



The Open Psychology Journal

Content list available at: www.benthamopen.com/TOPSYJ/

DOI: 10.2174/1874350101710010027



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Experiencing Peace Through Heart-Based Meditation on The Self

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Received: September 09, 2016

Revised: March 05, 2017

Accepted: March 06, 2017

Abstract:

Background:

This paper is based on the results obtained from a research program which showed that training in the heart-based Intuitive Meditation (IM) method brought about a significant shift towards more feeling based consciousness. This data was obtained from a pre-post test design measuring changes in scores on the Feeling Consciousness Scale (FCS). The post-test scale also included several open-ended questions.

Objectives:

Among other aims, the objectives of the present paper are to compare the traits obtained from the open questions to the scale items in order to refine the scale where necessary and to learn more about the quality of feeling-based consciousness; for instance, to compare the scale item "I feel peace inside" with the open answers.

Method:

The method consisted of a comparison of answers from the open questions with the scale items.

Results:

An overlap was found between many of the scale items and traits derived from the open answers. The scale item "I feel peace inside" and the open answers of 36% of the participants suggest that peace might be an inner experience related to feeling.

Conclusion:

The comparison throws more light on the quality of the inner experience of participants after learning IM. It also suggests that peace is an inner experience related to feeling. This has many implications, especially for people who try to create or impose peace on others through military or forceful means. As the sample size was small, further research is suggested, especially with respect to possible gender differences.

Keywords: Intuitive Meditation, Feeling Consciousness Scale, Quality, Peace, Inner experience.

INTRODUCTION

Modern-day people rely mainly on their rational mind to guide them in their actions, including when engaged in scientific research. School systems world worldwide are also based on increasing intellectual ability. According to an Eastern philosopher and yogi, Srinivas Arka, this trend has led us to lose touch with our *Feeling Heart*, our intuition and the experience of inner peace [1].

To find out more about this, this paper is based on a larger investigation involving different levels of consciousness and the role of the heart in meditation methods [2]. It was the start of a research program to see if training in Intuitive

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Meditation (IM), a heart-based method that involves touch, sound and breath, while meditating on the Self, increases people's sensitivity to their inner world of feeling. As no scale was found in the literature to measure feeling consciousness, a scale with the name of the Feeling Consciousness Scale (FCS), was developed to measure this construct. Initial psychometric procedures for validating the scale and assessing its reliability were also conducted. The FCS was administered to a group of 31 participants prior to being introduced to the IM method and then a second time six weeks later after attending 5 sessions of IM. A significant difference at the .001 level of significance was found between the two scores, suggesting that people can be trained to become more conscious of their inner world of feeling through meditating on the Self using the heart-based IM method.

Using a mixed method design [3], open questions were included the second time the FCS was administered. This gave rise to a list of traits of a qualitative nature describing the changes the participants had observed in their consciousness after learning and practicing the IM method a minimum of 5 times over a 6-week period.

Background

Some spiritual traditions, like Buddhism, talk of the need to create peace through the practice of non-violence [4] whereas others emphasize that peace is related to the need "to slow down, in other words walking, eating, having a shower and just about any activity you undertake. Slow down and enjoy things more" [5]. On the other hand, Arka claims: "The first experience of spirituality is inner peace. Once this threshold is obtained, many doors of matrix realities open" [1, p. 68]. However, "before we enter the inner realms of peace, we must bypass the mind's obstructions. If we accept this about the mind, then we can even enjoy its disturbing nature en route to the peaceful heart, and thence to the deep, silent sea of consciousness" [6, p.145]. Arka describes the part of the person who undertakes the inner journey as the "I ego awareness," and he maintains that to find our true identity, or Self, we have to look above or below our surface mind. He describes this as "a journey from the 'Rational Mind to the Emotional Heart to Pure Consciousness'" [1, p. 38].

To help people undertake this journey, nearly 40 years ago Arka developed a heart-based method of meditation known as Arka Dhyana or Intuitive Meditation (IM) which is based on three pillars – touch, sound and breath. IM has been practiced for over a quarter of a century in many countries, such as England, New Zealand, Canada, India, Spain, Mexico, and Fiji Islands. Although the psychosomatic nature of religious practices is part of other methods that meditate on the heart [7], in the present investigation the IM method was chosen because, although it too is aimed at leading the practitioner to the discovering of the Self, it is so designed that people who want to connect with their feeling nature in their heart may do so [2]. This method is not a religious practice but a natural way of discovering or rediscovering our heart-based inner intuitive nature on our journey to Self-discovery. During this journey, Arka maintains, practitioners will go through six main levels of consciousness in order to reach the core of their being. This observation is based on his own experience and on teaching the Intuitive Meditation method to others. It has also given rise to his Theory of the 6 Main Levels of Consciousness [1, p.37]. Arka uses the following definition of consciousness:

Consciousness manifests itself through physical matter. Similar to bacteria that are able to survive with a complete lack of oxygen and in high temperatures, consciousness lacks boundaries, can take any form or shape and can emerge under challenging life conditions. In spirituality, consciousness is mainly a non-physical yet powerful entity that is the pivotal point of all life and activates the senses in every living being. It is highly responsive and expressive and activates many levels, especially in humans [1 p. 37].

Arka's definition of consciousness is similar to Classical Indian writings such as the Upanishads, [where] consciousness is thought to be the essence of Atman, a primal, immanent self that is ultimately identified with Brahman—a pure, transcendental, subject-object-less consciousness that underlies and provides the ground of being of both Man and Nature [8, p. 1].

It also resembles the model of reality put forward by quantum-relativistic physics which

has transcended the concept of solid, indestructible matter and separate objects and show the universe as a complex web of events and relations... However, the physicist has very little to say about the variety of the different forms the cosmic dance takes on various other levels of reality. The experimental insights from unusual states of consciousness suggest the existence of intangible and unfathomable creative intelligence aware of itself that permeates all realms of reality. This approach indicates that it is pure consciousness without any specific content that represents the supreme principle of existence and the

ultimate reality. From it everything in the cosmos is derived [9, p.72].

The six levels Arka presents in his theory are Mind, Subliminal-Mind, Feeling-Mind, Emotional-Heart, Heart-Soul and Pure- Self:

M (Mind) – Consciousness: Mind is the first layer, which manifests on the surface of the cerebral region. As it becomes sharpened by the cultivation of learning, it evolves into a faculty called intellect.

SM (Subliminal-Mind) – Consciousness: The second level, which is below the surface mind, is the subliminal or subconscious mind. We are unaware of its potential and capabilities, which may seem incredible to the surface mind. Many daily activities are governed by the subconscious mind.

F (Feeling-Mind) – Consciousness: The third level is the feeling mind. This feeling-consciousness generally prevails in the heart area and can thus be called the Heart of Heart-Consciousness. It includes an emotional faculty called intuition. Almost all mothers have this faculty naturally available and readily accessible to help them understand the intense needs of their children and people they care about.

H (Emotional-Heart) – Consciousness: The fourth layer is the deeper heart where you feel emotions with even greater intensity. This can be called the spiritual heart, or your inner consciousness. The presence of the surface mind is reduced and the presence of subliminal or subconscious mind is enhanced. It is formed by impressions gathered through what you have learned and experienced along with the memory of your personality.

HS (Heart-Soul) – Consciousness: The fifth level is between the deeper heart and the ultimate essential being (Soul). Here you experience inner-space and the Mystical Universe, where the laws of physics start reversing and lead you to experience many alternative realities and possibilities that give access to your own soul. Here you become more connected with Nature and the forces of the Universe.

PS (Pure-Self) – Consciousness: The sixth layer is Core-Consciousness. This is the very essence of your whole presence and of everything that you feel, think and do. It is addressed as Soul or Self [1, pp. 37–38].

As I was interested in learning more about Arka's 3rd level of consciousness, Feeling-Mind – Consciousness, my investigation was directed at people who were unfamiliar with the IM method to see if they would show a shift towards a more feeling-based consciousness after being trained to go below their minds. Here the independent variable consisted of an IM workshop consisting of 5 IM sessions spread over 6 weeks (a total of 13.5 hours). As this level of consciousness prevails in the heart area, Arka suggests it be called the Heart of Heart-Consciousness [5]. In the original study, I simply referred to it as the "Feeling Heart" [2].

Scientists have found that more information is sent from the heart to the brain than vice versa [10] and, even if science does not know the contents of this information, they do recognize that the heart uses different pathways. For instance, the HeartMath Institute identifies four communication pathways: neurological, chemical, biophysical, and energetic [11, Heart Brain Communication section, para. 1].

What is of interest to me here, are the last two pathways of communication. In support of the electrical or biophysical pathway, Liboff suggests that Western science has revealed that there is "a remarkable endogenous electric character to organisms" [12, p. 44]. Based on research involving heart transplant patients, the energetic layer seems to be the initial layer as it seems the organism might be reacting to subtle changes brought about by changes in the biofield, made up of the electromagnetic layer and other layers not yet discovered by science [2]. Rubik supports this. She claims the biofield is "at least in part, based on the electromagnetic field theory of modern physics... [and] rests on physical principles that can be measured" [13, p. 555]. However, she also draws our attention to the fact that these fields "might also include acoustic and possibly other subtler energy fields not yet known to science" [13, p. 555]. Changes in the biofield can be brought about by forces directly linked to the Source or Higher Nature or by changes in the environment [2]. The environment not only consists of the exterior environment; it also involves our world of thoughts and stories, referred to as our "inner environment". It is through "our bodies" that we experience these changes, both those that are occurring in the outside world and those that are occurring as a reaction to our inner thoughts [14]. Based on research into the nature and role of the heart, it seems as though these fields, often referred to as "subtle energy fields", are primary in that they seem to be related to not only what comprises the system, but what guides it [2]. This is consistent with the Anthroposophic vision [15]. However it also appears these fields can be influenced by the system, mainly the heart, in response to the person's reaction to the outer and inner environment. In this sense, these fields, or at least part of them, might be a reflection of what is going inside the person. These fields have been talked about

throughout the ages and form the subject matter of many spiritual and metaphysical traditions. In India the subtle energy system is described as “swirling intersections of vital life forces” making up the “subtle energy system” of the body which animates each person’s physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual body. Each chakra reflects an aspect of consciousness essential to our lives. They are “organizing centers for the reception, assimilation, and transmission of life energies” [16] and appear to involve changes in the magnetic and other electrical fields.

Spiritual traditions also talk of an aura where different bodies or sheaths are each embedded in the other [17, p. 8]. These bodies go from the outer subtlest body to the denser physical body. The different bodies that make up the Self are generally thought to be the causal body, mental body, emotional body, etheric body (made of ether or life-energy), and physical body [18]. There are variations to these names and number of sheaths. They are said to extend both outside the body and penetrate into the body itself [6]. As implied earlier, science also recognizes the organism as a being embedded in a bio-field of ever-increasing subtle fields. This way of looking requires a paradigm shift from seeing the body as only a biochemical system to also seeing it as a bioelectrical system. When the term “spiritual” is replaced with “metaphysical systems”, it becomes easier for the Western mind to understand [2].

Clarification of the Term “the Self”

In this investigation, people were trained to go below their thinking mind and contact their Self, using the IM method of meditation. As “life force is a one of the properties of soul” (Arka, personal communication, August 21, 2015) and terminologies “like soul, inner self, and deeper consciousness are very close to each other in meanings” (Arka, personal communication, May 2, 2016) this investigation also involved finding out what happens when practitioners are trained to go below their minds and connect with their “life force”. Arka, on being asked where the soul was in the human body answers with a question: “Soul, electrically, tell me where there is no soul . . . soul is not the word, it is the meaning that is important—self spirit, atman, how can you separate yourself from soul?” [19]. From this statement, he is clearly referring to an electrical system. The research mentioned here can therefore also be seen as involving what happens when people are trained to get in touch with their electrical system. During this analysis one must be careful not to reduce “life force” or “electrical system” to the soul, but rather see it as a property of the soul as suggested by Arka.

In his theory of the 6 levels of Consciousness, the sixth level as PS (Pure-Self) - Consciousness is identified as the very essence of your presence and of everything that you feel, think and do. It is called Soul or Self [1]. Arka also defines soul as the unconscious master–mind within every organic material in the body. It pervades inside and outside of every cell, a mother-like awareness of intelligence, which prompts everything that happens biologically, psychologically, emotionally, or in any other way. It can be bigger than our bodies and smaller than a photon. One’s truest identity; cosmically spiritual in nature. (S. Arka, personal communication, May 4, 2016).

He likens IM to a “musical instrument” which can be used in different ways depending on the intention of the person practicing it. He declares “the preliminary task of setting ones intention is the thrust of the IM method” and people may utilize it how they like. Some people want to “improve their health or feel good, whereas others want to discover and connect with their true nature or inner Self” (S. Arka, personal communication, August 6, 2016). In this investigation participants were encouraged to connect with their inner essence or Self, using their feeling heart.

Clarification of the Term “Heart-based”

The concept “heart-based” also needs to be clarified. Although some traditions talk of *Anahata* which is the name of the 4th chakra or heart center, in IM pupils are initially instructed to bring their right hand in *jnana mudra*, which consists of bringing the index finger and the thumb together in a closed circuit, to the area of the center of their upper chest and to become aware of their inner world of sensations. Participants are encouraged to experiment where they feel more connection without specifying the exact location. During this beginning stage participants who want, may launch an intention. In this study, those who so desired were invited to connect with their Self or Soul, and then to let go of this wish. An intention based on a sincere desire is said to put participants in touch with their inner world of feeling.

Initially “heart-based” can be considered an area in the center of the upper chest connected with sensations, as well as an inner attitude based on ones intention. “Heart-based” is also concerned with certain levels of consciousness described by Arka in his theory and a type of meditation. Meditation methods can be divided into thinking or feeling based meditation. Feeling based meditation is considered as easier than those that are thinking based [6]. When the goal of meditation involves ego-transcendence arising out of “experimental phenomenological introspection into the living topological construct of the Self” [20 p. 82] or the rewinding of our history coupled with “serious self-pondering [which

involves] the process of making profound inquiry into the depth of the soul about . . . [our] existence or how the Universe was created or the laws that governed living and non-living matter” [1p. 29], then the meditation experience is seen to move in a certain way.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Description of Participants

The participants for this study were self-selected in the sense they were people who voluntarily signed up to learn the IM method and participate in the study. As long-term changes in inner consciousness normally require that people actually practice the method on a regular basis, I decided to use only people interested in learning it. All participants paid a nominal sum for attending the workshop. People who were not earning were given a discount.

Thirty-seven participants started the course, of which 31 completed it. Six could not complete the course for a variety of reasons. Twenty-three were females and 8 were males. Their ages ranged from 27 to 72 years, with an average age of 48 years. Twenty-five were Spanish, two Argentinian, and one from Colombia, Brazil, and Italy respectively. At the time of the study, they all were living in Madrid, where I conducted this research. The participants came from all walks of life.

Instrumentation

The same IM workshop was offered on different days, times and places and the participants joined whatever workshop was most convenient to them. All workshops were conducted in spacious halls, which permitted the participants to lie down during the relaxation phase of the meditation. In the end there were five groups consisting of between three and nine subjects. All the participants filled in the FCS prior to beginning the workshop. The same scale, was again applied 6 weeks later at the end of the last class after practicing IM. The first time the scale was applied it also included demographic questions regarding age, gender, and experience with other meditation methods. The scale also included several open questions the second time it was applied. As such, this research can be considered as a special type of multi-method approach where both quantifiable and qualitative data play an important role [21]. The assertions were the same as in the first scale, although the order of presentation was changed. A Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 7 was used, with 1 representing “never” or “almost never” and 7 representing “very often” or “always”. All participants filled in the scale items the second time it was applied but one male did not fill in the open questions.

Description of the Final Scale

The final scale consisted of 20 items (Table 3). I dropped two during the analysis phase because both of these were worded negatively and when the participants were filling them out, many asked which way they should go. This indicated an ambiguity in their wording, so I decided to not include them.

As this study is a start in a field in which scientific psychological evaluation is new, future work in evaluating this treatment approach will need to refine the measurement instrument and try to develop a shorter version so that the field can add constructs to the evaluation instrument (A. Kendall, personal communication, January 31, 2016). (See Table 3 for a list of scale items).

Description of Open Questions

The qualitative questionnaire consisted of five reflective questions:

1. In what way or how do you feel IM has complemented to your wellbeing?
2. Please add something about your experiences while practicing the method IM and how you feel afterwards.
3. In what way is IM helping you with your emotions?
4. Since experiencing the method IM, do you feel that you have tapped into intuition more? Please expand your answer if possible.
5. Do you feel that IM has increased your sensitivity? For example, how do you react to violent scenes in films or the TV? Do you have to turn away your head and close the eyes? Has it always been like this or have you noticed a change since taking this course? Please also give more details in how your sensitivity might be increasing.

There was also another open-ended question that followed the scale items: Is there anything you would like to comment or add regarding the questionnaire itself or how you filled it in the first time you did it?

Procedures Used for Open-ended Questions

Only 30 participants responded to the open questions; one of the participants who had filled in the scale online did not complete this section. The answers to the open questions were not very elaborate, but, in turn, were descriptive in terms of certain traits. This permitted the answers to be coded in terms of frequency. Seventeen traits were identified. A frequency count was conducted. I also looked at the frequency of naming a trait in terms of gender (Table 1). I then calculated the frequency scores based on gender into percentages (Table 2). Although some traits were similar to each other, I initially left them as separate traits, for sometimes both were mentioned together by the same person, indicating that at least for them, the internal experience of each trait was slightly different. Two people responded in English, the rest responded in Spanish. One of the traits, “sensitivity” (*sensibilidad* in Spanish) has multiple shades of meanings (Merriam-Webster.com, n.d.b). As some people claimed that prior to learning IM they were already sensitive, I identified it as the same trait with part “a” and part “b,” with part “a” reflecting more “sensitivity” after learning IM and part “b” reflecting recognition of sensitivity prior to learning IM. I did the same for intuition, as people also claimed they were already intuitive prior to learning IM. I also looked at the data to see if one could recognize phrases that identified the learning of IM as a process. Unfortunately, the open questions did not address the question of process directly.

Scale Items and Their Derivation

Arka’s theory and work suggests that a return to a more feeling level of consciousness involves various inner experiences, such as awareness of different configurations of sensations in the heart and elsewhere in the body, spontaneous emotional feelings arising during meditation, a move toward a feeling of unity and peace, connection with the Self, greater connection and empathy toward oneself, others, and nature, increased positivity and focus, a feeling of being centered, and an increased sense of receiving intuitive guidance [1, 6, 22].

The scale items comprising the FCS were derived from theory and interviewing eight people who had practiced the IM method for between 7 months and 2 years. I asked them to tell me about their experiences related to its practice. I chose to do this, as my interest was not only in testing a theory, but to find out if certain subjective experiences were common to practitioners when they started meditating on their Self using the IM method. Based on intuition and on Arka’s work, I felt that “feeling consciousness” is a single construct involving multiple facets.

Later, the same eight people ordered and arranged the statements regarding their experiences in different groups based on common elements. This was done to overcome certain biases like apheia or patternicity¹ [23], attribution bias² [24], and confirmation bias³ [25]. In addition, where possible, participants in this study were asked to share more about their inner experiences rather than my relying purely on the words used by them.

In the draft of the scale used in the pilot study, the number of scale items was reduced for better reliability - the rule of thumb is about five respondents per item [26]. Fundamental to IM is the awakening of the emotional layer. The deepening of this is essential to the student’s progression through the various levels of consciousness outlined by Arka in his theory. This is difficult to measure, particularly as the limitation in the number of scale items does not allow for the inclusion of other items that could tap into these deeper levels.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS PAPER

Based on this introduction, this paper has various objectives:

1. Compare the traits obtained from the open questions with the items comprising the FCS.
2. Explore the pros and cons as to whether the comparison between the scale items and items from the open ended questions might help refine the FCS.

¹ The tendency of one individual to find meaningful patterns in meaningless noise

² A cognitive bias that refers to the systematic errors made when people evaluate or try to find reasons for their own and others' behaviors.

³ The tendency to interpret new evidence as confirmation of one's existing beliefs or theories.

3. Expand information about gender differences found in the original study with special reference to the experience of peace and the feeling of “energy inside.”
4. Learn more about “peace as an inner experience,” based on the scale item expressed “I feel peace inside” and answers to the open questions concerning peace.

RESULTS OBTAINED FROM THE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS⁴

The pooled answers to the open questions in terms of traits are given below. First the answers were coded in terms of traits and from this the frequency (Table 1) and percentage (Table 2) was calculated. No single trait was scored more than once for each participant even though he or she might have mentioned it several times in response to the different questions. Identifying traits was relatively easy as in general the answers given by the respondents were short and specific. The results are also presented in terms of gender (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).

Table 1. Frequency based on Coded Data from Open-ended Questions [2, p.176].

Item	Males	Females	Total
1 a) More Intuitive after learning IM	3	19	22
b) Intuitive prior learning IM	3	4	7
2 a) More Sensitivity after learning IM	1	20	21
b) Sentient/Sensitive prior learning IM	1	15	16
3) Can work with emotions/not judge	2	15	17
4) Tranquil	4	10	14
5) Present/centered	1	11	12
6) Peace	3	8	11
7) Connected/ know or aware of myself	3	7	10
8) Clarity/lucid	3	5	8
9) Happy/blissful	2	6	8
10) Present in my body	3	4	7
11) Awareness of breath/emotions	1	1	2
12) Relaxed	1	5	6
13) Confidence in life/like a child		5	5
14) Energy feeling (tingling)	1	3	4
15) Thoughts are calmer	1	2	3
16) Calm		3	3
17) Listen to the body	1	1	2

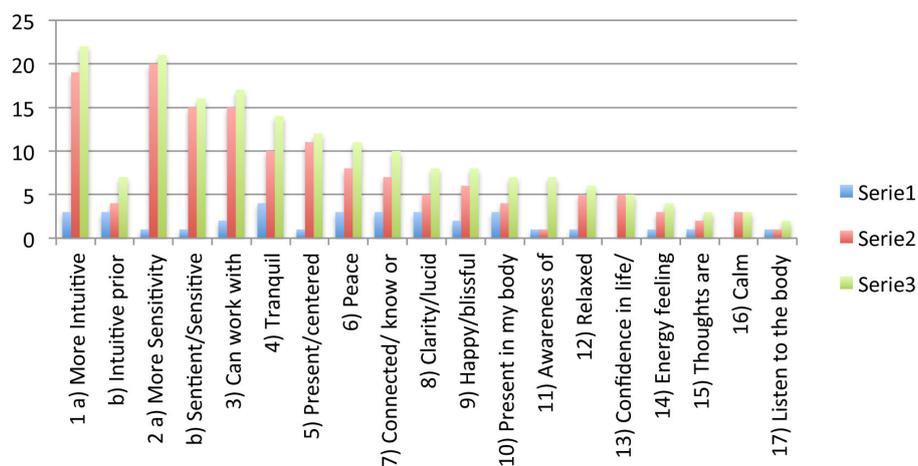


Fig. (1). Bar Frequency Graph based on Coded Data from Open-ended Questions [2 p. 178].

⁴ Although the results of the investigation are based on 31 participants, the results of the open-ended questions are based on the responses of 30 participants, 23 females and 7 males. One male did not complete this part of the questionnaire.

Table 2. Frequency in Percentage based on Coded Data from Open-ended Questions [2, p. 179].

Item	Males in (%)	Females in (%)	Total in (%)
1 a) More Intuitive after learning IM	42.8	82.6	73.3
b) Intuitive prior learning IM	42.8	17.3	23.3
2 a) More Sensitivity after learning IM	14.2	86.9	70
b) Sentient/Sensitive prior learning IM	14.2	65	53,3
3) Can work with emotions/not judge	28.5	65	56,6
4) Tranquil	57.1	43.4	46.6
5) Present/centered	14.2	47.8	40
6) Peace	42.8	34.7	36.6
7) Connected/ know or aware of myself	42.8	30.4	33.3
8) Clarity/lucid	42.8	21	26,6
9) Happy/blissful	28.5	26	26,6
10) Present in my body	42.8	17	23,3
11) Awareness of breath/emotions	14.2	4.3	23.3
12) Relaxed	14.2	21	20
13) Confidence in life/like a child		21	16.6
14) Energy feeling (tingling)	14.2	13	13.3
15) Thoughts are calmer	14.2	8	10
16) Calm		0.13	10
17) Listen to the body	14.3	4.3	6.6

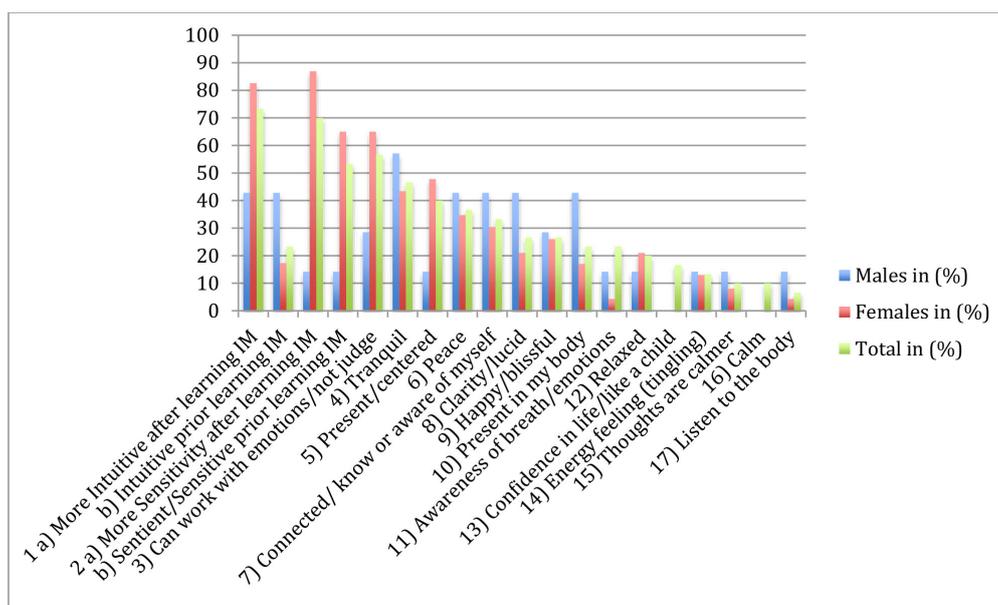


Fig. (2). Bar Frequency Graph in Percentages based on Coded Data from Open-ended Questions.

Paired Sample t-Test: Pre- and Post-Feeling-Consciousness

In the originals study a paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare feeling-consciousness on the pre-test and post-test. There was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test score (M= 4.3, SD= .99) and the post-test score (M= 5.3, SD= .72); t=5.4 (30), p < .001. The mean post-test score was .9 scale points higher than the mean pre-test scale score. The 95% confidence interval is from .6 scale points to 1.3 scale points with a statistically significance at the .001 level⁵.

⁵ Statistically significant means that taking into account the amount of variability the observed result is not readily attributed to mere chance variation. Statistical significance does not necessarily imply that the observed difference is meaningful.

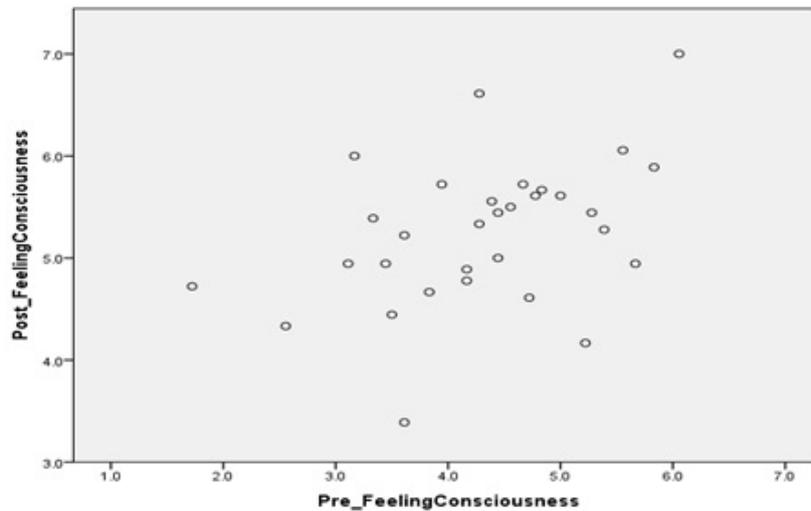


Fig. (3). Scatter Plot of Results based on Pre and Post Feeling Consciousness Scores.

Although there is somewhat of a lower left to upper right pattern, the points are not a straight line Fig. (3).

COMPARISON BETWEEN FCS ITEMS AND TRAITS BASED ON OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

The FCS⁶ includes items such as unity, peace, intuition, positivity, feeling of being centered, awareness of emotions, and connection to one's inner Self, sometimes expressed as soul, inner being, or *atman*. (See Table 3 for the full list). Comparing traits from the open questions with the scale items we can see the first 6 listed items in Table 3 coincide with the quantitative traits obtained from the open-ended questions. Item 7 also coincides partially for people mentioned they became “tranquil”, “calm” or “their thoughts became calmer”. Items 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12 are also specific body based experiences that seem to be related to the open trait “presence in the body”. When refining the scale, this observation needs to be taken into account. The open answers suggest that scale items need not be too specific. I address items 19 and 20 in the next section.

Table 3. List of Scale Items.

1	I feel peace inside
2	I am aware of my emotions as they are happening
3	I feel energy inside of me
4	I am guided by my intuition
5	I am centred
6	I feel connected with my innermost being (some describe this as soul, self, atman)
7	When I bring my attention to the heart area, my thoughts become slower or disappear altogether
8	I am aware of my feelings as an inner experience in my body
9	I feel sensations of various kinds in the centre of my chest or in the heart area
10	I notice vibrations in my body
11	I can feel pulsations (like heart beats) in different areas of my body
12	I feel the centre of my being is in the area of the heart
13	I feel that space also exists inside of me
14	I am aware of my own heart-beat as an inner experience
15	I feel positive
16	My sense of time inside is much slower than time measured externally
17	I have a feeling of unity inside
18	I am sensitive to the feelings of others
19	I classify/judge some of my inner bodily feelings as good or bad and I consider I should not be feeling them
20	I override or do not pay attention to my emotional layer of experience

⁶ To obtain the full version of the FCS, contact consol.tina@gmail.com

Nobody mentioned they felt: pulsations like heart beats in different areas of my body; the centre of their being is in the area of the heart, that space existed inside of them; that they were aware of their own heart-beat as an inner experience; that they feel positive; that their sense of time inside is much slower than time measured externally; that they experienced a feeling of unity inside or that they were sensitive to the feelings of others. However all these items showed a shift in pre-post-test scores. That they were not specifically mentioned does not mean they are not qualities linked to feeling consciousness. Participants did mention that they felt happy or blissful, confident in life like a child, tranquil, lucid and relaxed. These were not included in the scale. In descending order based on frequency, the pooled answers to the questions indicated that participants increased in intuition, sensitivity, non-judgmental acceptance of their emotions, tranquility, peace, being centered and present, connected with themselves, clear and lucid, happiness, present in their bodies, awareness of their breath and its relation with emotions, relaxed, innocent like a child and confident in life, energy feeling, calmer thoughts, calm, and a capacity to listen to their bodies.

PROS AND CONS OF REFINING THE FCS BASED ON OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

This comparison gives clues how the content of the FCS can be refined in the future. It also suggests how to improve the wording of the scale items and indicates new traits that could be included.

Although the original scale used in the investigation consisted of 20 items, during the analysis phase two of them were excluded because they were worded negatively and when the participants were filling them out, many asked which way they should go. This indicated an ambiguity in their wording. The two items were:

1. "I classify/judge some of my inner bodily feelings as good or bad and I consider I should not be feeling them." This item included two questions in one, which probably gave rise to the confusion that was noted.
2. The other item was "I override or do not pay attention to my emotional layer of experience." The confusion regarding this answer was with regards to the Likert Scale that ranged from "never" to "almost never" to "very often" to "always". Respondents were not sure which way their answer should go. It would have been better to word the item "I override my emotional layer of experience." This might have eliminated the confusion.

Constructing a scale in psychological studies has its difficulties [27]. As the construction of the questionnaire progressed, the term *feeling-consciousness* turned into a multifaceted state of consciousness that involves different aspects that in turn needed to be teased out to grasp its deeper significance. It also became increasingly obvious that our consciousness, like "reality" is dynamic; an expansion of consciousness brings about an expansion in how we perceive the world. A scale, therefore, reflects "only a moment in time" and is an attempt to capture a certain understanding of a way of being. The concept *feeling*, which the scale is said to measure, is also not static, for there are deeper levels of feeling still to explore if practitioners want to expand their consciousness further. However, I still believe that constructing a scale of this nature is relevant, as it might help us to better understand the nature of consciousness and its different levels.

The answers to the open-ended questions seem to provide a good basis for verifying the scale items, as well as suggesting how these may be modified, for the answers rest on the experiences of the 30 participants. Including an item referring to sensitivity seems to be a case in point; at least it needs to be investigated more fully in future studies. The trait "blissful/ happy" is also important as it is considered a quality associated with Pure Consciousness [1]. The trait "relaxation" is also relevant as it suggests the IM method might reduce stress. However, as participants were essentially still novices as they had only 6 weeks experience with IM, it is possible that relying exclusively on their answers could give rise to a scale which overlooks the deeper experiences of people who have practiced the IM method for years.

The implication that consciousness is expansive brings with it a problem regarding selecting items to describe it. It also raises the possibility that certain items, including some of those used in this scale, might be valid even at deeper levels. This seems to be implied by Arka, when he says in expansion, consciousness maintains "the same qualities, yet its appearance, its presence and its depth becomes expanded" [as cited in 2, p. 38].

EXPANSION OF DIFFERENCES BASED ON GENDER AND ENERGY FEELING

In the original investigation gender differences were found in frequency of traits mentioned by males and females in response to the open questions. These results have to be taken with extreme caution because the number of male respondents was very small. In addition this finding was not supported by the results from the FCS itself, as demonstrated by the following graph.

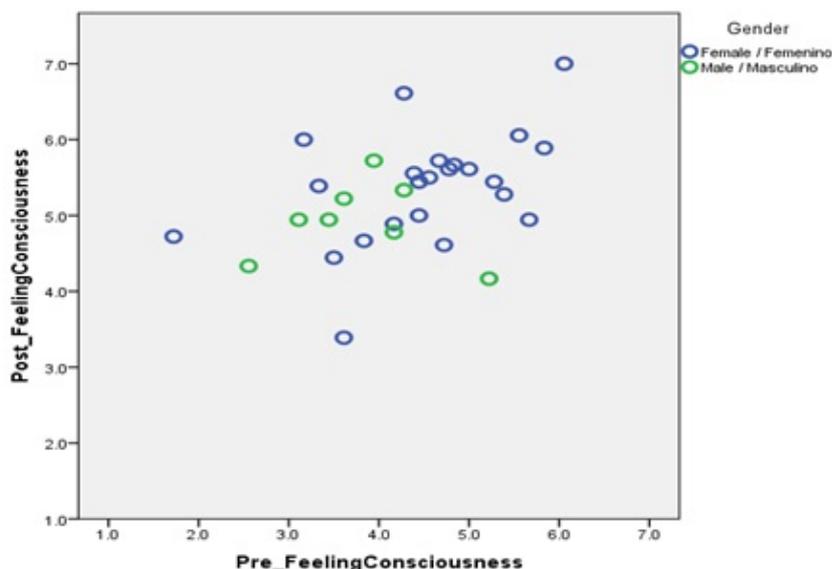


Fig. (4). Scatter Graph showing Results Based on the FCS in terms of Gender.

This graph shows no clear differences between males and females even though it does indicate that the range of differences is greater for females than for males (Fig. 4).

On the other hand, gender differences based on responses to the open-ended questions indicated that differences might be trait specific. These results showed that in females IM increased intuition (82.6%) and sensitivity (86.9%). The most mentioned trait in males was tranquility (57.1%), followed by an increase in intuition, peace, knowledge of oneself, clarity and presence in ones body (all 42.8%). The open-ended answers also clarified some of the aspects mentioned in the FCS, like the item to do with emotions. This was of interest as some of the participants claimed that before learning IM they had felt “controlled by their emotions,” whereas they felt they were in control of them after learning it. This was achieved through watching their emotions as they surfaced and learning not to react to the mind’s tendency to judge them as good or bad. Over 56% of female participants claimed feeling in control of their emotions post-test; 28.5% of males noted this experience post-test. This was an important development. Although it could be related to peace as an inner experience, these two traits do not seem to be directly related when the answers were individually scanned. In 8 females, peace directly corresponded with an increase in sensitivity. Only one male showed this trend. The experience of peace was mentioned by 3 of the 7 males and it appears there is no clear pattern regarding corresponding traits.

An increase in sensitivity seems to be related to an increase in intuition, especially in females. Only one male acknowledged that he had increased in “sensitivity”, even though over 42% of the males claimed they had increased in intuition. This might indicate that males do not like to admit an increase in sensitivity, or that there are other traits also connected with an increase in intuition. Although the experience of peace in males does not seem to be related to any other specific trait, in general they did show an increase in tranquility and also several other traits including intuition, knowledge of oneself, clarity and presence in one’s body. The last trait suggests that IM could be a suitable method for male practitioners, as it is a body-based method especially in the opening stages and men are often thought to be more in their thinking minds.

Although the Self or Soul seems to be related to “life force” and/or the electrical system, the results to the open questions only touched on this with 13.3% of the participants reporting an energy feeling (tingling). However, they were novices to this method and had only practiced it for 6 weeks. The open answers revealed no apparent gender differences. The FCS also consisted of an item “I feel energy inside of me” and the Likert rating shifted from a pre-test score of 158 to a post-test score of 178. Bearing in mind the possible connection between the Self/soul and electrical systems, it is recommended that future research concentrate on clarifying this topic. This could be done by either extending the time length of a study similar to the one on which these results are based or by investigating people who have practiced IM for several years. It is also recommended to include an open question concerning the experience of energy inside, such as tingling or vibrations.

PEACE AS AN INNER EXPERIENCE

The results of this study indicate that some people experience peace inside themselves after learning the IM method. This was reflected in the scale item “I feel peace inside” and answers given to the open questions. The Likert rating of the item “I feel peace inside” shifted from a pre-test score of 120 to a post-test score of 162. This seems to indicate that peace is an inner experience that increases with the practice of IM. Over 36 percent of the participants also specifically mentioned the experience of peace in their answers to the open questions. Unfortunately participants were not asked to qualify further what constituted peace as an experience for them. Although these results concerning “peace as an inner experience” are tentative, they indicate that it would be worthwhile pursuing this topic in future research into the IM method.

Arka’s comment that inner peace is the first experience of spirituality from which “many doors of matrix realities open” [6, p. 68] also indicates that pursuing this line of research might be interesting.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The correspondence found between many of the scale items and the traits obtained from answers to the open ended questions supports that the FCS is measuring what it purports to measure. It also suggests how and where the wording of certain scale items can be improved and also what traits might be included in a revised version of the FCS. This overview also gives further insights into the qualitative experience of a level of consciousness described by Arka in his theory.

According to this investigation, the initial experience of peace can be obtained through practicing IM for a relatively short length of time. This may rest on bypassing the mind’s obstructions. An example of this is not reacting to the mind’s tendency to judge emotions arising during IM as good or bad. This might involve a decoupling of our thoughts and the inner sensations linked to the various emotions. In addition, as IM is based on touch as well as sound and breath, it is easy for practitioners to become involved with their inner world of sensations and feelings and, in this way, overcome their thinking mind. As IM also involves a systematic training in bringing one’s attention to different centers in the body, more advanced practitioners become “masters” of their own minds. With practice, this training also permits practitioners to connect with their Self in the area in the center of their upper chest when they desire. But above all, IM seems to give rise to a change in the quality of our experiencing consciousness [1, 2].

As some of the scale items and the answers to the open questions are concerned with thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition, there is a possible connection with Jung’s theory of cognitive functions, which are defined as different ways of perceiving and judging [28]. I think that the etymology of the English verb “feel” might be one of the reasons why some people might have a problem with relating the verb *feel* to the heart. In late Old English, the verb “to feel” is “to have a mental perception,” from Proto-Germanic **foljan* (source also of Old Saxon *gifolian*, Old Frisian *fela*, Dutch *voelen*, Old High German *vuolen*, German *fühlen* 'to feel,' Old Norse *falma* 'to grope')” (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.a., Feel, para. 1). The translation of the verb to *feel* into Spanish as *sentir* avoids this difficulty for Spanish speaking participants as the etymology of this Spanish verb comes through the Latin root *sentire* which originally meant to listen, but later came to represent all the senses (Etimología de Sentir, n.d., Sentir, translation of para. 1) [2, p. 197].

There are three planes of living: “Living from the mind, living from the heart, and living in the core being” [6, p. 61]. Together with the original investigation, this paper helps us to understand more about what living from the heart involves and the type of consciousness that prevails when we can go below our thinking mind and connect with our Self via our Feeling Heart. As it appears that the experience of peace is one of the components of this level of functioning, the attempts to impose peace on others, especially by military or coercive means, might be an illusion without any real scientific basis. Further research is suggested, specifically into the experience of peace and possible gender differences in inner experiences.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FCS	=	Feeling Consciousness Scale
IM	=	Intuitive Meditation

ETHICS APPROVAL AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

This research proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Academic Committee of International University of Professional Studies, and it has been determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by Federal Law and University policies.

HUMAN AND ANIMAL RIGHTS

No Animals/Humans were used for studies that are base of this research.

CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION

Not applicable.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author confirms that this article content has no conflict of interest.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I give my thanks to the non-profit organization CCASpain under whose auspices this study was conducted.

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