

Integrated Amrita Meditation Alchemy and its Effects on Spiritual and Environmental Well-being of School teachers

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Integrated Amrita Meditation (IAM) is a unique practice, harmonizing yoga, and meditation, to bring about an integration of body, mind, and breath converging to a state of serene tranquility. This article portrays the results of a research probing the reciprocity between IAM regimen's yogic postures, visualization, focused breathing, and inner peace of female school teachers. A cross-sectional online survey was undertaken via a Google form, to acquire primary data using standardized questionnaire for analysis, using SPSS. This probe examined the level of satisfaction of 53 schoolteachers influenced by the main features of IAM, using Pearson correlation analysis. In addition, the study investigated the school teachers' perceptions of the relevance of IAM on their spiritual as well as environmental well-being, with regard to age and body mass index (BMI). This investigation showed a strong correlation among variables related to various dimensions of IAM routines. Besides, the research demonstrated a moderate response rate, based on the quartile values of all the items in the standardized questionnaire, on the 5 point-Likert scale. Interestingly, the perception scores were found to differ significantly by the BMI, rather than the age factor of school teachers. This investigation exemplified how school teachers in educational settings embraced the IAM introspective discipline, to preserve a sense of self-respect and reverence for the environment. The study, exhibiting positive implications for educators, underscored the benign outcomes of IAM practices that need to be sponsored in the educational sector, to comprehensively harness the innate dormant potential in school teachers.

Keywords: Well-being, Integrated Amrita Meditation, school teachers, inner peace

Meditation is an age-old tradition with its roots traceable to Vedic scriptures. It is a process of increasing the level of self-awareness with an experience of oneness, which steers the mind from the manifest objective world to the inner realms of the human self (Sharma, H., 2015). Meditation has a propitious role in enhancing personal self-esteem that stimulates humans to perform their duties and responsibilities with abiding commitment, punctuated by acceptance of things beyond their control (Shapiro et al., 2011). When incorporated into an educational curriculum, meditation fosters psychological well-being and congenial transformation of human personalities (Burrows, L., 2015). A study by Lomas et al. compared examined the practice of meditation navigated school teachers to deeper alchemy by having them be more conscious of their own thoughts and behavior. Zarate et al. in 2019 found that meditation

is a mindful mental state, focused on self-regulation of one's attention and awareness of mental activities. Recent studies revealed that meditation, incorporating visualizations, focused breathing, and yoga, enhanced school teachers' levels of awareness. Adherence to a regimen of meditation bolsters the social well-being within education systems (Graham, A., & Truscott, J., 2020). Thus, Meditation has been emerging as an effective strategy that enables school teachers to cope with the internal and external environment (Anderson et al., 1999).

The Covid-19 outbreak and post pandemic issues have totally deranged the global education scenario, with the teaching population compelled to switch over to web-based instruction. Meditation practices turned out to be more meaningful for school teachers to address such challenging and uncertainties of online educational strategy (Matiz et al., 2020).

Meditation stimulates the buildup of spiritual wellness in school teachers, which facilitates their alacritous acceptance of alternative teaching options. The Integrated Amrita Meditation Technique (IAM), a zero-cost meditation process, designed and developed by Her Holiness Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, the world-famous philanthropist, recognized by the United Nations for her humanitarian work (Bringi, S. K., 2019). IAM recommends the body rested in a sitting posture with a straight back, steering one's awareness to thoughts and emotions focused on a real or imaginary point. According to Vedic scriptures, focusing the mind on breathing facilitates an intense awareness. As Increased intensity of awareness, guides one to the very depths of mind and enabling veritable mindfulness in one's day-to-day actions. The synergetic interplay of IAM attributes - yoga, focused breathing; body scan and visualization facilitate convergence of one's awareness of body movements and thought processes to serenity in the present moment. IAM practitioners are motivated to prolong the state of mind and get established in tranquility of inner peace. Eventually this congenial peace is manifested in a person's thoughts, words, and deeds. Scientific evidence bear testimony to IAM's potential for mitigation of human stress (Vandana et al., 2011).

The objectives of this study are noted here under

- Examination of the school teachers' perception on the influence of IAM in enhancement of their spiritual and environmental well-being.
- Appraisal of the school teachers' age and BMI factors into spiritual and environmental well-being, based on their perception scores
- Analysis of school teachers' satisfaction levels over the four dimensions of IAM: inner peace, yogic postures, focused breathing, and visualization.

Method

An online cross-sectional study was conducted among 53 school teachers, in various schools across the state of Kerala,

India, who were regular practitioners of IAM. Primary data collection, using self-administered standardized questionnaire via Google form, was accomplished subsequent to respondent's uncompelled acceptance of a consent form and information sheet specifying the purpose of study. This investigation was commenced on receipt of a formal approval from the Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham University's Institutional Ethics Committee.

Instruments

A self-developed standardized questionnaire constituted of socio-demographic and psychological components was employed in the current study. A scale, comprising the domains of IAM Effectiveness (EIAM) and IAM Satisfaction (IAMS), was designed for assessment of psychological variables.

EIAM was appraised from two perspectives: Spiritual Well-being (SW) and Well-being of Environment (WBE).

Four aspects contributing to SW were evaluated in the present study:

1. Inner harmony
2. Humility and receptiveness towards life experiences
3. Sense of gratitude
4. Acceptance of a current situation by being aware of how one reacts to the situation.

The following features contributing to WBE were appraised:

1. Cultivating the attitude of nurturing and planting trees, vegetables, and gardens
2. Maintaining a balance between oneself and the environment
3. Feeling a sense of reverence towards nature
4. Living in harmony with nature's law and healthy ways of behaving
5. Intrinsically connecting to all beings on this planet
6. Balancing the forces of internal environment as body, mind, and breath.

IAMS scale comprised of four domains illustrates how the various features of IAM

regimen influence the satisfaction level of school teachers. The variables adopted in IAMS scale were

1. Yogic postures for mind-body relaxation
2. Focused Breathing
3. Visualization
4. Inner peace.

IAMS Scale was developed in such a way that the respondents' responses were evaluated according to the level of their satisfaction of IAM practice on a five-point Likert scale -

- 1 = Strongly Disagree,
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree.

Higher the perception score obtained (maximum 5 on the Likert scale score), higher is a participant's belief in the efficacy IAM discipline. Based on the quartile value statistics (De Vaus., D., 2002), using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software (Norusis, M. J., 2006), the Likert scale values were evaluated further, at three levels of influence of IAM tradition in a participant's life.

- a. Less than 4.00 indicates low effect, marked by low influence
- b. score 4.00-4.5 implies moderate effect
- c. score greater than 4.5 indicates high influence

Statistical experts examined the validity and reliability of the instrument. The primary data set, obtained via Google form, was compiled and coded in Microsoft Excel and the statistical analyses were done using the SPSS software. Reliability of the scale used in the current research was evaluated using Cronbach Alpha. When compared to the 70% criterion, the Cronbach Alpha value was 98.6 %, based on standardized items, which is regarded incredibly good (Taber, K. S., 2018).

Results

The demographic characteristics of the participants were examined and summarized

below: The school teachers who participated in the study were female with a mean age of 44.40 ± 6.769 years, mean teaching experience of 16.34 ± 5.942 years and mean BMI of $24.77 \pm 3.266 \text{ kg/m}^2$. Among the school teacher participants, 45.3% were graduates with bachelor's degrees, while 54.7% were post-graduates with Master degrees, 45.3% of the participants were language school teachers where as the subject of teaching of 35.8% participants were Humanities. The percentage of Commerce, Science and Computer Science participants were 7.5%, 5.7% and 5.7% respectively. In addition, 28.3% of the participants fell into primary school and 17.0% were in upper primary classes. 39.6% of the participants were from high school and 15.1% were higher secondary school teachers. A good majority (98.1%) of the participants were married.

The perception score of the participants on the impact of IAM apropos SW and WBE is addressed in table 1 with all items in EIAM Scale having moderate effect.

Table 1: Participant's Perception Level of Spiritual and Environment well-being (N=53)

Variable	Items	Mean \pm SD	Effect
Spiritual Well-being (SW)	1.Helps to enhance inner peace and harmony	4.43 \pm 0.665	Moderate
	2.IAM practice makes you humble and more receptive to all experiences without them	4.40 \pm 0.716	Moderate
	3.Enhances your sense of gratitude	4.43 \pm 0.772	Moderate
	4.Enable to accept a current situation by being aware that the real problem is not the situation, but how you react to the situation	4.38 \pm 0.814	Moderate
	Total	4.410 \pm 0.6883	Moderate

Well-being of Environment (WBE)	1. Helps to cultivate the attitude of taking care nature by nurturing and planting trees and vegetables and cultivating gardens.	4.40 ±0.716	Moderate
	2. IAM is an effective path of maintaining the balance between oneself and the environment and paves the way to have a feeling that the human mind should be harmonized then harmony of nature spontaneously take place	4.43 ±0.694	Moderate
	3. Feels a sense of reverence towards environment	4.40 ±0.793	Moderate
	4. Helps to live in harmony with nature's law and healthy ways of behaving	4.40 ±0.793	Moderate
	5. Helps you to intrinsically connected to every other human being and also to nature, animals, plants, everything on this planet	4.40 ±0.840	Moderate
	6. Helps to balance the forces of your internal environment as body, mind, and breath	4.38 ±0.790	Moderate
	Total	4.399 ±0.6613	Moderate

Additional comparison of the score with respect to age and BMI factors, are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Comparison of IAM Efficacy Variables with Age and BMI

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	F	P value
Age	SE	1.306	0.281
	WBE	0.174	0.841
BMI	SE	5.324	0.008 <0.05
	WBE	5.612	0.007 <0.05

The perception scores, using mean and standard deviation of the variables in the IAMS Scale were compared using one factor ANOVA (Mishra et al., 2019) are presented in table 3.

Furthermore, this paper's investigation resorted to Pearson correlation analysis (Benesty et al., 2009) to assess the correlation among these variables. As depicted in table 4, Focused breathing was found to be positively related to yogic postures (r=0.670, p<0.001), whereas, Visualization was positively related to Focused breathing (r=0.723, p<0.001). Furthermore, Attainment of inner peace was positively related to visualization (r=0.809, p<0.001).

Discussion

The online survey was based on the perception of female school teachers, based on a standardized questionnaire. Table 1 explores the perception level of the participants

Table 3: Comparison of IAM Satisfaction Level Perception Score: One Factor ANOVA

Items Variable	Mean	n	Std. Dev	F	P value
Relaxation of body mind	4.5	53	0.67	0.18	0.9099
Focused Breathing	4.4	53	0.69		
Visualization	4.5	53	0.69		
Attainment of Inner Peace and silence	4.5	53	0.60		
Total	4.5		0.66		

Table 4: Correlation Matrix: IAM Satisfaction Level of Participants

Item Variables in IAM Satisfaction of School teachers		Yogic Postures	Focused Breathing	Visualization	Attainment of Inner Peace and silence
Yogic Postures		1.000			
Focused Breathing	Pearson Correlation	0.670**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001			
	N	53			
Visualization	Pearson Correlation	0.753**	0.723**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001	<0.001		
	N	53	53		
Attainment of Inner Peace	Pearson Correlation	.795**	0.677**	0.809**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	
	N	53	53	53	1.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

on SW and WBE emanated by IAM practices. When the participants' perception score was evaluated, the mean score assigned by the participants on the efficacy of IAM for the SW and WBE variables, were, 4.410 (Moderate effect) ± 0.6883 and 4.399 (Moderate effect) ± 0.6613 , respectively. SW pertains to the wellness of the inner resources of people and is the way of life in tune with the self, community and environment which nurture the state of wholeness (Moberg, D.O., 1979). Organizational effectiveness is enhanced by increased SW ensued by clear enhanced comprehension of the true nature of related phenomena (Chen et al., 2014). On evaluating the data for spiritual effectiveness of IAM in the present research, highest mean score (4.43 (Moderate effect) ± 0.772) related to SE was accomplished by item 3 ('IAM enhances your sense of gratitude'). Some studies have ascertained that gratitude generating meditation practices facilitates better classroom management. As a psychological trait, gratitude has a positive correlation with quality of life and happiness of school teachers (Chan, D.W., 2010). Similar to Item no 3 in the SE variable, the item number 1 ('IAM helps

to enhance inner peace and harmony') was assigned a more or less equal mean score (4.43 (Moderate Effect) ± 0.665 , concerning IAM efficacy. Thus, our result is in consonance with the findings of Konza & Pappas (2008), in which they ascertained that school teachers were able to manage the classroom environment in a more peaceful way, by the introduction of meditation in classroom settings.

Incorporation of meditation in an educational setting paved the way to shape the quality of social and ecological living (Rockefeller, S., 2006). In the current study, the highest mean score (4.43 (Moderate effect) ± 0.694) was awarded to item no 2 ('IAM is an effective path of maintaining the balance between oneself and the environment and it paves the way to have a feeling that the human mind should be harmonized then harmony of nature spontaneously take place') with regard to WBE, the domain of environmental wellness. The practice of IAM meditation would enhance appreciation of green energy by the school teachers, leading to environmental well-being, harmonious connectedness with nature. Since no published research explored the effect of

environmental well-being due to meditation practice, this study addresses a unique research concept to fill up the research gap. On further analysis, by comparing the SE and WBE variables of IAM efficacy with respect to age and BMI factors, the perception scores with respect to age of the participants, were more or less similar (Table 2).

Interestingly, the score found a significant difference with regard to BMI of participants ($P < 0.05$). Thus, the results of the present study indubitably affirm a perceptible association between BMI and meditation. To extract robust conclusions, experimental research should be conducted including samples of all genders, with more sociological variables such as behavior, culture, obesity etc.

On examining the school teachers' satisfaction level of IAM in Table 3, comparison of the mean values of the variables in IAMS Scale revealed a p value of 0.9099 ($p > 0.05$), demonstrating relevance of all the four aspects of IAM - yogic postures for relaxation of body and mind, focused breathing, visualization capacity and attainment of inner peace. All the features obtained a mean score > 4 (Moderate to High effect), attesting the school teachers' similar perceptions of the satisfaction level of IAM regimen in their daily life routine.

Statistical examination of the correlation of the IAM features (Table 4) revealed significant correlation ($p < 0.001$) between all the variables in the domain of IAM Satisfaction. A single degree change in the visualization effect of IAM led to 75.3 % ($r = 0.753$) change in the relaxation of body mind. Similarly, 67 % ($r = 0.670$) of change occurred to the relaxation of body mind with a single degree change in focused breathing. Highest correlation was observed in the attainment of inner peace with the visualization feature of IAM ($r = 0.809$) affirming that all the features of IAM have strong relationships with each other. As the Pearson correlation Coefficient values $+1$ indicate a perfect positive and linear relationship, the results further explain that all the features in IAM meditation are equally important and incredibly useful for

school teachers (Ratner, B., 2009)

The results of this study underscore relevant associations of a teacher's perception towards IAM meditation. Incorporation of IAM meditation training offers school teachers' energy and vitality, inner peace, improved emotional stability, a greater sense of gratitude, enhanced inter-personal relationships and many more dimensions for better classroom management and quality of life. Studies have shown that meditation instilled in school teachers, will have a positive effect on their students' behavior and social interaction with their peers, and school teachers (Singh et al., 2013). As the principal goal of IAM practice is to instill inner serenity in the practitioners, the current study shows that schoolteachers could maintain their internal harmony as well as harmony with those they encounter in their professional as well as personal lives.

Limitations of the study

This study acquired data from a single location in a single southern state in India with a single gender group, limiting the generalization of the research findings. Secondly, the study leaned on cross-sectional data; besides the likelihood of biased responses, the aggregate data reflects the population's attributes exclusively at one point in time. Thirdly, sample sizes for this study were small restrained by the modest size of long-term IAM practitioners among schoolteachers. The observed population characteristics may differ for larger population of schoolteachers, as well as vary over time. As IAM practices all over the world are a licensed program, cross-national research could be done in the future, using time-series data with the aim of sampling the teaching population across the globe.

Conclusion

The most essential need of educational institutions is to foster a sense of well-being in schoolteachers by adopting a sustainable strategy of implementing IAM meditation into their daily schedule. The present research advocates that the various attributes of IAM practice - yoga, focused breathing, visualization, and inner peace, have a significant linear relationship,

affirming the momentous role of an IAM regimen. The study concludes that the propitious role of IAM practices in school settings is unavoidable for the intrinsic enhanced effectiveness and quality of life of school teachers.

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