RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARTICIPATION IN TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION AND THE FUNCTIONALITY OF MARRIAGE

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The following is a summary of the author’s masters thesis, conducted at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, 1989.

This study found that couples participating in the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Programme showed significant higher levels of marital functionality, as indicated by overall greater positive couple agreement, and also by greater agreement on marital satisfaction, personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, children, family and friends, religious orientation, marital cohesion, and marital adaptability.—EDITOR

The practice of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Programme is associated with specific variables that would be expected to improve marriage functionality, such as reduction of stress, development of inner fulfilment and feelings of mutual personal growth and self-actualization within the couple, greater self-esteem, increased self-acceptance, and increased ego-strength (Eppley et al., 1983; Nidich et al., 1973; van den Berg and Mulder, 1976). In previous studies conducted on the relationship between marital satisfaction and the practice of the Transcendental Meditation Programme, the experimental group of participants in the Transcendental Meditation Programme showed significantly greater marital satisfaction than controls on Locke’s Marital Adjustment Inventory (Aron and Aron, 1978). Other studies conducted on the relationship between marital adjustment and the practice of the Transcendental Meditation Programme supported these results (Suarez, 1976; Aron and Aron, 1982; Marcus, 1978).

This research was conducted to give further evidence whether the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Programme can contribute to the task of building functional marriages.

The ENRICH scale of marital functionality (Olson et al., 1982) was administered to an experimental group consisting of 12 couples who had practised the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Programme for an extended period of time. A socio-demographically matched control group of 12 couples also took the ENRICH inventory. The matching was conducted on the basis of the following variables: education level of both spouses, occupational category of both spouses, marriage duration, combined total yearly income, number of children, and marital status (marital history).

The results of the ENRICH questionnaire are based on the percentage of positive couple agreement on 125 questions which cluster into thirteen categories comprising the ENRICH scale of marriage functionality. There is also an overall positive couple agreement on the marriage scale.

In this marriage scale, positive couple agreement is equated with marital health or functionality. The reason for this is that it is assumed that a high level of agreement between a couple indicates a relationship strength. Conversely if the couple has a low level of agreement it is considered an area which is likely to produce conflict. It is called a positive agreement score because it only includes the agreement items in which the couple indicate positive feelings about their partner or relationship.

The Mann-Whitney test was used to determine group differences between the experimental and control groups on mean overall couple agreement and on mean couple agreement on each of the thirteen categories of the marriage functionality scale.

The mean agreement of the experimental group was higher than that of the control group on each of the subscales of the ENRICH inventory, and reached statistical
significance on overall couple agreement and on 10 of 13 subscales: overall couple agreement ($p < .005$), marital satisfaction ($p < .005$), personality issues ($p < .005$), communication ($p < .005$), conflict resolution ($p < .005$), financial management ($p < .01$), children ($p < .025$), family and friends ($p < .025$), religious orientation ($p < .025$), marital cohesion ($p < .05$), and marital adaptability ($p < .01$).

It would appear that based on the structure of the ENRICH scale, the experimental group performed not only significantly better than the control group, but appeared to have considerable marital strengths. The relationship strengths demonstrated by the experimental group are obviously highly desirable and the role of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Programme in cultivating these strengths needs to be further investigated.

This study suggests that a positive relationship exists between the practice of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Programme and marital adjustment. These findings are in the same direction as those of other studies which examine this relationship (Aron and Aron, 1978; Aron and Aron, 1982; Suarez, 1976; Marcus, 1978; Baumrind, 1971) and therefore add to the existing literature.

REFERENCES


