



REVISITING THE ROLE OF TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION IN ENHANCING HAPPINESS AND SELF-EFFICACY

A Review of Singh et al. (2024)

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Original Paper:

Pragya Singh, Ajit Kumar Singh, Madhurima Pradhan (2024) The Impact of Transcendental Meditation on Happiness and Self-Efficacy among University Students. *Frontiers in Health Informatics*, 13 (3), 4898-4916

Abstract:

This review critically evaluates the article “The Impact of Transcendental Meditation on Happiness and Self-Efficacy among University Students” by Singh, Singh, and Pradhan (2024). The study investigates the effects of Transcendental Meditation (TM) on university students’ happiness and self-efficacy. The authors report significant improvements after a six-month TM program. This review acknowledges the strengths of the study, such as its clear objectives, standardized measurement tools, and structured intervention, while also highlighting limitations, including the absence of a control group, reliance on self-reported measures, limited cultural diversity, and possible biases. The paper contributes to the growing evidence of meditation’s benefits for mental health in educational contexts, but future research with stronger methodological rigor is needed to confirm and generalize the findings.

Keywords: Transcendental Meditation, Happiness, Self-Efficacy, University Students, Well-being

1. INTRODUCTION:

The transition from high school to university is widely recognized as a pivotal stage in a young adult’s life, characterized by heightened academic, social, and personal challenges. During this period, students often face increased stress, adaptation difficulties, and fluctuating self-confidence, making the maintenance of mental and emotional well-being a significant concern. Promoting psychological resilience and holistic development has

therefore become a priority for educators and mental health practitioners alike. In recent years, meditation-based interventions, particularly Transcendental Meditation (TM), have gained attention for their potential to enhance psychological well-being, happiness, and self-efficacy among students. TM involves the practice of personalized mantras in structured sessions, aiming to reduce stress, improve focus, and foster emotional stability. The study under review examined 200 university students aged 18–23 years, all without prior meditation experience, who participated in a three-day TM program at Maharishi University, Lucknow. Participants engaged in twice-daily 20-minute meditation sessions, with outcomes assessed through standardized Self-Efficacy and Happiness scales and semi-structured interviews. The findings demonstrated significant improvements in both happiness and self-efficacy ($p < 0.01$), alongside a weak positive correlation between the two variables. While these results suggest the potential of TM as a complementary tool for enhancing student well-being, methodological limitations such as purposive sampling and short intervention duration restrict generalizability and the assessment of long-term effects.

Reviewing this study is important for multiple reasons. First, it contributes to the growing evidence supporting meditation as an educational intervention that promotes holistic student development. Second, a critical examination allows identification of research gaps, methodological limitations, and areas for future inquiry, guiding the design of more rigorous studies to validate TM's effectiveness in diverse higher education contexts. Finally, understanding the interplay between happiness and self-efficacy provides insights for educators and policymakers aiming to foster resilient, well-rounded students capable of navigating the challenges of university life.

2. SUMMARY OF THE PAPER:

The article employed an explanatory research design, sampling 200 university students (aged 18–23 years) through purposive sampling. Participants underwent TM training and practiced it over six months. Data were collected using validated scales on happiness (Rastogi & Moorjani, 2016) and self-efficacy (Mathur & Bhatnagar, 2012). Paired t-tests revealed statistically significant improvements in both happiness and self-efficacy scores after the intervention. Additionally, a weak but positive correlation was observed between happiness and self-efficacy (Singh et al., 2024).

3. CRITICAL ANALYSIS:

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on meditation in education. Its strengths include the use of standardized scales and a structured six-month intervention. However, reliance on purposive sampling, absence of a control group, and cultural homogeneity (majority Hindu participants) limit its generalizability. Self-reported measures also raise concerns about social desirability bias. While the findings suggest TM is beneficial, stronger causal evidence is needed.

4. CONTEXT AND COMPARISONS:

The study aligns with international research showing meditation's benefits in reducing stress, depression, and anxiety while improving resilience and coping. However, comparisons with other interventions such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) or yoga were limited. The findings are consistent with previous pilot studies, though the weak correlation between happiness and self-efficacy raises questions about whether TM's benefits are primarily psychological, social, or contextual.

5. REFLECTIONS & RELEVANCES:

The study is highly relevant in today's educational climate, where student stress levels are at record highs (American College Health Association, 2022). Incorporating TM into academic environments could support holistic well-being. However, institutions must balance scientific evidence with cultural and ethical sensitivity before adopting such programs (Oman, 2018).

6. STRENGTH:

- Standardized assessment tools were used.
- Six-month intervention ensured longitudinal observation.
- Statistically significant results support the intervention's potential.
- Addresses a timely and critical issue in higher education.

7. LIMITATIONS:

- Lack of control group reduces ability to infer causality.
- Purposive sampling may introduce selection bias.
- Religious homogeneity reduces cultural generalizability.
- Reliance on self-report measures may be influenced by desirability bias (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007).
- Short study duration limits understanding of long-term impacts.

8. LEARNED EVALUATION:

The reviewed article provides promising evidence for the use of TM in enhancing happiness and self-efficacy among university students. Its strengths lie in its clear objectives and practical relevance, but methodological weaknesses limit the conclusiveness of its findings. While the study highlights TM's potential as a mental health intervention, further research with rigorous designs, cross-cultural samples, and longitudinal data is essential. TM may be an effective adjunctive practice in higher education, but it should be approached with critical awareness of its limitations and controversies.

9. CONCLUSION:

The reviewed study provides preliminary evidence and establish a prudential connectivity that Transcendental Meditation enhances happiness and self-efficacy among university students. Despite methodological limitations, the findings highlight the potential value of integrating meditation practices into educational institutions to foster student well-being.

10. FUTURE RECOMMEDATIONS:

- Employ randomized controlled trials (RCTs) with larger and more diverse samples.
- Include long-term follow-up to assess sustained benefits.
- Explore cross-cultural differences in TM's impact (Oman, 2018).
- Incorporate objective physiological and cognitive measures alongside self-reports.
- Examine potential applications of TM for students with mental health concerns (Davidson & Kaszniak, 2015).

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