

Effects of loving-kindness meditation on prosocial behavior: empirical and meta-analytic evidence

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Abstract-

Purpose

Brief loving-kindness meditation (LKM) is introduced here as a valid social marketing intervention. LKM positively influences prosocial cognitions and affects. However, it remains unclear whether brief meditation interventions can influence prosocial behavior. This study aims to provide evidence of the effects of short LKM on prosocial behavior.

Design/methodology/approach

This study reports the results of three experiments examining the effects of brief LKM on donations to unknown others. The results are then integrated with the results of seven other studies testing the effects of brief LKM on prosocial behavior using a meta-analysis (n = 683).

Findings

LKM increased love more than the control group (focused breathing) in the three experiments; however, its effects on donations were mixed. The meta-analysis shows that LKM has a small-to-medium significant effect compared to active control groups (d = 0.303); moreover, age and type of prosocial measure used moderate the effects.

Originality/value

Results suggest that LKM can nurture prosocial emotions such as love and lead young individuals to donate. However, these emotions may not be sufficient to lead adult meditators to share their resources with unknown others. This study presents the first meta-analysis of brief LKM and provides insights into the use of meditation in social marketing programs.

Index Terms- meditation; mindfulness; pro-social; donation; meta-analysis;

behavioral change

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