CONCLUSION:

Transcendental Meditation has the potential to positively impact the happiness and self-efficacy of university students. The stress-reduction effects, cognitive enhancements, and improved emotional regulation contribute to a greater sense of well-being and self-efficacy. Furthermore, TM fosters emotional resilience and self-efficacy, providing students with the tools they need to overcome challenges and achieve their goals.

This research suggests that Transcendental Meditation is a valuable addition to strategies aimed at enhancing the mental and emotional well-being of university students. As research in this field continues to grow, the positive effects of TM on happiness and self-efficacy are likely to become even more pronounced, emphasizing its importance in promoting overall well-being among university students. Future studies can further investigate the precise mechanisms and benefits of TM in the lives of university students and explore its potential for broader application in academic and personal development.

The research on Transcendental Meditation (TM) suggests that this practice has the potential to be highly beneficial for individuals who practice it. However, while the research is promising, there are still many unanswered questions about the mechanisms underlying its effects.

In summary, while the research on TM is still ongoing, the potential benefits of this practice in promoting physical and mental well-being make it an area of ongoing interest for researchers and individuals seeking alternative ways to improve their health. Nonetheless, more research is needed to fully understand the mechanisms underlying the benefits of TM, as well as to identify the specific populations and contexts in which it may be most effective.

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