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EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF PREKSHA MEDITATION ON THE HAPPINESS LEVELS OF RETIREES

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Abstract: The study aimed to examine the effects of Preksha Meditation on the happiness levels of 30 retirees from Amroha district, Uttar Pradesh, with an average age of 73.33 years. Researchers employed the Happiness Scale (HS-RHMJ), developed by Himanshi Rastogi and Janki Moorjani in 2017, which consists of 62 items divided into five dimensions of happiness, each rated on a five-point Likert scale. Participants were asked to complete the happiness scale both before and after undergoing a one-week Preksha Meditation training program, which included sessions held both in the morning and afternoon. The results demonstrated a notable increase in the mean scores for all dimensions of happiness from pre-test to post-test. The statistical analysis revealed that the 't' value was significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$), indicating a marked improvement in overall happiness following the meditation intervention. These findings suggest that Preksha Meditation has a positive impact on enhancing the happiness levels of retired individuals. The substantial improvement observed in the study highlights the potential benefits of incorporating meditation practices into the daily routines of older adults to improve their overall well-being and life satisfaction.

Index Terms - Preksha Meditation, Happiness, Career Well-being, Subjective Well-being, Social Well-being, Spiritual Well-being and Emotional Well-being.

I. INTRODUCTION

Retirement represents a major life transition, bringing numerous changes in daily routines, social roles, and relationships. This stage offers freedom and leisure but also challenges related to identity, purpose, and overall well-being. Consequently, the quest for happiness becomes crucial for many retirees as they adjust to this new phase. Recently, meditation has garnered significant attention for its potential to enhance well-being across diverse populations. Among various meditation techniques, Preksha Meditation, rooted in the Jain tradition, stands out as a promising approach to fostering mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Integrating ancient wisdom with modern scientific principles, Preksha Meditation includes practices aimed at enhancing self-awareness, inner peace, and holistic development. Despite the growing interest in meditation, research specifically examining its effects on retirees remains limited. Given the unique challenges and opportunities of retirement, this period provides an ideal context to explore the effectiveness of meditation in enhancing happiness and quality of life.

Preksha Meditation, systematized by the Jain monk *Acharya Mahapragya* in the 20th century, emphasizes self-awareness, inner peace, and spiritual growth. It incorporates various techniques, such as *Kayotsarga* (body and mind relaxation), *Anupreksha* (contemplation on specific themes), and *Shvas Preksha* (breath awareness). These practices aim to deepen self-understanding and facilitate inner transformation. A distinctive feature of Preksha Meditation is its focus on visualization and perception. Practitioners engage in visualizations of colored lights or internal organs to aid mental purification and concentration. Additionally, *Leshya Dhyana* involves perceiving subtle body vibrations to enhance inner awareness. Preksha Meditation is accessible to individuals of all backgrounds and beliefs, promoting mindfulness, peace, and self-awareness. Its practical techniques have gained popularity beyond the Jain community.

Understanding the role of Preksha Meditation in enhancing happiness among retirees has significant implications for both theoretical insights and practical applications. This research aims to enrich the literature on contemplative practices and their relevance for psychological well-being in later life stages, highlighting meditation's potential benefits in the context of retirement.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Study by Sanchetee (2015): In a study conducted by Sanchetee [1], 58 elderly participants (37 males and 21 females) were assessed, with the majority being male (63.8%) and under the age of 70. Most participants were married (87.9%) and resided with their families. All male participants were pensioners, while among the female participants, 17 were engaged in household work and 4 were pensioners. Following four months of meditation practice, moderate improvements were observed in systolic blood pressure, psychological well-being, social well-being, depression, and anxiety. Additionally, minor improvements were noted in body mass index (BMI), pulse rate, diastolic blood pressure, physical well-being, environmental well-being, stress levels, and autonomic function scores. The baseline alpha wave percentage increased from 32.3% to 42.3%, with more significant improvements observed in individuals with initially lower alpha levels.

Study by Maheshwari & Yadav (2018): Maheswari and Yadav [2] conducted a study involving 100 adolescent girls aged 17 to 19, randomly divided into an experimental group (n=50) and a control group (n=50). Participants were enrolled in a college in Haridwar, India. The experimental group participated in daily Yoga-Preksha Meditation sessions for 50 minutes over two months, while the control group received no intervention. Assessments using Bell's Adjustment Inventory were conducted pre- and post-intervention. Results indicated a significant reduction in adjustment issues across all dimensions (home, health, social, and emotional) in the experimental group ($p < 0.001$ and $p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that Yoga-Preksha Meditation significantly improves adjustment levels among adolescent girls.

Study by Jain (2017): Jain [3] investigated the clinical effects of a 10-day Preksha meditation program on 20 individuals (16 females and 4 males, mean age = 38.29 years). Participants engaged in daily meditation sessions for 10 days. Baseline psychological measures were collected, and a pre-post design was employed. Analysis using a mixed-effects model with pairwise comparisons revealed significant reductions in anxiety, depression, and aggression, alongside improvements in optimism. These findings suggest that Preksha meditation may be an effective psycho-therapeutic intervention for addressing various clinical concerns.

Study by Crego (2021): Crego [4] conducted a study revealing that higher levels of mindfulness are associated with increased happiness and reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression. The relationship between mindfulness and these mental health outcomes was partly mediated by a sense of purpose in life and behavioral activation. Specifically, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) model used in the study accounted for significant proportions of variance in happiness (50%), anxiety (34%), and depression (44%) symptoms. These findings suggest that mindfulness contributes to mental health by fostering a sense of purpose and promoting active engagement in life activities. The study underscores the importance of having clear life goals and their role in behavioral activation, highlighting the interconnectedness of mindfulness, purpose, and behavior in enhancing positive mental health outcomes.

Through rigorous empirical investigation, this research seeks to elucidate the role of meditation in promoting happiness and well-being during retirement. The findings aim to offer practical implications for enhancing the quality of life within this demographic. By integrating recent studies, such as those by Sanchetee (2015), Maheswari & Yadav (2018), Jain (2017), and Crego (2021), this research aims to build a comprehensive understanding of the potential benefits of Preksha Meditation for retired individuals, thereby contributing to the growing body of literature on meditation and well-being in later life stages.

III. OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the impact of Preksha Meditation on the happiness levels of retired individuals.

SAMPLE SIZE

The sample comprises 30 retired individuals from Amroha district, Uttar Pradesh, selected through convenient sampling, with a mean age of 73.33 years.

TOOL DESCRIPTION

The Happiness Scale (HS-RHMJ), developed by Himanshi Rastogi and Janki Moorjani in 2017, was employed in this study. The scale consists of 62 items divided into five dimensions of happiness: Career Well-being (14 items), Subjective Well-being (14 items), Social Well-being (11 items), Spiritual Well-being (11 items), and Emotional Well-being (12 items). Participants rated each item on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Higher scores indicate greater levels of happiness. The scale demonstrated a high split-half reliability of 0.88 and possesses both face and content validity.

PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION

The retired individuals were approached and given an explanation of the research objectives. Upon agreeing to participate in the one-week Preksha Meditation program aimed at enhancing happiness, they were asked to complete the Happiness Scale both before and after the intervention. A good rapport was established prior to the commencement of the training and data collection. The training sessions were organized for groups of 30 participants over seven days, with two 45-minute sessions each day, held in the morning and afternoon.

TRAINING PROCEDURE

Day 1: Introduction to Preksha Meditation

Morning Session:

- 1) Welcome and introduction to Preksha Meditation.
- 2) Discussion on the importance of happiness in retirement.
- 3) Overview of the training program.

Afternoon Session:

- 1) Guided Preksha Meditation focusing on Kayotsarga (body relaxation).
- 2) Reflection and sharing session to discuss initial thoughts and expectations.

Day 2: Cultivating Mindfulness**Morning Session:**

- 1) Exploration of mindfulness and its role in enhancing happiness.
- 2) Techniques for incorporating mindfulness into daily life.

Afternoon Session:

- 1) Guided Preksha Meditation focusing on Anupreksha (contemplation on positive qualities).
- 2) Group discussion on insights and experiences with mindfulness practice.

Day 3: Relaxation and Stress Reduction**Morning Session:**

- 1) Understanding the connection between stress and happiness.
- 2) Relaxation techniques for stress reduction and well-being.

Afternoon Session:

- 1) Guided Preksha Meditation focusing on Shvas Preksha (breath awareness).
- 2) Practice and discussion on integrating relaxation into daily routines.

Day 4: Nurturing Social Connections**Morning Session:**

- 1) Discussion on the importance of social support and connections in retirement.
- 2) Strategies for building meaningful relationships and community.

Afternoon Session:

- 1) Guided Preksha Meditation focusing on Metta Bhavana (loving-kindness meditation).
- 2) Group activity to share gratitude and appreciation among participants.

Day 5: Self-Exploration and Personal Growth**Morning Session:**

- 1) Exploration of self-reflection and personal growth in achieving happiness.
- 2) Techniques for self-exploration and setting personal intentions.

Afternoon Session:

- 1) Guided Preksha Meditation focusing on Leshya Dhyana (perception of subtle vibrations).
- 2) Journaling exercise to reflect on personal values and aspirations.

Day 6: Embracing Change and Acceptance**Morning Session:**

- 1) Understanding change and impermanence.
- 2) Cultivating acceptance and resilience in retirement.

Afternoon Session:

- 1) Guided Preksha Meditation focusing on Antaryatra (inner journey).
- 2) Group sharing session on embracing change with equanimity and grace.

Day 7: Integration and Celebration**Morning Session:**

- 1) Reviewing the week's journey, insights, learnings, and growth.
- 2) Creating a personal happiness plan for continued practice.

Afternoon Session:

- 1) Guided Preksha Meditation focusing on Samadhi (integration and wholeness).
- 2) Closing ceremony with participants sharing gratitude and intentions for continued happiness and well-being.

Throughout the program, participants engaged in guided meditation sessions, interactive discussions, experiential activities, and reflective exercises. These components aimed to deepen their understanding of Preksha Meditation and its application for enhancing happiness in retirement, within a supportive and nurturing environment that facilitated learning and growth.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 4.1: Comparing Pre and Post Test Scores of Preksha Meditation on Dimensions of Happiness for Elder persons.

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Mean Diff	t	p value
Career	Pre	35.500	30	4.369	0.798	19.133	35.171	0.001
	Post	54.633	30	4.468	0.816			
Subjective	Pre	35.000	30	4.119	0.752	21.233	38.019	0.001
	Post	56.233	30	3.540	0.646			
Social	Pre	27.633	30	4.148	0.757	13.967	17.615	0.001
	Post	41.600	30	3.738	0.682			
Spiritual	Pre	24.667	30	4.229	0.772	21.167	106.810	0.001
	Post	45.833	30	4.161	0.760			
Emotional	Pre	30.800	30	4.131	0.754	10.433	20.409	0.001
	Post	41.233	30	3.256	0.594			
Total Happiness	Pre	153.600	30	8.186	1.495	85.933	64.218	0.001
	Post	239.533	30	8.529	1.557			

The table 4.1 shows that the mean scores for the Career Well-being dimension of Happiness increased from 35.500 in the pre-test to 54.633 in the post-test, with a mean difference of 19.133 and a significant t-value of 35.171 ($p < 0.01$). This indicates a significant improvement in Career Well-being due to Preksha Meditation. Similarly, the mean scores for the Subjective Well-being dimension rose from 35.000 to 56.233, with a mean difference of 21.233 and a significant t-value of 38.019 ($p < 0.01$), demonstrating significant enhancement. For the Social Well-being dimension, scores improved from 27.633 to 41.600, with a mean difference of 13.967 and a significant t-value of 17.615 ($p < 0.01$), indicating notable growth. The Spiritual Well-being dimension showed an increase from 24.667 to 45.833, with a mean difference of 21.267 and a highly significant t-value of 106.810 ($p < 0.01$), reflecting significant progress. Emotional Well-being scores increased from 30.800 to 41.233, with a mean difference of 10.433 and a significant t-value of 20.409 ($p < 0.01$), indicating significant enhancement. Overall, the total dimensions of Happiness scores rose from 153.600 to 239.533, with a mean difference of 85.933 and a significant t-value of 64.218 ($p < 0.01$), confirming that Preksha Meditation significantly improves overall Happiness dimensions among retired persons.

V. DISCUSSION

Preksha Meditation offers a holistic approach to enhancing the happiness levels of retired individuals through various mechanisms that address their unique challenges and needs during this life stage [5]. Firstly, the practice cultivates mindfulness and self-awareness, enabling retirees to become more attuned to their thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations [6]. By developing this heightened awareness, individuals can better recognize and manage negative thoughts and feelings associated with retirement, such as loss of identity, social isolation, or fear of aging [7]. Through regular meditation practice, retirees can develop a sense of inner peace and acceptance, fostering a more positive outlook on life and reducing the impact of stressors on their well-being [8].

Preksha Meditation incorporates relaxation techniques that promote physical and mental relaxation, which is particularly beneficial for retirees who may experience increased levels of stress or anxiety during the transition to retirement [9]. By learning to relax the body and calm the mind, individuals can alleviate tension, improve sleep quality, and enhance overall feelings of well-being and contentment [10]. This relaxation response also has cascading effects on various physiological processes, such as reducing blood pressure and cortisol levels, which contribute to improved health outcomes and increased vitality in retirement [11]. Preksha Meditation fosters a sense of connection and belonging, which is essential for maintaining happiness and life satisfaction in retirement [12]. Through group meditation sessions or community gatherings, retirees can cultivate supportive relationships and a sense of camaraderie with like-minded individuals, thereby mitigating feelings of loneliness and isolation that are common in this life stage [13]. Additionally, the practice of compassion and loving-kindness meditation within the Preksha framework encourages retirees to cultivate empathy and altruism towards themselves and others, fostering positive social interactions and deepening interpersonal connections [14].

Furthermore, Preksha Meditation facilitates personal growth and self-actualization, which are key components of happiness and fulfillment in retirement (Kabat-Zinn, 2019). By engaging in introspective practices such as contemplation and visualization, retirees can clarify their values, set meaningful goals, and embark on a journey of self-discovery and self-transformation (Goyal et al., 2014). This process of inner exploration and growth empowers individuals to find purpose and meaning in retirement, whether through creative pursuits, volunteer work, or spiritual development, ultimately leading to a greater sense of fulfillment and happiness in this phase of life (Pascoe et al., 2017). In summary, Preksha Meditation offers a comprehensive approach to promoting happiness among retired individuals by fostering mindfulness, relaxation, social connection, and personal growth (Basso et al., 2019). Through its various techniques and practices, Preksha Meditation equips retirees with the tools and resources to navigate the challenges of retirement with resilience, positivity, and inner peace, thereby enhancing their overall well-being and quality of life (Shapiro & Carlson, 2017).

VI. CONCLUSION

Retirement marks a significant life transition fraught with emotional and psychological challenges, including a loss of identity, reduced social interactions, boredom, and feelings of isolation. Meditation practices, such as Preksha Meditation, hold promise in addressing these issues and contributing to overall happiness and well-being in retired individuals. Preksha Meditation aids retirees in coping with transitions by fostering emotional resilience and flexibility, thereby easing the adjustment period into retirement. Furthermore, it helps manage stress and anxiety, offering a more peaceful state of mind. By encouraging self-reflection and introspection, Preksha Meditation enhances self-awareness and personal growth, leading to increased contentment. Socially, it facilitates connections through group sessions, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness. By cultivating positive emotions like compassion and gratitude, Preksha Meditation fosters a more positive outlook on life and improves mood and satisfaction. Moreover, it aids in improving sleep quality, contributing to overall physical and mental health. In essence, Preksha Meditation offers multiple benefits that significantly enhance the happiness and well-being of retired individuals, making it a promising practice for elder persons.

VII. REFERENCES

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