

Attitude of People Towards Meditation: A Study



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Submission: December 14, 2021; **Published:** January 03, 2021

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Abstract

Background: Meditation is a yogic practice contributing to relaxation and wellbeing. Attitude is formed when a person creates an opinion about a practice based on its relative advantage, compatibility etc. It is important to understand the attitude towards meditation to motivate more people to practice it.

Objective: The study was conducted to analyze the attitude of people towards meditation, which will be helpful in adopting suitable measures for improving its practice.

Materials and Methods: Data on attitude towards meditation was collected from a randomly selected sample of 100 meditating and 100 non-meditating people through an online questionnaire, which also contained the demographic characteristics of respondents and the period of meditation practice. The perceptions on benefits of meditation were considered as the attitude of the respondents towards it. The attitude score was worked out based on the no. of benefits reported. The data was analyzed using ANOVA and t test.

Results: Both meditators and non-meditators have a positive attitude towards various benefits of meditation, even though the meditators have more attitude than non-meditators, probably because they have experienced the benefits through practice. Higher period of meditation practice contributes to better attitude. Age and marital status of the meditators influence their attitude. However, men and women do not have perceptible difference in their attitude.

Conclusion: Undertaking such type of studies among different sections of the population would help in targeting interested people and employing suitable strategies for improving the adoption of health promoting practices such as meditation. This appears to be relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, when people are prone to psychological and psycho-somatic disorders.

Keywords: Meditation; Attitude; Study; COVID-19 pandemic; Meditation; Relaxation; Stress

Introduction

Meditation, a type of mind-body complementary medicine is commonly used for relaxation and stress reduction. During meditation, one focuses attention and eliminates the stream of jumbled thoughts crowding the mind and causing stress. This process results in enhanced physical and emotional well-being. (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/meditation/in-depth/meditation/art-20045858> retrieved 7th June 2021). It has been observed that students achieve better psychological wellbeing through meditation for a period of three months, when compared to before its practice [1]. The “innovation-decision process” from Diffusion of Innovations conceptualises the “Attitude” stage as one which occurs when a person forms an

opinion about a practice based on various factors including its relative advantage and compatibility [2]. Knowledge, Attitudes and Beliefs (KAB) survey on the interest and understanding of meditation has been reported. It would be important to discover current KAB to overcome barriers and determine what would motivate people to learn meditation and mindfulness techniques [3].

Objective

A study was carried out to analyze the attitude towards meditation, considering the fact that understanding this will be helpful for adopting suitable measures for improving its practice among people, thus contributing to a healthier society.

Materials and Methods

Data was collected on-line from a randomly selected sample of 100 meditating people and 100 non-meditators using a questionnaire containing details such as age, education, marital status and gender of the respondents, period of meditation practice and the benefits of meditation. The perceptions of the respondents on benefits, which depict its relative advantage and compatibility were considered to be indicating their attitude towards meditation. The attitude score was worked out based on the no. of benefits reported. The data was analyzed and interpreted as scores and frequencies. ANOVA and t test were the statistical tools used.

Results

Table 1 shows the attitude of meditators towards meditation. Majority (77%) feel that meditation can achieve calmness and mind relaxation. 57 % have the attitude that meditation helps to reduce stress. 45 % are of the opinion that meditation enhances

awareness and mindfulness of one’s actions, behavior and relationships. 50 % feel that meditation improves their health, while 66 % feel that it helps in improving concentration. Only 1% of meditators have a negative attitude towards meditation through reporting no benefits (Table 1). Table 2 shows the attitude of non-meditators towards meditation. 71 % are of the opinion that meditation calms and relaxes the mind as well as reduces stress. 62 % feel that it helps to improve concentration, improves health (56 %), while 40 % of non-meditators have the perception that meditation can enhance awareness and mindfulness of one’s actions, behavior and relationships (Table 2). Table 3 gives the score for attitude towards meditation of the respondents under different periods of meditation practice. Meditators with up to 12 months of practice have a comparatively lower score (3.4) than those with higher period of practice (Table 3). People with 36 and more months of practice have better attitude on meditation, as evident from their mean score of 5 / near to 5, which indicates the maximum no. of benefits reported in this study (Table 3).

Table 1: Attitude of meditators towards meditation.

Sl.no.	Attitude Towards Meditation	Respondents (%)
1	Calms and relaxes the mind	77
2	Helps to concentrate well	66
3	Reduces stress	57
4	Improves health	50
5	Enhances awareness and mindfulness of your actions, behaviour and relationships	45
6	No benefits through meditation	1

Table 2: Attitude of non-meditators towards meditation.

Sl No.	Attitude Towards Meditation	Respondents (%)
1	Reduces stress	71
2	Calms and relaxes the mind	71
3	Helps to concentrate well	62
4	Improves health	56
5	Enhances awareness and mindfulness of your actions, behaviour and relationships	40

Table 3: Attitude score of respondents with different periods of meditation practice.

Period of Meditation Practice (Months)	Respondents (%)	Mean Attitude Score of Respondents
Up to 12	15	3.4
18-24	19	4.3
36	6	5
40-48	6	5
48-60	9	4.9
96-420	45	4.8
Total	100	

Table 4 shows the proportion of meditators under various categories of the attitude score (based on mean and standard deviation). It is interesting to note that only 21 % of the meditators have low attitude score, while 42 % fall in the high score category. This is also substantiated from the data presented in Table 3, which shows that a total of 66 % meditators have mean attitude score of 5 / near to 5, indicating that they have a positive attitude towards all the benefits of meditation reported in this study. 37 % of the meditators are having a medium attitude score (Table 4).

However, unlike the meditators, maximum proportion (47%) of non-meditators fall in the low attitude score category, with only 23 % in the high score category (Table 5). Statistically significant difference exists between the mean attitude score of meditators and non-meditators, with meditators having a comparatively higher score (Table 6). It has been already mentioned that while 42 % of meditators come under the high attitude category (Table 4), the corresponding figure for non-meditators is 23 % only (Table 5).

Table 4: Categorization of attitude score of meditators.

Category* of Attitude Score	Respondents (%)
Low	21
Medium	37
High	42
Total	100

*Based on mean and standard deviation.

Table 5: Categorization of attitude score of non-meditators.

Category* of Attitude Score	Respondents (%)
Low	47
Medium	30
High	23
Total	100

*Based on mean and standard deviation.

Table 6: Test of significance of attitude score of meditators and non-meditators.

Detail	Meditators	Non-Meditators	t	Significance
Mean attitude score	3.36	2.16	4.08	p < 0.001

Table 7 shows the statistical test of significance of the attitude score under different periods of meditation practice. Significant difference exists in the attitude score of meditators with 1 to 6 months of meditation practice and the following periods of meditation practice, namely, 8 to 12 months, 24 to 36 months, 40 to 60 months and more than 60 months, with all these categories having a higher mean score than the 1 to 6 months category (Table 7). The results of ANOVA of the attitude score of meditators

with respect to age and marital status is shown in Table 8 & 9 respectively. Statistically significant difference exists in the score between different categories of age as well as marital status. Compared to the 20-30 years age group, meditators in the higher age groups have a higher attitude score (Table 8). With respect to marital status, while married meditators have a mean score of 4, it is only 3.3 for unmarried meditators (Table 9).

Table 7: Test of significance of attitude score under different periods of meditation practice.

Mean Attitude Score	Period of Meditation Practice (Months)		t	Significance
	1 to 6	8 to 12		
Mean attitude score	2.94	3.84	-2.06	p < 0.05
	1 to 6	24 to 36		
Mean attitude score	2.94	4.6	-2.19	p < 0.05
	1 to 6	40 to 60		
Mean attitude score	2.94	4.9	-2.46	p < 0.01
	1 to 6	> 60		
Mean attitude score	2.94	4.8	-2.46	p < 0.05
	1 to 6	> 60		

Table 8: ANOVA of age wise attitude score of the meditators.

Age Group (Years)	Mean Attitude Score	Variance	Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	Significance
20-30	2.5	2.7	Between groups	21.85	5	4.37	4.42	p < 0.001
30-40	4.4	0.72						
40-50	4.4	1.56						
50-60	3.7	0.54						
60-70	3.8	0.65						
70-80	3.7	1.33						

Table 9: ANOVA of marital status wise attitude score of the meditators.

Marital Status	Mean Attitude Score	Variance	Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F	Significance
Married	4	1.25	Between groups	4.3	1	4.3	3.2	p < 0.10
Unmarried	3.3	2.79						

Discussion

The result of the study shows that more than 50 % of meditators and non-meditators have an attitude that meditation helps to reduce stress. This could be attributed to the calmness and relaxation achieved through its practice, which again, is a benefit reported by a very high proportion of the respondents. The influence of meditation in reducing stress of the practitioners has been reported [4]. The perception of 40 % and more of meditators and non-meditators that it enhances awareness and mindfulness of one’s actions, behaviour and relationships is also a positive one, which could help meditators to sustain its practice and motivate non-meditators to learn it, when situation demands. Stress reduction and enhancement of self-awareness through meditation have also been reported (<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/12-benefits-of-meditation> May-help-fight-addictions- retrieved 29th May 2021). The attitude of more than 60 % of meditators and non-meditators in the study about meditation helping to improve concentration is logical, since it is a practice primarily based on the concept of concentration through focusing the mind.

The results indicate that non-meditators, who have not experienced its benefits are also having a good attitude towards meditation. This is a welcome trend, since motivating non meditators, who have a positive attitude towards meditation can be more fruitful in making them learn and practice it. As per the Knowledge- Attitude- Practice (KAP) concept, attitude towards a practice will favor its adoption among people. However, non-meditators under this study are not having that much of attitude towards meditation as that of meditators. The statistically significant difference between the mean attitude score of meditators and non-meditators also establishes this, with meditators having a comparatively higher score. This could be because the benefits could be more for the those who have actually experienced meditation through its practice. People with three years and more of meditation are having better attitude

than those with a lower practice period, with the former group having an attitude score equal to or near to the maximum score of the respondents in the study. The result of t test of the mean attitude score under different periods of meditation practice also establishes the influence of higher period of / experience in meditation in developing a better attitude towards the practice. This may be attributed to the experience of more benefits through higher period of meditation practice. What you learn from experience contributes to your information (<https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/basicproblems002/2015/01/21/the-inextricable-connection-between-knowledge-and-experience/>- retrieved 29th May 2021). Statistically significant difference observed in the score with respect to age and marital status of the meditators indicate the influence of these characteristics on the attitude of the respondents towards meditation. Compared to the lowest age group (20-30 years), meditators in the upper age groups have a higher attitude score. Comparatively higher attitude score was observed in the case of married than un-married meditators. Married individuals are reported to have lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol than those who are not married, which supports the belief that unmarried people face more psychological stress than married individuals (Married people have lower levels of stress hormone. Carnegie Mellon University, Feb 2017. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/02/170213131232.htm>-retrieved 2nd June 2021). This could be the probable reason for the trend observed in this study also. Gender wise statistically non-significant difference observed with respect to the attitude score of meditators in the study implies that men and women do not have perceptible difference in their attitude towards meditation. This is a positive trend, indicating that even women who usually face more mental stress than men are also able to get good benefits through meditation, helping them in developing a favourable attitude towards it. It has been reported that almost an equal proportion of men and women perceive meditation to be helpful [5].

Conclusion

Both meditators and non-meditators have a positive attitude on various benefits of meditation such as stress reduction, enhancement of awareness/ mindfulness of one's actions / behaviour and relationships, improving concentration etc. However, meditators have more attitude than the non-meditators, probably because the benefits of meditation will be more for the those who have experienced them through practice. Higher period of meditation practice is found to contribute to a better attitude. Age and marital status of the meditators influence their attitude. However, men and women do not have perceptible difference in attitude. It will be worthwhile if more studies are undertaken by competent research institutions, yoga centres, NGOs etc. among different sections of the population to understand their perceptions on relaxation/health promoting practices such as meditation, yoga, art of living etc. This would prove useful for targeting interested people and employing suitable strategies for improving the adoption of such practices, which appears to be relevant in the present context of the COVID-19 pandemic, when many people could be prone to psychological problems and psycho-somatic disorders.

Acknowledgement

The authors are thankful to the office bearers/members of WEDO and SYRC, Kozhikode, Kerala, India for all the assistance provided in conducting the study.

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DOI: [10.19080/JYP.2022.09.555762](https://doi.org/10.19080/JYP.2022.09.555762)

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