

Effect of Om Meditation on Psychological Wellbeing among Adolescents

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Abstract

The concept of spirituality is attracting the attention of researchers all over the world. It plays an important role in the maintenance of psychological well-being. The present study was designed to study the effect of 'OM' chanting meditation on psychological well-being among adolescents. Practice time for 'OM' chanting meditation was 20 minutes and the duration was one month. The sample consisted of 100 subjects (50 in each group) in the range of 15 to 24 years and selected from Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra. Psychological Wellbeing was measured by 'P.G.I. Wellbeing Scale'. Five more items taken from the Life Satisfaction Test were added along with the items of P.G.I. Wellbeing Scale by the researcher herself to improve the validity of the scale. t-test was applied to study the effect of 'OM' chanting meditation on psychological wellbeing. Results showed that the calculated t-value in experimental group was found to be 5.59 which is significant at 0.01 level. Calculated t-value in control group was found to be 1.00 which is not significant even at 0.05 level. Result reveals that there is a significant positive effect of 'OM' chanting meditation on the psychological well-being of adolescents.

Keywords: Meditation and Psychological Wellbeing.

21st centuries is known as the era of tough competition in every sphere of life. We are moving rapidly towards modernism and materialistic culture that is making our life more complex day to day. Generally we find that everyone has some amount of problems due to this fast and growing culture either at their home, work or in their life. Spiritual life style which includes spiritual activities like prayer, meditation, yoga, pranayama, positive thinking, diet etc. is catching the world's attention. It plays an important role in the maintenance of physical and mental health.

Wellbeing is categorically defined as a positive state of human being. Psychological wellbeing refers to how people evaluate their lives. Wellbeing involves subjective satisfaction and individual's pleasure depending upon psychological status of the individual and his environmental conditions. Wellbeing may be defined as a subjective, positive emotional state with general life satisfaction (Diener, 1984). It involves the way the individual feels about himself or herself due to achievement of goals in life. Therefore the most common and comprehensive

indicator of the sense of wellbeing includes life satisfaction which refers to an individual's own global judgment of his or her quality of life, feeling of contentment and happiness. The sense of 'enjoyment of life' (commonly referred as satisfaction, happiness and joy) or subjective appreciation of life is also conceptualized as an indicator of wellbeing (Veenhoven, 2004). Diener (1984) reported that happy people tend to have high self-esteem, a satisfying love relationship, a meaningful religious faith and sufficient social activities. Happy people may have greater self-confidence, sociability or better social relationships and other characteristics of those high in well-being.

Life satisfaction is categorized by satisfaction with current life, satisfaction with past, satisfaction with future, significant other's views of one's life and desire to change one's life. People are said to have high subjective wellbeing if they are satisfied with their life conditions, experience frequent positive emotions and frequent negative emotions. Wellbeing or wellness is often referred to as 'wholeness of body, mind

and spirit in terms of health, prosperity and self-actualization' by Maslow (1968). Tatarkiewicz (1976) wrote "happiness requires total satisfaction that is satisfaction with life as a whole"

Life satisfaction often refers to the attitudes that individuals have about their past, present as well as future in relation to their psychological wellbeing (Chaddha and Willigen, 1995). Meditation is generally an internal, personal practice and done without any external involvement, though many practitioners of meditation may rely on external objects such as candle flames as point on which to focus their attention as an aid to the process. Meditation is a mental exercise in which one directs one's mind to think inwardly by shutting one's sense organs to external stimulations. It is a Vedic exercise which can be used as a powerful instrument to restrain sense organs, control autonomic nervous system and also to attain super consciousness.

Through meditation a person is expected to get mental peace and this mental peace affects their emotional state. So the present researcher was curious to examine the effect of 'OM' chanting meditation on psychological wellbeing of adolescents. 'OM' chanting meditation which is a concentrative type of meditation that involves focusing of attention on breath and internal or external and chanting *mantra*.

METHOD

Sample: The total sample of 100 students ranging in age from 15 to 24 years were selected from Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra. This sample consisted of 50 students in experimental group and 50 students in control. A purposive sample was selected. Both the groups were matched in terms of Age, Education, Marital Status and Socio Economic Status. Only female participants were considered and minimum education was at least intermediate passed.

Inclusion Criteria: In order to study the effect of 'OM' chanting meditation on the psychological

wellbeing of the students, only those students were considered who were willing to participate in meditation.

Design: Static Group research design was used in the present study. In this design, two groups are used, but only one of them is given the experimental treatment. At the end of the treatment, both groups are observed or measured to see if there is a difference between them as a result of the treatment or intervention.

Tools: Psychological Wellbeing was measured by combining two measures:

(a) *P.G.I. Wellbeing Scale:* P.G.I. Wellbeing Scale by Moudgil *et al.*, (1986) was selected to measure the wellbeing among students.

(b) *Diener's Life Satisfaction Scale:* Five more items taken from the life satisfaction test constructed by Diener *et al.*, (1985) were added along with the items of P.G.I. Wellbeing Scale by the researcher to improve the validity of scale]. *Reliability:* In a pilot study done by the investigator herself on 40 female university students, high test-retest reliability (with a time gap of one month) came out to be 0.77. The reliability of the scale was tested by cronbach's alpha in a study by Das and Satsangi (2008). The reliability coefficient was found to be 0.85. It shows the high reliability of the scale.

Procedure:

Phase (1) Pre-test Measures: Testing Phase:

Initially permission was taken from the concerned Heads of departments of Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra. Then tool was administered on all 100 students (age range 15-24 years). The students were requested to answer truly and mark the appropriate option among those given in the scale for each question. They were requested not to leave any of the items unanswered. Instructions regarding the test were given properly and they were assured that the information given by them

will be kept confidential. Test administration and scoring was done according to the instructions given in the test manual. After the completion, the questionnaire was taken back from them and subjected to scoring and statistical analysis.

Phase (2) Pre-test Measures: Experimental Phase (Intervention): Researcher conducted Meditation session for 20 minutes every morning for 1 month, excluding Sunday and holidays. Intervention was given only to the experimental group (50 students) but no intervention was given to the control group (50 students). *‘OM’ Chanting Meditation:* In the meditation researcher gave instructions, “First, enter your meditative state by securing a quiet and comfortable sitting position. Close your eyes. Breathe comfortably and slowly

through your nose, into your belly and then into your chest. Imagine the sound of OM Mantra internally, in the mind only, making no external sound. Allow the mantra to flow with the breath. Repeat like this: inhale: "Silence..." and exhale: "OMmmm..." Simply allow the OM Mantra to come and go with each inhalation and exhalation. Feel that positive energy is running into all over body and each part of your body is pure and holy. Now feel the positive energy and enjoy in this positive environment”.

Phase (3) Post-test Measures: After the experimental phase, post- test was administered on both the groups again. This posttest was parallel to the pretest. Psychological Wellbeing was measured again.

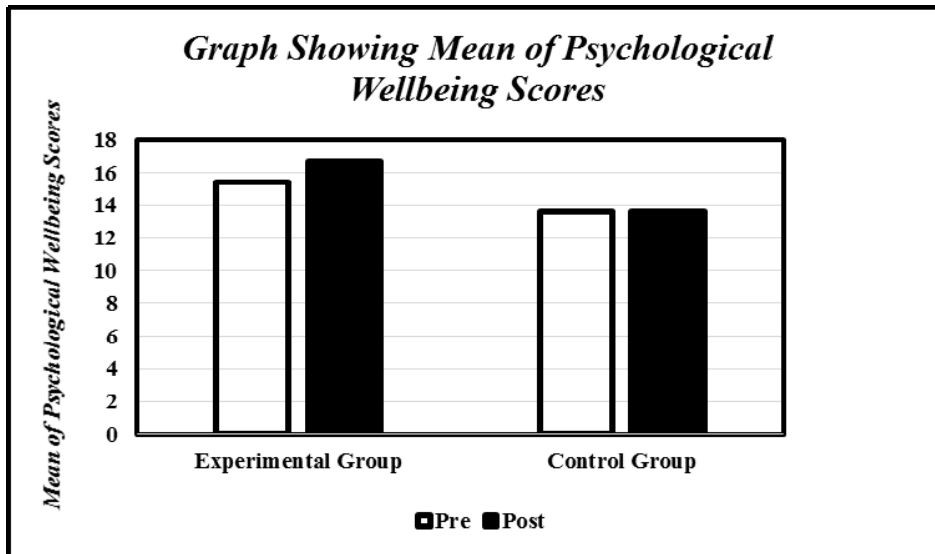
RESULTS:

Table (1): Mean of Psychological Wellbeing Scores in Experimental and Control Group

Groups	Measures	N	Mean	SD	SE _D	t-value
Experimental Group	Pre	50	15.38	2.78	2.26	5.59**
	Post	50	16.65	2.72		
Control Group	Pre	50	13.62	2.88	0.10	1.00
	Post	50	13.63	2.88		

**P < .01

Figure (1)



It can be observed from Table that mean score for psychological wellbeing in pre measure is 15.38 and in post measure it is 16.65 in experimental group. Thus It shows the enhancement in psychological wellbeing scores. In control group the mean score for psychological wellbeing in pre measure is 13.62 and in post measure it is 13.63. It also shows the enhancement in psychological wellbeing scores. Further, *t* test was applied to study the significance of difference between both the measures in both groups. Results reveals that in experimental group calculated *t* value in respect to psychological wellbeing was found to be 5.59 which is significant at 0.01 level. This indicates that there is a significant positive effect of meditation on psychological wellbeing of the students in experimental group. Table further indicates that in control group calculated *t* value for psychological wellbeing was found to be 1.00 which is not significant even at 0.05 level. This indicates that there is no significant effect of meditation on psychological wellbeing of the students in control group. However, the mean of the post measure is higher than the pre measure in control group. But in control group the difference

between means is not statistically significant. The improvement in psychological wellbeing scores in both groups is also shown graphically (Figure 1).

Researcher also conducted a follow up after 6 month of the intervention in both groups. Table 2 shows the result of follow up study.

Table (2): Mean of Psychological Wellbeing Scores (Follow up of 6 months)

Groups	Mean of Psychological Wellbeing Scores	
	Practice Meditation (14% subjects)	Not practice Meditation (11% subjects)
Experimental Group	17.36	16.35
Control Group	13.02	

Follow up result shows that in experimental group 14 percent subjects practiced meditation regularly and their psychological wellbeing scores improved and 11 percent subjects not practiced meditation regularly and their psychological wellbeing scores

reduced. In control group there is no change in psychological wellbeing scores.

Results reveals that meditation helps an individual to cope with the negative life situations. So, subjects who practiced meditation daily their psychological wellbeing is enhanced while who are not practiced meditation regularly their psychological wellbeing is reduced.

DISCUSSION

Results of the present study lead to the acceptance of the hypothesis that there is a significant effect of 'OM' chanting meditation on psychological wellbeing ($t = 5.59, p < .01$) in experimental group. Thus a clear basis is obtained to state that there is a significant positive effect of meditation on psychological wellbeing.

Another finding of the present study is that in control group the mean value of post measure ($M=13.63$) is higher than the mean value of pre measure ($M= 13.62$). The higher mean score of post measure in experimental group on psychological wellbeing suggests that the students who participated regularly in meditation are happier and mentally healthy. Therefore their psychological wellbeing is high in comparison to control group. Experimental group score high because meditation strengthen the positive aspects of human personality and enhances the hidden qualities of men.

Results are consistent with the previous research finding that the greater use of meditation increases the relaxation which is directly associated with the wellbeing. In another research Ishwar and Nishad (2010) found that adolescent students who practiced yogic concentrative meditation experienced gains to both psychological well-being and leadership skills. Lavretsky *et al.*, (2012) examined the effect of meditation on mental health and psychological wellbeing. Findings revealed that meditation practice significantly effects the mental health and psychological wellbeing. Davidson and McEwen

(2012) found that well-being and other prosocial characteristics can be enhanced through meditation training. Meditational practices give a more positive outlook and a belief for the future. When people suffer ill health practices like meditation and prayer etc. helps them because their beliefs bring comfort them, and help them to be more optimistic. They are more likely to achieve health goals, and believe that they will get better. These type of believe helps in enhancing their psychological wellbeing. Through regular practice of meditation, negativity is undone, speed and aggression are pacified, frustration, tension and turbulent emotions are defused and the unkindness, violence and harm are removed.

Conclusion

The results of the present study reveal that the regular practice of 'OM' chanting meditation improves the psychological wellbeing of adolescents. Meditation affects the mental functioning, personal growth and self-actualization. All these aspects affect the interpersonal and social behavior of an individual. Healthy citizens make healthy society and mental health is as important as the physical health. If peoples in a society are mentally healthy then this will lead to the society to the development.

The practice of Meditation ('OM' chanting) can also be used as one of the powerful means as any other yogic practices like Asanas and Pranayama in calming down the mind and in enhancing Psychological Wellbeing. In today's haphazard life, stress has become an evitable part of life. Spiritual practices, praying, meditation, attending religious services not only reduce the stress among individuals but also strengthen the positive aspects of human personality, enhances the hidden qualities of men and also helps in developing the society.

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