
EMOTIONAL WELLBEING THROUGH MEDITATION : AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF YOUTH PRACTISING HEARTFULNESS MEDITATION

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ABSTRACT

Emotional wellbeing is defined in terms of qualities like empathy, selflessness, compassionate the key parameters considered to be affected by "Heartfulness Meditation". It the present study the theories of Raja Yoga expounded by Saints of ancient India and its modifications in present times are seen in the writings of Swami Vivekananda, Ram Chandra and others. The study is undertaken to examined the meditation under the heartfulness method based on principles of Raja Yoga in Sahaj Marg. The researchers concluded that the heartfulness meditation has had a positive influence on the sample of youth studied and the experiment is amenable to replication, with youth from other regions and cultural backgrounds.

Key Words: Emotional Well-being, Meditation, Heartfulness Institute, Principles of Raja Yoga.

INTRODUCTION

"In the present age of degradation in all phases of human life – physical, social, moral and spiritual – it has almost become impossible to keep up the normal standards of virtue and righteousness. The simple reason is the diversion of mind towards grossest materialism. Therefore all that one has to do is to turn the tendency of the mind towards the right channel." (pp. 104, Sahai, I., 2016). The role of the mind is the very basis of the system of Raja Yoga which was known to the rishis and sages and the people of ancient India. The need therefore to understand this age-old system acquires significance. However, the modified system of Raja Yoga, as propounded in the Heartfulness relaxation and meditation method is the practice based on Sahaj Marg which is a scientific approach developed to suit the present times. "This scientific process has been the very basis of Raja Yoga ever since, and the great sages of the past utilized it for the spiritual uplift of the people, of which there are numerous instances in our history." (pp. 105, Sahai, I., 2016).

In the present study, it is seen that the theories of Raja Yoga expounded by saints of ancient India and its modifications in present times are seen in the writings of Swami Vivekananda, Ram Chandra and others. The meditation under the heartfulness method based on principles of Raja Yoga in Sahaj Marg are examined in this study. "Emotional Wellbeing" defined in terms of qualities like empathy, selflessness, compassion are the key parameters considered to be affected by "Heartfulness Meditation". The inclusion of these values in the training process in the educational system can mean a lot for the development of positive values, overall development of the youth and its contribution towards peace and harmony in the world. This study was a part of project implemented by "Heartfulness Institute" in collaboration with Yuva colleges of YI-CII. The researchers extend gratitude to more than 60 volunteers from YI and HFI, who implemented this project.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vast literature on ancient Indian thought and philosophy is available and throws light on the universal values and qualities cherished and nurtured for the good of the individual and society. The Dharmasastras list the qualities that are enjoined on all irrespective of caste or creed besides the rites of each caste (P.V. Kane, 1997). In the yoga system of Patanjali, raja yoga with eight aspects, where the yamas include not harming others, contentment, as 'requisite for wellness of human being' (pp. 8, Jha, U., 2016). Universal

values are also seen in Buddhism and Jainism. Among the many values emphasized in the Bhagavad Gita, non-violence, absence of anger, peace of mind, kindness towards all beings are regarded as 'daivisampad' or divine wealth. Non-violence is also the cornerstone in the Gandhian philosophy. Caring for others as one of the 'core ethical value' where 'ethics is all about one's responsibilities towards other people' and citizenship are some of the important aspects of the universal values in modern times. (pp. 13, Jha, U., 2016). Making friends of foes, and not to do to others what one does not wish to be done by, are seen in the writings of twentieth century writers and philosophers, like of Ram Chandra. (pp.14, Ram Chandra, 2010).

In the educational system of gurukula in ancient Indian history, the role of meditation was integral to the learning process, promoting concentration, understanding and intuition, "shravana", "manana" and nidhidhyasana." (pp. 76, Rajagopalachari, P., 2004).

The present educational systems and processes need much to be changed to develop the student as a total integrated and balanced personality. "We have to seriously think of improving the education system that changes both the physical and emotional aspects of human beings," the Dalai Lama pointed out, since all destructive tendencies ultimately rose from emotions. "The basic human nature was based on compassion which is a positive thing. If human nature was based on a negative aspect, there would have been no hope for change." (Dalai Lama, 2015). Rajagopalachari emphasizes that education must infuse in the students discipline, craving for excellence, and for learning, healthy minds in healthy bodies, the role of aspiration rather than ambition and the concern for others first. (Rajagopalachari, 2015).

Well being, happiness and doing good are integral to philosophers like Aristotle's, and in present times very much part of wellness and well-being studies. There are studies on the relationship between meditation and its impact on psychological well being. The 'mindful component of various meditation techniques' has a health benefit studied by Vinchurkar. (Vinchurkar, A.S., et al, 2014). Other studies, in Malaysia by Mohamad, M. and others revealed a direct impact of spirituality or meditation on wellness. (Mohamad, M., et al. 2015).

"The inner mental disturbance manifests itself in our creating disturbances outside." (Rajagopalachari, 1987). To tackle the problem, peace and calmness of the individual is vital. Then alone can he contribute for the same in others in society. Therefore, spirituality and the Raja Yoga based meditation is stated as necessary for human existence. (Ram Chandra, 2004).

Broaden and build theories of positive emotions show the impact of positive emotions on success, health and longer life. Broaden theory implies changes that take place little by little in the outlook of the persons towards their small and daily situations. Empirical studies on broaden theory show how positive emotions broaden visual attention, desired actions, openness to new experience and to critical feedback and can thus impact both personal and interpersonal domains through increase in oneness with others and trust in acquaintances.

Build theories show indirect evidence of people moving in a growth path, and building personal resources like optimism and tranquility, ego-resilience and quality of close relationships. Mindfulness meditation in Buddhism helps regulate stress, anxiety, chronic pain and various illnesses. (Baer, 2003; Kabat-Zinn 2003 & Davidson, 2000; Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Daily guided meditation showed EEG left-sided anterior brain activation related to positive emotions. (Easterlin and Cardena, 1998; Davidson et al 2003). Besides mindfulness meditation that makes attention on the present, love kindness meditation (LKM) increased positive feelings like caring feeling towards self and others in an ever-widening circle encompassing more and more of the others, through open-heartedness. (Salzberg, 1995). Thus the love and kindness meditation have two consequences of the build and broaden theory of positive emotion and broadening attention.

Mind training in meditation has a deeper effect beyond positive emotional improvement in dispelling false assumptions regarding the sources of human happiness as held in the conventional thinking and philosophy. (Dalai Lama and Cutler, 1998). Thus understanding of the broadening and building theory is seen through changes in the outlook and emotions of the people, development of compassion and empathy.

Empirical study of Fredrickson et al on meditation is significant, and the present study overcomes some of the gaps in it. As a span of months to get a longitudinal study is required to measure the positive emotions developed in the individuals through meditational practice for the period, study by Fredrickson et al of a corporate at Detroit was done through workshops on guided meditation held over 2 months on daily basis, increasing the warm feelings from self to loved ones to ultimately all living beings over the weeks. Fredrickson et al have used the scales for mindfulness and awareness, 'agency & pathways thinking', for cognitive resources; scales for measuring psychological resources like life orientation, well-being, ego resilience; scales for social resources like dyadic adjustment, positive relations with others; physical resources measured through illness symptoms and sleep duration, Besides, for outcome measures, life satisfaction scales, depression symptoms measure. Daily practice of mediation on emotions and DRM survey that is, day reconstruction method was used for daily account of emotions (Kahneman et al, 2004). After manipulation check to see if participants practiced as instructed, LKM (Love-kindness Meditation) impact was measured for nine positive emotions, namely, amusement, awe, contentment, joy, gratitude, hope, interest, love and pride over the day and week, and by using hierarchical linear modeling for individual, across weeks. The study showed, not individually but collectively the emotions had an impact of positive emotion on the individual.(Fredrickson, 2008). But study could not show any significant influence on negative emotions (anger, shame, contempt, disgust, embarrassment, guilt, sadness and fear). LKM influence was higher on positive emotions, extending beyond meditation time to during the day and over time; the positive emotions also influenced social interactions of the individual. Positive emotions did not directly, but through building of personal resources, increased life satisfaction and also reduced depressive symptoms. Positive emotions and life satisfaction are indices of happiness and subjective well-being.

Meditation workshops that created positive emotions are more than temporary feelings as seen in the Fredrickson et al study and showed significant effect on resource building characterized by loving and positive attitude to others, self-acceptance, purpose in life, ego-resilience, and growth paths (self, others and cognitive influence); and overall well being as also seen in decreased anxiety and stress. Impact on decreased negative trends, increase in compassion and sympathy based on contemplative traditions, need further investigation according to the Fredrickson et al study.(Fredrickson, 2008).

Fredrickson et al study on positive emotions leading to build of personal resources through LKM has been taken forward in the present research by seeing other meditative techniques.

Heartfulness meditation as taken in this study, is as practiced under Sahaj Marg which is closely along the lines of Raja Yoga; with "certain amendments and modifications to purge out superfluity from that system." (pp. 121, Ram Chandra, 2013).Individually, experimenters with heartfulness meditation write of their enhanced positive values, feelings and qualities. As Pearmain says, "Feel attuned to your heart and you will quite naturally feel more harmony with others too." (pp. 28,Pearmain, R., 2016).There are a number of concepts relevant in the context of the study. "Empathy is the automatic tuning in to another's field, what he or she is feeling, what they have brought to us." (pp. 30, Rajagopalachari, P., 2016). "When two hearts are linked together by light, this immediately creates the phenomenon of empathy. There is neither distance nor separation anymore with your partner. She or he feels listened to, understood and accepted by you". (pp.32, Theophile in 'Heartfulness', 2016).By "heart globalization" Camisa refers to 'equal access by all, to be shared fraternally' as a 'universal value'. (pp.41, Camisa, J., 2016).

Patel refers to the process of heartfulness meditation and how the mind and heart create the base for the change in the individual. "...to prepare, refine and sensitize our heart and to bring our mind to rest, which is accomplished through the sincere practice of meditation. This allows us to easily capture the waves of inspired creativity that arise from the heart. We take advantage of those inspirations to change ourselves and, ultimately, to transform ourselves." (Patel, K. D., 2016).

MEASURING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING, SOFT SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES AND PERSONALITY TRAITS

Well-being is defined in terms of how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole. To break this down, how people feel refers to emotions such as happiness or anxiety. Within the National Accounts of Well-being, the headline personal wellbeing indicator is made up of five main components, some of which are broken down further into subcomponents. These are:

1. Emotional well-being. The overall balance between the frequency of experiencing positive and negative emotions, with higher scores showing that positive emotions are felt more often than negative ones. This is comprised of the subcomponents: Positive feelings – How often positive emotions are felt. Absence of negative feelings – The frequency with which negative emotions are felt, with higher scores representing less frequent negative emotions.

2. Satisfying life. Having positive evaluation of your life overall, representing the results of four questions about satisfaction and life evaluations.

3. Vitality. Having energy, feeling well rested, healthy and being physically active.

4. Resilience and self-esteem. A measure of individuals' psychological resources. It comprises the subcomponents: Self-esteem – Feeling good about yourself. Optimism – Feeling optimistic about your future. Resilience–Being able to deal with life's difficulties.

5. Positive functioning. This can be summed up as 'doing well'. It includes four subcomponents: Autonomy – Feeling free to do what you want and having the time to do it. Competence – Feeling accomplishment from what you do and being able to make use of your abilities. Engagement – Feeling absorbed in what you are doing and that you have opportunities to learn. Meaning and purpose – Feeling that what you do in life is valuable, worthwhile and valued by others.

OBJECTIVES

- To Study if there is any significant change in levels of parameters of "Emotional Wellbeing (defined in terms of eleven variables)" of Experimental group of college students after undergoing "Meditation based self-development program"
- To study the effect of "Gender" if any on "Emotional Wellbeing" of Experimental group of college students after undergoing "Meditation based self-development program".

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The proposed study was an attempt to measure the effect of a Heartfulness Meditation Program" on the "Emotional Wellbeing" of College students.

A self development program was designed and delivered to the college students. The curriculum of the proposed "Self Development Program" spanning 14 weeks, included sessions on Orientation, Values, Understanding Aspiration, Ambition, Attitudes, Aptitudes, Personal and Universal Values and How to set and align values to goals, Philosophy of Yoga, God, Self and Ultimate goal of yoga, Brief Introduction to various types of yoga and Integration of values in Yoga, Study of major Religions, Identify commonality, condition of its origin or intention Vs current state Identify Values and Yoga in Religions, Art of Meditation, Observation, Introspection, Contemplation, Meditation and Concentration, Schools of Meditation, Tips for Self-Management,

Systematic Practice of Meditation, Rationale–Relevant theories and philosophies, and Practice. The program was introduced by YI-CII and was delivered by local Heartfulness Trainers.

The effect of this program was measured in terms of following variables:

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

“Well-being can be understood as how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole.” Emotional wellbeing is defined as 'a positive sense of wellbeing which enables an individual to be able to function in society and meet the demands of everyday life. It is more than mental wellbeing. It was measured on a scale consisting of 11 items. The items are listed below:-

1. Degree of concentration: Defined as being able to focus on tasks without wandering of mind
2. Degree of inner calmness: Defined as a feeling of inner peace
3. Clarity of personal goal: Defined as desired result that one envisions, plans and commits to achieve
4. Harmony/relationship with others: Defined as getting along with others without conflict
5. Quality of sleep: Defined as the degree of depth and refreshing feeling after sleep
6. Degree of inner Joy: Defined as feeling of great pleasure/blissful feeling
7. Degree of positive thinking: Defined as practice of embracing the affirmative in our thoughts conducive to growth, expansion and success
8. Degree of self-confidence: Defined as a feeling of trust in one's abilities, qualities, and Judgment
9. Degree of empathy: Defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another
10. Degree of tolerance: Defined as the ability or willingness to tolerate something, in particular the existence of opinions or behavior that one does not necessarily agree with
11. Degree of honesty to oneself: Defined as the ability to take a clear look at oneself and one's situation
12. Degree of Anger
13. Degree of Stress
14. Degree of Anxiety

The measurement of each parameter was on a 10 point scale with 1 meaning very low and 10 meaning very high. A high score indicated better performance of the candidate on that particular parameter for eleven parameters out of fourteen. Whereas, the remaining three parameters namely – anger, stress and anxiety, indicated poor performance of the respondent for a high score on that particular parameter. The reliability of the scale was tested by calculating the “Cronbach's alpha”- which was reported to be 0.823. Thus, indicating that the scale is reliable.

The “Emotional Wellbeing” of the respondent was calculated by summing up all the fourteen parameters. Eleven positive parameters were added as such. The three negative parameters were reverse coded before adding them to calculate “Emotional Wellbeing”.

A quasi experimental design with pre and post measurement of experimental group was undertaken in this research.

The comparison of averages in pre- and post observations and in experimental and control groups was done by applying t –test ANOVA.

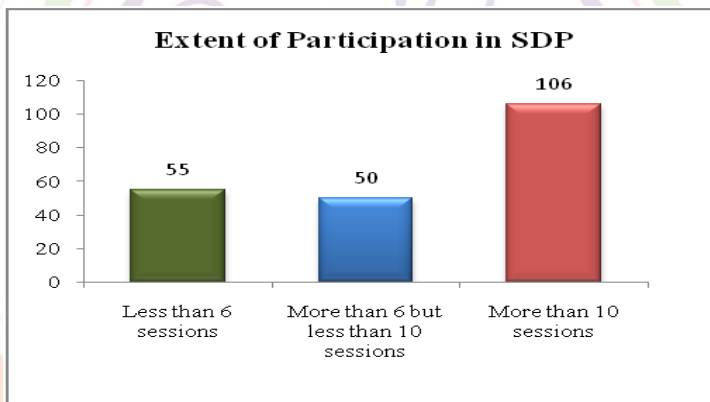
SAMPLE COLLEGES WHERE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

A brief Summary of participation	
City and College	Number of Participants Registered
Guwahati - Asian Institute of Management & Technology	100
Hyderabad -Government Degree College for Women	114
Indore -Acropolis Institute of Technology and Research	100
Indore -International Institute of Professional Studies, DAVV	60
Total Participants	374

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

DESCRIPTION OF THE GROUP

The group consisted of 314 students when the program was started- 100 in Guwahati, 114 in Hyderabad and 100 in Indore. While, the Indore and Hyderabad colleges were able to complete the program successfully, Guwahati College dropped out of the program just after 2 to 3 weeks. Therefore, 100 students from Guwahati were not included in the final analysis. Students from Indore and Hyderabad attended the program and final data was collected from 211 students. Out of this, 170 responses were complete and were found suitable for analysis.



106 students were extremely regular and attended more than 10 sessions of the meditation program out of total 14 sessions. Remaining 50 students attended more than 6 classes but less than 10 classes. 55 students attended very few, i.e., less than 6 classes. A comparison was obviously drawn between these three groups of participants in terms of effect of meditation experienced by them.

EFFECT OF HEARTFULNESS MEDITATION ON "EMOTIONAL WELLBEING"

All the positive parameters showed an increase after attending the Meditation based Self Development Program (SDP). The three negative parameters showed considerable decline after the SDP. A paired sample t test was applied to estimate whether the difference in mean values of parameters is significantly different after SDP. Table 2 shows that all the fourteen pairs reported significant change in mean values.

A further investigation was made into extent of change experienced as a result of SDP. Figure 2 shows the comparative change. As seen, maximum change was reported in Degree of Tolerance and Degree of Positive thinking, whereas, Quality of Sleep and Inner Joy were seen to show

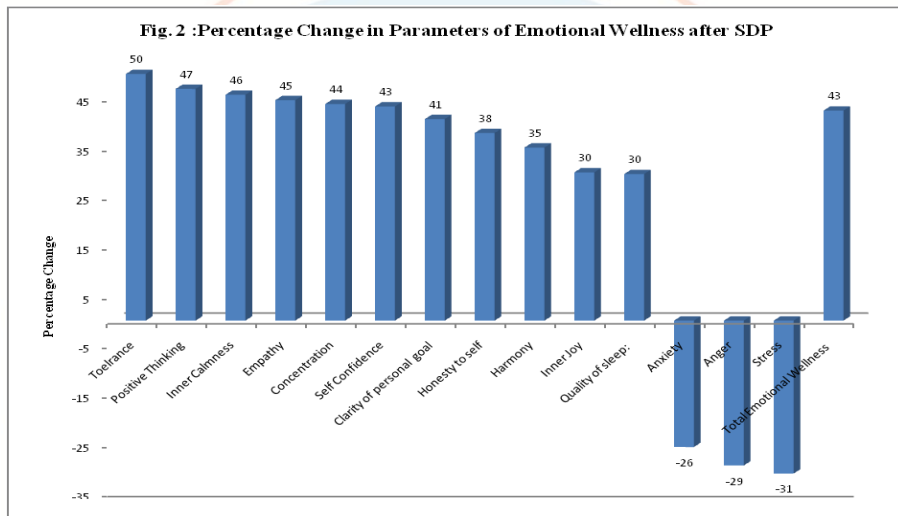
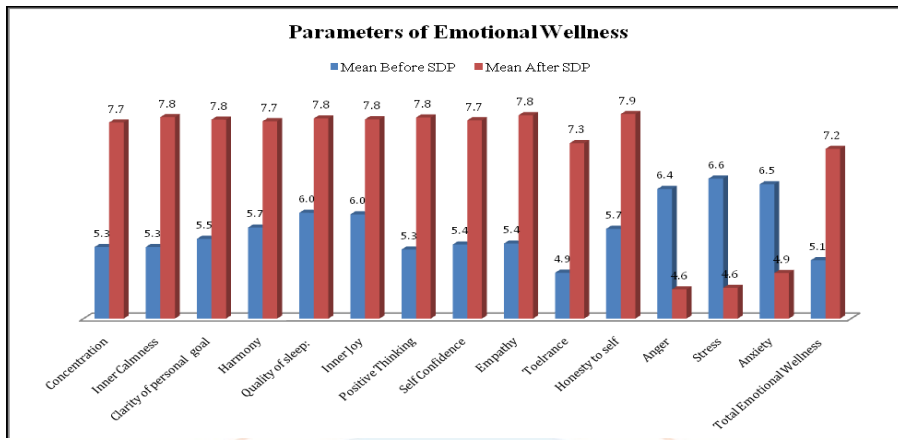


Table 2: Paired Samples Test to estimate the difference between Value of Parameters Before and After SDP

		Paired Differences Mean	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Concentration	-2.35	-21.05	0.000*
Pair 2	Inner Calmness	-2.45	-19.82	0.000*
Pair 3	Clarity of personal goal	-2.25	-17.61	0.000*
Pair 4	Harmony	-2.02	-20.05	0.000*
Pair 5	Quality of sleep:	-1.78	-14.76	0.000*
Pair 6	Inner Joy	-1.79	-16.60	0.000*
Pair 7	Positive Thinking	-2.49	-17.67	0.000*
Pair 8	Self Confidence	-2.34	-17.01	0.000*
Pair 9	Empathy	-2.43	-17.83	0.000*
Pair 10	Tolerance	-2.45	-17.98	0.000*
Pair 11	Honesty to self	-2.16	-18.00	0.000*
Pair 12	Anger	1.91	9.52	0.000*
Pair 13	Stress	2.07	11.61	0.000*
Pair 14	Anxiety	1.68	9.01	0.000*
Pair 15	Total Emotional Wellness	-1.35	-21.37	0.000*

lowest change. The possible reason for this could be that the Quality of sleep depends on lot of other physiological reasons. The total "Emotional Wellbeing" reflected a positive change after SDP. Anger, Anxiety and Stress showed a significant amount of decline.

EFFECT OF "GENDER" ON "EMOTIONAL WELLNESS" AFTER MEDITATION BASED SDP

The group under study had males as well as females, though unequal in numbers. There is a basic difference in the approach, outlook and participation levels of girls and boys in such development programs at college level. Same was observed in case of this self-development program.

The average attendance of girls was observed to be higher than that of boys. Therefore, it was a natural question whether there was any significant difference in the change experienced by girls vis-a-vis the change experienced by boys after attending this self-development program.

GENDERWISE CHANGE IN PARAMETERS OF EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

	Mean Values Before SDP		Mean Values After SDP		Percentage Change		ANOVA	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	F	Sig.
Concentration	5.3	6.0	7.1	7.8	33.7	30.5	.005	.942
Inner Calmness	4.8	5.8	7.3	7.9	50.6	35.5	4.642	.033*
Clarity of personal goal	6.4	6.5	7.1	7.9	11.4	21.7	.691	.407
Harmony	7.0	6.7	7.3	7.8	4.3	16.9	3.795	.053*
Quality of sleep:	6.7	7.4	7.3	7.9	9.1	6.8	5.558	.020*
Inner Joy	6.0	7.0	7.4	7.8	22.1	11.4	10.520	.001*
Positive Thinking	6.3	6.5	7.1	8.0	12.4	23.3	.282	.596
Self Confidence	6.8	6.6	7.5	7.8	10.3	17.7	1.589	.209
Empathy	7.1	6.7	7.6	7.9	7.7	17.4	4.135	.044*
Tolerance	6.1	6.2	7.1	7.4	17.0	18.0	.000	.984
Honesty to self	6.8	7.1	7.2	8.0	5.3	13.2	1.423	.235
Anger	6.1	5.2	5.1	4.4	-16.8	-14.7	1.454	.230
Stress	6.2	5.2	4.8	4.5	-22.4	-12.8	2.123	.147
Anxiety	5.9	5.2	4.4	5.0	-25.5	-4.8	6.318	.013*
Total Emotional Wellness	5.8	5.9	6.8	7.3	17.9	24.8	2.257	.135

Table 3 : Difference in Girls and Boys for Effect of SDP


 Boys were affected more	↑ - Inner Calmness , Inner Joy, Quality of Sleep ↓ - Anxiety
 Girls were affected more	↑ - Harmony , Empathy
 Both were affected	↑ - Concentration, Clarity of personal goal, Positive Thinking, Self Confidence, Tolerance, Honesty to self, Total Emotional Wellness ↓ - Anger, Stress

Table 3 shows the findings of "Effect of Gender" on Emotional Wellness. The Mean values of each of the fourteen parameters and complete Emotional Wellness were compared for girls and boys both before and after SDP. The percentage change in the

mean values was calculated and an ANOVA was applied to estimate the significant changes.

It was found that girls and boys differed in terms of effect they experienced in “Inner Calmness”, “Harmony”, “Quality of Sleep”, “Inner Joy”, “Empathy” and “Anxiety”. While rest of the parameters changed in a similar way for both girls and boys.

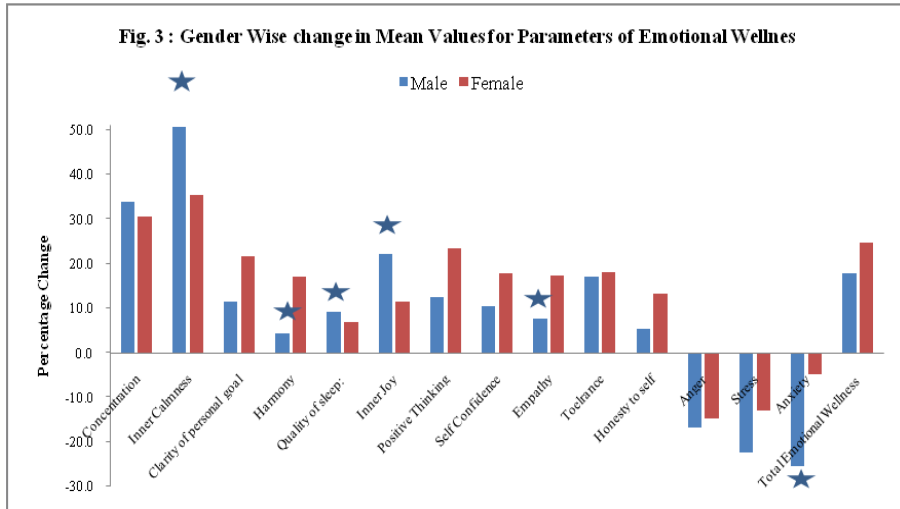


Figure 3 shows the significant changes marked by star. Boys experienced a larger increase in “Inner Calmness”, “Quality of Sleep” and “Inner Joy”. “Anxiety” reduced more in case of boys. Whereas, “Harmony”, increased more in case of girls.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has marked the influence of Rajyoga based Heartfulness meditation, on a sample of college students. The change was seen in the various parameters. Maximum increase was experienced in the levels of Tolerance, Positive thinking, inner calmness and empathy with more than 45% change. Stress and Anger declined by 30%. Further, the results showed that “gender” had a significant effect on six parameters – inner calmness, harmony, quality of sleep, inner joy, empathy and anxiety. Further, the decrease in negative feelings is also concluded in this study as a clear indication. It may be concluded that the heartfulness meditation has had a positive influence on the sample of youth studied and the experiment is amenable to replication, with youth from other regions and cultural backgrounds. It may also be extended to other social groups.

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