

The Practice of Meditation: A Path to Maximize the Quality of Life

La Práctica de la Meditación: Un Camino Para Maximizar la Calidad de Vida

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Abstract

This paper evaluates the benefits of *meditation* in terms of *emotional intelligence*, *fear of death* and *self-satisfaction*. Participants in the study were women, divided into two groups: a target female group practicing the meditation technique of Prananadi daily, for at least a year (n=20), with an average age of 41,5 years, a witness female group (n=20) not practising this kind of meditation, with an average age of 42 years. The participants completed the Emotional Intelligence Scale, Collett-Lester Fear of Death Scale and Spiritual Well-being Questionnaire. The T test for independent samples was used to analyze the data; the results show a significant difference between the two groups regarding emotional intelligence, fear of death and self-satisfaction, in favor of those who meditate. This study supports the practical value of meditation as a method of self-development.

Keywords: meditation, emotional intelligence, fear of death, self-satisfaction

Resumen

Este trabajo evalúa los beneficios de la meditación en términos de inteligencia emocional, temor a la muerte y satisfacción con uno mismo. Los sujetos de este estudio fueron mujeres, divididas en dos grupos: un grupo experimental de mujeres que llevaban practicando meditación Prananadi diariamente por un año (n=20) con una media de edad de 41,5 años, y un grupo control que no practicaba este tipo de meditación (n=20) con una media de edad de 42 años. Los participantes rellenaron tres instrumentos de evaluación; la escala de inteligencia emocional, la escala de temor a la muerte Collett-Lester y el cuestionario de bien estar espiritual. Los datos se analizaron mediante la prueba T para muestras independientes y los resultados mostraron una diferencia significativa a favor del grupo meditador, en cuanto a inteligencia emocional, temor a la muerte y satisfacción con uno mismo. En conclusión, este estudio aporta una prueba más al valor de la meditación como método de desarrollo personal.

Palabras clave: meditación, inteligencia emocional, miedo a la muerte, auto-satisfacción

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Introduction

The contemporary world is undergoing a generalized crisis seriously affecting the entire human community and having multiple causes, the major one being of a spiritual nature. The world's scientific authorities, such as Laszlo, Russell and Grof (2009) speak about the need for a revolution concerning consciousness, a revolution involving inexorably the consistent use of certain *spiritual practices*, prayer and meditation occupying a privileged place among them.

Given the many benefits of *meditation*, which concerns the physical, psychological and spiritual component of the human being, many researchers around the entire globe, having the possibility to use high technology (PET, functional magnetic resonance, computed tomography), showed the beneficial role of meditation in the contemporary human existence. This explains why *Prananadi meditation technique* is acknowledged today by the American Psychological Association (APA) and there are 4953 articles on meditation, rated by ISI database.

The main purpose of this study is to identify the psycho-behavioral and spiritual effects of the Prananadi type of meditation, an ancient Tibetan meditation technique which today brings together over 22,800 practitioners in Romania, grouped in an association led by Master Tibor Ujlaky.

Conceptual Clarifications

The quality of social interactions and the general well-being of a person can be improved; among many other effects, it is known that meditation can have this effect. To see how meditation can influence these aspects of life, we chose to measure *emotional intelligence*, as an important factor of the quality of social interactions; *fear of death*, which may influence the way the person relates to their life and death and the life and death of others; and *self-satisfaction* as a component of spiritual well-being, reflecting the connection with oneself, taking into consideration the meaning of life, and the values and purposes of life.

Meditation

As shown by Mircea Eliade (1993), meditation is a state of mind in which there are no thoughts coming from the senses. In turn, J. Vigne (2009), in his book *Meditation and Psychology*, offers his definition of meditation: "To stop the mental activity (mind) in order to allow the Sacred or Self to be discovered"; and, a bit more psychological definition, "a group of techniques that have in common the practice of a stable, non-analytical, non-discursive attention". Nature of the mind reveals itself in the break between thoughts. Maharishi says that through meditation we focus our attention inwards, towards subtler levels of thought, until the mind transcends the experience of a subtle thought state and reaches the source of all thoughts. This process expands the conscious mind and, at the same time, brings it in contact with the *creative intelligence* that gives rise to every thought. *Meditation* is different from *introspection*, because it is a detached contemplation when thoughts should be allowed to flow freely. On the contrary, introspection focuses on an isolated state. *When you pray you speak and God listens, when you meditate you listen whilst God speaks*. It's about transcendence of all mental activity, but at the same time clear awareness remains as transcendental or pure consciousness.

Through meditation, a shift from the Ego-centered consciousness to a Self-centered consciousness is made possible. The motivation and the purpose of meditation consist in releasing from ignorance and disturbing conceptions (Rabten, 2011). Genuine reason and purpose of meditation is to free us from our ignorance and from other concepts interference (Rabten, 2011). Through meditation we reach the fourth state of consciousness – the pure consciousness (the transcendental consciousness) – *pure* meaning, which has no empirical content; it has no content except itself.

The *Prananadi meditation technique* is a Tibetan spiritual technique that continuously adapted itself, over the centuries, to different branches of religion. Even though it is intended to address westerners of today and tomorrow (Ujlaky, 2005), Prananadi keeps intact ancient teachings preserved in Tibetan monasteries taken directly from a master. It is a way to improve our physical and mental health. By Prananadi, everyday life becomes less stressful and feels less anxious. Those who practice this type of meditation become much stronger and energetic; it can change one's relations to other people, as well as one's environment towards the person (Ujlaky, 2005). It supports the process of self-development, has positive effects on healing processes, helps to fight strong physical and psychological strains, and it has a positive effect on relationships with others (Ujlaky, 2005). Among today's alternative therapies, uniting body and mind is a common feature. In this sense Prananadi focuses on the unity of mind and body (Feher, 2011). The way someone lives his life, the decisions he makes—all of his thoughts and feelings have an effect on the person's health. Every change in our feelings and thoughts has the same effect on the physical body (Feher, 2011). The essence of this technique is that, by rebuilding ourselves and helping others, we learn to rediscover the ability of living in harmony with the universe and with ourselves.

This technique comprises 5 degrees. After a satisfying health status has been achieved, states of spiritual health start to appear: joy, happiness, contentment, followed by states that are the basis of a sustainable happiness, independent from external factors. First degree offers the capacity to be charged with universal healing energy and to transmit it to others. Second degree gives the ability to heal from a distance with the help of ancestral Tibetan symbols, as well as to learn a traditional meditation technique that has effects on personal development. Third degree has a high energetic and spiritual level and gives highly efficient instruments for healing and self-development. Grade IV is the most specialized, and at Grade V, the person reaches a point where his life may take a radical turn.

Emotional intelligence

Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990) first used the term *emotional intelligence* (EI). They define EI as the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions such as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions such as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer and Salovey, 1995). They divided the abilities and skills of EI into four areas: the ability to perceive emotions, use emotions to facilitate thought, understand emotions, and manage emotions. *First domain reflects the perception of emotions and involves the capacity to recognize emotions in others' facial and postural expressions*; it involves nonverbal perception and expression of emotions in the face, voice, and other related communication channels (Ekman, cited in Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2004). *The second domain involves the capacity of emotions to assist thinking. The third domain, understanding of emotions, reflects the capacity to analyze emotions, appreciate their probable trends over time, and understand their outcomes. The fourth domain reflects the management of emotions, which necessarily involves the rest of personality.* Emotions are managed in the context of the individual's goals, self-knowledge, and social awareness.

Goleman (2001) finds *emotional intelligence* as the best predictor of success in life; he also says that those who have highly developed emotional abilities have more chances of being satisfied and efficient in life.

Recently, researchers started to study the impact of EI on humans' mental health, or as a moderating factor of stress, and found that people with a high level of EI suffer less subjective stress (Goldman, Kraemer and Salovey, 1996), also, they have a better state of health and well-being (Mayer and Salovey, 1995; Tsaousis and Nikolaou, 2005).

Each emotion conveys a unique set of identifying signals—emotional information (Ekman, cited in Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2004). This emotional information may be conveyed through its own unique communication channels, as well as through a unique pattern of associated signals from proprioceptive,

affective, and cognitive channels. Such emotional signals communicate information about the individual's appraisals and motivated reactions to relationships and their vicissitudes.

Mindfulness meditation and EI are similar because both are meta-cognitive constructs, and both stress people's abilities of perceiving, understanding and adjusting thoughts and emotions (Feilder cited in Chu, 2009).

Fear of death

Collett and Lester (1969) suggest that *fear of death is a multidimensional concept*; that can have different causes, causing the person to react differently towards death or dying. Likewise, emotional and attitudinal reaction may be different when we confront ourselves with our own death or with the death of others (Sabado, Limonero and Abdel-Khalek, 2007). The authors divided fear of death into four dimensions: *Death of Self, Dying of Self, Death of Others, and Dying of Others*. The major correlates of death anxiety are age, gender, physical health, religion, and culture.

Modern society does not teach us how to die; it focuses on preventing the death of the rich people and ignoring the death of the poor (Ramsay, 2005). Our attempt to remove death from our life, through institutionalization of the elderly, death in hospitals, takes away the understanding of death and its context; thereby causing the person to become more reluctant towards death than anxious (Ramsay, 2005). When death becomes a personal problem, the individual comes back to religion or seeks coping strategies. Religion offers an objective context for life and death, while honoring; lasting life after death of people who lived in sacrifice, morality and wisdom. Hope for a life after death is the only thing that makes the fear of death manageable (Malinowsky cited in Suhail and Akram, 2002) by offering hope for the eternal life (Lundh cited in Suhail and Akram, 2002). Ensuring a meaning of death has a visible effect on fear of death: it decreases the fear (Head, 1994). A series of studies demonstrated that certain factors of religiosity (religious commitment, orthodoxy, religious practice) reduce fear of death. *Meditation, as a coping strategy, offers a transcendental meaning of life, wherein man gets in contact with the multidimensional consciousness that transcends time, life, and death*. The sense we offer to death and life determine the way we are going to live and die.

Spiritual well-being

Spirituality gets more and more attention especially from gerontology and social services. Spirituality is complex because it overlaps with religiosity and infuses all of human life, making it very difficult to be studied. Human nature has a spiritual component related to the realm of faith, illumination, revelation, and insight.

Moberg (1984) considers "the spiritual" to pertain to "man's inner resources especially his ultimate concern, the basic value around which all other values are focused, the central philosophy of life - whether religious, anti-religious, or non-religious - which guides a person's conduct, the supernatural and nonmaterial dimension of human nature". *The components of spiritual well-being were described in terms of the human need to cope with socio-cultural deprivations, anxieties and fears, death and dying, personality integration, self-images, personal dignity, social alienation and life philosophy*. Social indicators of life satisfaction, including material and immaterial factors, are part of this dimension. Spiritual well-being includes social attitudes, self-perceptions, and theological orientations, activities serving others in charitable, political, and religious contexts, and religious beliefs, opinions, experiences, preferences, and affiliations. *Spiritual growth is possible throughout the entire lifetime*.

Traditionally, the term *spirituality* and, by extension, *spiritual well-being* were seen from a religious perspective, of religious experiences and behaviors (Powell cited in Gomez and Fisher, 2003). It overlaps with aspects of religiosity. The National Interfaith Coalition on Aging assumes that many aspects of religiosity are part of or correlates with spiritual well-being. *Religiousness* usually refers to membership and participation in the organizational structures, beliefs, rituals, and other activities related to a religious faith like Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, or Christianity, while *spirituality* typically has a more existential and

experiential focus upon an individual's internalized faith, values, and beliefs along with their consequences in daily behavior (Moberg, 2008). *Spiritual well-being* is the affirmation of life in relationships with self (*personal domain*), with others (*social domain*), with nature (*environmental domain*), and with God (*transcendental being*). The personal domain reflects the connection with oneself, taking into consideration the meaning of life, the values and purposes of life. The social domain expresses the quality and depth of interpersonal relationships, including love, justice, hope and faith in humanity. Environmental domain captures the excitement and care for biological and physical world, containing a feeling of respect, wonder and union with nature. The transcendental domain refers to the relationship with something or someone above human level, like a cosmic force, a transcendental reality or God; it implies faith, adoration and worship the source of Universe's mystery (Gomez and Fisher, 2003). A research study conducted by Nelson-Becker (2005) captured the way adults describe *religiosity and spirituality*: *religion* is seen as beliefs with unique descriptors that include heritage, basic principles, a way of thinking, and duty; on the other hand, *spirituality* is identified as a feeling in the heart with unique descriptors of connection with God, relationships with other people, communication with nature, and choice.

Spirituality, a central and integral part of human existence, can be involved implicitly, explicitly, directly or indirectly, in everything that humans are and do. Likewise, it overlaps with music, art, literature, philosophy, and with emotional responses, ethics, morality and individual's religion. People easily assume that any satisfaction of desires associated with them is the height of spiritual development, is a way to find spiritual fulfillment (Moberg, 2008).

Relevant research

Spiritual practices have many effects on a person, both from physiological and mental perspective. Only in the last 20 years, have the connections between emotional states and physical and mental wellbeing been begun to be understood by doctors, biologists and psychologists. Yet, Buddhist thinkers were aware, for more than 2000 years, of the healing capacity of mind (Goleman, 2008). From the effects on the body we mention: an increase in flexibility and sensibility of the nervous system, shorter time needed for recovery, and increased immunity (Haynes, 2004); it stimulates neuroplasticity, brain's capacity to organize and reorganize as a response to the incoming stimuli, stability of vegetative nervous system (Orme-Johnson and Vegors, 1988), contributes to the structural and functional changes of cerebral cortex (Horan, 2009).

At Maharishi University, a series of studies were conducted that highlight the effects of meditation. They found an improvement in psychological health of the people who practise Transcendental Meditation (Gerderloos, Hermans, Ahlstrom and Jacoby, 1990). The people who learned TM-Sidhi showed increased autonomy, creativity (Gelderloos, Goddard, Ahlstrom and Jacoby, 1987), spirituality, well-being and integration, spiritual well-being and spiritual experiences (Wachholtz and Pargament, 2005).

A series of research studies found the positive effects of Transcendental meditation on personality development: it reduces anxiety and stress (Dillbeck, 1997; Coppola and Spector, 2009), neuroticism, increases extraversion, emotional stability (Turnbull and Norris, 1982), self-control, positive emotions (Coppola and Spector, 2009). Furthermore, it optimizes the capacity of understanding and solving existential problems, strengthens self-control (Coppola and Spector, 2009), increases creativity through brain hemispheres synchronization, and α waves coherence (Horan, 2009).

Li-Chuan Chu (2009) conducted a research study, and the results suggest that people who meditate feel less stress, have better mental health and get higher scores at EI tests. The meditators perceive their actual-selves as being increasingly similar to their ideal- and social-selves and they develop a more strongly defined concept of their actual-selves (Turnbull and Norris, 1982).

Lukoff brought together a significant number of research studies showing in which way the development of a religious sense may contribute to psychological health, in general, and to the balance of couple life, in particular (Vigne, 2009).

Kline, Docherty and Farley (1982) did not find significant differences between meditators and those who don't meditate regarding self-actualization; in contrast Coppola and collaborators obtained opposite results, noticing a significant increase of self-actualization.

Effects of meditation by reporting to society is a subject of study that attracts more and more research studies. Many studies claim that meditation practice can increase EI (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer and Toney, 2006; Chu, 2009), sociability (Hanley and Spates, 1978), empathy (Beddoe, Murphy, 2004; Lutz, Slagter, Dunne and Davidson 2008), happiness, joy, positive thinking (Chang et al, 2004; Shapiro, 1992) and moral development; it also improves social relationships (Hanley and Spates, 1978) and helps the management of negative emotions (Shapiro, Schwartz and Bonner, 1998). *Meditation practice positively correlates with positive social attitudes*; meditators have less negative concepts about human nature and a positive self image (Hanley and Spates, 1978). The beneficial effects of meditation on morality of thoughts and intimacy can be observed in a study conducted by Chandler and collaborators (2005).

Methodology

Two groups of 20 women each, with the average age of 42 years, completed three questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered individually, for every subject respecting the same procedure; the necessary time for completing the questionnaires was about 40 minutes. For the statistical processing of data SPSS 17.0 program was used. For the verification of formulated hypotheses, independent t test was used for the identification of the differences between groups and the Pearson coefficient was calculated in order to capture the relationships between the variables.

This paper evaluates the benefits of Pranadi meditation technique in terms of emotional intelligence, fear of death and self-satisfaction and these are the hypotheses we want to study:

1. There will be statistically significant differences between women who practice meditation technique Pranadi and those who don't practice this technique regarding *emotional intelligence*.
2. There will be statistically significant differences between women who practice meditation technique Pranadi and those who don't practice this technique regarding *fear of death*.
3. There will be statistically significant differences between women who practice meditation technique Pranadi and those who don't practice this technique regarding *self-satisfaction*.
4. There will be statistically significant differences between women who practice meditation technique Pranadi and those who don't practice this technique regarding *evaluation and use of emotions*.
5. There will be, statistically, a significant relationship between fear of death and the Christian faith in adulthood.
6. There will be, statistically, a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and self-satisfaction in adulthood.

Subjects

This study analyzed a group of 40 women, divided in two: a target group (20 women practicing Pranadi, for at least a year, daily) and a witness group (20 women not practicing any kind of meditation), whose average age was 42 years old, for both groups.

Instruments

Collett-Lester *Fear of Death Scale* developed by Lester and Collett (1994) is one of the multidimensional classic instruments used in assessing attitudes toward death, and which is unique in that it distinguishes between death and the process of dying for both oneself and others. It is thus organized into four separate subscales: *Fear of Death of Self, Fear of Dying of Self, Fear of Death of Others, and Fear of*

Dying of Others. The scale has 28 items, the answers are noted on a 5-point Likert format anchored as follows: 1 (not) and 5 (very). The total score in each subscale could range from 7 to 35, with higher scores denoting higher anxiety from death or dying.

Spiritual well-being Questionnaire, developed by Moberg D. (1984), is composed of 82 items that measure different aspects of spiritual well-being (social attitudes, self-perceptions, theological orientations, activities serving others in charitable, political, and religious contexts, and religious beliefs, opinions, experiences, preferences, and affiliations). *This instrument was developed to verify religiosity from a holistic point of view.* It analyzes the human relationships with nature, God, community and own person.

Emotional intelligence Scale developed by Salovey and Mayer, (1990) is composed of 33 items and is self-administered. The answers are given in a 5-point Likert scale (1- strongly disagree, and 5- strongly agree). It measures emotional intelligence: *evaluation and expression of personal and others' emotions* (13 items), *adjustment of personal and others' emotions* (10 items) and *use of emotions in problem solving* (10 items), are found in this instrument.

Results

The questionnaires were administered individually, for every subject respecting the same procedure. For *the statistical processing of data* SPSS 17.0 program was used. For *the verification of formulated hypotheses*, independent *t* test was used for the identification of the differences between groups for the first 4 hypotheses and the Pearson coefficient was calculated in order to capture the relationships between the variables analyzed in the last two hypotheses.

The distribution of the data is symmetrical, being in the -2 - +2 intervals, for both Skewness and Kurtosis. The internal consistency (Alpha Cronbach) was calculated for each test. The values obtained vary between $\alpha = .87$ (for Emotional Intelligence Scale), $\alpha = .73$ (for the dimension evaluation of emotions), $\alpha = .68$ (for the dimension use of emotions), $\alpha = .95$ (for Collett-Lester Fear of Death Scale), $\alpha = .86$ (for Christian faith dimension) and $\alpha = .77$ (for the dimension self-satisfaction).

First hypothesis

For the first hypothesis we found the following results:

Table 1: *Independent t test for emotional intelligence*

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional intelligence	Meditators	20	137,30	10,92
	Non-meditators	20	128,70	11,56

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean difference
Emotional intelligence	Equal variances assumed	,168	,685	2,418	38	,021	8,60000
	Equal variances not assumed			2,418	37,877	,021	8,60000

The quantitative analysis sustains the first hypothesis, meditators obtaining a significantly higher score on EI scale than the witness group. Levene's F test is statistically insignificant, indicating that the groups are homogenous, so we can use the first value of $t(38) = 2,41$, $p = .02$, the mean difference of the is 8,6. These results confirm the hypothesis. To measure the effect size Cohen's d was used, in this case d has a value of 0,78, indicating a medium effect.

Second hypothesis

For the second hypothesis we found the following results:

Table 2: Independent t test for fear of death

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fear of death	Meditators	20	67,45	20,70
	Non-meditators	20	90,25	26,40

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Fear of Death	Equal variances assumed	2,896	,097	-3,038	38	,004	22,80000
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,038	35,957	,004	22,80000

To identify the differences between groups, having as dependent variable fear of death, independent T test was used, the results $t(38) = -3,03$, $p < .01$ confirm the second hypothesis, the persons who don't meditate are significantly more anxious towards death than the meditators. Mean difference is -22,8. This high score indicates a high level of anxiety, explaining why the t test results are negative. The size of the effect was calculated, and a $d = 0,97$ was obtained, suggesting a strong effect. The differences between these groups have an important practical value.

Third hypothesis

For the 3rd hypothesis we found the following results:

Table 3: Independent t test for self-satisfaction

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-satisfaction	Meditators	20	18,05	4,65
	non-meditators	20	21,95	5,36

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Self-satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	,395	,534	-2,456	38	,019	-3,90000

Equal variances not assumed	-2,456	37,249	,019	-3,90000
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Levene’s F test is statistically insignificant, meaning that the groups are homogenous. The results $t(38)=-2,45$ $p<.02$ confirm the third hypothesis, meditation practice has a beneficial effect on self-satisfaction. The high score obtained at this scale indicates a low level of self satisfaction. Mean difference is -3,99, and effect’s size $d=0,77$, medium effect.

Fourth hypothesis

For the 4th hypothesis we found the following results:

Table 4: Independent t test for evaluation and use of emotions

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Use of emotions	Meditators	20	17,55	1,43
	Non-meditators	20	16,05	2,32
Evaluation of emotions	Meditators	20	36,20	3,86
	Non-meditators	20	32,95	3,53

		Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Use of emotions	Equal variances assumed	6,092	0,18	2,455	38	,019	1,50000
	Equal variances not assumed			2,455	31,577	,020	1,50000
Evaluation of emotions	Equal variances assumed	,059	,809	2,778	38	,008	3,25000
	Equal variances not assumed			2,778	37,702	,008	3,25000

The analysis of the fourth hypothesis was done with independent T test. For the dimension use of emotions Levene’s F test is statistically significant, so we used the second value of t, having as results $t(38)=2,45$ $p<.02$, effect’s size 0, 77, medium effect; and for the dimension evaluation of emotions: $t(38)=2,77$ $p<.01$, $d= 0,87$, strong effect. This result confirms the fourth hypothesis; meditators evaluate and use emotions significantly better than those who don’t practice meditation.

Fifth hypothesis

For the fifth hypothesis we found the following results:

Table 5: Pearson correlation for fear of death and Christian faith

		Fear of Death	Christian Faith
Fear of Death	Pearson Correlation	1	-0,21
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,898
	N	40	40
Christian Faith	Pearson Correlation	-0,21	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,898	
	N	40	40

To test the fifth hypothesis Pearson coefficient r was used. The results $r(38)=-.02$ $p>.05$ is not significant statistically, so the fifth hypothesis is not confirmed. This study did not find a correlation between fear of death and Christian faith in adulthood.

Sixth hypothesis

For the 6th hypothesis we found the following results:

Table 6: Correlation between self-satisfaction and emotional intelligence

		Self-satisfaction	Emotional Intelligence
Self-satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	-,646
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	40	40
Emotional Inetlligence	Pearson Correlation	-,646	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	40	40

Linearity and homoscedasticity of this relation make possible the use of Pearson coefficient to test the sixth hypothesis. The result $r(38)=-.64$ $p<.001$ is statistically significant. A high score on the self-satisfaction dimension indicates a low level of self-satisfaction, and a high score at EI scale indicate a high level of it. The correlation is positive; as EI rises so does self-satisfaction. The sixth hypothesis is confirmed.

By analyzing the data the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 6th hypothesis were confirmed, the persons who practice Pranadi meditation technique have a high level of EI, self-satisfaction than the witness group, also they have a lower level of fear of death. There is a positive correlation between self-satisfaction and EI. The 5th hypothesis was confirmed, this study found no relation between fear of death and Christian faith.

Discussion

The **first hypothesis** of this study investigated the relationship between meditation and emotional intelligence, especially if meditation practice can increase EI. As expected, meditation practice is positively associated with EI, increasing it. These results are in accordance with other studies' results that found that meditation can intensify EI (Baer et al, 2006; Chu, 2009), sociability (Hanley and Spates, 1978), empathy (Beddoe, Murphy, 2004; Lutz, Slagter, Dunne and Davidson, 2008), happiness, joy and positive thinking (Shapiro, 1992), can increase extraversion and emotional stability (Turnbull, Norris, 1982), self-control and positive emotions (Coppola and Spector, 2009).

Empirical evidence shows that people who have well-developed emotional abilities – who know and control their feelings, recognize and efficiently approach the emotions of others have an advantage in every aspect of life (Goleman, 2001). *High level of EI indicates a better perception of emotions*; these people use their emotions in the process of thought, and they understand the meaning of each emotion and can manage

them better than those with a low level of EI. The cognitive effort necessary for solving the emotional problems is the Emotional problem solving and it requires less cognitive effort for these people. High scores on evaluation of emotions dimension indicate a greater social and verbal intelligence. These people are, generally, more open to others and have a smaller probability of showing self-destructive and negative behaviors (like smoking, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, violent behavior). More positive social interactions can be observed by the people scoring high on the dimension of use of emotions (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2004). Many studies capture the importance of emotional intelligence. EI predicts academic performance, communication abilities (positive correlation) (Mayer, Perkins, Caruso and Salovey, 2001), stress management (Gohm, Corser and Dalsky, 2005), and the quality of social relationships (Lopes et al, 2004). Meditation may indicate a low social withdrawal, positive concepts about human nature, positive self-image, high tolerance, sociability, and vague feelings of social inadequacy (Hanley and Spates, 1978). All of these aspects influence the social relationships; thereby meditation can improve the quality of interactions. Emotions infuse every social interaction, but also influence many aspects of life. People need to set their priorities, to positively focus on the future, to control their negative moods before the onset of anxiety and depression (Grewal and Salovey, 2004). Insights about the nature of emotional experience are offered by Ekman, and say that people differ, in every culture, in their ability to evaluate and use emotional information. Emotional skills deficiency may lead to negative results, therefore every way of improving EI needs to be valued; this study shows that meditation practices have this effect on EI. *Focusing on mind and soul, EI may help by directing us on the right path* (Grewal and Salovey, 2004). The motivation and the purpose of meditation consist in releasing from ignorance and disturbing conceptions (Rabten, 2011), since our existence and well-being are a result of the contribution and cooperation of the people around us, we have to develop a proper attitude toward the way we relate to them (Dalai Lama, 2002).

Researchers are becoming more interested in discovering methods of enhancing EI, of reducing perceived stress and of promoting a better mental health. *Meditation appears to be one of the most efficient coping strategies*. A significant number of research studies demonstrated that meditation is beneficial, not just for the mental health (Shapiro, 1992) and adjustment of cognitive and emotional functions (Baer et al, 2006), but even for the removal of perceived stress and associated symptoms (Chang et al, 2004).

The **second hypothesis** of this study analyzed the difference between the meditators and non-meditators regarding fear of death. The results confirmed this hypothesis, meditators being significantly less anxious towards the idea of death than those from the witness group. From birth we live with the idea of a life limited by death, the fear of death overshadows our existence. People desperately try to find ways of avoiding death (ex. Philosopher's Stone), increasing their life span, for postponing the encounter with death, forgetting, most of the time, that the individual is immortal through his soul. *"To meditate means knowing to unite with the Soul in our soul, the one that never was different from the Soul's soul"* (Vigne, 2009), passing from an Ego-centered consciousness to a Self-centered consciousness. *With the help of meditation, we can start a journey to the center of the being, to the pure and immortal essence of the being*. By connecting with the multidimensional consciousness, man exceeds the physical dimension of existence, thereby the experience of death is invested with another value: passing in another form of existence. *Belief in the afterlife has the most important effect upon this fear* (Malinowsky cited in Suhail and Akram, 2002) offering hope for the eternal life (Lundh cited in Suhail and Akram, 2002). Changing our belief in the afterlife is associated with the reduction of fear of death (Ochsmann, 1984).

The **third hypothesis** demonstrated that *Prananadi meditation technique has a positive influence on self-satisfaction*. We can explain this if we see meditation as a way of understanding and personal growth, influencing self-satisfaction. Meditation positively correlates with life satisfaction (Shapiro, Astin, Bishop and Cordova, 2005), produces changes of ego's defense mechanism where the person is showing more maturity and tolerance (Emavardhana and Tori, 1997). Coppola and Spector, (2009) found a significant increase of self-actualization at meditators, they perceive their actual-selves as being increasingly similar to

their ideal- and social-selves and they develop a more strongly defined concept of their actual-selves (Turnbull and Norris, 1982). The self-determination capacity of human being is well highlighted by Rogers (cited in Macinga, 2003), who subordinates the dynamic elements of personality to a fundamental motivational structure, called *actualization tendency*: “*development, maturation, the tendency of activating and expressing all potential of an organism or of the Self*”. Through the concept of incongruence, Rogers explains the discrepancy between the Ideal-self and the real-self; the more space that grows between them, the bigger the inadequacy will be. This has major effects on self-satisfactions. Some studies sustain the idea that meditation can increase sociability (Hanley, Spates, 1978), empathy (Beddoe, Murphy, 2004; Lutz, Slagter, Dunne, Davidson 2008), happiness, joy and positive thinking (Chang et al, 2004; Shapiro, 1992), helping the management of negative emotions (Shapiro, Schwartz, Bonner, 1998) and forming a positive self image (Hanley, Spates, 1978). Maslow ranks self-actualization in the top of his hierarchy of needs; self-actualization is a fundamental human need, so the whole dynamic and development of personality focuses on satisfying this need.

According to the **fourth hypothesis** *the obtained results shows the existence of meaningful differences between groups regarding evaluation and use of emotions*. Meditation implies focusing our attention on personal development, making possible for the meditators to develop self-awareness, one of the major tenets of EI (Chu, 2009), this way the person pays attention to the environment and whatever is happening in the here and now, rather than focusing too much on the past and the future. *Meditation practice might effectively disengage individuals from automatic thoughts, habits and unhealthy behavioral patterns* (Ryan cited in Chu, 2009). Open awareness may effectively facilitate the choosing of behavior that is consistent with one’s needs, values and interests (Deci cited in Chu, 2009). Meditation involves a conscious intention of deepening in unconsciousness (Horan, 2009). Meditation influences these dimensions of EI through self-knowledge, through focusing attention to the inner space of the individual, who becomes more aware of his emotions, to understand the emotions of others in a more empathic way, and use them in a positive manner. *The management of emotions is in accordance with the person’s objectives, self-knowledge and social awareness*.

As demonstrated by the **fifth hypothesis**, *this study did not find a connection between fear of death and Christian faith in adulthood*. One reason for this result could be that religiousness has an extrinsic orientation for an important number of Christians. *Some studies observed that certain factors of religiosity (religious commitment, orthodoxy, practice) reduce fear of death*. Belief in the afterlife has the most important effect upon this fear (Malinowsky cited in Suhail and Akram, 2002) offering hope for the eternal life (Lundh cited in Suhail and Akram, 2002). There are studies that sustain the major role played by religion in our attitudes and emotions regarding death. Giving death a meaning has a visible effect on reducing death anxiety (Head, 1994). Christianity confronts the problem directly, trying to offer a frame for solving the problems related to death and the anxiety generated by dying. *The relationship between fear of death and religiosity has often been studied, but the results were usually contradictory*. Allport defined extrinsic and intrinsic religiousness concepts. Extrinsic religiousness sees religion as a means to an end: religious devotion is a method of getting different objectives, as personal comfort, security, social status (Spilka cited in Patrik, 1979). Intrinsic religiousness – religion as finality- sees faith as the most important value, this type of faith transcends the selfish needs, has its roots in a profound personal engagement, in contrast to the extrinsic religiousness that is oriented towards success, money, prestige, power having a major importance.

The **sixth hypothesis** *identified a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and self-satisfaction*. Goleman (2001) finds emotional intelligence as the best predictor of success in life; also he says that those who have highly developed emotional abilities have more chances of being satisfied and efficient in life. *This study found a positive correlation between those variables*. In today’s society, people are interdependent, communication plays an essential role in all social interactions, that’s why the ability of

adjustment, evaluation and use of emotions directly influence social relationships. The quality of these relations influences personal satisfaction and well-being. The individualist focusing has some limits, individuals being more and more independent, but since our very existence and well-being are a result of the cooperation and contributions of countless others, we must develop a proper attitude about the way we relate to them (Dalai Lama, 2002). Focusing on mind and soul, EI may help direct us on the right path (Grewal, Salovey, 2004).

Conclusion

According to the results obtained in this study, we have the following conclusions: at the study group meditation practice stimulates emotional intelligence, ameliorates the fear of death, enhances self-satisfaction, and emotional intelligence correlates positively with self-satisfaction. Meditation is a path to understanding and personal growth.

One of the most ambitious studies that analyze the physical, psychological and behavioral effects of meditation, conducted by Clifford Saron (2006) called Samantha Project offers evidence of meditation practice effects on perception (improves) (MacLean et al, 2010) and emotions (gives a feeling of well-being, may encourage an empathic attitude) (Sahdra et al, 2011). By reducing stress, meditation can play a role in preventing aging. Meditation is useful in clinical and non-clinical interventions, to improve physical and mental functioning by promoting emotional adjustment. Meditation can facilitate a deeper contact with and openness to others. *The contact with the inner forum, which offers individuality, leads to the dissolution of the barriers between us and the environment* (Blackstone, 2008). Psychology aims at mind control and interrogation of self and meditation – a complete stagnation of mind and a transcendence of the ego.

As Maharishi Mahesh Yogi said (Wallace, Orme-Johnson and Dillbeck, 1990, p. 24):

“There is an ever-increasing state of chaos in the world; tension increases daily in the individual, in social life, in national affairs, and international relations. The great and urgent need is for something to re-establish harmony in the individual human being and to give him peace; only from such inner peace can wisdom and happiness be born”. A self-exploration technique, called meditation *“enables a man to dive into the innermost reaches of his being, in which dwell the essence of life and the source of all wisdom, creativity, all peace, and all happiness”*.

Limits and future research

This study presents some limits. First, the small number of participants, even though there are studies with a smaller number of participants and same obtained results (Orme-Johnson cited in Kline, Docherty and Farley, 1982). Different types of meditation may influence the results obtained at the measured variables, because they may be focused on other aspects, along with the practice stringency, which could not be controlled. Another limit is the fact that the groups were composed only of women. The testing was done using only self-report methods, creating the risk of biases because of the tendency of desirability of answers. At least, the reduced possibility of generalization of results, *meditation efficacy may vary depending on population*.

A possible future research direction could study the capacity of meditation of invoking some emotions like compassion, empathy, affection or could study the different effects of certain types of meditation upon presented variables, this fact possibly providing information about what aspects of meditation influence different dimensions of these variables. Also, the connection between Buddhist faith and fear of death could be studied. The use of pre-test-post-test method could indicate how much EI, self-satisfaction increase, and how much the fear of death can be reduced.

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