Meditation, Health Promotion, and the Five Factor Model of Personality

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Abstract
Although many studies have demonstrated the physical and psychological benefits of meditation, few studies have considered the personality factors involved in establishing and maintaining a meditation practice. The present study used the Five Factor model to compare frequency of meditation with personality characteristics. Overall, meditators were found to score higher than non-meditators on Factor II, Agreeableness, and to exhibit higher levels of curiosity and open-mindedness. In addition, meditators were more attracted to social interaction and less stimulus-seeking. In contrast with some previous research, the present study found no relationship between meditation and Factor IV, Emotional Stability.

Introduction
Although meditation as a spiritual practice has existed for at least three millennia, psychological research on meditation is barely fifty years old (Welsh & Shapiro, 2006). For the most part, results from these studies have shown an impressive list of outcomes that link meditation with both physical and psychological health. For example, meditation:

- helps alleviate symptoms associated with asthma, insomnina, back pain, and type 2 diabetes (Mehar & Rosen, 1997);
- appears to be useful in the treatment of patients with serious cancer, and chronic pain (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Carlson, Speca, Patel, & Goodey, 2003);
- helps control substance abuse (Gelderloos, Wolten, Orme-Johnson, & Alexander, 1991); panic disorder (Miller, Fletcher, & Kabat-Zinn, 1995), and symptoms of anxiety in cancer patients (Spica, Carlson, Goodey, & Agron, 2000).

Despite the burgeoning linkage between meditation and physical and psychological health, not many studies have considered the personality factors that affect an individual’s motivation to start and maintain a meditation practice. To a large degree, meditation’s potential as a physical and mental health promotion strategy depends on the willingness of individuals to participate in the practice.

Meditation and the Five Factors

Factor I, Extraversion: No consistent pattern with frequency of meditation (Delmonte, 1988; Wills, 1988; Travis, Andersen, Delbree, 2004), so no prediction regarding frequency of meditation and Extraversion.

Factor II, Agreeableness: Agreeableness has been linked with the qualities of receptivity and pliancy (Johnson & Ostrandorf, 1993). Prediction: Frequency of meditation would be related to Factor II.

Factor III, Conscientiousness: Findings from studies of meditation and Conscientiousness appear to be contradictory (Travis et al., 2004; Farge, Hartung, & Borland, 1979), so we predicted no relationship between Factor III and frequency of meditation.

Factor IV, Neuroticism: Although more neurotic individuals seem to be attracted to meditation initially (Wilson, Francis, & Darmon, 1975), they are also more likely to discontinue the practice (Delmonte, 1980, 1988; Smith, 1975; Wills, 1988). In contrast, meditators who possess the traits in the practice demonstrate lower levels of Neuroticism. Prediction: Emotional stability should predict frequency of meditation.

Factor V, Openness to Experience: Some previous research has shown that Factor V relates to the willingness to use complementary and alternative medicine (Henders & Jacobsen, 2005) in address issues of physical and mental health. Prediction: A positive correlation between Factor V and meditation frequency.

Analyses

The only statistically significant result from analysis of demographic variables and meditation frequency was a small correlation (r = .18, p < .05) between age and frequency of meditators. Consequently, age was used as a covariate in subsequent analyses of variance. A screen test of eigenvalues after a principal components analysis of HIC scores suggested a five factor solution, accounting for 48.0% of the variance. Five factor scores from the various scaled solution were computed to be used in subsequent analyses. Meditation frequency scores were correlated with both the HIC and five factor scores. A series of stepwise discriminant analysis were run with the five factor scores as dependent variables, the four levels of meditation frequency as fixed factor, and age as covariate, were conducted to identify patterns of personality differences for differing frequencies of meditation.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to extend our knowledge of health-seeking behavior and personality by looking at the relationship between the Five Factor model of personality and meditation. As the level of the Five Factors, correlation and analysis of variance confirmed only the relationship between Factor II (Agreeableness) and frequency of meditation.

Conclusion

As expected, the results from the present study confirm that meditation is associated with Agreeableness. Meditation practice is associated with a positive personality trait, Agreeableness. Meditation practice is associated with Agreeableness, which is associated with positive personality traits. Meditation practice is associated with Agreeableness, which is associated with positive personality traits. Meditation practice is associated with Agreeableness, which is associated with positive personality traits. Meditation practice is associated with Agreeableness, which is associated with positive personality traits. Meditation practice is associated with Agreeableness, which is associated with positive personality traits.