

Meditation with AutoSuggestion for Thought Control Ability and Spiritual Well-Being in Male Alcoholics

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ABSTRACT:

Self-regulation alters or overrides one's cognitive processes, feelings, and actions. When it becomes vulnerable to impulsive and under controlled behaviors, it could lead to substance abuse and addiction. Spirituality index of well-being serves as a significant predictor of a composite set of attributions related to alcohol prevention. Pre-post design was used to measure the thought control ability and spiritual oriented well-being of male alcoholic patients. The forty male alcoholics who came for treatment of alcohol dependence were selected for the study. Thought control ability and Spirituality index of well-being scales were used at the assessments of before, after, and follow-up of the meditation. The technique was used for 12 sessions, each comprising 35 minutes to bring about changes. Demographic variables such as age, religion, income, education, and occupation were also collected from the patients. Percentage and t -test were used for analyzing and interpreting the obtained data. Results indicated a significant improvement in the thought control ability and well-being of the male alcoholics after the intervention of Transcendental Meditation (TM) and maintained well at follow-up except the life scheme of the spirituality index of well-being. Transcendental meditation with autosuggestion was significantly more effective in arresting the symptoms of alcohol dependence and improving their thought control ability and spiritual oriented well-being of the male alcoholics. The alcoholics had the important changes in social and recreational activities, and they thought about the effects of alcohol use leading to dependence, and personality deterioration and illnesses of physical and psychiatric experiences. Spiritual practice supported them to think positively for these changes. This technique could help them to prevent relapses and to enhance their mental health.

Key words: Alcoholics, meditation, thought control ability and spirituality index of well-being.

INTRODUCTION

The self-control exercises show a significant improvement in self-regulatory capacity by the thought-suppression exercise [1]. Self-regulation refers to the capacity to alter or override one's responses, including thoughts, emotions, and actions. It encompasses both conscious and unconscious processes and sometimes it refers to all behavior guided by goals or standards. Self-control refers to conscious efforts to alter behavior, especially restraining impulses and resisting temptations [2]. People have an extraordinary capacity to override their responses and change how they act and alter their internal states and processes [3]. Self-regulation is a key to successful functioning in many spheres and failure in self-regulation may conducive to substance abuse and addiction. It operates as a limited resource akin to strength or energy and as a depleted self, and it becomes subsequently vulnerable to impulsive and under controlled behaviors including increased consumption of alcohol [4]. It involves altering one's cognitive processes, feelings, and behaviors and the contribution of cognitive and attentional factors is well documented. It is a central function of the self and an important key to success in life. Motivational factors can temporarily block the deleterious effects of being in a state of ego depletion [5], [6], and [7]. It liberates human behavior from external stimuli and automatic, reflexive, or instinctual responses. It is counted as one of the most precious endowments of the human self [8], [9]. It contributes greatly to the diversity and flexibility of human behavior. Self-regulation requires something akin to strength for reviving the will power [10].

Religious well-being was associated negatively with beliefs concerning the social-effects of alcohol, and existential well-being was a significant predictor of a composite set of attributions related to alcohol prevention. These two aspects of spiritual well-being serve as moderators of behavior as well as causal attributions and make beliefs to represent a cognitive mechanism of alcohol prevention in college students [11]. Identifying some of the domains of alcohol abuse and spirituality appears to correlate with measures of recovery or decreases in alcohol use. Several treatment approaches such as thought stopping, controlled worry periods, cognitive reappraisal and the use of distraction techniques concept controlling one's thoughts effectively are used because people can experience unpleasant and unwanted thoughts in verbal and /or picture forms and may have difficulty in controlling them [12]. Spirituality has become a subject of interest in health care as it potentially prevents and copes with illness and it enhances their mental health or mental well-being. Fava, Rafanelli, et al, (1998) express that positive mental health is recognized as having major consequences for health and social outcomes [13]. Suggestion means that an idea, a thought can be brought to an individual from his environment or from within. The idea comes from within oneself or more or less influenced by the outer world. An individual who wants to change his/her life, actions (stop smoking, drinking,) can do this through self-suggestion. The present study attempts to measure the thought control ability and spirituality index of well-being of male alcoholics.

OBJECTIVES:

They were

- a) to use psychological scales to assess thought control ability and spirituality index of well-being of male alcoholics
- b) to use appropriate intervention strategy for the management of alcohol dependence and
- c) to assess the qualitative changes in the male alcoholic patients after the intervention and at follow-up.

METHOD

DESIGN:

Pre-post design was used to evaluate whether 12 sessions of training in Transcendental Meditation had any significant effect on thought control and spirituality index of well-being of alcoholic patients or not. The group of the male patients was tested on three occasions - before, after and follow-up by using the scales.

SAMPLE:

The forty consecutive cases of male alcoholics who came for treatment to the Vinayaka Mission Medical College' hospital were selected excluding the 12 unwilling patients. Thought control ability (TCA) scale and Spirituality Index of Well-Being (SIWB) scale were used at the assessments of before, after, and follow-up of the intervention / meditation. The technique was used for 12 sessions, each comprising 35 minutes for the improvement of thought control ability and spirituality index of well-being and advised to continue the practice for research purpose and for their benefits. Demographic variables such as age, religion, income, education, and occupation were also collected from the patients.

MEASURES:

1. Thought Control Ability (TCA) scale: The 26 item questionnaire [14] was used to assess individual differences in the ability to control unwanted intrusive thoughts. Subjects rated the items on a five-point Likert type scale and indicated the extent to which they agreed with each statement on the spectrum of 1 = strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree. The total score of the TCA consisted of thought control ability was 130. The test-retest reliability was 0.78.
2. Spirituality Index of Well-Being (SIWB) Scale: The 12 item scale [15] was used to evaluate the well-being of a) self- efficacy and b) life scheme of alcoholics. Each items was rated on a 0-5 point scale (1= strongly agree, and 5= strongly disagree). The total scores of the spirituality index of well-being (SIWB) scale were 30 for

self- efficacy and 30 for life scheme. The test-retest reliability was 0.85.

INTERVENTION

Meditation is the self-regulation of attention to suspend involvement in the habitual stream of thoughts and to become passively aware of sensations at the present moment and it helps to attain a state of thoughtless awareness. Self-induced state and self-focused skill are considered essential elements of the meditation [16, 17]. The practice of the meditation could result in a state of physical and mental relaxation.

A mantra (a word or sound repeated silently) is used in Transcendental Meditation (TM) to prevent distracting thoughts from entering the mind. It allows the mind to settle into a quieter state and the body into a state of deep rest. Ultimately it leads to a state of relaxed alertness.

The male patients who got admission in the hospital were trained in Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique. There was an initial intensive training for first three days and it consisted of benefits and practical applicability of the technique through personal interview (30-40 minutes). Three consecutive 30 minute practices were given while undergoing treatment for their alcohol dependence.

They practiced the meditation technique after discharge from the hospital. In each practice session there was (a) concentration for 1-2 minutes on respiration, (b) mantra meditation for 15 – 20 minutes: The mantras were assigned by mentors based on personality traits of the patients and based on their religions, (c) concentration for one minute, and (d) a rest for 5 minutes. After the training, they followed the practice daily twice regularly at home in the morning and the evening. The follow up was done after 2 months by using the scales.

In addition, patients' spouses were offered personal sessions for discussing their problems and they too received the same training of the meditation technique following similar practicing schedules. Compliance with TM program was assessed by their log notes. They discussed their disturbances with the therapist who trained them in autosuggestion and the disturbances were three categories (a) unimportant problems (problems unrelated to the things that matter to them), (b) problems which can be solved, and (c) problems which can not be solved (e.g. the loss of a loved one).

A different strategy was used to solve the problems or to learn to cope with the unsolvable ones. The method suggested for solving the disturbances were describing the problem, identifying various alternatives, choosing the best alternative for solution, carrying out the

solution, and evaluation. These suggestions helped them to handle their external problems. The alcoholics successfully used the auto-suggestion and the method went through the following phases.

They had an insight into and understanding that one's own behavior,

The way of life was unsatisfactory and even harmful to oneself and the environment.

They focused on two activities, the first which was preceded by will, the second by desire, and they could clearly see the difference in actions, perception and recognize differences between these two.

They practiced attention / watchfulness during a longer time, the physiological function of the sense-organs.

They developed the necessary ability to relax and a considerable degree of the power of awareness. Now the conscious decisions could bring into subconsciousness.

These could simply reach their personal potential.

Autosuggestions were self-made statements which the alcoholics were used when they faced stressful situations or thoughts towards drinking alcohol or when they felt that they could not come out of the addiction.

STATISTICAL METHOD

Percentage, and t -test were used for analyzing and interpreting the obtained data. The mean scores of the patients in the three occasions were compared by SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table1: Demographic variables of male alcoholics

Variables	Groups	Male alcoholics	
		N	%
Age	21- 30 Years	18	45
	31- 40 Years	22	55
Religion	Hindu	34	85
	Christian	2	5
	Muslim	4	10
Education	No formal education	2	5
	< 8 th standard	9	22.5
	< 10 th standard	10	25
	.>10 th standard	19	47.5
Income	Rs. < 2000	7	17.5
	Rs. < 3000	13	32.5
	Rs. < 4000	11	27.5
	Rs. > 4000	9	22.5
Occupation	Weaver	14	35
	Construction workers	18	45
	Agricultural workers	8	20

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation, and t- value for the scores of the thought Control ability scale and spirituality of well-being scale of the groups.

S.No	Scale	Assessment	Male Alcoholics			t-value
			N	Mean	SD	
1	TCA	Before	40	50.16	4.65	
		After	40	67.98	4.32	23.44*
		Follow-up	40	70.90	4.23	3.37*
2	SIWB-1	Before	40	9.58	1.89	
		After	40	15.81	2.04	13.18*
		Follow-up	40	17.68	2.81	4.36*
	SIWB-2	Before	40	10.42	1.77	
		After	40	16.06	2.17	10.16*
		Follow-up	40	16.48	2.95	0.91

*p < 0.01: SIWB- Spirituality Index of Well-Being (SIWB); SIWB-1- self- efficacy; SIWB-life scheme

Majority of them belonged to the age group of 31-40 years (55%), followed by the age group of 21- 30 years(45%), and belonged to Hindu religion (85%) followed by Muslim (10%) Majority of them had above 10th standards (47.5%) and they had income of Rs. > 3000 (32.5%). Majority of them had the occupation of construction work followed by weaving (35%).

Mean and standard deviation were calculated for the group to facilitate the comparison of repeated assessments by the thought control ability scale (TCA) and the spiritual index of well-being scale (SIWB) The main analysis of the data was to determine the significance of mean difference between before and after, between after and follow-up assessments of the group. t- test was applied for the repeated assessments.

On comparison of the group showed a significant difference between before and after assessments (t =23.44, p < 0.01) and after and follow-up assessments (t = 3.37, p < 0.01) of thought control ability. The analysis of the data was done to determine the significance of mean difference between before and after, between after and follow-up assessments of the spiritual index of well-being. The male alcoholics showed a significant difference between before and after assessments (t =13.18, p < 0.01) and (t =4.36, p < 0.01) in self- efficacy (SIWB-1) and (t =10.16, p < 0.01) and (t =0.91, p < n.s) in life scheme (SIWB-II).

This study revealed that the male alcoholics had most remarkable change in the areas of self- efficacy and life scheme of spirituality index of well-being and this improvement was maintenance more in self- efficacy, but not in life scheme.

The beneficial effect of TM on these two areas is just statistically significant but also clinically plausible as a short course for the male alcoholics. The present finding confirms the previous findings of some of the authors.

REPORT OF THE PATIENTS

Most of them had frequent thought disturbances initially as their minds thought about various stressors and other life events. These disturbances could reduce as they practiced continuously. Some of them had concentration problem and they were asked to gradually increase their time from 5 minutes to the required number of minutes. Some reported that they forgot the mantra for few seconds indicating their increasing concentration or trance like state. Many did wise decision of what they want to do every day. They too discussed with their spouses to make any decisions. They had change in actions such as irritability, home care, health care, social, occupational, or recreational activities. They thought about the effects of alcohol use leading to dependence, and personality deterioration and illnesses of physical and psychiatric experiences. Spiritual practice supported them to think positively for these changes. This technique could help them to prevent relapses and to enhance their mental health. But two alcoholics were relapsed and again both came to the hospital voluntarily for treatment. One alcoholic wanted to test his controllability and then tried for abstinence but he failed to do so. The other had relapses two times, perhaps due to personality traits and he too came for treatment again. The training in the meditation helped them to come for treatment for their alcohol dependence.

LIMITATION

The present study did not have control group and the patients' intelligence was not measured. Their spouse income did not include in the study as some of them did not work and earn regularly.

CONCLUSION

Transcendental Meditation improves thought control ability and self- efficacy and life scheme of spiritual index of well-being of the male alcoholics. The meditation was significantly more effective in treating the symptoms of alcohol dependence and arresting the relapse of alcoholics. The alcoholics had the important changes in social, and recreational activities, and in dependence, and personality deterioration and illnesses of physical and psychiatric experiences. Spiritual practice supported them to think positively for these changes. This technique could help them to prevent relapses and to enhance their mental health.

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