Meditation Practice is Associated With Greater Well-Being During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

Meditation is a tool with a long history of use and is known to reduce stress and enhance overall health and well-being (Carmody and Baer, 2008). The uncertainty and distressing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with mitigation measures including isolation and social distancing, have taken a toll on mental health (Kumar and Nayar, 2021). Previous studies have showcased the benefits of mindfulness and meditation practices as a means to minimize stress and deal with the challenges manifested by the pandemic (Green et al., 2021, Antonova et al., 2021, Pollizzi et al. 2020). Here we investigate the relationship between meditation practice and well-being during the onset of the pandemic.

How does meditation effect well-being?

We predicted that more meditation practice per week would be related to greater well-being.

Methods

Participants: We measured the frequency of meditation practice and well-being in a national sample of 389 meditators in the U.S. enrolled in the Contemplative Caregiving 2020 study. Participants accepted into the study were required to have some prior meditation experience, to live in the US, and to be 18 or older.

Procedure: Self-report data were collected via Qualtrics every 4 months for a year. Data reported here are from the baseline data collection that took place between June of 2020 and January of 2021.

Measures: Participants self-reported how many days per week, on average, they were practicing formal meditation practice during the pandemic, Frequency of practice prior to the onset of the pandemic was positively correlated with practice during the pandemic, r = 0.43, p < 0.001.

Before pandemic:

- Participants practiced formal meditation an average of 3.62 days per week before the pandemic and 5.09 days per week during the pandemic.
- Frequency of practice prior to the pandemic was positively correlated with practice during the pandemic, r = 0.43, p < 0.001.

During pandemic:

- More meditation practice per week was associated with greater well-being.
- We found a significant positive correlation between frequency with which participants experience each element of well-being and emotional, social, and psychological well-being.

Well-being Scores

The average well-being score amongst the practitioners was 46.18.

Conclusion

- On average, study participants increased the frequency with which they were practicing meditation during the pandemic.
- More meditation practice per week was associated with greater well-being, and this remained true when accounting for age and gender.
- These data suggest that practicing meditation more frequently promotes greater emotional, social, and psychological well-being.
- Alternatively, this correlation could suggest that individuals with greater well-being may be better able to maintain a regular meditation practice.
- These results suggest that meditation may be a useful tool for promoting a sense of well-being and emotional resilience as individuals navigate the challenges brought on by the pandemic.

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References