

THE IMPACT OF VIPASANA MEDITATION ON MENTAL HEALTH AND LIFE STRESS

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Abstract

Vipassana is seen as an excellent tool for self-actualization and a commendable measure for positive mental health because of its existential basis, which is based on the recognition of inevitable suffering (Dukkha) and the sincere encouragement to diligently strive for the ultimate goal of complete liberation (nibbana). In the field of health research, the main objective is to thoroughly investigate and evaluate the psychological benefits of Vipassana. This investigation looks at how one's personality and attitude can change, how one can adapt to deal with stress in life, and how well one performs and adjusts in other areas of life, such work, study, and home life—a comprehensive assessment of one's quality of life.

The study aims to prove that practicing Vipassana meditation considerably reduces stress among practitioners and brings about observable positive effects in people's lives. Interestingly, there is a marked difference in life stress between men and women, as well as between non-meditators and Vipassana beginners and frequent practitioners. This emphasizes how Vipassana can have a significant impact on stress levels and highlights how it can be a transformative practice that affects people differently based on their gender and experiences.

Introduction: Meditation is widely perceived as a technique that develops mental focus, surpasses habitual thought patterns, and exposes the essence of existence. A attentive awareness of the present moment with an open and accepting space for all experiences is known as "Natural

Presence," and this study investigates meditation as a path that leads to it. Diverse techniques, referred to as "skillful means," enhance this presence and call for an inquisitive, gentle, and non-intrusive manner of handling things. The knowledge that our natural presence—a loving consciousness that characterizes our essence—is always innate is where the wisdom rests.

A popular tool for meditation is the seed thought, which is frequently taken from motivational texts. According to Indian custom, the "Mahavakyas" from the Upanishads provide renunciants with enduring meanings that act as seed ideas for their lives. Rene Descartes, a key figure in Western philosophy, challenges Aristotelian teachings and shapes current philosophical discussions by considering meditation as the foundation of contemporary thought.

According to Swami Vivekananda, meditation is essential to all religions and represents the pinnacle of mental existence. According to Walsh and Shapiro (2006), meditation entails self-regulation techniques that center on awareness and attention, promoting mental health and particular abilities like serenity and focus. Scholars such as Cahn & Polich (2006), Jevning et al. (1992), and Goleman (1988) offer differing interpretations on the benefits of meditation.

The word "meditation" has various connotations in different cultures, ranging from Patanjali's Yoga Sutras to Latin's *Lectio Divina*. This article focuses on meditation in its broadest definition, which is a practice that is present in many cultures and that aims to transcend the thinking mind and achieve more profound, pious, or peaceful states. However, the term may have more specific meanings when used in talks about particular traditions like Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism.

Vipasana and mental health

Vipassana meditation is an approach to self-observation that synchronizes one's mind and body with the natural laws that apply to all things. It aims to eliminate mental negativity in order to

achieve true serenity and a happy, open-minded life. The core of vipassana is healing human suffering and changing one's perspective to one of joy and calmness, even though many health advantages have been proved.

Vipassana emphasizes the value of human understanding and compassion for both healers and patients in the realm of medicine, bridging science and art. By encouraging self-reliance, self-awareness, and professional fortitude, the technique reduces burnout and improves empathy, sensitivity, and diagnostic precision. Integrating Vipassana into their personal and professional development, healers find it appropriate in a variety of fields, which eventually enhances the efficacy of therapy.

Vipassana Practice and Stress

Stress has an impact on absenteeism rates and job performance, effectiveness and satisfaction (Burnard et a. 2000). Given the prevalence of these stress – related their costs to the nation's health care system and the loss of quality of life for individuals, it is no surprises that publications increasingly concerned over the effects of stress. Vipusana meditation is a conscious mental process that induces a set of integrated physiological changes termed the relaxation response.

Methods

Statement of the problem

To find out the impact of “*Vipassana Meditation on Mental Health and Life in meditators and non-meditators*”.

Objective of the present study

1. To know the impact of Vipassana Meditation on mental health and life stress.
2. To know the gender differences of Vipassana meditators and non-meditators.
3. To know the mental health and life stress of Vipassana meditators and non-meditators.

4. To know the relationship between Vipasana meditation, mental health and life stress of Vipasana and non-Vipasana meditators.

The Variables

- Independent variable - Vipasana meditation, gender and age
- Dependent variable - Mental health, Life stress.

Hypothesis

Following are the major hypothesis have been formulated for the present study. There are;

1. There is significant impact of Vipasana mediation on mental health and life stress of Vipasana and non-Vipasana meditators.
2. There is a significant gender difference in Vipasana and non-Vipasana meditators.
3. There are significant differences between mental health of Vipasana and non-Vipasana meditators.

Sample

Participants in this study included a total of 600. This sample including 300 male and 300 female respondents. In this sample 200 general group (those are un aware of vipasana meditation), 200 newly joined in vipasan meditation and another 200 they are more than two years experience in vipasana meditation. Participants ranged in age from 20-40 and 41 & above.

Tools used for study

Every possible care was taken to have the best possible tools with as much objectivity, reliability and validity as possible among other qualities for measuring selected variables. **The Mental health Inventory developed by Jagdish.A.K.Srivastava (1983).** and **Life stress Inventory by Holems and Rahe (1967).**

Main study

The researcher had collected various vipasana meditation centers in India and collected representative samples.

The study was conducted in various vipasana meditation centers of India. Using tools of mental health, life stress. The researcher randomly selected vipasana meditators and common people. 8-10 each and appraised them regarding the nature and need of the study. Informed consent to participate in the study was obtained from all the meditators and general people. The data collection was done in three sessions of one hour duration. These sessions were conducted taking into consideration the time frame in which these meditators were not involved in their regular practicing of vipasana.

Session- I First day of vipasana : Socio-demographic data sheet, mental health inventory life stress questioner.

Socio – demographic data sheet given to the meditators and non-meditators and asked them to fill up with brief introduction given to them.

Mental health, life stress questioner given to them with instructions.

Session –II After 10 days of vipasana, given to all scale and inventory for meditators with clear instruction and finally collected the data.

Session-III Data collection from common population in same procedure.

Duration of the study

Since there was a big sample involved (as much as 600). It took almost 2 years to collect data. The data collection began in the year 2018 itself, and finished 2020. The data Analysis and discussion finished in august 2021.

Statistical methods applied

Following statistical methods were applied in the present analysis; Descriptive statistics, Multi-variate analysis of variance, Scheffe's post hoc test and Regression stepwise multiple.

Results and Discussions

Vipasana meditation have been shown promise in effectively treating life stress, anxiety and depression through teaching clients or mediators to become more aware of thoughts and feelings and to change their relationship to them. Mindfulness practices are used to create a viewpoint on thoughts and feelings so that they are recognized as mental events rather than as accurate reflection of the self or reality in times of stress, the individual will be able to step back from thoughts and feelings, instead of engaging in ruminative thinking patterns that can escalate anxiety and depression. This research has been developed at a time when the changing demographic profile of people has lead to increased need for services. It has been suggested that the skills taught during the meditation affect global life style changes and new patterns of perceiving that is readily applicable to most of life situations. The objective of present research is "To know the impact of Vipasana meditation on life stress and mental health.

Table No. 1. Mean, SD and 't'-value of mental health and life stress of non-meditators, beginner of vipasana meditation and regular vipasana meditators. (N=600).

Factors	Mental health			Life stress		
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)	(C)
Group	NM	BVM	RM	NM	BVM	RM
Mean	146.55	187.57	226.31	214.71	157.52	128.28
SD	15.31	10.24	11.59	51.58	13.19	16.89
t- value	AB=31.49::BC=35.42::AC=58.74			AB=15.19::BC=19.29::AC=22.52		
Significance level	Mental health-AB=0.0001 (HS):: BC =0.0001 (HS):: AC=00001 (HS). Life stress-AB=0.0001 (HS):: BC=0.0001(HS) ::AC=0.0001(HS).					

NM= Non-meditators, BVM = Beginner of Vipasana meditation, RM = Regular meditators

Table No. 1: The Mean and SD of mental health of non-meditators is 146.55 and 15.31 is lesser than the beginner of vipasana meditation i.e. 187.57 and 10.24 respectively. The calculated 't'-value 31.49 is significant at 0.01 level of significance. The Mean and SD of mental health of beginner of vipasana meditation i.e. 187.57 and 10.24 are lower than the regular meditators i.e. 226.31 and 11.59 respectively. The calculated 't'-value 35.42 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The Mean and SD of mental health of non-meditators i.e. 146.55 and 15.31 is very lower than the regular meditators i.e. 226.31 and 11.59 respectively. The calculated 't'-value 58.74 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Therefore, the formulated hypothesis is that there are significant impact of vipasana meditation on mental health of non-meditators, beginner of vipasana meditation and regular vipasana meditators. Therefore, the formulated hypothesis is strongly accepted.

The Mean and SD of life stress of non-meditators is 214.17 and 51.58 is higher than the beginner of vipasana meditation i.e. 157.52 and 13.19 respectively. The calculated 't'-value 15.19 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The Mean and SD of life stress of beginner of vipasana meditation i.e. 157.52 and 13.19 is higher than the regular meditators i.e. 128 and 16.89 respectively. The calculated 't'-value 19.29 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The Mean and SD of life stress of non-meditators is 214.71 and 51.68 is higher than the regular meditators i.e. 128.28 and 16.89 respectively. The calculated 't'-value 22.52 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Therefore, the formulated hypothesis is that there are significant impact of vipasana meditation on life stress of non-meditators, beginner of vipasana meditation and regular vipasana meditators. Hence, the formulated hypothesis is accepted.

Table No.2 Mean , SD and 't'-value of mental health of men and women non-meditators, beginner of vipasana meditation and regular vipasana meditators. (N=600).

Gender	Mental health of Men			Mental health of Women		
	(A) NM	(B) BVM	(C) RM	(A) NM	(B) BVM	(C) RM
Mean	147.18	195.54	231.42	146.22	181.49	224.48
SD	15.542	14.071	10.495	14.853	7.167	5.811
t- value	AB=23.06::BC=20.43::AC=44.91			AB=21.38::BC=46.59:: AC=49.06		
Significance level	Men-0.0001(HS), 0.0001(HS), 0.0001(HS). Women-0.0001 (HS), 0.0001 (HS), 0.0001 (HS).					

NM= Non-meditators, BVM = Beginner of Vipasana meditation, RM = Regular meditators

F (Groups)=231.84; P=.000 :: F (Gender)=56.32; P=.000 :: F (Interaction) = F=15.06; P=.000

Table No.2 reveals the mean and SD of mental health of non-meditators in men i.e. 147.18 and 15.542 is lower than the beginner of vipasana meditation i.e. 195.54 and 14.071 respectively. The calculated 't'-value 23.06 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The Mean and SD of mental health of beginner of vipasana meditation in men i.e. 195.54 and 14.071 are lower than the regular meditators i.e.231.42 and 10.495 respectively. The calculated 't'- value 20.43 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The Mean and SD of mental health of non-meditators in men i.e. 147.18 and 15.542 are very lower than the regular meditators i.e. 231.42 and 10.495 respectively. The calculated 't'-value 44.91 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Therefore, the formulated hypothesis is that there are significant difference between mental health of men non-meditators, beginner of vipasana meditation and regular vipasana meditators. Therefore, the formulated hypothesis accepted.

The Mean and SD of mental health of non-meditators in women i.e. 146.22 and 14.853 are lower than the beginner of vipasana meditation i.e. 181.49 and 7.167 respectively. The calculated 't'- value 21.38 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The Mean and SD of mental health of beginner of vipasana meditation in women i.e. 181.49 and 7.167 are lower than the regular meditators i.e. 224.48 and 5.811 respectively. The calculated 't'- value 46.59 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The Mean and SD of mental health of non-vipasana meditators in women i.e. 146.22 and 14.853 are very lower than the regular vipasana meditators i.e. 224.48 and 5.811 respectively. The calculated 't'- value 49.06 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Therefore, the formulated hypothesis is that there are significant differences between mental health of women non-meditators, beginner of vipasana meditation and regular vipasana meditators. Therefore, the formulated hypothesis is accepted.

Table No. 3. Mean SD and 't'-value of life stress of men and women non-meditators, beginner of vipasana meditation and regular vipasana meditators. (N=600).

Gender	Life stress of Men			Life stress of Women		
	(A) NM	(B) BVM	(C) RM	(A) NM	(B) BVM	(C) RM
Mean	239.20	157.38	136.69	190.22	157.65	119.86
SD	44.28	16.42	13.04	46.66	8.95	16.14
t- value	AB=17.32::BC=9.86::AC=22.20			AB=6.85::BC=20.47::AC=14.22		
Significance level	Men-AB=0.001 (HS):: BC=0.001(HS):: AC=0.001(HS). Women-AB=0.001 (HS):: BC =0.001 (HS)::AC=0.001 (HS).					

NM= Non-meditators, BVM = Beginner of Vipasana meditation, RM = Regular meditators

F (Groups) =471.69; P=.000 :: F (Gender)=87.36; P=.000 ::F (Interaction) = F=38.147; P=.000

Table No.3. Reflects that the Mean and SD of life stress of men in non-meditators i.e. 239.20 and 44.28 are higher than the beginner of vipasana meditation is 157.38 and 16.42 respectively. The calculated 't'-value 17.32 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The Mean and SD of life stress of men in beginner of vipasana meditation i.e. 157.38 and 16.42 is higher than the regular vipasana meditators i.e. 136.69 and 13.04 respectively. The calculated 't'-value 9.86 is significant at 0.01 level of significance. Mean and SD of life stress of men in non-meditators i.e. 239.20 and 44.28 is higher than regular vipasana meditators i.e. 136.69 and 13.04 respectively. The calculated 't'-value 22.20 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Therefore, the formulated hypothesis is that there are significant difference between life stress of men non-vipasana meditators and beginners of vipasana meditation and regular vipasana meditators. Hence, the formulated hypothesis is accepted.

The Mean and SD of life stress of women in non- meditators i.e. 190.22 and 46.66 higher than the beginner of vipasana meditation i.e. 157.65 and 8.95 respectively. The calculated 't'-value 6.85 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The Mean and SD of life stress of women in beginner of vipasana meditation i.e. 157.65 and 8.95 is higher than the regular vipasana meditators i.e. 119.86 and 16.14 respectively. The calculated 't'-value 20.47 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The Mean and SD of life stress of women in non-meditators i.e. 190.22 and 46.66 is severe than the regular vipasana meditators i.e. 119.86 and 16.14 respectively. The calculated 't'-value 14.22 is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Therefore, the formulated hypothesis is that there are significant difference between life stress of women non-vipasana meditators and beginner of vipasana meditation and regular vipasana meditators. Hence, the formulated hypothesis is accepted.

Summary and Conclusion

- The research made an attempt to argue that, Vipasana meditation definitely brings positive changes in life and helps the group's members / considerably to reduce stress. It is noticed

that there is a radical difference in life stress of men and women on the one hand and non-meditators, beginners of vipasana meditation and regular vipasana meditators on the other hand.

- Mental health as such there is noticeable differences among three selected groups. Men and women non-meditators, beginners of vipasana meditation, regular vipasana meditators. It is found that the men who regularly practices vipasana meditation have good mental health than the beginners of vipasana women meditators.
- There is a significant difference between life stress of men and women. The non-meditators have more life stress than the other two groups. In fact, the regular vipasana meditators have less life stress others.
- There is significant difference in life stress and mental health in the different group of meditators. However, there is no variation in relation to the age and domicile of meditators and non-meditators.
- The impacts of regular vipasana meditation have significant positive impact on mental health than the non-meditators. Therefore, non-vipasana meditators have high level of life stress and low level of mental health.

Suggestions

It is alarming to see the suicide rate in India, which is above the world average of the half of million people reported to have committed suicide annually, 20% are Indians. The suicide rate of the world population 17%. The last two decades have witnessed and an increased from 7.9 to 10.3 per lakh in India. There is considerable difference between the southern and northern states of India. In southern region including Karnataka has witnessed more than 20% of suicide rate whereas in northern states it is less than 5%. It a matter of concern that the national crime rates states that among the people who commit suicide in India 38% than below 30 years. 71% re below the age of 33 years. The suicide many the youth cause a huge social emotional and economic catastrophe poisoning constitutes 36% hanging 32%, self emotional 7.9% are the common method used fact commit suicide. There are certain socio-psychological mechanisms through which suicides can be brought down it is highly recommended that the Government of Karnataka can take the initiative of opening up of vipasana meditation centers in primary health center and district hospitals. It is advisable to introduce vipasana meditation center in academic institutions like

School College and University. Through out reach programmes the government should utilize the programmes like vipasana meditations to reach out to the farmers and other sections of the society keeping in mind the incidents of farmers committing suicide because of drought and other life stress factors and so as it becomes the entire mode irrespective.

A healthy society depends to a great extent on the level of mental health the people experience in a society which is experiencing the materialism of globalization on the one hand and negative elements like corruption on the other hand, definitely need programmes like vipasana meditations to nurture a holistic approach among the people. This process will definitely contribute in the field of social integration and upliftment of the mental health of society by reducing social isolation.

A Vipasana meditation facilitates the optimum socio-psychological temperature of the people it is in consistent with the Buddhist views of transcendence and enlightened awareness of the true being. This process attempts to bring one's complete attention to the present experience on a moment to moment basis.

The establishment of vipasana centers at district level either by NGO's or the government will help in the rehabilitation of destitute orphan's HIV +ve patients, child labors, sex workers and make them active members of the social mainstream. The vipasana meditators programme will enable the above said victims to overcome the social stigma and psychological problems associated with them. There by, they can lead a normal life and contribute to the National development.

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