



Research article

Impact of meditation on mental & physical health and thereby on academic performance of students: a study of higher educational institutions of Uttarakhand

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Background and Purpose finding out why people choose to engage in mindfulness-based practises can help in the development of effective health promotion outreach efforts. The impact of health attitudes and perceived stress on the intention to practise mindfulness meditation among undergraduate college students in Uttarakhand was studied in this study. Experimental Approach the research is descriptive in nature based upon primary data. A total of 15 aspects have been studied to assess the impact of meditation on mental & emotional state, physical & psychological well-being and academic performance of students. For collection of data, convenience sampling technique has been used. Data has been collected via mail survey using questionnaire technique. Descriptive analysis has been conducted to fulfil the objective of the study, where SPSS version 21 was used for data analysis. Key results indicate that meditation has a positive impact on improving mental & emotional state of students, at the same time it leads to better physical and psychological health. As a result of this, the academic performance of students also enhances, where they are able to perform better in their academics. Conclusion and Implications meditation is a beneficial method to reduce stress and boost creativity. It also promotes physical stamina to battle sickness. It also led to improved academic performance of students; their confidence level, concentration level, memory power, focus, study ability and other related aspects were improved following meditation and mindfulness activities.

Keywords: Meditation, Mindfulness-based practices, Mental & emotional state, Physical & psychological well-being, Academic performance.

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INTRODUCTION

Meditation is as old as human civilization; the roots are deep within the ancient Vedic mythology. The practice was first originated during Vedic times; it is also used in Ayurveda, the ancient health care methodology of India.^[1] Ayurveda addresses all aspects of human health in order to prevent and treat disease. The fundamental objective is to link yourself to own profound inner Self. The actual objective of meditation is served by techniques that attain that goal. For centuries, meditation is being used as a medium to improve physical, psychological, emotional and mental well-being; it is also practiced to cope with severe and dreadful illness.

Today meditation is practiced all over the world and the rise has been manifold since last 2 – 3 decades, basically owing to the fact that work-related stress and work-life-balance has gone for a toss in past few decades. As per the recent study conducted in 2017 by National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), the number of Americans who meditated in the previous year gone up to 14.2 per cent in 2017 as compared to mere 4.1 per cent in 2012. Further, considering the pressure imposed upon students due to ever increasing competition in

every field of study, it was imperative that students to move towards meditation for relieving stress and excel in their studies. Students now a days are under tremendous pressure not just for the sake of securing better grades but also for finding themselves on a reputable position as and when they complete their graduation or masters. The pressure comes from various sources, like family, friends, peers, society, industries, and corporates. All these leads to weak individuals with very low morale and motivation. In such testing times, one need to stand out and excel not only in academics but also professionally. Since past decade, the practice of meditation among students is also on a rise; the practice of meditation among children and students between age group of 4 to 17 years in the United States has increased dramatically from 0.6 percent in 2012 to 5.4 percent in 2017.

All these do emphasis upon the fact that meditation is very important and play crucial part in maintaining physical health, mental and emotional balance, psychological well-being and improving performance (both academically and professionally).

Considering the gravity of the concept and its role in developing more confident and focused individuals, there is a pertinent need to study the role of meditation in improving mental & emotional health, physical & psychological well-being and academic performance of students specially those who are in their graduation or masters or doctorate. Hence, the purpose of this research is to look into the impact of meditation on mental and physical health of a college students in terms of day-to-day study performance, stress reduction, psychological well-being, and daily life.

Literature Review

Ramsburg and Youmans ^[2] took research to look upon the impact of meditation on student knowledge retention. Participants from three beginning psychology classes were randomly assigned to either brief meditation training or rest, listened to a class lecture, and then took a post-lecture quiz to measure their comprehension of the lecture topic in three experimental trials. In each of the three experiments, the results showed that meditation increased students' memory of the information presented during the lecture. The meditation had no effect on mood, relaxation, or class interest which shows that Meditation training may have an impact on the cognitive skills required for successful knowledge retention.

Rani & Rao ^[3] in his study on effect of Meditation on attention processes studied the effects of transcendental meditation on different attributes of attention process. They further studied that whether the effects were long term or short term. They studied a group of 100 college students among which half of the students meditate regularly while another half does not. They applied Star Counting test which shows that those who mediate regularly are more attentive. After applying a number of tests, they concluded that regular mediation improves attention processes, a shift that appears to be permanent in some processes and temporary in others.

Joshi ^[4] in her study on stress management on secondary students through pranayama and meditation applied stress management test on school going students of senior classes and concluded that meditation has positive effects on managing stress level of these students. However, pranayama and meditation are believed to be the easiest, simplest and most cost-effective technique to deal with stress with no adverse effects on the individual. In addition to reducing stress, pranayama and meditation help individuals keep a positive outlook on life.

Kok ^[5] studied the relationship between meditation and health and found that because of the tremendous increase in psychological interest in mental states and their influence, new approaches are needed for creating mental states that persist long enough and have enough impact to make a major difference in physical health. Mind-body interactions can be studied through contemplative practices of various traditions. This gives a need that

personality and social psychologists will be introduced to the field of meditation research.

Totzeck ^[6] has the primary goal of his study to see if love kind meditation (LKM) could be an effective intervention for improving mental health in university students using the hypothesis that participants who received the LKM intervention would experience an increase in positive mental health factors and a decrease in depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms. They found that LKM had a substantial short-term effect on anxiety and positive mental health and state. Long-term analyses found that LKM participants saw a significant decrease in depression, anxiety, and stress, while the control group experienced a significant increase in despair, anxiety, and stress.

Rizer ^[7] tries to understand in his study why people choose to engage in mindfulness-based practices and how it can help to outreach the effective health promotion. The impact of health attitudes and perceived stress on the intention to practise mindfulness meditation among undergraduate college students was studied in this study. A survey of undergraduate college students was conducted to gauge their stress levels, health attitudes, and plans to practice mindfulness meditation and concluded that the intention to practise mindfulness meditation was positively connected to the perceived benefits of mindfulness practise. Perceived stress was linked to the severity of a stress-related condition and susceptibility to it. Intention to engage in mindfulness training in three different formats was positively connected to intention to practise mindfulness meditation. Gryffin ^[8] studied about Campus students who face a significant amount of stress as a result of juggling college life, academic studies, work, and family obligations. Meditation has been demonstrated to be an effective stress-reduction technique. The need for understanding meditation difficulties has been addressed in study along with the advantages of meditation. The absence of good marketing of the genuine nature and advantages of meditation and mindfulness may be the most significant impediment to its widespread adoption.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is descriptive in nature based upon primary data. The research attempts to explore the impact of meditation on mental & emotional state, physical & psychological well-being, academic performance and aspects of academic performance of college going students of higher educational institutes of Uttarakhand. Data has been collected via mail survey using questionnaire technique. 3 aspects namely: stress level, emotional health and memory power has been taken to assess mental and emotional state of students. 2 aspects namely: physical health and psychological health have been considered to assess impact of meditation on physical health and psychological well-being. Finally, 10 aspects have been studied to measure impact of meditation on

academic performance, namely: concentration level, confidence level, focus, sitting ability, i.e., one is able to sit for longer period of time, study speed, i.e., one be able to learn quickly, ability to stay awake late for studies, study time, i.e., one is able to study for longer period of hours, performance in studies, securing better rank in class and academic grade.

The population for the was defined as the entire student community of higher educational institutions of Uttarakhand, sample has been collected using convenience sampling technique. Questionnaires were mailed to approx. 600 students (via google form) out of which 547 filled responses were received. To do away with the absurd and non-responsive respondents, data cleaning and mining has been done, which resulted in a valid response count of 512. Descriptive analysis has been conducted to fulfil the objective of the study; study only attempts to answer perception of students upon impact of meditation on their academic performance via maintaining emotional & mental health and physical & psychological well-being. SPSS version 21 was used for data analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Benefits to Meditation

There is a visible rise in joy, tranquilly, and enthusiasm as a person practices meditation on a regular basis. This occurs as a result of the body's enhanced prana which is also known as life forcing energy. Meditation impacts physical as well as mental health of a person. On a physical level, meditation reduces anxiety attacks by lowering high blood pressure and blood lactate levels, reduces tension-related pain (headaches, ulcers, sleeplessness, muscle and joint problems) and improves mood and behaviour by increasing serotonin production and it also bolsters the immune system and boosts energy levels. On the other hand, Meditation causes the brainwave pattern to shift into an alpha state, which aids in healing. The intellect becomes light, delicate, and lovely. It helps in cleansing and nourishment of a soul from inside whenever someone is feeling overloaded, unstable, or emotionally shut down and keep the person calm. With frequent meditation practise a person can control anxiety levels drop, and it rises emotional stability. While practising meditation the inside happiness rises because it rises your creativity also, and intuition grows. It helps to regain clarity and tranquilly of mind and improves mental agility which relaxes the mind. Meditation also results in improvement of memory and recall the things easily.

Impact of Meditation on Mental and Emotional Well being

Table 1 above clearly indicate that doing meditation has tremendous benefits upon mental as well as emotional well-being of students. For all the aspects, i.e., meditation reduces stress, it improves emotional health and it improves memory power, 85 to 90 per cent of respondents do agree that meditation improves these aspects of mental health.

Table 1: Impact of Meditation on Mental and Emotional Well being

Item	Percentage of Respondent				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Meditation reduces stress level	0	1.0	6.7	42.3	50.0
Meditation improves emotional health	1.0	1.9	17.3	40.4	39.4
Meditation improves memory power	1.0	1.0	12.5	46.2	39.4

Impact of Meditation on Physical and Psychological Well being

Table 2: Impact of Meditation on Physical and Psychological Well being

item	Percentage of Respondent				
	strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Meditation improves physical health	1.0	4.9	17.5	40.8	35.9
Meditation improves psychological well being	0	3.9	10.7	45.6	39.8

Further, table 2 above shows that meditation do improve physical as well as psychological wellbeing as around 80 per cent of respondents agree that meditation improves physical health and psychological wellbeing. Around 18 per cent of respondent were neutral upon whether meditation improves physical health or not; only around 11 per cent respondent said they are neutral on whether meditation improves psychological wellbeing or not. Around 6 per cent students disagree that meditation improves physical health; around 4 per cent disagree upon the fact that meditation improves psychological health.

Impact of Meditation on Academic Performance

Table 3: Impact of Meditation on Academic Performance

Item	Percentage of Respondent				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Meditation increases confidence	0	0	13.5	44.2	42.3
Meditation improves concentration level	0	0	9.7	46.6	43.7
Meditation improves sitting ability, i.e., one is able to sit for longer period of time	1.9	1.0	15.5	51.5	30.1
Meditation improves study speed, i.e., one be able to learn quickly	1.0	1.9	21.2	43.3	32.7
Meditation improves ability to stay awake late for studies	1.9	10.7	23.3	39.8	24.3
Meditation improves study time, i.e., one is able to study for longer period of hours	1.0	3.9	21.4	44.7	29.1
Meditation improves performance in studies	1.0	2.9	19.2	47.1	29.8
Meditation helps in securing better rank in class	3.2	0.0	33.7	37.9	25.3
Meditation improves academic grades	1.0	9.6	22.1	42.3	25.0
Meditation improves focus	1.9	1.0	13.6	45.6	37.9

Finally, table 3 shows that meditation has its impact on academic performance of students. For each of the 10 aspects selected to assess impact of meditation on academic performance, almost 2/3rd of respondents agrees to the fact that meditation do improve the aspects necessary for excelling in academics, i.e., concentration level, confidence level, focus, study speed, study time, sitting ability, ability to stay awake and so on. Furthermore, around 15 to 20 per cent of students were neutral about whether meditation has an impact on aspects necessary for improved academic performance. Baring the aspects of meditation improves ability to stay awake late for studies and meditation improves academic grades, for all other aspects, mere 2 to 3 per cent of respondents disagree to the fact that meditation improves their concentration level, confidence level, focus, study time, study speed, ability to sit for longer period of time, their performance in studies, and so on.

CONCLUSION

Results and findings lead us to a conclusion that meditation does has an impact not only on mental and emotional well-being but also improves physical and psychological health of students. All these lead to improved academic performance of students; their confidence level, concentration level, memory power, focus, study ability and other related aspects were improved following meditation and mindfulness activities.

Many research studies are currently being written about the benefits of short-term meditation. More research should be done to discover the additional benefits of long-term meditations. In addition, for the most trustworthy data, sample sizes in future research initiatives should include a larger number of persons. As long as this mythological meditation is performed, pupils can and will be able to achieve good grades in their classes, make their parents pleased, and overcome the depression and melancholy that they experience when they are isolated.

To anything and anything; it reduces stress, boosts creativity and promotes physical stamina to battle sickness. Research shows that it improves the human mind's focus compared to a normal person. As a result, I believe that meditation is a practise that every person, whether a student or a parent, should engage in. Because it transforms you from the inside out, it makes you humble and better equipped to handle stressful situations. My research focuses on the academic performance of college students, and it has a significant impact as the results shows positive impacts of the meditation.

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