

Immediate Effects of Practising Meditation on Secondary School Students

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Abstract

Meditation is a practice that combines the mind and body, aiming to increase calmness and physical relaxation, improve psychological balance, and enhance overall health and well-being (Kiefer, 2021). The present study was qualitative in nature and aimed to collate the responses of school students regarding their experiences with meditative practices. As meditative practices impact every individual differently on subtle levels, the students were given journals in which they had to record their everyday experiences of meditative practices. They felt calm, relaxed, stress-free and peaceful after practising meditation. For some of them, the meditation was amazing, and they enjoyed these sessions. Most of the students reported that they felt it was a good experience in their lives, and some of them reported it as a great experience. Some of the students said that meditative practices were helpful for them either in improving their personal life or academic life. A few also felt a decrease in their stress and overthinking. In addition, some unique responses were also obtained from the students, which count for their spiritual well-being. Along with all the positive responses obtained from the students as above, some of the negative responses were also recorded, such as a few of the students reported that sometimes they didn't like to do meditation, or they felt bored. So, it can be concluded that with a few exceptions, most of the students observed improvements in themselves and enjoyed the meditative practices.

Keywords: Meditation, Meditative Practices, Effects of Meditation, School Students

Introduction

Meditation is a practice of the mind and body associated with increasing calmness and physical relaxation, improving psychological balance and enhancing overall health and well-being (Kiefer, 2021). Patanjali defined Meditation as the state of mind that remains the same from one moment to the next. The mind, filled with awareness, is so still, so calm, and free of disturbance that from one moment to the next, the state of the mind is identical (Jain, 2024). There are generally two types of meditative practices, namely concentrative, also termed as Focused Attention (FA) Meditation and mindfulness meditation, also termed as Open monitoring (OM) meditation (Lippelt et al., 2014; Lutz et al., 2008).

Meditative practices enable students to acquire lifelong skills, including taking personal responsibility for their health, happiness, and success, as well as social responsibilities such as being compassionate, empathetic, and inclusive towards others. (Ramasubramanian, 2017). Meditation leads one to his inner self, which is the source of all kinds of energies (Sharma, 2018). Meditative practices are accountable for producing significant improvements in mindfulness of the participants (Greif & Kaufman, 2019; Hanna & Pidgeon, 2018; Lyzowski et al., 2019; Phang et al., 2016; Pidgeon et al., 2013). The practice of

mindfulness meditation resulted in improvements in well-being among the practitioners (Fazia et al., 2023; Hanna & Pidgeon, 2018; Ramasubramanian, 2017; Vibe et al., 2013; Yang et al., 2018).

Meditative practices significantly improved cardiovascular efficiency and homeostatic control of the body and play a significant beneficial role in the prevention of heart disease and stroke (Shilpa et al., 2020). Transcendental meditation is effective in improvements in blood pressure and cardiovascular function among adolescents at risk for hypertension (Barnes et al., 2001). Sahaja Yoga Meditation resulted in significant improvements in the blood pressure of the participants (Chung et al., 2012). Brain education-based meditation resulted in significant reductions in the levels of LDL cholesterol among diabetic and hypertensive patients (Lee et al., 2019).

During meditation, there is generally a tremendous acceleration of energy to the individual cells of the body (Sharma, 2018). Practising meditation resulted in lowering fatigue among the participants (Bleasdale et al., 2019; Mo et al., 2021; Tang et al., 2007). Mindfulness-based training exhibited significant reductions in compassion fatigue among human service professionals (Hanna & Pidgeon, 2018). Chaplains working in hospices for older adults practising meditation exhibited lesser emotional exhaustion and depersonalization as burnout markers (Pandya, 2020). The practice of meditation resulted in preventing burnout among human service professionals (Hanna & Pidgeon, 2018; Seppala et al., 2014). Meditation helps in regulating the mind, as while practising meditation, one observes the mind constantly (Patel & Pollock, 2018). It improves the ability to monitor and redirect the attentional focus in case of conflicting thoughts (Lippelt et al., 2014). Mindfulness meditation resulted in effective reductions in mind wandering (Bennike et al., 2017; Fazia et al., 2023). and improvements in attention among the students (Ching et al., 2015; Fazia et al., 2023). A brief integrative meditation resulted in an improvement in executive attention among Chinese undergraduates (Tang et al., 2007).

Mindfulness meditative practices also help in improving psychological health among college students (Ramasubramanian, 2017). Meditation is an effective tool for the reduction of psychological distress (Phang et al., 2016; Valosek et al., 2021). A mindfulness-based stress management program resulted in a significant decrease in mental distress among medical and psychology students (Phang et al., 2015; Vibe et al., 2013). Mindfulness-based intervention also resulted in reductions in overall distress (Fazia et al., 2023).

Integrative meditation resulted in lowering depression in Chinese undergraduates (Tang et al., 2007). Students practising transcendental meditation showed significant reductions in depression (Bleasdale et al., 2019; Burns et al., 2011). Loving-kindness meditation helps to reduce negative elements of depression at work (Ivtzan & Quirk, 2018). Students who practised mindfulness-based intervention showed significant reductions in depression scores (Bennett & Dorjee, 2015; Cavanagh et al., 2013).

Meditation is a journey of a person from restlessness to peacefulness (Patel & Pollock, 2018). Meditation resulted in improvements in sleep among the practitioners (Wendt et al., 2015). Mindfulness meditation helps improve memory (Ching et al., 2015; Lykins et al., 2010); participants in meditation also showed enhancements in working memory (Axelsen et al., 2022; Ziegler et al., 2019). Mindfulness-based intervention resulted in significant improvements in academic attainment (Bennett & Dorjee, 2015). Deep breathing meditation acted as a promising solution for facing academic and professional challenges (Paul et al., 2007). Mindfulness meditation was also able to improve learning effectiveness among university students (Ching et al., 2015). Chaplains working in hospices for older adults practising meditation exhibited higher personal achievement (Pandya, 2020).

Loving-kindness meditation helped to reduce negative elements of anxiety at work (Ivtzan & Quirk, 2018). Sahaja Yoga Meditation resulted in significant reductions in anxiety among the participants (Chung et al., 2012). Deep breathing meditation helped students decrease nervousness, self-doubt and concentration loss. (Paul et al., 2007). Students practising meditation showed significant reductions in anger (Bleasdale et al., 2019; Tang et al., 2007). A brief integrative meditation resulted in a higher positive mood in Chinese undergraduates (Tang et al., 2007). Meditation is considered a perfect therapy to keep the body, mind and soul balanced (Sampaio et al., 2016).

Meditation is a method of physical and mental self-regulation that can adjust mental state and correct behavioural patterns (Mo et al., 2021). Students self-reported an increase in their self-confidence after practising transcendental meditation (Wendt et al., 2015). Mindfulness-based meditation demonstrated improvements in the self-compassion of the practitioners (Huberty et al., 2019; Erogul et al., 2014; Pidgeon et al., 2013). Mindfulness-based meditation improved self-efficacy among medical students (Phang et al., 2015). Students practising transcendental meditation showed improvement in self-esteem (Bleasdale et al., 2019). Meditation supports forgiveness among college undergraduates (Oman et al., 2008). Mindfulness-based meditation significantly improved the empathy levels of health professionals (Kemper & Khirallah, 2015). Participants of online meditation programs exhibited greater geriatric social work competencies (Pandya, 2019).

Sahaja Yoga Meditation resulted in significant improvements in the quality of life of the participants (Chung et al., 2012). Students who practised transcendental meditation self-reported an increase in their happiness (Wendt et al., 2015).

Meditation helped in decreasing anxiety significantly among the students at different levels (Bennett & Dorjee, 2015; Bleasdale et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2013; Greif & Kaufman, 2019; Ratanasiripong et al., 2015; Wendt et al., 2015).

Positive emotions can help in building personal reserves in ways that lead to a greater appreciation for life, more meaning in life, and contribute to forming a protective shield to cope with future adversity (Ramasubramanian, 2017).

The oldest shreds of evidence of meditative practices are found in India. India introduced meditative practices to the world when Swami Vivekananda delivered a presentation at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in the 20th century (Nash, 2025). India has the largest size of young population, and it is significant to harness their potential. Can meditative practices help young students deal with challenges and make significant progress in life? This is a significant research question in the Indian context. So, the current study was conducted to explore the same question of the effect of meditative practices on secondary school students.

Objective of the study

As per the reviews quoted above, a lot of research was done on the effects of meditative practices, but there is a scarcity of such research conducted on school students. So, the present study aimed to collate the responses of the students in terms of their experiences after doing meditative practices recorded in qualitative journals.

Research Question

Whether the use of meditative practices as an intervention add to the experiences of secondary school students?

Intervention

The technique that was chosen to practice every day, explicitly oriented towards mindfulness of different entities such as breathing, sensations, thoughts, feelings and emotions and the others chosen to practice once in the whole period, intended to foster kindness and compassion, which might uniquely affect the students. Forgiveness meditation and loving-kindness meditation were included to serve the purpose.

Each session started with relaxation using a body scan. During relaxation, we give attention to each part of our body and use the energy of mindfulness to embrace each organ of our body with love and care (Hanh, 2012). Physical relaxation also gives mental and emotional calmness, which makes it easy to go deep in meditation. It works as a stress relief tool (Patel & Pollock, 2018). It releases bodily tension and leads an individual to a psychophysiological state of decreased arousal and decreased stress levels (Hwang et. al, 2017). Deep relaxation heals and restores the whole body (Hanh, 2012).

When an individual brings intentional attention to one's ongoing stream of thoughts, sensations and emotions as they arise, it allows an individual to react with less impulsivity and flexibility (Tan & Martin, 2012). Breathing is the most important component of this practice. It starts with a focus on breathing, noting every inhale and exhale, and patiently returning attention to the breathing each time it wanders, and then attention is deliberately brought to the other components.

Data Collection

A sample is a small proportion of the population that is selected for observation and analysis; small-sample research has made a significant contribution to the statistical analysis of research data, particularly in experimental studies (Best et al., 2017). For the present study, the sample was selected from the population of students of class IX studying in government schools of Chandigarh. Out of 93 government secondary and senior secondary schools in Chandigarh, a government school was selected by using a convenience sampling technique. An intact section of class IX was randomly selected for experimentation and forty sessions of meditative practices were conducted. For collecting data to get an insight into the experiences of meditative practices as felt by the students, separate journals were provided to every student with the instructions to note down their feelings after each session. There were 43 students in this group, out of which 35 students recorded the qualitative journals, which were given to the students to record their experiences after each session of meditative practices.

The researcher ensured entries in the journals by every student after each session of meditative practices. The students were given general instructions on the first day on how to fill out the qualitative journal around three points. First, whether they were able to follow the instructions, second, what they felt during and after the meditation and third, if they found any difference in them after doing meditation. No suggestions were given by the researcher regarding what they could feel. They were asked to record anything that happened to them openly without any hesitation.

Results

Qualitative analysis was done for the responses recorded by students in the journals. The responses given by the students are grouped using various keywords that came up during the analysis

Ability to Practice

Students frequently reported that they were capable of practising the meditation as per the instructions. For instance, one participant said *I was able to follow instructions*, and another said that *I followed instructions properly and very easily*. Sometimes, they felt a little disturbance in concentrating on the

subjects of meditation, such as *Today I can't do meditation with my full concentration. I tried to do meditation with my full concentration, but I couldn't do this.*

Amazing

Many students noted feeling great during the practice of meditation and various reported it as the best experience of their life. The students reported like *Mujhe hmesha ki tarah boht achha laga* and *Acha laga, boht acha laga, boht boht boht acha laga*. Occasionally, students compared the feelings before and after meditation or with the previous day, such as a student reported feeling bad before meditation but good after the session of meditative practice. For instance, there was a response *Aur aaj kll se zayada acha laga* and another *I am feeling very good as compared to last week*. A few times, they reported not feeling good after the meditation.

Relaxed

One of the most common responses that emerged was feeling calm, peaceful and meditated. One of the responses was like *After meditation mere ko bilkul calm feel huya.. day by day mujhe khud me bohot calmness feel ho rhi hai...* These responses were repeated more times than any other response, and they were present every day in one or the other journal. Many students felt relaxed, relieved, refreshed, happy and satisfied after practising meditation like *I feel very relaxed, and my mind is very fresh*. A lot of times, they responded that they felt stress-free or tension-free after the sessions, several times they felt cool, and a few times they were conscious. For instance, *Ajj mujhe subah se paper ki tension thi par jab maine meditation kiya toh meri sari tension dur ho gai*. Many times, the students said that they felt very light, several times they felt like their body was floating in the air, such as *Aisa lag raha tha jaise mai hava me ud raha hu*. A few times, they felt some heaviness, and a few times, they felt anxious during the practice.

Sleepy

After practising meditation, many of the students reported that they felt sleepy, various times they fell asleep, and several times they didn't fall asleep. For instance, there was a response like *Aaj mujhe boht achha lga aur boht neend aa rhi thi* and another one like *I feel fully relaxed and thoughtless and sleepy too*.

Energetic

Sometimes the students reported that they were feeling energetic, confident and active, like *Feeling more energetic, positive thoughts*. Several times, they felt that their tiredness had gone away. For instance, *I love this class. Baki class like math, science classes ki thakan mit jati hai* and one more response was *Aaj meri saari thakavat utar gai aur kafi behtar laga*. A few times, they also felt lazy after practising meditation.

Thoughtless

Sometimes the students reported that they felt thoughtless after practising meditation. A few times, there were positive thoughts in their minds, and all the negative thinking was going away from them. Such as *I feel fully relaxed and thoughtless and sleepy too*, and *I feel very light. Sari negative thinking mujh se dur ho rahi hai. Thanks for this.*

Bodily Sensations

Sometimes the students felt the stillness in their bodies, and at various times they felt sensations or vibrations in their bodies, and a few times they were so aware of their body that they felt the circulation of blood in their bodies. For instance, *Shareer me khoon chal raha hai mehsoos kiya* and one more response was like *Yeh bohot acha tha.. meri body bohot still ho gyi.. mujhe apni body ka har part mehsoos ho raha tha*.

Joy

Sometimes, the students reported that they liked doing meditative practices, enjoyed the meditation sessions, or found them interesting. Occasionally, they loved the sessions so much that they didn't want to open their eyes after meditation, or they wanted to meditate for a bit longer. For instance, *I feel good and I like the meditation*. A few students expressed a desire to meditate every day, as seen in responses such as *Aur mai chahti hu meditation roj hoye*. Another response was, *I am happy, but I am also sad because it will be over in a few days*, which was reported a few days before the last session. Students also felt bored a few times, and sometimes they felt nothing like *Aaj kuch bhi nahi laga*.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness meditation was practised twice during the whole period. It was planned to be practised once, but on the second time, it was practised at student-driven demand, as many of the students desired to practice it once again. Most of the students reported that they had forgiven others either in the first session or in the second one, some of the students said that they had forgiven their selves, and a few had asked for forgiveness from the ones whom they had hurt, like *Maine apne bhai ko maaf kar diya.. Thanks to meditation*. Some of the students replied that they could not forgive someone or their own selves. For instance, *Mujhe is wali meditation main bohot acchha lga.. maine apne aap ko toh maaf kar diya par kisi aur ko nahi kar payi lekin mujhe yeh wali meditation bohot acchhi lagi* and another response was recorded as *Mai dusro ko to maaf kar payi lekin apne aap ko nahi kar payi.. par dusro ko maaf kar ke ab acha lag rha hai*.

Loving-Kindness

Similar to the Forgiveness meditation, the Loving-kindness meditation was also planned to be practised once during the whole period, but practised twice because of the desire of students. A few students reported that they felt love for their selves after practising loving-kindness meditation, some of the students felt love for their parents, and a few also felt love for their siblings, friends or teachers, various students felt love for everyone in the whole world and one of the students said that he/ she has extended his/her love up to Mars. For instance, there was a response *Maine pehle apne ko pyar kiya.. aur uske baad mera bhai aur mere parents.. apne friends bhi*, another one was *I love myself too much. I love my parents. I love the world*, and one more was *Mujhe kafi achha laga aur maine apna pyar mangal greh tak pahuncha diya*.

Physical Conditions

Sometimes students reported that they were not able to meditate as they were having a cough, cold or fever. Some of them said that their legs/feet/knees or back were aching, sometimes they reported having headaches or body or neck pain, a few times they shared having watery eyes and several times they also reported that their headache was being cured with meditation. Once a student shared that his body pain had gone after practising meditation, once a student also said that he/she was anxious before meditation but he/she felt good after the meditation session, once a student also felt relief from her menstrual pain with the practice of meditation. The above responses revealed that the students may become more aware of their pain during the practice of meditation, and sometimes they felt relief from the pain they were feeling before meditation. A few instances are as *I feel a little pain in my neck; Mujhe aaj bukhari tha.. isliye mai dhyaan nahi laga paya..; My lower legs were aching a little bit while sitting in meditation, Leg pain.. Back pain.. But a good feeling*.

Thankful

A lot of times, the students felt thankful to the researcher for helping them in practising meditation. Sometimes they felt sorry, and this was usually when the students were not feeling well. They said sorry

for not being able to practice meditation properly. So, the above responses exhibited that the students felt some satisfaction after practising meditation. For instance, *Thank you ma'am, ki aap ne hame meditation karvayi hai* and *Thanks for the session*.

Improvements

A few times, the students reported that the meditative practices were helpful to them, and several students responded that they saw improvement in themselves. Sometimes the students replied that they had observed improvement in their studies, and they could learn easily now. Several students noticed an improvement in their physical activities or sports. A student reported that his/her overthinking had been lessened, another responded that his/her sadness was lessened, and one more said that his/her anger had faded. So, these responses made it clear that the students observed various improvements in themselves as a result of meditative practices. For instance, *Pehle mujhe yaad karne me mushkil aati thi par ab yaad ho jata hai; Mai physical activity me achha ho gaya hu; Yesterday I found a difference in me when I was studying. I can focus better than before*.

Unique Responses

Various times, students reported some different or unique or new experiences after practising meditation. Several times, they felt like they came into another world, a student felt something very special, the students felt some transference of energy, and a few times, the students felt like some unique power was created inside them. Once a student had some secretion in his/her backbone, once a student felt grateful and once a student felt like some music was playing inside him/her, once a student reported that his/her awareness was going to the center of his/her head, once a student said that he/she saw everything from a different point of view, once a student was so mindful of his present time that he/she had felt every moment. So, the above responses revealed some unique effects of meditative practices on the students. Most of the above responses were felt once by the students, but these responses even matter as per the context of the meditative practices. For instance, *I am feeling some secretion in my backbone; Mujhe aisa lagta hai ke mere ander koi alag si shakti ka Janam hua hai; Mujhe lga ke mai kisi dusri duniya me aa gaya hu*.

Discussion

People are living in the hectic and chaotic world of the 21st century, epitomised by stress and strain. Everyone is always so hurried that they have no time for themselves. Most people remain involved in so many unnecessary things that the necessary things get missed, creating an imbalance in their lives. Everyone is so busy that they forget their existence and keep moving away from their true nature and strengths. The need of the hour is to get out of this lifestyle to live again, come closer to one's self to heal bodies, minds and souls.

The students are also a part of this fast-paced period, where most people express a lack of time and adequacy. They are trying to learn in a very competitive environment and are not always able to deal with academics, relationships, expectations, peer pressure, domestic distractions or obstructions of social media. The mental space is so filled with unrest that it is constantly buzzing, and no one has the time to pause. In such a period of anxiety and melancholy, it is challenging to make them believe in their selves so that they can find out their inner strengths and be present in the tasks they are doing. They have to be educated to spend some time understanding their nature and develop confidence in themselves. Many self-help techniques may be available to deal with the demands of the present; meditative practices have been used since time immemorial, and research also indicates the benefits of meditative practices for improving

the quality of life (Dasanayaka et al., 2023). Moreover, the things learned in early years impact an individual for the rest whole life (Hyppolite, 2025).

According to Swami Rama (2013), “Meditation is a practical means for calming yourself, for letting go of your biases and seeing what is, openly and clearly. It is a way of training the mind so that you are not distracted and caught up in its endless churning.” It is a medium to reach infinite potential by rising above one’s limited existence. One learns to experience and accept things in an open way instead of judging, controlling or changing them.

So, in the present research, the immediate effects of meditative practices were studied on secondary school students, and stunning results were witnessed. The students were asked to write about their experiences of the meditative practices. They were not provided with any options; they were free to record what they had experienced, positive or negative, in the journal. Most of the students reported that they felt it was a good experience in their lives, and some of them reported it as a great experience. They felt calm, relaxed, stress-free and peaceful after practising meditation. For some of them, the meditation sessions were amazing, and they enjoyed these sessions. They were thankful for the practice of meditation. Some of the students said that meditative practices were helpful for them either in improving their personal life or academic life. Elaborating on this, they revealed that their concentration on studies improved, and they can focus more on their studies as well as understand more easily now. A few also felt a decrease in their stress and overthinking. In addition, some unique responses were also obtained from the students, which count for their spiritual well-being. Some of them were feeling that they would miss the meditation sessions. Along with all the positive responses obtained from the students as above, some of the negative responses were also recorded, such as a few of the students reported that sometimes they didn’t like to do meditation, or they felt bored. One of them said that he/she felt pain in his/her back and feet, and a few observed that sometimes they were not able to concentrate while practising meditation. So, it can be concluded that with a few exceptions, most of the students observed improvements in themselves and enjoyed the meditative practices.

Implications

Meditative practices bestow benefits on all the dimensions of health and wellness of a person. As reported from the empirical data of the current study, meditative practices can play a vital role in the improvement of the overall health and well-being of the students. Even the students themselves felt and shared that meditation should be a part of their studies and lives.

Conclusion

We can conclude that in the present era of stress and strain, meditative practices can be counted as a valuable tool for the well-being and emotional balance of the students. This helps the students to pause and observe themselves, go deeper and become more developed personalities. Meditation is a self-regulated mental process that accompanies deep relaxation and increased internalised attention (Singh et al., 2019). As per the students’ words, it aids in their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellness.

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