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How meditation impacts life satisfaction and empathy in adults

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Abstract

Meditation is an ancient technique practiced in India. Since time immemorial, rishis and yogis in India have been practicing meditation and have been enlightening us for the same. Meditation has been known to provide numerous benefits like better emotional health, stress relief, quality sleep, better physiological functioning etc. Meditation is self-exploratory and self-transformatory journey. It provides a space away from noise of the world and allows one to go deeper into the inner world. The aim of the following research is to study how meditation impacts life satisfaction and empathy levels of people. Life satisfaction can be defined as how much satisfied one is with his/her life. Empathy can be defined as the ability to understand one's perspective and situation from their point of view. It is the ability to feel how other must be feeling. The sample size of the study is 100 and the results have been obtained through quantitative research.

Keywords: Life satisfaction, empathy, adults

Introductions

Meditation is an ancient technique which has its roots in India. Meditation has been mentioned in the Indian vedas. Meditation has been invented due to the natural human tendency to introspect or think deeply. The holy book of hindus 'Bhagwat Gita' also mentions a lot about the practice of 'Dhyana' or contemplation. The scripture mentions how practicing meditation can sharpen our memory and help us in developing 'attitude of surrendering to the almighty'. Patanjali's yoga sutra also mentions about meditation amongst one of the 8 limbs of yoga. Meditation can be understood as a way of life and not just some one time practice. It is a rich gift to us from the world of spirituality.

Meditation can be understood as an umbrella term under which numerous techniques can be practiced. Meditation is also known as mindfulness. This technique stresses on the importance of being aware. The idea behind practicing meditation or mindfulness is to be completely aware of the present, not being stuck in the past or being anxious about the future. When we are completely absorbed in the present, we are able to better deal with our life. Under meditation lots of techniques can be practiced like, guided meditation, creative visualization, breathing techniques, yoga, vipasana meditation, observing mindfulness while doing daily chores, sitting in silence etc.

Practicing meditation regularly can lead to many benefits like-

- Better sleep quality
- Improved physiological functioning
- Healing from any kind of pain (physical or emotional)
- Enhanced Memory
- Increased capacity to tolerate undesirable situations(Resilience)
- Promotes spiritual understanding
- Helps in processing emotions and traumas
- Stress tolerance
- Enhanced compassion and empathy levels

Meditation is also known to affect how satisfied and contented people are from their life which is also known as life satisfaction. It also has the power to empathize with others. Empathy can be defined as the ability to understand others emotions and situation as they

feel. It is the ability to feel how other must be feeling. Basically, it is the ability to 'be in other person's shoes'.

Life satisfaction is comes when one lives their life in accord with their values, principles and potential. Contributing to one's own life and that to their's lives is also known to increase life satisfaction. Outlook or one's view on life also greatly impacts life satisfaction. Looking at brighter side of life or hoping good from life helps us to enjoy and be satisfied with our lives. Optimist people are generally more satisfied with their life rather than pessimist people. Happy emotions are associated with increased life satisfaction as compared to negative emotions. This happens because happy emotions help us in goal achieving and keeps us motivated. Our daily experiences and evets are also a great predictor of how satisfied we are from life because they indicate how ve respond to situations, how we behave with others and how we choose to carry ourselves.

Social support is another aspect that contributes to our wellbeing and life satisfaction. Social support can be defined as the number of genuine people we have in our lives who care and value us. Strong social support and cultivating deep, meaningful relationships can hugely impact how we view our lives and ourselves.

Thus, life satisfaction is a feeling that can be achieved by having strong social support, high values and morals and keeping an optimistic view on life.

On the other hand, empathy is the ability to feel how other person must be feeling. Spiritual rituals are known to enhance levels of empathy and compassion. Though there are several determinants of empathy, some of the important ones are age, gender, life experiences etc.

Talking about types of empathy, there are majorly two types of empathy-

- Cognitive Empathy- Ability to intellectually understand what other must be feeling and,
- Affective Empathy- Ability to feel how other must be feeling or must have felt

As people grow older, they keep on having varied life experiences which makes them sensitive towards others and hence more empathetic. Similarly, women are known to have higher levels of empathy due to their maternal instinctive. People who are good in reading books and who do read a lot are a lot more empathetic than non- readers. Probably this is because through books, they explore many characters, their life stories, the reason for their behaviour etc.

Review of literature

Patricia Carr Phd (2024) The research shows how both mindfulness and gratitude affect life satisfaction of employees. The employees were given surveys on mindfulness, life satisfaction and gratitude and the results were analysed. Through the research, it was proved that gratitude is an important contributor in life satisfaction.

Rebecca Y.M Cheyung and Elsa Ngar Sze- Lu (2023) In the above research, participants ranging from 20-72 years old were selected from a meditation event and were given surveys to check whether positive life experiences and gratitude contribute to life satisfaction or not. The surveys which were given were- 5 facet mindfulness questionnaire short form, savouring beliefs inventory and 6 item gratitude questionnaire. After the analysis, which was done using ANOVA, the results showed that enjoying little experiences

in life and giving gratitude majorly helped in feeling a greater amount of life satisfaction.

Phra Taweepong Inwangsakul and Sampath Kumar (2023) In the above research, experimental research design was used to study what effect vipassana meditation has on life satisfaction. Both experimental and control group had 60 participants each and experimental group was given 1 hour of vipassana classes for 10 days. After 10 days, the results were obtained using repeated ANOVA technique. It was proved that performing vipasana contributed to greater life satisfaction and overall health. This is because vipassana is an ancient meditation technique that has the ability to bring about positive molecular changes in the practitioner's body. It also is linked with other benefits life learning to be in solitude and have a awareness of being in present.

Methodology

AIM of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of meditation on life satisfaction and empathy among those who practice and who don't practice relationship.

Variable of the study

Independent Variable

Meditation: The term "meditation" describes a group of techniques that include developing awareness and focus in order to attain emotional stability, profound relaxation, and mental clarity. Meditation practices including transcendental, loving-kindness, and mindfulness-based approaches are all part of it, with the goal of improving one's health, happiness, and sense of inner peace. The independent variable in this study is meditation, which stands for people's use of or practice of meditation techniques.

Dependent Variables

Life Satisfaction: The term "life satisfaction" describes how people feel about their entire subjective assessment etc perception of their quality of life, which includes a range of areas including relationships, employment, health, and personal fulfillment. It expresses how happy, fulfilled, and content people are with the life they lead and the experiences they have. One of the dependent variables in this study is life satisfaction, which represents how satisfied people are with their lives as a result of practicing meditation.

Empathy: The capacity to comprehend, relate to, and connect with the feelings, ideas, and experiences of another is referred to as empathy. It entails thoughtful, sensitive, and caring reactions to the thoughts, feelings, and viewpoints of others in order to promote prosocial behavior, understanding, and connection. The third dependent variable in this study is empathy, which measures a person's ability to sympathize with others and is impacted by their meditation practice.

Objectives

- To explore the influence of meditation on life satisfaction and empathy among those who practice relationship.
- To explore the influence of meditation on life satisfaction and empathy among those who don't practice relationship.

Hypothesis

- There is no significant relationship life satisfaction and empathy among those who practice meditation.
- There is no significant relationship life satisfaction and empathy among those who practice meditation.

Participants of the study

Purposive sampling will be used to choose 100 people from the sample, including both participants who practice and who don't practice relationship. The majority of the people in the sample are in the 18–25 age range.

Data collection instrumentS

Data for this study will be gathered using the "satisfaction with life scale & Perth empathy scale" in addition to demographic information.

Data collection procedure

Two questionnaires the "Satisfaction with life scale as well as Perth empathy scale" has been used to collect the results. After being informed of the goals of the study, participants will be requested to take part and given a package of questionnaires containing information about the project, privacy concerns, the researcher's contact details, and further measures. Reviewing the instruments will take five minutes.

Satisfaction with life scale

A five-item survey known as the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) measures an individual's overall cognitive assessment of their level of life satisfaction. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), which has a range of 5 to 35, is a 7-point Likert scale used to assess life satisfaction.

Reliability

There is strong test-retest reliability and internal consistency with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Over a two-month period, the SWLS has an alpha of 0.87 & a correlation of 0.82.

Perth empathy scale

The 20-item Perth Empathy Scale (PES) is a self-report assessment tool used to gauge an individual's capacity for positive as well as negative emotional recognition (cognitive empathy) and emotional experience (affective empathy). Five points are awarded for the PES, with 1 representing "almost never" and 5 representing "almost always." Elevated scores signify increased empathy levels.

Reliability

Using Cronbach's alpha (α) and McDonald's omega (ω) values, the internal consistency was evaluated. Reliability was deemed adequate if the threshold was ≥ 0.70 .

Statistical analysis

With the use of SPSS software, the research has used descriptive statistics analysis and the Pearson correlation approach.

Results and Discussion

Meditation has drawn a lot of attention as a possible way to improve wellbeing and develop empathy in a society that is becoming more connected and fast-paced. Meditation is a practice with roots in ancient traditions & philosophies. It

entails a variety of practices meant to foster compassion, self-awareness, and mindfulness. With the increasing popularity of meditation, it is critical to comprehend how it affects important psychological health markers like life satisfaction and empathy. In an effort to understand the complex link between meditation practice & these fundamental aspects of the human experience, this study explores the effects of meditation on life satisfaction & empathy. This study uses a rigorous research technique, including longitudinal studies and experimental designs, to clarify the ways in which meditation affects interpersonal understanding and subjective well-being.

Table 1: descriptive statistics of all variable among people who practice meditation

	Life satisfaction	Empathy
Mean	25.42	48.9
Standard Deviation	4.267055	5.334715
N	50	50

Descriptive data for two variables—life happiness and empathy—among those who meditate are shown in Table 1. This group has an average life satisfaction score of 25.42, with a standard deviation of 4.27, suggesting a generally modest degree of life satisfaction. Additionally, these people appear to have a modest amount of empathy, as the mean score is 48.9 and the standard deviation is 5.33. According to these results, those who meditate appear to have a reasonably contented existence and a modest degree of empathy for other people. Deeper understanding of the connection between meditation, life happiness, and empathy, however, could come from more research and comparisons with different communities or groups.

Table 2: descriptive statistics of all variable among people who don't practice meditation

	Life satisfaction	Empathy
Mean	19.56	40.54
Standard Deviation	4.563207	11.06974
Count	50	50

The descriptive data for life happiness and empathy among those who do not meditate are shown in Table 2. Compared to those who meditate, this group's mean life happiness score is 19.56, having a standard deviation of 4.56, suggesting a generally lower degree of life contentment. Comparably, those who do not meditate had a mean empathy score of 40.54 and a standard deviation of 11.07, indicating a moderate level of empathy.

When these figures are compared to those of those who meditate regularly, it seems that people who don't meditate often have lower life satisfaction but comparable empathy levels. This may suggest that engaging in meditation practice might help people have greater levels of life satisfaction.

Discussion

Several major insights arise from the study of the data reported in Tables 1–4, concerning the link between meditation, life satisfaction as well as empathy. Firstly, with an average score of 25.42 & a standard deviation of 4.27, those who meditate appear to have a moderate degree of life satisfaction. Furthermore, this group's mean empathy score is 48.9, which denotes a

moderate level of empathy. These results indicate that most meditation practitioners have happy lives and have a fair amount of empathy for other people.

On the other hand, those who do not meditate report lower levels of life satisfaction (19.56 on average, with a standard deviation of 4.56). Their empathy, however, is similar to that of those who meditate, with a larger standard deviation of 11.07 and a mean score of 40.54. This suggests that although non-meditators could be less satisfied with life, they are not really different from those who meditate in terms of empathy.

The correlation study sheds more light on the connection between empathy and life happiness. The relationship among life satisfaction and empathy is very slightly inverse among meditation practitioners, indicating that somewhat lower levels of empathy may be correlated with greater life satisfaction levels. Nevertheless, this association is not statistically significant due to its modest size. The relationship between life happiness and empathy, on the other hand, is only marginally positive among those who do not meditate. This suggests that in this group, more empathy is correlated with better life satisfaction levels.

These results imply that although meditation practitioners may have better levels of life satisfaction, its effects on empathy are less evident. There could be trade-offs between life pleasure and empathy in this demographic, as shown by the minor negative association seen among meditation practitioners. To completely comprehend the intricate interactions among meditation, life happiness, and empathy, additional study is necessary. Additionally, contrasting these relationships with those of other societies or groups may provide light on them.

Conclusion

An examination of the correlation among empathy, life satisfaction, and meditation yields intriguing findings. There is a little negative association between life contentment and empathy among people who meditate, indicating that there may be a minor, though not significant, link between higher life happiness and lower levels of empathy. Conversely, there is a somewhat positive association between life happiness and empathy among the non-meditators, suggesting that better life satisfaction is generally associated with higher empathy in this population.

These results imply that whether or not people practice meditation, there may be differences in the link between life happiness and empathy. It's interesting to notice that non-meditators show a stronger positive connection between life satisfaction & empathy, even if meditation tends to have a nuanced influence on this relationship.

These findings highlight the difficulty in figuring out how meditation affects psychological health and social empathy overall. Additional investigation, including integrating qualitative approaches or scrutinizing particular meditation methods, may yield more profound understandings of these correlations. However, these results advance our knowledge of the complex interactions among mindfulness, life happiness, and empathy in modern culture.

Recommendations

- **Longitudinal Studies:** Conduct longitudinal studies to track changes in life satisfaction and empathy among individuals who engage in meditation over extended

periods. This will provide insights into the long-term effects of meditation on these psychological variables.

- **Diverse Meditation Practices:** Examine how different meditation techniques, such as mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation, affect empathy and life happiness. Comprehending the ways in which different methods impact these results might assist in customizing meditation programs for certain groups or objectives.
- **Cultural Context:** Considering the cultural and environmental elements that may impact the link between meditation, life happiness, and empathy is important. Examine how individual characteristics, societal norms, and cultural beliefs affect how well-being and empathy are promoted by meditation activities.
- **Qualitative Research:** Use qualitative research methods along with quantitative research to find out more about the personal stories of people who meditate. Significant understanding of the psychological processes supporting the connection between meditation, life happiness, and empathy may be gained from qualitative data.
- **Intervention Studies:** In order to find if meditation-based therapies are effective in improving life satisfaction and empathy, conduct intervention studies. Create and carry out organized meditation programs, then assess in controlled environments how they affect these results.
- **Community Comparisons:** Examine how meditation affects life satisfaction & empathy in various communities or groups, accounting for variables including age, gender, financial condition, and previous meditation experience. This will assist in determining possible modifiers of the mediation and psychological well-being connection.

Limitations of the study

- **Sample Characteristics:** The results of the study are based on a homogenous and rather small sample of meditation practitioners. Because of this, the findings cannot be applied to larger groups with a wider range of demographic traits, cultural backgrounds, or meditation experiences.
- **Self-Report Measures:** Self-report measures are how life happiness and empathy data are gathered, and they are prone to biases like response set and social desirability. The accuracy of the results may be impacted by participants giving answers that they think were socially acceptable and that match their expectations about the benefits of meditation.
- **Cross-Sectional Design:** The study's cross-sectional design makes it more difficult to determine the causal links between empathy, life satisfaction, and meditation. In order to determine if meditation precedes increases in life satisfaction & empathy, as well as how these variables develop over time, longitudinal studies are required.
- **Measurement Validity:** There may be issues with the validity and reliability of the instruments used to evaluate empathy and life satisfaction. Comprehensive assessment batteries or alternative measures may offer a more sophisticated knowledge of these components and how they relate to meditation.

- **Confounding Variables:** Potential confounding variables which could affect the association between meditation, life happiness, and empathy are not taken into consideration in this research. Variations in these results may be caused by variables including personality characteristics, social support, or life experiences; therefore, more research is necessary.

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