

Self-Efficacy and Well-Being among Students: Role of Goal Meditation

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ABSTRACT

Due to stressful environment as a result of academic, career, parental, and societal pressures that students face today, high stress, anxiety, depression, and conflict are very common. Students with high caliber can be seen to wander aimlessly, which can be an alarming situation. This study took a lead from the ancient Indian philosophy of practicing yoga and meditation to start the day to combat the above situation. Meditation enables one to focus on the present moment, leading to a state of thoughtless awareness. The study aimed at training students in a particular way, so that they can keep clear of unproductive and aimless approach and concentrate their energy and creativity on their goal of life.

The objective of the study was to observe self-efficacy and well-being among students in a pre- and post-test design to investigate the effect of goal meditation as an intervention. Sixteen postgraduate students (age range 22 to 24 years) selected through purposive sampling participated in the study with their due consent. The post-test data on self-efficacy and well-being were gathered six months after the administration of the intervention. Data analysis employed the Wilcoxon signed rank test.

Results indicated significant differences in pre- and post-intervention measures of self-efficacy and well-being. Based on these results, it was concluded that goal meditation is effective in enhancing self-efficacy and well-being among students.

Keywords: *Ancient Indian philosophy, Intervention, Pre- and post-test, Thoughtless awareness, Wilcoxon signed rank test*

Development of a child is dependent not only on family, school, or society, but also the innate and natural quality of that child's mind, body, and emotions. People in India are known for their spirituality. In every action or decision they take, there is likely to be some input of spirituality or well-being of the society. Today everyone wants progress and peace in life. Meditation is a state, which enables one to focus on the present moment, leading to a state of thoughtless awareness.

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Teaching also contributes to development. Effective classroom teaching largely depends upon three Cs: relevant content knowledge, communication effectiveness, and confidence on self. Goal meditation can be used as an important device to enhance overall happiness, well-being, self-efficacy, and focus on goal. This is a particular type of meditation which gives compassion and focuses on well-being of all human beings and on students' specific goals in their life.

Spirituality plays a significant role in changing the belief system and flow of energy among students. At the time when students are facing too much career, peer, family, and parental pressure, there is a strong need to provide a spiritual capsule that will inculcate inner strength and positivity in them. Deep breathing is very important for creating positive energy. Rozman (1974) revealed that teaching children to meditate improves their decision making. Lesko (2000) reported mental and emotional changes resulting from Zen meditation practice. Shah et al. (2001) inferred that intelligence; performance and confidence are positively correlated to Saral meditation.

Self-efficacy has been defined as people's belief that they are capable of completing a task and producing a designated level of performance (Bandura, 1997). When people believe that they are not capable of completing a task for producing results, they will lack motivation to attempt the task (Bandura, 1997). Studies have shown that higher self-efficacy leads to better academic performance and enhanced retention (Conner, 2015).

Meditation makes a significant contribution toward enhancing coping mechanism, decreasing stress, and improving intellectual ability (Spadaro & Hunker, 2016). Spadaro and Hunker (2016) reported numerous studies which have shown that mindful-meditation improves attention, concentration, and self-knowledge. Practicing meditation enhances personal and social growth and cultivates well-being among students.

Subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as "individuals' cognitive and affective assessment of their life" (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002, p. 630). People who have high level of satisfaction with their life experience a greater positive effect, little or less negative effect, and would be deemed to have high levels of SWB.

"Students with high psychological well-being and life satisfaction have been found (i) to be more flexible, resilient, and efficient in problem solving; (ii) to be more committed to their academic goals; and (iii) to pursue success rather than to be focused on avoiding their failures" (Pajares & Schunk, 2001).

Well-being is one of the strongest predictors of happiness and healthy relations with others. Automaticity of creative ideas and positive flow of energy can be seen in the work output of people who think positive about themselves. Well-being also provides contentment and regenerates positivity.

Keyes and Moore (2003, p. 477-497) defined well-being as "The State of successful performance throughout the life course integrating physical, cognitive and socio-emotional functions that results in productive activities deemed significant by one's cultural community fulfilling social relationship and the ability to transcend moderate psychological and environmental problems" Kuyben et al. (2013) assessed the efficacy and acceptability of mindfulness based intervention to enhance mental health and well-being. Burnet (2011)

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reported that mindfulness promotes an individual's emotional well-being, capacity and potential for learning, and the physical and mental health of those who practice it. Various research findings also demonstrate positive effects of meditation on students with educational needs. Meditation or mindfulness produces self-knowledge and helps us to discriminate our own behavior (Kaiser, 2013, Manas, 2009). Arguis (2014) reported that the practice of mindfulness in an educational setting can counteract the daily stresses in a way that allows people to experience things in a more attentive way.

Based on the review of literature summarized above, following objectives were set.

O1: To investigate the effect of goal meditation on self-efficacy among postgraduate (PG) students.

O2: To investigate the effect of goal meditation on well-being among PG students.

O3: To compare the effect of goal meditation on self-efficacy and well-being among PG students in Pre- and Post- analysis.

O4: To investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and well-being among PG students.

The following hypotheses were investigated.

H1: There will be a significant effect of goal meditation on self-efficacy among PG students.

H2: There will be a significant effect of goal meditation on well-being among PG students.

H3: There will be a significant effect of goal meditation on self-efficacy and well-being among PG students in pre- and post- analysis.

H4: There will be a significant relationship between self-efficacy and well-being among PG students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a before-after (pretest-posttest) experimental design to investigate the effect of goal meditation on self-efficacy and well-being. Goal meditation was employed as an intervention. Wilcoxon signed rank test was used to analyze the data.

Participants

Sixteen postgraduate students (age ranging between 22 to 24 years) of M.A. Final year in the PPN College, CSJM University Kanpur, U.P. (India) were selected through purposive sampling to voluntarily participate in the study. Written consent of the students was taken for their participation in the experiment.

Instruments

Following is a brief description of the instruments used for data collection.

General Self-efficacy Scale. Hindi version of the General Self-efficacy Scale (GSES; Sud, Schwarzer, & Jerusalem, 2002) was used to measure self-efficacy. The original scale was developed by Jerusalem & Schwarzer (1979) in the German language and validated in 25 countries. Sud (2002) adapted the scale in Hindi, which consists of 10 items that seek responses on a 4-point scale. A typical item of the scale is: "Thanks to my resourcefulness, I can handle unforeseen situations." The self-efficacy can be measured with an index of standardized score reflecting responses to all the items. The scale yields a minimum score of 10 and a maximum of 40. Sud validated the scale on a sample of 398 college students (Women—217, age: mean = 19.5, SD = 1.35 y;

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Men —181, age: mean = 19.9 y, SD = 0.71 y) with acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha—Women: .77; Men: .72; Overall: .75).

Subjective Well-being (SWB) Inventory: The subjective well-being Inventory (SWB; Sell & Nagpal, 1992) was used to measure subjective well-being. It is designed to measure feeling of well-being or ill-being as experienced by an Individual or a group of individuals in various day-to-day life concerns. It consists of 40 items with a mix of positively and negatively stated items that require reverse scoring. Each statement has 3 alternative responses (“very good”, “quite good”, and “not good”). Three items (item numbers 14, 27, and 29) that were not applicable to the participants were dropped. Test Result test- retest reliability of the SWB inventory is 0.79 and its validity is 0.86.

Intervention

Goal meditation was used as an intervention. In goal meditation, mediators focus on whatever goals they set for themselves. For example, students may set “good health” and “well-being” as their goals. To practice goal meditation, the mediator sits down in a specific body gesture, generally “Gyan Mudra” or chin mudra (gesture of consciousness), which promotes physical and mental health. Once seated in gyan mudra, the meditator begins the session by chanting the following schloka (verse) from the Vedic period:

"Sarve Bhavantu Sukhina
Sarve Santu NirAanayaah
Sarve Bhadraani Pashyantu
Maa Kaschid-Dukha Baag-Bhavet
Om Shanthi, Shantih, Shantih."

The meaning of the schloka is as below:

"Om May all become Happy
May all be free from Illness
May all see what is Auspicious
May no one Suffer.
Om Peace, Peace, Peace." (Greenmesg.org Feb. 2019)

This Shloka is a *shanti mantra* chanted to invoke peace and happiness. It is intended to be chanted for the welfare of humanity as a whole. It is a prayer for every person or things that exist in the world. A meditator's prayer for all is also a prayer for self that heals and leads to be well. Meditators pray that they are no different from the universe, so may be joined with the whole world.

Human hearts have evolved with this empathy, reflecting emotions from the world people see around. The prayer is for peace in the universe, peace in human hearts, and peace for everyone.

Following interactive instructions were given to the participants in a sequentially phased manner as indicated by the numbers in parentheses.

“(1) Please sit in Gyan Mudra and chant the schloka “Sarve Bhavantu Sukhina” once. (2) Take a deep breath in and chant the sound “OM” when breathing out. Repeat breathe in and breathe out with the chant “OM” three times. (3) Sit in relaxed position and take deep breath

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in and exhale. Focus on your goal. Imagine your goal with closed eyes. See and feel that at that moment you are present in that goal situation, and be with your goal. Believe in yourself that you can accomplish your goal and have strong conviction that one day you will achieve your desired goal. When imagining your goal situation, evaluate yourself, where you were while imagining the goal, and how long you have to go. Have the belief that one day you will achieve your set targets. (4) Take deep breath, hold the breath for as long as you can, and then release it in the open environment. (5) Open your eyes gradually while rubbing your hands and touch your palms with your eyes and the whole face.”

Rubbing of palms generates some positive energy and touching eyes and whole face with the palms spreads that energy to that particular participant.

Procedure

Participants ‘informed consent was taken prior to the start of the experiment. The experiment involved a pretest, an intervention, and a posttest. GSES and SWB were administered during the pretest and the posttest in the stated order.

Goal meditation intervention was administered with the instructions as described above. Intervention sessions were held in the college premise in a group setting. The sessions were organized before the start of the formal classes on working days. The intervention was administered for six months.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Wilcoxon signed Rank Test and correlation statistics were computed to analyze the data. The nonparametric test was chosen in view of small sample size.

Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

Table 1 summarizes the results of the Wilcoxon signed rank test for self-efficacy. There was a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores ($Z = 3.261$, p (two-tailed) = .001, Table 1) which indicates that goal meditation as an intervention had a significant positive effect on self-efficacy of the participants.

Table No. 1 Effect of Goal Meditation on Self-Efficacy (Before-After Design)

	N	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	MEAN	Std. Deviation	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Z
Self-Efficacy Scale pre-test	16	13.00	34.00	25.62	6.47	.001	-3.261
Self-Efficacy Scale post-test	16	25.00	39.00	33.37	3.89		

Based on the findings in Table 1, it can be inferred that practicing goal meditation for 6 months led to a significant enhancement in self-efficacy of the PG students. This was also supported by the personal interviews with students. Self-efficacy is a very important component for the development of students. Feeling of Self-confidence is a big achievement for the academic or in any other kind of domain. Previous studies also supported the present results.

"Low self-efficacy is connected to symptoms of anxiety and depression" (Faure & Loxton, 2003; Kashdon & Roberts, 2004; Shnek, Irvine, Stewart & Abbey, 2001). "Self-efficacy has

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been found to be closely related to academic achievement and performance" (Salani & Ogundapun, 2009).

Table 2 summarizes the results of the Wilcoxon signed rank test for well-being. There was a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores ($Z = 2.732$, p (two-tailed) = .006, Table 2), which indicates that goal meditation as an intervention had a significant positive effect on subjective well-being of the participants.

Table No. 2 Effect of Goal Meditation on Subjective Well-Being (Before-After Design)

	N	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	MEAN	Std. Deviation	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Z
SWB Pre-test	16	59.00	101.00	76.81	9.94	.006	-2.732
SWB Post-test	16	70.00	104.00	86.68	8.82		

Based on these findings, it can be inferred that practicing goal meditation for 6 months led to a significant enhancement in well-being of the PG students. This was also supported by the personal interviews with students.

The above findings are consistent with several other findings reported in the literature. The positive psychological influence of meditation is widely recognized. In their studies, Brown and Ryan (2003) and Dobkin (2008) found evidence for a significant relationship between meditation and development of well-being. Stew (2008) and Morris (2009) both report implementation of "meditation in educational setting with Holland (2004) advocating a learning process involving both students and teacher to provide authentic experiential learning in meditation and self-awareness". Several other studies (Galante & Shukla, 2006; Galante et al., 2014; Kapoor & Shukla, 2006; Newsome et al., 2006; Sharma et al., 2008) have also revealed significant effect of Yoga and meditation on the well-being of adolescents.

Table 3 presents the correlation matrix for the relationship between subjective well-being and self-efficacy.

Table No. 3 Correlation between Subjective Well-being and Self-Efficacy.

Variables	Subjective Well-Being	Self-Efficacy
Subjective Well-Being	1	.462*
Self-Efficacy	.462*	1

$p > 0.05$ (NS)

As Table 3 indicates, there was a moderately strong, but statistically non-significant, relationship between well-being and self-efficacy ($r = .462$, $N = 16$, $p > .05$).

Although not significant, the moderately strong relationship close to being significant (critical value of $r = .468$; $p < .05$, $N = 16$) indicates that there is likely to be a significant correlation between the two variables with a larger sample size. In light of the above, the following discussion seems in order.

High level of self-efficacy contributes to high levels of engagements and life satisfaction. If self-efficacy is low, subjective well-being would also be low. If self-efficacy is high, subjective well-being would be also high. "High self-efficacy is related to positive well-

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being, regulation of stress, higher self-esteem, better physical condition, and better adaptation to and recovery from disease" (Bandura, 1997; Bishop, Knegsman, Beekmen & Deep 2004; Kuizer & deRidder, 2003).

Kritzell (2000) demonstrated that meditation did significantly improve the participants' overall psychological functioning. Meditation is an effective practice to improve self-efficacy and well-being. Brown et al. (1993) confirmed "that students who meditated, or who practiced meditation, had significantly greater well-being." Individuals who meditate daily can explore their positive energy in a very creative way and recognize their abilities very easily.

Many studies have reported that high self-efficacy is connected to better health outcomes and well-being, whereas low self-efficacy leads to depression, job dissatisfaction, and burnout (Arslan, 2012, Bandura, 1997; Ghasemizad, Khajehei, & Mahamadkhani, 2013; Judge & Bono, 2001; Schyns & Von Collani, 2002; Siu, Lu, & Spector, 2007).

Individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to persist while those with low self-efficacy retain low aspirations with little commitment of their goals. Lent and Brown (1984) examined the relationship between self-efficacy, academic achievement, and persistence among college students pursuing career in science and found that well-being was a significant component that can have important effect on self-efficacy.

Meditation positively affects self-compassion and benefit would be to everyday life (Hollio-Walper & Colosims, 2011; Ooffs, Heston & Fredrickpoor, 2018; Ott & Holzel, 2006).

CONCLUSION

This study focused on meditation with focused goal. In ancient India, the system of philosophy and practice of meditation was very common to all human beings. Many previous researchers reported that any person may gain physical, emotional, and spiritual health through the practice of meditation and yoga. The present results indicate that the six-month long goal meditation program had a positive impact on self-efficacy and well-being among students. Students experienced that higher well-being reduced stress level and increased compassion and kindness for others.

Respondents' feedback and discussion with them revealed that they had reduced anger and increased happiness after participation in the experiment. They felt more efficient about themselves. They reported being more confident of their academics and were very much focused toward their goal. Students also reported that they felt a significant change in their capacity to perform, happiness, satisfaction level, and reduced aggression or anger.

This was a major achievement of the study. Results indicated that in comparison to pretest, self-efficacy and well-being were both significantly higher on posttest. This clearly shows that goal meditation had a positive effect.

Future studies should be conducted with a larger sample size and should include a control groups. As reported by previous studies, students who have high level of self-efficacy and well-being are motivated to participate in academic activities and develop positive attitudes that enhance to success in school (Kharantsava et al., 2007; Lyubonirsky, 2001; Ozer & Bardura, 1990) and are likely to perform well in their academic goals (Zimmerman, Bandura

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& Martinez-Pons, 1992). This study shows that goal meditation can improve well-being, self-efficacy, self-confidence, and ability to cope with stress. On the basis of the present results, it is recommended that in modern era, where stress and academic overload are high, academic institutions should provide some time for meditation and yoga classes to be taken by trained and certified trainers. Meditation is an old but very effective tradition for enhancing the intellectual, social, and emotional well-being. Practice of meditation and yoga exercises would contribute to the total academic output as well as overall growth of students in a unique way.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors carefully declare this paper to bear not a conflict of interests

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