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A RANDOMIZED TRIAL: EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES AND PERFORMANCE ON PSI TASKS RELATED TO MEDITATION OR EXERCISE CONTROL GROUP

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Background: We explored wellbeing, mindfulness, paranormal beliefs and experiences between meditators and exercisers.

Aims: Compare listed variables and psi task in meditation vs exercise cohorts over time.

Method: Subjects were randomized by a generated random allocation sequence to cohort. Data obtained online with IRB approval at baseline, week 4, 9, and 2 months. Multivariate regression models used for outcomes, combining mid, and follow-up measures for each score using the cohort groups as the unique independent variable. For the psi and paranormal experiences, we conducted unique multivariate regression model with all outcomes at post 1 using the cohort groups as the sole independent variable. Self-reported paranormal beliefs and experiences variables were compared at follow-up using linear probability regression models with standard errors robust to heteroscedasticity. STATA 15 was used for statistical analysis. RNG data was analyzed using Matlab functions to calculate a total number of bits, percent deviation, cumulated Z scores for the time interval, and max Z score.

Results: 72 subjects ($N = 45$ meditation/ $N = 27$ exercise) showed no significant differences between groups in wellbeing over time with both improving. Significant increases in meditators acting with awareness at the end of the study ($p < 0.001$, CI 95% -5.85; -1.90) and at two month follow up ($p < 0.001$, CI 95% -5.88; -2.02), compared to exercise cohort. No differences between groups in sense of closeness, connectedness, self-transcendence. Meditation cohort reported more out of body experiences ($p=0.008$), spontaneous healing ($p = 0.003$), seeing energy fields ($p = 0.032$), contact with distant others ($p = 0.039$), directing healing energy ($p = 0.021$), and other paranormal experiences ($p < 0.001$). Meditators vs exercisers reported: hearing things ($p < 0.001$) and tasting things ($p < 0.001$) that were not physically present; altered sense of space ($p < 0.001$) and identity ($p < 0.001$); disturbing feelings ($p < 0.001$); sense of collective energy ($p < 0.001$); awareness of a nonphysical entity ($p < 0.001$); telekinesis ($p < 0.001$); and clairvoyance ($p < 0.001$). Exercise cohort endorsed altered breathing more than the meditation cohort ($p = 0.003$). RNG did not show any residual deviations during any of the post-test data acquisitions at the $p = 0.05$ level.

Conclusions: Both groups improved in wellbeing. Meditation group demonstrated significant increases in aspects of mindfulness, paranormal experiences, and beliefs vs exercise cohort. Performance on psi task did not improve in either group over time, as these tasks may not be sensitive enough to detect changes. Limitations/biases of the study include the small sample of predominately non-Hispanic white females, and unequal groups that occurred.

Keywords: Meditation, Mindfulness, Paranormal experiences, Psi beliefs

Publications:

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