

Assessing the Therapeutic Effects of Vacationing

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ABSTRACT

There is a sharp rise in the extent to which people share positive aspects of life on social media; vacations being one of them. During vacations, their social media profiles are replete with pictures from the most desirable tourist destinations, filled with joy and satisfaction. However, the long-term influences of these vacations are hardly observable, as majority of people don't share their experiences on social media after the vacations are over. Do vacations act as buffers against the stress that characterises our daily lives? Do vacationers feel just as happy and rejuvenated after some time has elapsed? The present study tries to answer whether vacationers differ from non-vacationers in terms of their happiness, resilience, peace of mind and mindfulness levels. The study also explores if different subtypes of vacations (solo/friends/family; national/international; religious/non-religious) have an influence on the aforesaid variables. An online interview was carried out to know the experiences of recent vacationers (N=34), which was used for deciding the dependent variables. The final study included 238 participants of age 18-25 years ($M_{age}= 21.5$ years, $M= 60$, $F=178$). Independent samples t-test was carried out and no significant differences were found among vacationers and non-vacationers with respect to the variables of interest. One-way ANOVA and Mann-Whitney U tests showed no significant differences with respect to the type of vacations. The results are discussed with respect to hedonism and eudemonia to highlight differences between transient and enduring form of well-being, including factors other than vacationing that can be harnessed to improve the overall quality of life.

Key words: *vacations, happiness, resilience, mindfulness, therapy*

INTRODUCTION

Vacations are considered a source of happiness and an essential ingredient for quality of life (Filep, 2012; Richards, 1999). Spending time away from home, in the quest of new experiences is not a recent phenomenon, it has evolved over hundreds of years. Traveling can be alluded to the ancient Romans who pioneered the establishment of inns, guides, hotels and restaurants – a set of essentials any traveller would need. With the passage of time,

including a historically significant timeline of the ascent of dark ages, Elizabethan rule, Renaissance, industrialization and globalization, traveling has taken many forms and aspirations. While the periods of peace and prosperity allowed the ancient Romans to go on a holiday that lasted no less than two years, a modern man finds it difficult to plan even a two-week trip with his family!

Based on studies (Strauss-Belche et al., 2005) that show an increase in productivity amongst

employees and students who spend some time on a vacation, it becomes important that the psychological aspects associated with vacationing are studied in greater detail, as they carry implications for policy making. However, there is a dearth of research in this area, especially among young adults in India. The present study contributes to research literature by exploring whether going on a vacation has a persistent effect on one's sense of happiness, resilience, peace of mind and mindfulness.

The concept of happiness can be traced to the writings of Greek philosophers who popularized the term "eudaimonia" ("eu" refers to good, while "daimon" means spirit). In its etymological sense, the term means that happiness is achieved when an individual is under the influence of good spirit, which ultimately brings prosperity and contentment. The shift in view of happiness from non-agentic to more agentic accelerated during the periods of Renaissance and Reformation, when the emergence of Humanism emphasized human effort and individual responsibility. The pursuit of happiness also found its place in Jefferson's American Declaration of Independence, declaring happiness as a fundamental right. The rapid industrialization in the 19th and 20th centuries led to a preoccupation with material goods, paving a way for happiness to be equated with pleasure (as obtained by going on an expensive dinner, or buying a lavish house for oneself). With globalization and consumerism at their peak, the concept of happiness and well-being have become even more elusive.

To provide a scientific understanding of human well-being and happiness, pioneering attempts have been made by Ed Diener who made a

tripartite model of the same in the 1980s. The three components involve positive affect, negative affect and life satisfaction. Ample evidence suggests that Subjective Well-being (SWB) constructs are influenced by genetics and personality characteristics. Steel et al., (2008) found that out of the Big Five Factors of personality, neuroticism predicts lower SWB, while agreeableness, openness to experiences, extraversion and conscientiousness predict higher SWB. Social and environmental factors such as health, wealth, culture, relationships with friends and families also influence our subjective well-being.

The emergence of the Positive Psychology movement in the late 20th and early 21st century has spurred significant research in the area of happiness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Understanding individual differences with respect to happiness became a key issue. Lyubomorsky (2007) suggests that human beings have a happiness set point or "hedonic adaptation" tendencies, which means people do not remain happy forever by accomplishing their desired pursuit, as they become used to it, showing there's some genetic contribution to our happiness. In other words, there are specific genes (such as the 5-HTTLPR, the serotonin transporter gene) that account for individual differences in happiness (e.g. Tellegen et al. 1988; Lykken and Tellegen 1996; Røysamb et al. 2002, 2003; Stubbe et al. 2005; Nes et al. 2006) However, genes determine approximately only 50% of our happiness level (showing only a moderate heritability, signifying that the remaining variance could be explained by epigenetic environmental factors), while 10% of it is determined by our life circumstances. On the other hand, significant

40% of our happiness is determined by our intentional activity.

According to Ateca-Amestoy et al., (2008), leisure and tourism are some important domains which can be explored to enhance one's sense of happiness. Research has generally focused on the ways in which trips can enhance our well-being. Firstly, individuals experience happiness and excitement through anticipation of vacations, during the vacations, and after the vacations (Nawijn, 2011). Secondly, vacations can contribute to our happiness through indirect experiences such as reminiscing about them by looking at photos or memoirs (Aho, 2001). They could also help strengthen family bonds which could account for increased life satisfaction (Sirgy et al, 2010). In terms of post-trip happiness, Chen & Petrick (2012) found that life satisfaction after a vacation was influenced by mastery experiences, perceived control and detachment from work, with longer vacations leading to positive effects in overall life satisfaction.

Strauss-Belche et al., (2005) conducted a study on 191 predominantly white-collar employees to see what characteristics of the vacations led to changes in health outcomes. 27% of variance in change of recuperation and 15% of variance in exhaustion was explained by various characteristics of the vacations. Recuperation was facilitated by warmer vacation location, time for one self and exercise during vacation, while exhaustion was reduced by warmer vacation locations. Hilbrecht & Smale (2016) found that taking more paid leave was associated with higher level of health and life satisfaction. Consistent with these findings, Westman & Eden (1997) found the effect of holiday satisfaction on post-trip happiness

levels and concluded that both are positively associated with each other. Similarly, Gilbet & Abdullah (2004) used a series of pre-post test design studies and have found significantly higher levels of happiness and other positive effects, such as decreased level of stress and generally better health after the vacations, although these effects fade out too quickly (De Bloom, 2009). In 2014, Kroesen et al., also obtained consistent findings regarding the extent to which vacations can influence different components of our happiness. While the vacationers had a higher level of cognitive happiness (as they judged their lives to be better, considering the social desirability of vacations), the vacations did little to contribute to any enduring, affective component of happiness.

Another variable that has started to receive some empirical attention in vacationing is resilience. It is defined as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress (APA, 2014). Research in resilience has generally followed three broad approaches. The first deals with successful adaptation (Luthar, 1999). The second branch of research describes resilience as a dynamic process, whereby an interaction between risk and protective factors takes place. This demonstrates that resilience is context-dependent (Masten, 2001). The third branch of research in resilience is closely associated with the applications of the findings provided by the aforementioned approaches. It studies how effective schooling, neighbourhoods, peer relations and policy implementation can contribute to one's repertoire of positive experiences, thereby promoting resilience in an individual.

While defining resilience, it is imperative to consider whether resilience should be viewed as a trait, process or an outcome. While it may be convenient to take an all-or-none approach while describing resilience, many psychologists now (e.g., Pietrzack & Southwick, 2011) view resilience as lying on a continuum. They suggest that while an individual may excellently show resilient capacities in one domain of life, he may not be able to cope with other aspects of life such as failure at work or academics. Instead of resilience being a trait, it is now seen as a process involving the ability to interact with environments and the processes that either promote well-being or protect them against the overwhelming influence of risk factors (Zatura et al., 2010). The American Psychological Association (2018) suggests that resilience is not achieved only by continuously moving forward in life, but also by taking temporary breaks in between to reenergize and reorganize oneself, to be mindful of one's own resources. While there are no studies exploring the direct relationship between vacationing and resilience, there is evidence that going on a vacation leads to optimization of resources that act as "assets" or "resources" in the face of tragedy. For example, Durko & Petrick (2016) found that travel has several deeper benefits for relationships with the families, and provides an opportunity for self-reflection to the individual. As more time is available to family members while on a trip as compared to their daily schedules, communications within the relationship grows. Nawijn (2010) has also found that holidays strengthen family bonds and increase satisfaction with family life.

Amid the turbulent times of the contemporary world, achieving a sense of peace and harmony is just as important as optimizing our resources

to be resilient. Research in the arena of peace of mind is also gaining momentum because of its established implications for stress-management (e.g., Woods-Giscombe & Black, 2010). Whether we perceive a particular situation as a stressor or not depends upon our cognitive appraisal, which involves *two stages*. The *primary appraisal* involves assessing whether the situation poses a threat, and if the situation is perceived as threatening to the well-being, the *secondary appraisal* begins. In this stage, the individual tries to marshal all his coping resources to effectively fight the stressor and return to his/her normal level of functioning (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). However, locating and organizing one's coping resources in a state of stress could be a daunting task, which necessitates that the person maintains his calm and peace of mind. Lack of peace of mind in the times of stress, coupled with the original stressor itself can have detrimental effects on physical health, and a vicious cycle of suffering erupts. In his GAS (General Adaptation Syndrome) model, Selye discusses the impact of a persistent stressor on the Hypothalamic-Pituitary Adrenal Axis (HPA-axis). In view of preventing our bodies from reaching Selye's stage of exhaustion, there is a spur of interest in stress-reduction exercises that promote relaxation, calmness and peace. These exercises involve progressive relaxation, autogenics, self-hypnosis and visualization among many others (Davis, Eshelman & Matthew, 2008). Along with promoting peace of mind and providing a buffer against stress, these exercises have also been found to mitigate physiological ailments like postoperative pain (Topcu et al., 2012).

While some people choose to experience peace of mind in relaxation/yoga/meditation classes, others prefer going on a vacation with the hope

of temporarily relieving themselves of the stress associated with work, studies and finances. Considering research in organizational behaviour and vacationing, Binnewis et al., (2009, 2010) reported that employees who feel refreshed after returning from their vacation are more likely to consider their work effortless and to engage in various forms of citizenship behaviours. Such generous behaviours after vacationing can be explained using the model proposed by Latane & Darley (1970). The first step in prosocial behaviour is that the individual “notices” that someone requires help (helping is an example of citizenship behaviour). A plausible reason why people can devote their cognitive resources to help others, after returning from a vacation, could be that trips help reduce stress, thereby promoting a greater peace of mind which fosters better attention to one’s own and others’ needs.

One variable closely associated with peace of mind is *mindfulness*. The association is not linear and direct. Research suggests that mindfulness helps enhance feelings of subjective well-being and self-acceptance, which, in turn, foster peace of mind (e.g., Wei et al., 2014). Xinghua et al., (2014) used a randomized control trial and concluded that mindfulness training can lead to inner peace. They propose a number of reasons for the relationship between the two. One reason could be that increased mindfulness enhances one’s “reperceiving”, helping them view their life from an overall perspective without being entangled by current events and disturbances. This has been found to be linked to increased equanimity and inner peace (Shapiro et al., 2006). Consistent with Wei et al., (2014), these researchers suggest that another reason why mindfulness can promote peace of mind is

increased feelings of acceptance as facilitated by attention to their physical sensations, thoughts and emotions without any judgement. Nygren, Norberg & Lundman (2007) supported this idea using phenomenological hermeneutical method in which a group of older adults were interviewed. Through the thematic analysis, it was found that an important subtheme in promoting inner peace was “acceptance of one self as one is, and his life as it has been and as it is.” The third reason why mindfulness may promote peace of mind is that being mindful offers “deep and penetrative insight” into the transient nature of reality. Inner peace of mind develops as the urgency to avoid negative experiences and pursue positive ones starts to dissipate. This is a core tenet of Buddhism (Nananmoli & Bodhi, 1995).

Thus, mindfulness can be defined as the psychological process of bringing one’s attention to experiences taking place in the present moment, which one develops through the practice of meditation and through other training (Lutz, Davidson, Richard & Slagter, 2011). While traditionally mindfulness has become synonymous with meditation, Gelles (2017) suggests that the diversity of experiences that one stumbles upon during a vacation can serve as a rejuvenating source of mindfulness. Vacations could be perceived as a ‘life within our life’, where we meet new people, try different adventures, explore diverse traditions, while trying not to get too attached to any aspect of it by realizing its ephemeral nature. Meditation also promotes the same goal by helping us realize the transient nature of positive and negative experiences, so that we are not excessively entranced by positive events or jolted by negative ones. However, in terms of empirical data, no research, in the author’s

knowledge, exists that assesses the long-term benefits of vacationing on one's level of mindfulness.

Based on the discussion of these variables and available literature on how they are affected by vacations, the present study has two objectives:

1. To see if happiness, resilience, peace of mind and cognitive and affective mindfulness differ in people who went on a vacation 2-3 months ago from those who did not.
2. To understand which subtype of vacation (solo/friends/family; national/international; religious/ non-religious) is associated with significant changes in these variables.

With respect to the first aim, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference between the vacation and nonvacation groups in terms of the aforesaid variables. No hypothesis could be stated for the second aim due to lack of availability of research assessing the importance of various sub-types of trips.

METHOD

Participants

238 adults of age group 18-25 ($M_{age} = 21.5$ years, 178 females and 60 males) were taken as the sample for the present study. They were categorized into vacation (156) and non-vacation group (82). To study the therapeutic effects of vacationing, purposive sampling was used. Data was collected from different groups of participants divided on the basis of the nature of the trip (religious=16/non-religious=140) and (national=136/international=20) as well as with whom they went on the trip (family= 88 / friends= 41 /solo=26).

Tools used

Following questionnaires were used to interview the participants for the present study:

A.Peace of Mind Scale: The Peace of Mind (PoM) Scale was constructed and validated by Lee et al., (2013). It is a 7-item scale wherein the responses range from 'Strongly disagree'= 1 to 'Strongly agree'=7. It consists of items such as "My mind is free and at ease" and "I feel content and comfortable with myself in daily life". The maximum possible score is 49 and the minimum is 7. The alpha reliability coefficient of the PoM is 0.91 and criterion-related validity for the scale has been well established by the authors (Y.C. et al., 2013).

B.The Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale–Revised (CAMS-R): This scale was developed by Feldman et al., (2007). The scale originally consists of 12 items but a shorter version with 10 items was used. Respondents have to choose from 1= 'rarely/not at all' to 4= 'almost always' for items like "It is easy for me to concentrate on what I am doing." and "I can usually describe how I feel at the moment in considerable detail." The alpha coefficient is 0.78 for this scale and criterion-related validity for the scale has also been well established (Feldman, 2007). Maximum possible score is 40 and minimum is 10.

C.Subjective Happiness Scale: This scale was developed by Lyubomirsky & Lepper (1999). It consists of 4 items with responses ranging from 1 to 7. For example, for the item "Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?", 1 represents 'not at all' and 7 stands for 'a great deal'. The maximum possible score is 28 and the minimum is 4. Respondents have to choose a

response from the continuum that adequately describes their condition. The scale has good internal consistency with alpha coefficients ranging from 0.79 to 0.84 across different samples. It also has good criterion-related validity (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999)

D.Brief Resilience Scale: This scale was developed by Smith et al., (2008). It consists of 6 items where 3 items are reverse scored. It includes items like “I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times” and “It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event”. Responses range from 1= ‘Strongly disagree’ to 5= ‘Strongly agree’. Maximum possible score is 30 and minimum is 6. Internal consistency of the scale is good, with Cronbach’s alpha ranging from 0.80 – 0.91 for different samples. It also has good criterion-related validity (Smith et al., 2008).

Procedure

Before beginning the study, detailed qualitative interviews were carried out online with a few participants who were asked about the duration of their trip, nature of the trip, the experience of the trip and how the trip affected them in terms of their emotions, mindfulness, concentration etc. This was taken as the basis for selection of the different variables and their respective questionnaires for the present study.

Quantitative data was collected through online administration of the questionnaires. Informed consent was taken from all the participants by explaining the aim of the study, assuring them that the data would remain anonymous and be utilized solely for research purposes. They were

also informed that they could decline filling the questionnaire should they feel any discomfort.

Purposive sampling was used to obtain responses for the desired categories. While administering the questionnaires, it was made sure that a minimum of 2 months and maximum of 3 months had elapsed between the last day of the vacation and the administration of the questionnaire, to avoid the influence of extraneous factors such as recency effect or occurrence of any major event in an individual’s life after returning from vacation, for example, either substandard performance in exams or performing outstandingly well, breaking of a relationship or forming new satisfying relationships, etc.

RESULTS

For the analysis of results, SPSS 23.0 was employed. The first aim of the study was to assess whether significant differences exist between vacation and non-vacation groups in terms of their happiness, resilience, cognitive-affective mindfulness and peace of mind levels. A brief interview with 34 vacationers yielded the following themes of feeling “calm”, “happier”, “mindful”, “being able to concentrate” and “cope better”.

Using independent samples t-test, it was found that vacationers did not differ significantly from non-vacationers in terms of their happiness levels [$t(236) = 1.30, p = .19$]; resilience levels [$t(236) = 0.36, p = .71$]; peace of mind levels [$t(236) = 1.53, p = 0.13$]; and cognitive and affective mindfulness [$t(236) = 1.36, p = 0.18$] (Table 1).

Table 1: Independent t-test results, comparing happiness, resilience, peace of mind and cognitive and affective mindfulness between vacationers and non-vacationers ($df=236$).

Variable	Vacation (n=156)		Non-vacation (n=82)		t-value	p-value
	M	SD	M	SD		
Happiness	4.55	0.89	4.38	1.01	1.30	0.19
Resilience	18.77	4.18	18.56	3.90	0.36	0.71
POM	22.4	5.77	21.22	5.66	1.53	0.13
CAFM	27.6	4.90	26.69	4.97	1.36	0.18

The second aim of the study was to assess if significant differences exist among different groups of travellers with respect to these variables. To assess the effect of company on a trip, one-way ANOVA was used. From Table 2 it can be seen that no significant differences were found among those who traveled solo,

with friends or with their family in terms of their happiness [$F(2, 153) = 2.55, p = .08$], resilience, [$F(2, 153) = 0.36, p = 0.70$], peace of mind [$F(2, 152) = 0.64, p = 0.53$] and cognitive-affective mindfulness [$F(2, 153) = 0.14, p = .86$]

Table 2: One-way ANOVA results, comparing happiness, resilience, peace of mind and cognitive and affective mindfulness among different groups of vacationers (df=153).

Variable	Solo (n=26)		Friends (n=41)		Family (n=88)		F-value	p-value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Happiness	4.90	0.88	4.42	0.82	4.51	0.91	2.55	0.08
Resilience	19.41	3.70	18.66	4.39	18.77	4.19	0.36	0.70
POM	21.61	5.71	21.97	6.17	22.42	5.77	0.64	0.53
CAFM	27.81	4.59	27.88	4.62	27.42	5.15	0.14	0.86

To assess influence of religious/non-religious trip and national/international trip, Mann-Whitney U test was used, as the sample size in different groups was disproportionate. Results showed that there were no significant

differences among the participants who went on a religious or a non-religious trip (Fig. 1) or national or international trip (Fig.2) with respect to the variables of interest.

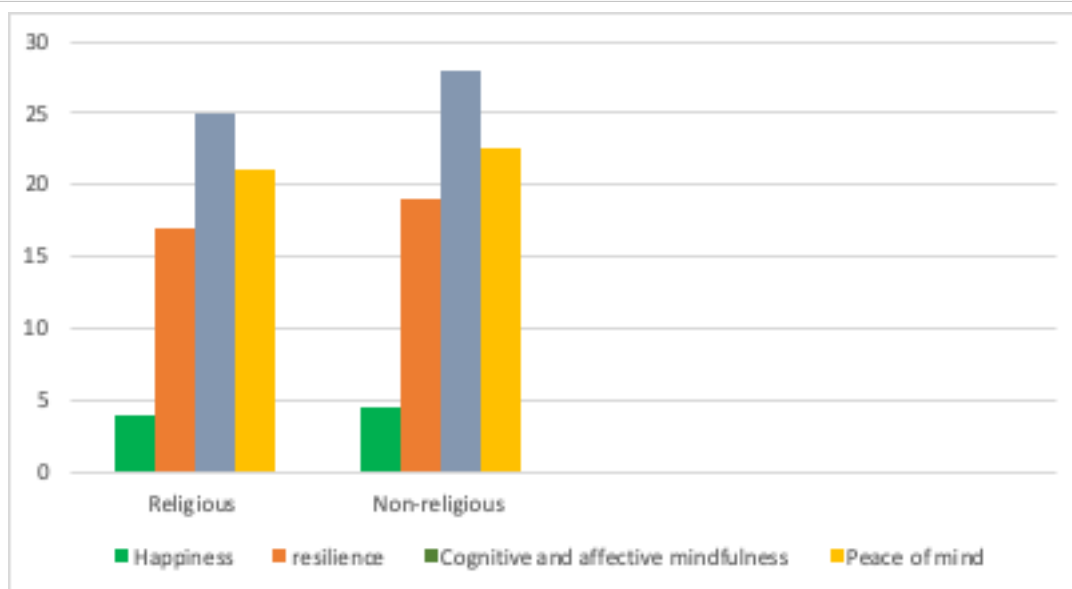


Fig 1: Differences among travellers who went to a religious or a non-religious trip

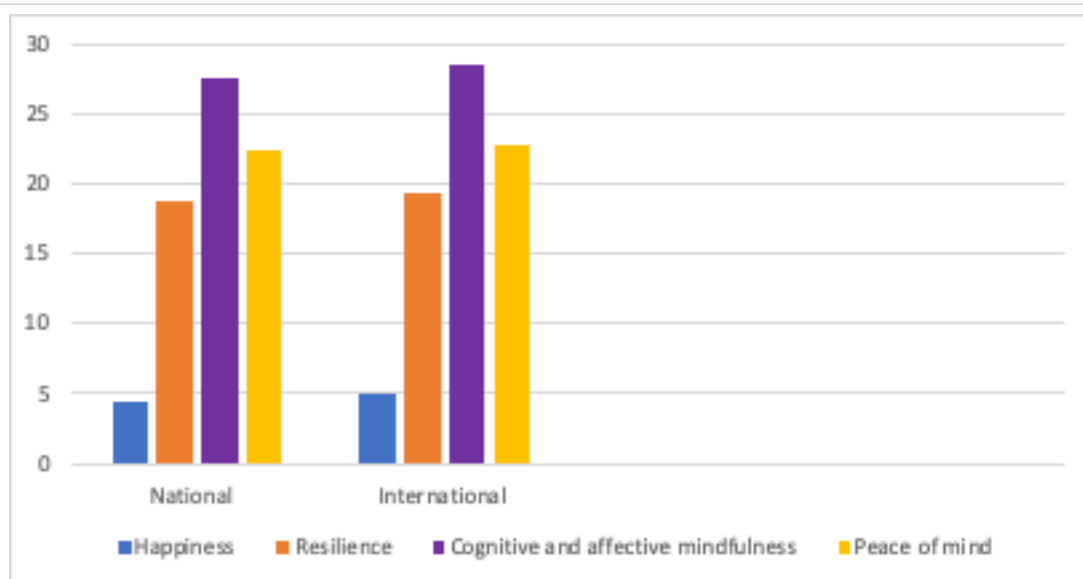


Fig 2: Differences among national and international travellers

DISCUSSION

The first aim of the study was to assess whether significant differences exist between the vacation and non-vacation groups with respect to happiness, resilience, peace of mind and mindfulness. As can be seen from the table, there are no such statistically significant differences. Although the qualitative interviews conducted with 34 participants who had recently been on a trip suggest that they felt “happier”, “calm” and it helped “increased

coping”; these effects on happiness must have faded out after 2-3 months of the trip. While Ateca-Amestoy et al., (2008) suggest that leisure and tourism is a domain that could be explored to enhance one’s sense of happiness and wellbeing, other researchers suggest that the effects do not last long enough to differentiate them from non-vacationers (e.g., DeBloom,2009). When Nawijn (2011) compared the happiness levels of non-

vacationers and vacationers after 35th and 43rd weeks of the trip, there were no statistically significant differences, $F(2, 783) = 2, ns$. However, he found a difference in happiness levels of those who were anticipating a vacation (pre-trip happiness) compared to those who were staying at home. These results, where anticipation of holidays and a return from a *recent* trip boost happiness levels, can be understood from the concept of hedonic happiness (where vacations are the pursuit of pleasure). Consistent with the nature of hedonic happiness, where the locus of pleasure lies externally (versus internally), hedonic happiness levels decline when the external source of pleasure is drawn away. However, if one desires lasting well-being, satisfaction and happiness, components of eudaimonia become more important because they are less affected by the attainment of external rewards and rely mainly on self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life and so on.

According to Aristotle, humans can maximize their well-being by adopting a “golden mean” approach in which they should fulfil their basic needs to pursue their potential, while being aware of the “apparent” good. These include entities which may act as a source of pleasure in a short run, but they don’t contribute significantly to our well-being once they are exhausted. Considering the results of the present study, vacations could be viewed as the “apparent good” because they only appear to facilitate well-being temporarily. The concept of happiness set point and hedonic adaptation (Lyubormirsky, 2008) can also be nudged into view to explain the results of the present study. While a trip of a few days could have given a boost in happiness levels of the participants,

they returned to normalcy, bringing them to similar levels of happiness as non-vacationers.

While the qualitative interviews show that vacationers felt easier to deal with challenges in their lives after having returned from the trip, results in the long run suggest that they do not have a significant advantage over the ones who did not go on a vacation. The results can be understood with respect to the resources (e.g., protective factors and assets) that play an important role in resilience. While vacationers could have capitalized upon resources such as strengthened interpersonal support and time for self-reflection during their holiday (Durko & Petrick, 2016), these resources might not have been effectively harnessed as they resumed their stressful lifestyles, bringing them at par with non-vacationers. The demographics of the participants could also be factored in to explain these findings. As participants in both the groups were enrolled in an educational institution, and were not working at the time of the administration of the questionnaire, they could have been going through similar levels of stress in their lives (and the positive effects on vacationing might have dissipated over the last two-three months). A charity, UK Youth (2018) conducted a study on young adults (N=1000, age-18-25 years) and found that they spent more than 6 hours of the day “stressed out”. One in ten reported feeling that they had no one to talk to about their problems, a further 67 suggested that they had no one to lean on for seeking advice – indicating meagre resources for resilience.

Apart from interfering with the process of resilience, extremely stressful circumstances also have detrimental effects on one’s peace of mind and mindfulness. The results show that

both vacationers and non-vacationers experience similar levels of peace of mind and mindfulness. Vacations may have facilitated peace of mind in the short run, by regulating the participants' levels of adrenocorticoids and blood pressure. However, resumption of daily stressful lives brought their stress and peace of mind levels similar to those of non-vacationers. Similarly, the free time available to vacationers on their trips seems to have promoted their mindfulness (as they reported in their interviews that they could think or feel more clearly). The inability to find sufficient time for focusing attention on oneself during two-three months after returning from holidays explains the insignificant differences between vacationers and non-vacationers.

The next aim of the study was to assess whether there are differences among people going on different types of trips in terms of their happiness, resilience, peace of mind and mindfulness. As can be seen from the results (Table 2), it did not matter with respect to any of the variables whether an individual went alone, with friends, or family. It appears that the vacationers in the "friends" and "family" groups would report higher level of happiness as compared to the "solo" group because the former groups would have greater opportunities to explore and share positive experiences, and the collective effort of all members would be better enjoyed in company of one another. This assumption is also related to the concept of emotional contagion. However, the happiness levels remained unaffected. This could be due to two reasons. Firstly, it is possible that there were no significant differences among these groups in terms of happiness even in the short-term! They could have experienced similar levels of happiness, even though the sources

were different. For example, the solo travellers may have taken delight in their independence, just like the latter groups might have rejoiced in the company of their friends and family members. Secondly, even if the solo travellers experienced less happiness in the short-run, their happiness levels became comparable to those of the other groups as they spent 2-3 months with their families and friends again after having returned from the trip. Similarly, because their environments in terms of stressors (academic problems, relationship issues) and protective factors (such as presence of family members and friends) were similar, they show similar levels of resilience 2-3 months after the trip.

In terms of peace of mind and mindfulness levels, it did not matter in the long-run whether an individual had more time to himself/herself on a vacation or whether they spent their time with family members. It could mean that there are factors other than one's company that promote levels of peace of mind and mindfulness such as gratitude, compassion, deep breathing, acceptance, regular health check-ups, living in the moment, emotional regulation and being generous (Shankar & Melissa, 2017).

With respect to whether the trip was national/international or religious/non-religious, there were no significant differences with respect to happiness, resilience, peace of mind and mindfulness levels (Fig 1 & 2). Because of lack of empirical research on the long-term effects of such trips on young adults and disproportionate sample size in the groups, no meaningful conclusion could be drawn for these results.

CONCLUSION

It may be concluded while vacationing serves as an effective measure for people to experience their lives on a different tangent, it may not be sufficient to provide an individual with the resources that are required for enduring levels of well-being, satisfaction, and physiological-psychological health. As opposed to the general notion that views vacationing as an effective way of “forgetting all the problems”, or “relieving the mind of its stressors”, going on vacations is overrated. Being an external source of catalysing positive emotions, they remain useful only as long as we continue the trip. If the goal is to maximize well-being and mental health in the long-run, an individual should realize that the source of happiness lies within themselves. For example, in his groundbreaking book, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfilment*, Seligman (2002) focuses on five aspects of being authentically happy: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and

Accomplishments. Popularly known as the PERMA model, it identifies various aspects that an individual can capitalize to secure lasting well-being. While external sources (i.e. relationships) are accorded importance in his model, it primarily emphasises individual aspects of well-being (such as positive emotions, engagement, meaning and accomplishments).

Going on a vacation is certainly not a bad idea, however one should not view it as a panacea for all their problems. Apart from granting only hedonic advantage, vacations could also prove to be draining on one’s physiological health (if vacations become stressful themselves) and financial health. Future research may focus on how going on a “mental vacation” could prove to be better than going on a “physical vacation” in terms of one’s sense of being; and the strategies that may be utilized by people to explore the happiness, power and calmness within themselves rather than seeking the same by going on expensive holidays!

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