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Research Article

Effect of Help Programme on Attention Level of Students in India

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Abstract:

Background: Enhancing students' attention levels is an ongoing challenge faced by educators as they strive to create an optimal learning environment. As researchers explore innovative approaches, novel interventions are being investigated to improve attention and facilitate a conducive atmosphere for learning. One such program that has gained considerable attention is the Heartfulness experience life's potential commonly known as the HELP Program, which incorporates the practice of Heartfulness Meditation.

Aims and Objectives: The primary objective of this study is to assess the potential of the HELP Program supplemented with Heartfulness Meditation in enhancing students' attention levels. Additionally, the study aims to explore potential variations in the effectiveness of the program based on factors such as gender, age, and prior experience with meditation.

Materials and Methods: Conducted between 2020 and 2021, this cross-sectional and observational study involved a diverse group of school students from multiple states across India. A total of 32,904 students participated in the analysis of attention levels. Before introducing Heartfulness Meditation, students completed questionnaires gathering socio-demographic information and assessing their attention using a standardized scale. Following the 16-week program, the same questionnaires were administered to the students without prior notification. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 21, employing descriptive and inferential statistics, including counts, percentages, frequencies, and paired t-tests to compare mean levels between baseline and end line assessments.

Results: The findings of the study revealed a significant increase in students' attention levels (m_b= 10.33< m_e= 12.26, $p < 0.05$) following the intervention of the HELP program.

Conclusion: This study highlights the transformative potential of the HELP program, incorporating Heartfulness Meditation, on students' attention levels. Notably, the study also demonstrates that various demographic characteristics, such as gender, place of residency, type of family, physical illness, and prior engagement in meditation, did not significantly alter the reported effectiveness of the treatment. By employing the HELP program with Heartfulness Meditation, educators and researchers can potentially

address the perennial challenge of enhancing students' attention levels, fostering a positive and enriching educational journey for students in India and beyond.

Keywords: help program, attention, students, heartfulness meditation

1. Introduction

In the realm of education, enhancing students' attention levels is a perennial challenge that educators strive to address [1-5]. With the advent of various innovative approaches, researchers have been exploring novel interventions to improve attention and foster a conducive learning environment. One such program that has gained attention is the Holistic Education and Life-skills Program ('HELP Programme), and supplemented by the practice of Heartfulness Meditation. This unique combination aims to enhance students' attention spans, promote inner calmness, and ultimately optimize their learning experience [6-8].

Heartfulness Meditation, rooted in ancient spiritual traditions, involves directing one's attention inward to foster a sense of tranquility and heartfulness. By incorporating Heartfulness Meditation as a core component of the HELP Programme, educators and researchers seek to harness its potential to positively impact students' attention abilities [9-12]. Through regular practice, students are guided to develop a deeper awareness of their thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations, ultimately enabling them to cultivate focused attention and emotional regulation.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the HELP Programme integrated with Heartfulness Meditation, several studies have been conducted in educational settings. For instance, a recent study by [13] explored the impact of this intervention on a group of high school students. The researchers implemented a pre-test and post-test design, assessing students' attention levels before and after the program. The findings revealed a significant improvement in attentional performance among the students who participated in the HELP Programme with Heartfulness Meditation, suggesting the potential of this combined approach to enhance attention and focus.

Additionally, a longitudinal study conducted by [14] investigated the long-term effects of the HELP Programme supplemented with Heartfulness Meditation on elementary school students' attention. Over the course of one academic year, the researchers monitored the attentional abilities of a group of students who engaged in regular meditation practice. The study revealed sustained improvements in attention and self-regulation skills, indicating the lasting impact of this integrated intervention.

By exploring a research on this effect, we can gain valuable insights into the effectiveness and mechanisms underlying this approach. Furthermore, these insights can inform educational practices and policies, aiding in the development of interventions that support students' attentional development and overall well-being. By highlighting key findings, methodological approaches, and implications for educational settings, this research seeks to contribute to the on-going discourse on effective strategies for nurturing attentional skills in students.

2. Materials and Methods

The survey enrolled school students aged between 16 and 18 years from various schools in India. The study utilized a prospective observational design to assess the attention levels of the participants before and after the implementation of the 'HELP' program. Prior to the introduction of Heartfulness meditation, all participants completed forms capturing socio-demographic information and evaluating their attention levels. Subsequently, at the conclusion of the 16-week program, the students were again provided with questionnaires to collect their responses. Participants were not informed beforehand about the questionnaires in order to maintain consistency across both situations.

A total of 34,425 students participated in the survey [15, 16]. However, due to incomplete data provided by 263 participants and inconsistent adherence to the 16-week intervention by 1258 participants, their responses were excluded from the study. The final analysis included data from 32,904 students.

Parameters	**No of Participants (Attention Level)**
Initial total sample size	34,425
Incomplete data	263
Did not follow up 16 weeks intervention regularly, thus excluded from data	1258
Final analysed sample size	32,904

The collected data underwent analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21, a widely used software for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics, including counts, frequencies, and percentages, were employed to present the data, providing a comprehensive overview of the participants' responses. Inferential statistics were also utilized to draw meaningful conclusions from the data.

To examine the differences in mean levels of attention between the baseline and end line measurements, a paired t-test was performed. This statistical test allowed for a direct comparison of the two sets of measurements obtained from the same group of students before and after the intervention. The use of a paired t-test helps to account for individual variations within the sample and provides a robust analysis of the effectiveness of the intervention. A significance level of $p \leq 0.05$ was adopted in this study to determine statistical significance. This widely accepted threshold helps to assess whether the observed differences in mean levels of attention between the baseline and end line measurements are statistically significant or if they could be attributed to random chance.

By employing these rigorous statistical techniques, the study ensures the reliability and validity of the findings, allowing for a robust evaluation of the impact of the HELP program on students' attention.

3. Results

Among the students (49.2%) were male and (50.8%) were female. The students from Urban (37.6%) were higher than the Sub urban (11.1%) and Rural (35.7%) and metro (15.6%). In type of family, (66.5%) of the students were from nuclear family system. According to their health (90.3%) of the students had no chronic physical illness and (93.7%) of the students had no mental illness. Among the students (59.5%) were already practicing meditation and (40.5%) of them were non meditators Table1.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the study participants

Variable		**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Overall		32904	100.0
Gender	**Male**	16191	49.2
	Female	16713	50.8
Place of residence	**Metro**	5139	15.6
	Urban	12366	37.6
	Sub-urban	3636	11.1
	Rural	11763	35.7
Type of family	**Joint**	11007	33.5
	Nuclear	21897	66.5
Chronic physical illness	**Physical illness**	3177	9.7
	No illness	29727	90.3
Mental illness	**Mental illness**	2079	6.3
	No illness	30825	93.7
Practicing meditation	**Yes**	19566	59.5
	No	13338	40.5

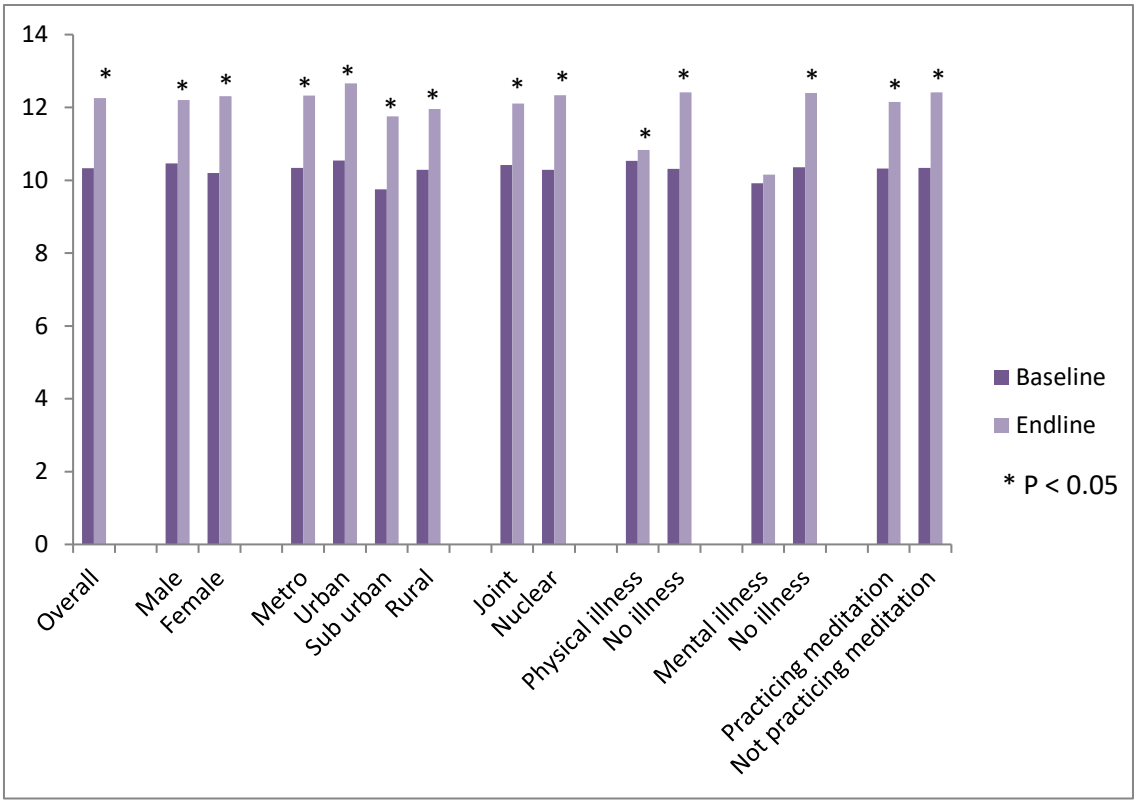

Figure 1. Comparison of Attention level between baseline and endline.

Figure 1 indicates the mean values of attention level, compared between baseline and end line of the students and starred symbol indicates the significant level.

Overall, significantly (p-value < 0.05), students attention level have increased (m_b= 10.33< m_e= 12.26) after the intervention of HELP programme. Based on gender category both male (m_b= 10.46< m_e= 12.20) and female (m_b= 10.20< m_e= 12.31) students have improved their attention level significantly. Students from rural, Metro and Sub urban, Urban have improved their attention level significantly. Students from Nuclear family (m_b= 10.28< m_e= 12.33) and Joint family (m_b= 10.41< m_e= 12.11) have reported significant increase of their attention level. Students with or without physical or mental illnesses have improved their attention level significantly ($p<0.05$) after the intervention. Likewise students who were not practicing meditation before the intervention of HELP Programme, have improved their attention levels significantly (m_b= 10.34< m_e= 12.415). Same trend was observed for those who were practicing meditation Figure 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Comparison of pre and post Attention level of the students

Variables		Pre & Post	Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
						Lower	Upper			
Overall		**Pre & Post**	-1.92697	6.59973	.03638	-1.99828	-1.85566	-52.963	32903	.000
Gender	**Male**	**Pre & Post**	-1.73708	6.75415	.05308	-1.84112	-1.63303	-32.725	16190	.000
	Female	**Pre & Post**	-2.11093	6.44147	.04983	-2.20860	-2.01327	-42.366	16712	.000
Place of residency	**Metro**	**Pre & Post**	-1.98424	6.64957	.09276	-2.16608	-1.80239	-21.391	5138	.000
	Urban	**Pre & Post**	-2.12154	6.38430	.05741	-2.23408	-2.00901	-36.953	12365	.000
	Sub-Urban	**Pre & Post**	-2.00495	6.73822	.11175	-2.22404	-1.78586	-17.942	3635	.000
	Rural	**Pre & Post**	-1.67330	6.74843	.06222	-1.79526	-1.55133	-26.892	11762	.000
Type of family	**Joint**	**Pre & Post**	-1.69256	6.54209	.06236	-1.81479	-1.57033	-27.143	11006	.000
	Nuclear	**Pre & Post**	-2.04480	6.62553	.04477	-2.13256	-1.95704	-45.669	21896	.000
Physical illness	**Physical illness**	**Pre & Post**	-.29462	7.05641	.12519	-.54008	-.04915	-2.353	3176	.019
	No illness	**Pre & Post**	-2.10142	6.52506	.03785	-2.17560	-2.02725	-55.527	29726	.000
Mental illness	**Mental illness**	**Pre & Post**	-.24242	6.47040	.14191	-.52072	.03587	-1.708	2078	.088
	No illness	**Pre & Post**	-2.04058	6.59299	.03755	-2.11419	-1.96698	-54.341	30824	.000
Practicing meditation	**Yes**	**Pre & Post**	-1.82751	6.75948	.04832	-1.92223	-1.73279	-37.818	19565	.000
	No	**Pre & Post**	-2.07287	6.35556	.05503	-2.18074	-1.96501	-37.667	13337	.000

4. Discussion

One of the compelling aspects of integrating Heartfulness Meditation into the HELP program is its cultural relevance in India. With a rich heritage of meditation practices, Indian students are often more familiar and receptive to the inclusion of Heartfulness Meditation as part of their education [17-19]. This cultural alignment contributes to increased acceptance and engagement, allowing students to more readily embrace the practice and potentially experience greater improvements in attention levels [19].

In the current study, it was observed that the HELP program through Heartfulness meditation increased the attention levels of the students. Heartfulness Meditation has been reported by other researchers to have positive impact on attention level [20]. Studies have demonstrated that meditation practices, including Heartfulness Meditation analogues, can enhance attentional control, attentional switching, and sustained attention [22]. By integrating Heartfulness Meditation into the HELP

program, students can develop greater self-regulation of attention, leading to improved concentration and focus during academic tasks. Other researches have suggested that meditation practices can improve emotional regulation and resilience, leading to a calmer mental state and enhanced attentional capacity [23].

While correlation studies indicate positive associations, it is important to consider contrasting studies that shed light on potential limitations or varying outcomes. Roy et al. (2020) [24] conducted a comparative study examining the effectiveness of different meditation practices, including Heartfulness Meditation, on attention levels among college students in India. Surprisingly, their findings showed no significant difference in attentional improvements between the Heartfulness Meditation group and the control group. Another contrasting study by Desai and Patel, (2021) [25] explored the impact of the HELP program, with a focus on Heartfulness Meditation, on attention and academic performance among high school students in India. The study found limited improvements in attentional skills and no significant correlation between participation in the program and academic performance. These contrasting studies emphasize the importance of considering diverse perspectives and conducting further research to gain a comprehensive understanding of the effects of the HELP program, through Heartfulness Meditation, on students' attention levels in India.

Furthermore, the effects of the HELP program, through Heartfulness Meditation, extend beyond immediate attentional improvements. Longitudinal studies have indicated that regular meditation practice can lead to enduring changes in attention and cognitive functions [26-30]. By incorporating Heartfulness Meditation into the HELP program, educators can provide students with a lifelong tool for attentional development, impacting their academic performance, well-being, and overall success not only in India but also globally.

5. Conclusion

The research on the effect of the HELP program on the attention levels of students in India has yielded captivating findings. The study reveals that the incorporation of Heartfulness Meditation within the HELP program has proven to be a powerful tool in enhancing students' attention levels, transcending demographics and socio-cultural factors. The results demonstrate that Heartfulness Meditation is a versatile practice that can be embraced by students from various backgrounds, irrespective of their cultural, social, or economic differences.

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