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Efficacy of Blessings Meditation as a Behavioral Medicine in Enhancing Pregnancy Happiness

Isha Chaudhary[1*], Dr. Bharti Joshi[2]
[1] *Research Scholar, Department of Social Science, Devi Ahilya University, Indore, M.P., 452001, India.*
[2]*Professor & Head, Department of Lifelong Learning, Devi Ahilya University, Indore, M.P., 45200, India.*

ABSTRACT
Behavioral medicine is a tool of psychology applied to health and medicine. Conventionally, underlying negative emotional and psychological states that may produce pathological physiological consequences and social consequences gain attention, contradictory to them, positive emotional state of happiness is a way of enhancing health and wellbeing. Everyone is in pursuit of happiness; meditation is a tool for reaching the source of eudaimonic happiness, the authentic happiness that comes from self- actualization. Pregnancy is equalized to self-actualization in psychologically healthy mothers, on the other hand it is also counted as major life stressor that requires adjustment. The study aims at enhancing the positive appraisal of their pregnancy among pregnant women through blessings meditation as a behavioral medicine tool. The present study is a pretest-posttest study with comparison group, 60 pregnant women who gave consent to participate in the research were divided into two groups, control (N=30) and experimental (N=30). Experimental group was given blessings meditation intervention for 12 weeks. Degree of pregnancy happiness was assessed using Pregnancy Happiness Scale. Blessings meditation has proved to be efficient as a behavioral medicine in enhancing pregnancy happiness of the pregnant women.

KEY WORDS: Behavioral medicine, meditation, pregnancy happiness, pregnancy.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Behavioral Medicine examines problems from wide bio-psycho-social approach e.g., finding personal resources such as personality traits, coping strategies and social support that can be helpful in reducing negative outcomes of stress and strengthening psychological initiatives, like behavior modification and health-education in transforming faulty lifestyles and reducing disease and disease behavior at individual and community levels (Carson, Butcher and Mineka, 2006). In our study we have used blessings meditation as a behavioral medicine tool to augment the psychological initiative for positive mental state of happiness among pregnant women. We have measured happiness in pregnancy as a comprehensive measure of psychological, physical, socio-economic and personality correlates.

Blessings Meditation is intervened that is based on two meditations- 'Meditation of Divine Grant' by Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya (Acharya, 1982)**Error! Reference source not found.** and 'Twin Heart meditation' by Master ChoaKok Sui (Sui, 1990). Instructions based on both the meditations were formulated and guided meditation specialized for pregnant women was developed. The meditation focuses on blessings from the Supreme and feeling that these blessings are being manifested in the form of good health and happiness for the mother and the baby.

Naadyoga (instrumental music) (AWGP Audio, cited 2019, Jul14) forms the base of the meditation that helps the practitioners to deeply experience the meditative states. Nada yoga is a technique to reach deeper levels of consciousness with the medium of sound (Saraswati, 2011).

The meditation was consulted with the experts and pregnant women's feedbacks were taken. Needed alterations were performed before finalizing and intervention of the meditation.

Pregnancy is an important change that happens in a woman's life. Most of the researches are centered on the negative consequences related to pregnancy and providing measures and therapies to undo them (Crawley, Dennison and Carter, 2003). Untreated stress and depression in pregnancy may badly affect birth outcomes and taking antidepressants may also result in improper development and poor birth outcomes (Pearlstein, 2015). More or less emotional disturbances along with physical challenges are faced by every pregnant woman (Bjelica, Cetkovic, Trninic-Pjevic and Mladenovic-Segedi, 2018). That shows how prone pregnant women are towards pathologies. Negative emotional states make one more susceptible to ill health whereas positive state of emotions is proposed to be associated with good health specifically for immune system

and cardiovascular system (Salovey, Rothman, Detweiler and Steward, 2000).Focusing on the positive emotions that emerge out of the special state of pregnancy will put attention on the assets women have this time and ways how they can expand them.

II. OBJECTIVES:

Objective of the present study was to know how effective blessings meditation as a behavioral medicine is in enhancing degree of happiness among pregnant women and to find the difference in degree of happiness among pregnant women of experimental group and control group, before and after the intervention.

HYPOTHESES:

H_a_1: There would be a significant positive effect of Blessings Meditation as a behavioral medicine on degree of happiness of pregnant women in the experimental group.

H_0_2: There would be no significant difference in pre-scores of Degree of Happiness in pregnant women of Control and Experimental Groups.

H_0_3: There would be no significant difference in post-scores of Degree of Happiness in pregnant women of Control and Experimental Groups.

III. METHOD:

We conducted the study in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, India. Awareness sessions were carried out in various hospitals of Haridwar and pregnant women who volunteered, gave consent to participate in the research and matched the inclusion criteria were divided into two groups, control (N=30) and experimental (N=30). Sample included 60 women with 2 weeks to 20 weeks of pregnancy in the age range of 20 - 35 years (experimental group M= 28 years; control group M= 27.8 years). Women above 20 weeks of gestational age and severe health issues were excluded as the study needed three months to complete. Pretest – posttest with comparison group design was used in the present study. Blessings meditation as the behavioral medicine was used as the independent variable and happiness in pregnancy was the dependent variable.

TABLE I: SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS-

Characteristics		N
Age (years)	20-25	18
	26-30	27
	31-35	15
Educational status	Literate	6
	Elementary	8
	High school	11
	University	35
Family Type	Nuclear	32
	Joint	28
Pregnancy weeks		
2 - 4 weeks		10
5 - 12 weeks		36
13 - 20 weeks		14

DESCRIPTION OF ASSESSMENT TOOL:

Pregnancy Happiness Scale (PHS) (Chaudhary, 2019): Data was collected with the help of Pregnancy Happiness Scale standardized on Indian population. It was a 5-pointLikert scale and consists of 35 items. Positive items (N= 22) were scored as 5 (Strongly agree) - 4 (Agree) - 3 (Uncertain) - 2 (Disagree) - 1 (Strongly Disagree) and negative items (N= 13) were scored in reverse order. The total score is added and high scores suggest higher degree of happiness in pregnancy. The scale measures four gross happiness correlates: physiological, psychological, socio -economic and personality correlates and rates high on validity = 0.99 and Chronbach's Alpha reliability = 0.90.

PROCEDURE:

Table 1: *Intervention procedure.*

Groups	**Pre-Test** Pregnancy Happiness Scale (PHS)	**Treatment** Blessings Meditation (12 Weeks)	**Post Test** Pregnancy Happiness Scale (PHS)
Experimental Group	30		30
Control Group	30	Not Applied	30
Sample Size (N=)	60		60

MEDITATION INTERVENTION:
Particulars of the program:

Table 2: *Intervention program.*

Duration:	**Inclusion Criteria:**
1 session per week for 3 months. Total 12 sessions	Pregnant Women
Meditation audio was provided to pregnant women for daily practice at home. Group sessions were planned per week for effective follow up. Self-reported health records were kept.	

IV. RESULTS:

On comparing the pre and post scores of happiness of pregnant women in the experimental group following result was obtained:

Figure 1:

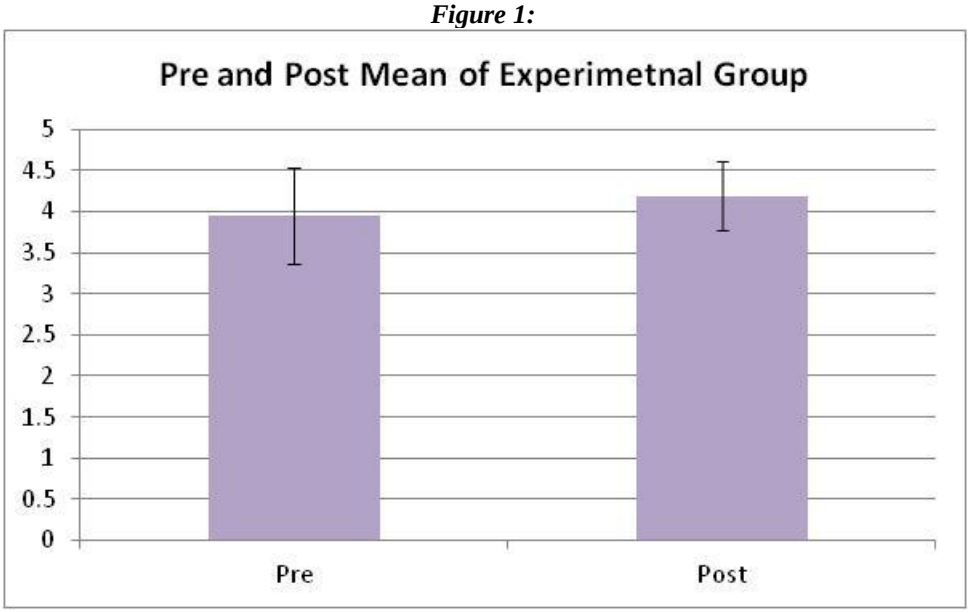

Figure 1: Pre and Post scores of Happiness of pregnant women in Experimental group.

Table 3: *Pairwise t-test between Pre and Post Score of the scale of Degree of Happiness of the Experimental group.*

Variables	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**t-value**	**Degree of Freedom**	**p-value**
Pre	3.95	0.59	3.8105	29	0.0003338
Post	4.19	0.42			

The above table shows that the p-value is less than 0.01 means our alternate hypothesis is accepted at 99 percent of confidence. The difference between the mean of post score of happiness scale and the mean of pre score of happiness scale is -0.2343 that indicate that there is positive effect of meditation at the degree of happiness in pregnant women of experimental group.

Comparison of pre-scores of Degree of Happiness of pregnant women of Control and Experimental Groups yielded following results:

Figure 2:

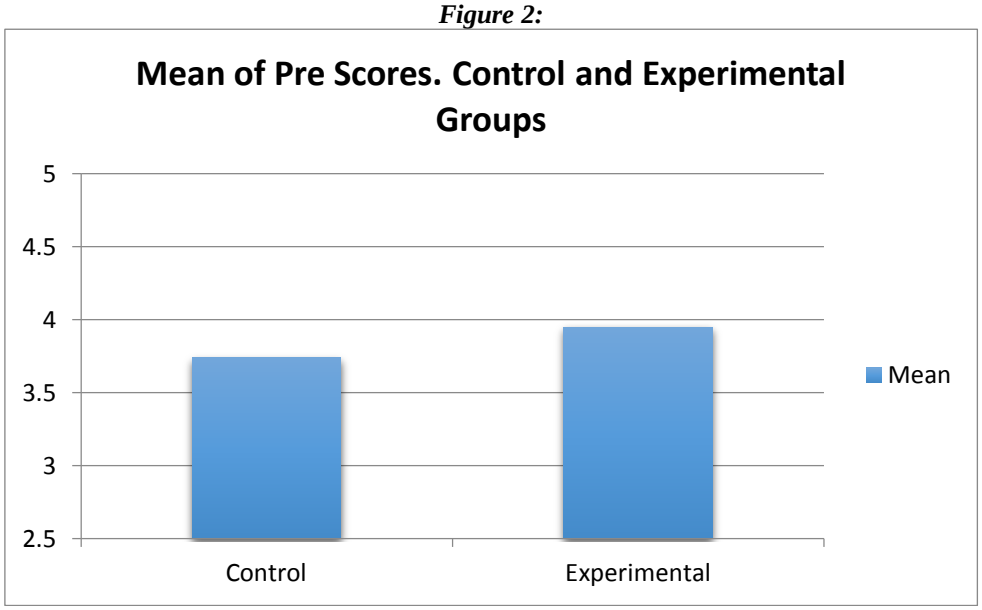

Figure 2: Mean of Pre-Scoresof Happiness of pregnant women in Control and Experimental Group.

Table 4: *t-test between Pre-Score of Degree of Happiness on Control and Experimental Groups.*

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	Degree of Freedom	p-value
Control	3.74	0.47	-1.5716	58	0.01215
Experimental	3.95	0.59			

The above table shows that the p-value is less than 0.05 means the null hypothesis is rejected at 95 percent of confidence. It means that there is significant difference in pre-score of happiness in control and experimental groups.

Comparison between post-scores of Degree of Happiness of pregnant women of Control and Experimental Groups:

Figure 3:

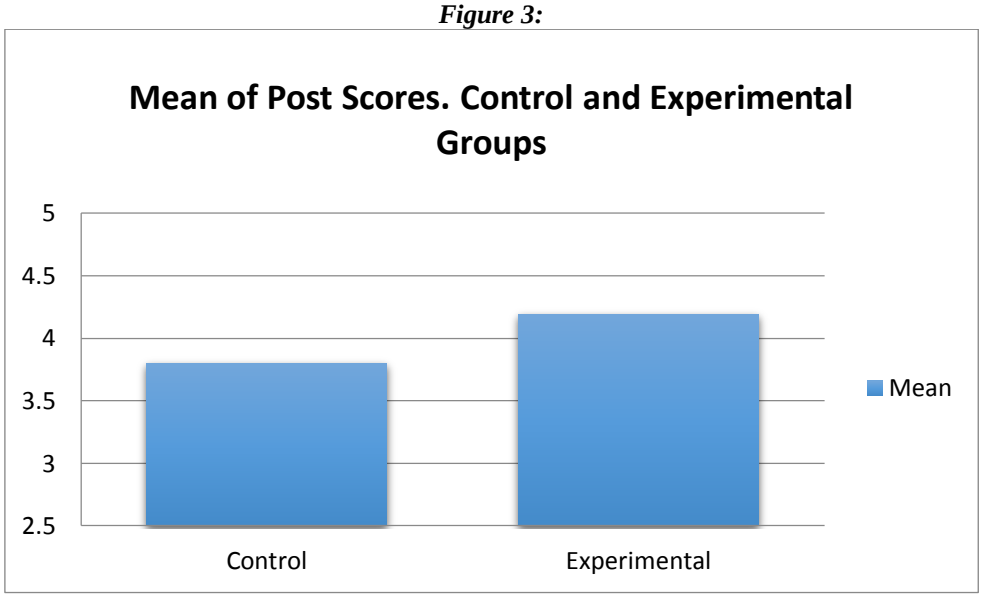

Figure 3: Mean of Post Scores of Happiness of pregnant women in Control and Experimental Groups.

Table 5: *t-test between Post Score of Degree of Happiness on Control and Experimental Groups.*

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	Degree of Freedom	p-value
Control	3.80	0.45	3.4118	58	0.001182
Experimental	4.19	0.42			

The above table shows that the p-value is less than 0.05 means our null hypothesis is rejected at 95 percent of confidence. It means that there is significant difference in post-score of happiness in control and experimental groups.

V. DISCUSSION:

In the words of Diener "It appears that the way people perceive the world is much more important to happiness than objective circumstances" (Diener,Richard, Lucasand Shigehiro, 2002). We have used Blessings meditation to shift the perception of the pregnant women from negative to positive, from illness to health, from discomfort to wellbeing by making them realize that they and the baby are blessed, happy and healthy.

Happiness is less researched in relation to pregnancy. Most researches have addressed hypertension, anxiety, depression, postpartum depression, health and psychological disturbances, before, in the course of and after pregnancy. Chesney et al. (2005) has advocated the role of meditation to be used as behavioral medicine in promoting positive mental states that are stable overtime and have health benefits. Such intervention is much more important during the present state of COVID- 19. One in four pregnant women worldwide are going through high degree of anxiety (30.5%) and elevated depression symptoms that are clinically significant (25.6 %) (Tomfohr-Madsen, Racine, Giesbrecht, Lebel and Madigan, 2021). Robust studies suggest positive effects of meditation that include researches like mindfulness meditation reduces trait anxiety and perceived stress effectively during pregnancy and higher efficacy of the intervention is especially observed at the early pregnancy stage (Beddoe, Paul Yang, Kennedy, Weiss and Lee, 2009). Meditation leads to 'relaxation reaction', decreased sympathetic, somatic nervous system activity and promote parasympathetic activity (Morgan, King, Weisz and Schopler, 1993). In our study effect of Blessings meditation is apparent in comparison between experimental group pre and experimental group post scores (Table no. 3). The alternate hypothesis is accepted, meditation is found to increase degree of happiness among pregnant women significantly. The items of PHS measure happiness covering wide parameters related to pregnancy. High scores on the PHS in the post intervention outcomes suggest pregnant women of the experimental group noticeably experienced more connection with the baby in their womb, they were much excited about their pregnancy and happy about the coming baby, perception of physical changes became positive, women experienced higher sense of creating and responsibility as a creator, they involved themselves more in taking care of themselves and the baby. Women developed more sense of control over their selves and their situations. General life satisfaction also became higher in the meditating pregnant women of experimental group. These findings indicate efficacy of meditation as behavioral medicine in increasing the degree of happiness in pregnant women of experimental group.

As the groups were not randomly divided, a baseline comparison was done to find, if any initial difference existed in the two groups. It is worth noticing that happier women volunteered to be in the experimental group. Comparison between control group pre-scores and experimental group pre-scores indicate a significant difference in pre-score of happiness in control and experimental groups (Table no. 4).

This difference could be understood by 'broaden and build model' (Fredrickson, 2000) that states happier people, people who experience joy expand possibilities for future activities that in-turn let them initiate subsequent actions in comparison to neutral or negative emotions experiencing people. Happiness also increases health seeking behavior, behavioral and biological correlated are found to mediate relationship of health with happiness (Steptoe, 2019).

Positive effect of blessings meditation is also found in comparison between control group post- scores and experimental group post- scores (Table no. 5). The alternate hypothesis is accepted at 95 percent of confidence; happiness among the pregnant women of experimental group was higher than the pregnant women in control group. It means that there is significant difference in post-score of happiness in control group who did not practiced blessings meditation and experimental groups who practiced blessings meditation for 12 weeks.

Hence, Blessings meditation has proved to be effective as a behavioral medicine in increasing the happiness of pregnant women.

VI. CONCLUSION

Our research is an application of behavioral medicine to the field of positive psychology, obstetrics and health. Meditation has proved to be an efficient tool to be used as a behavioral medicine, it is found to increase

the positive state of happiness that can further have health benefits for the pregnant woman and the baby in her womb.

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