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IMPACT OF VIPASSANA MEDITATION ON QUALITY OF LIFE



Phra Taweepong Inwongsakul¹ and Sampathkumar²

INTRODUCTION

Vipassana is one of the ancient techniques of meditation which means nearby and realizes the truth. Practicing this technique helps, one get released of old patterns of mind permanently and obtain insight without any dogma. In Vipassana, the person's mind is trained to focus her/his attention away from environmental triggers including persons, objects, and situation. Meditating person concentrate on breathing or body sensations, and instead of reacting to these sensations just observe them without any judgment. With practice the mind develops the faculty of awareness and equanimity. Vipassana is unique for the purification of mind at its deepest level (Wadhwani, 2012). Vipassana is a form of mental training that will teach to experience the world in an entirely new way. Meditator learns for the first time what is truly happening to him, around

Abstract

Vipassana is one of the ancient techniques of meditation which means nearby and realizes the truth. It is non-scientific technique of self-observation which leads to progressive improved insight and positive quality of life. The goal of this research is to study the effectiveness of Vipassana meditation on quality of life. In the study 120 student participants were selected. The experimental group was given One month Vipassana meditation course. The effect of intervention is studied by comparing with control group in pre-post test phases. For analysis of data the GLM-Repeated measures of ANOVA was used. Findings indicate that Vipassana meditation enhanced the level of quality of life.

Keywords :ancient techniques , non-scientific technique, Vipassana Meditation.

Short Profile

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and within him. It is a process of self-discovery, a participatory investigation in which he observes his own experiences while participating in them, and as they occur. The practice must be approached with this attitude.

Vipassana means to see things as they really are. It is a process of self-observation. The truth-realization by direct experience is the process of purification. This entire Path (Dhamma) is a universal remedy for universal problems and has nothing to do with any organized religion or sectarianism. For

this reason, it can be practiced freely by all without conflict with race, caste or religion, in any place, at any time and will prove equally beneficial to one and all. Anderson (2000) says that with continued practice, the meditation releases the tensions developed in everyday life and opens the knots tied by the old habit of

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reacting in an unbalanced way to pleasant and unpleasant situations and develops positive creative energy for the betterment of the individual and society. The focus of this study aimed at investigating the effect of Vipassana Meditation on quality of life.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Mark Rapley (2003) believes that the quality of life has been constructing from being a social scientific index of the relative well being of the whole population to being a measurable aspect of individual subjective experience. According to Costanza et al. (2008) quality of life has long been an explicit or implicit policy goal adequate definition and measurement has been elusive. The term is used in a wide range of contexts, including the fields of international development, healthcare, and politics. Quality of life is used to evaluate the general well-being of individuals and societies. Gregory et al. (2003) said that the quality of life include not only wealth and employment, but also the built environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time, and social belonging. Usha (2000) studied on effect of Vipassana meditation on physical and psychological level of college students. Chandramani et al. (1995) revealed that Vipassana meditation brought positive changes in behavior of jail inmates. Khurana and Dhar (2002) saw an effect of Vipassana meditation on Quality of life among inmates of Tihar jail.

Meditation has been defined as a family of techniques which have in common a conscious attempt to focus attention in a non-analytic way and an attempt not to dwell on discursive, ruminating thought" (Shapiro, 1980). For example, Vipassana meditation (Langer, 2002) involves a nonjudgmental attention that allows a sense of peacefulness, serenity, and pleasure. Kabat-Zinn (1990) has posed the following seven qualities of Vipassana meditation: non-judging, acceptance, openness, non-striving, patience, trust, and letting to. Likewise, in what is called

concentrative meditation, awareness is restricted by focusing on a single thought or object such as a personal mantra, breath, word or even a sound (Carrington, 1998). Therefore, in the present study vipassana meditation is used to enhance the quality of life.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

A number of studies have reported the effect of Vipassana meditation on many psychological variables. Kochargaonkar, 2005; Joshi, 2010; Kela, 2003; Chiesa, 2010; Germer, Siegel and Fulton, 2005 this clinical studies have found that increase quality of life, self-esteem, greater awareness, positive mood, acceptance, lower anxiety levels, lower stress, and a healthier sense of control self-concept and help the subjects to develop greater tolerance of common stressors in life. The positive impact of Vipassana on various aspects of mental health and personality had been reported in the above studies and it was therefore expected that similar results would come in the present study. The level of quality of life should be a key consideration for an individual contemplating the benefits of Vipassana Meditation.

The present day educational system more concentrates on classroom formal education rather than educational experience to the students. Educational system has the major responsibility to ensure psychosocial, physical and spiritual development of the individual and the society. Since the students of present generation are expected to be the leaders of the coming era. It is necessary to extend education to improve their quality of life that ensures individual growth towards better social and sustainable development. The purpose is to make students life better, to add a humanistic dimension to it, to help the inmates introspect and examine themselves and possibly understand the purpose of life better. Vipassana as a meditational technique is dedicated to fulfill these higher goals of life of students. It is believed that Vipassana has a

great role to play in transforming socio-cultural misbehavior in student's life. Since Vipassana is believed to be a technique that facilitates deeper psychological introspection and to bring about long lasting behavioral changes, it was considered worthwhile to assess some of these changes in a scientific manner. Keeping in the view of existing literature the present study is planned to aim at introducing Vipassana meditation to enhance quality of life among college students.

METHOD

Objective

To study the effect of vipassana meditation on quality of life.

Hypothesis

Vipassana Meditation enhances quality of life.

Research Design

Pre-Post experimental group design was used to study the effect of Vipassana Meditation on Quality of life. The participants were assigned randomly in to two groups-Experimental and control groups. The Experimental group was exposed to Vipassana Meditation whereas the control group was no exposure. The participants of Experimental and control groups were tested on dependent variable before and after exposure.

Participants

The participants were inmate students from Mahajulalongkon Rajaviddayalaya University, Thailand. They have registered for Vipassana Meditation training course. A large group of participants were administered the scale. Only those selected for the study that have scored low level on quality of life. The total participant group consists of 120 students. Then the participants were assigned randomly into two groups namely experimental and control groups. For random assignment of participant in to the groups the random number table was used. The

experimental group consist 30 boys and 30 girls, and control group also consist 30 boys and 30 girls. Their age ranges between 18 to 24 years.

Measures

1. Personal information schedule (PIS): This was developed by investigator and it includes identification data and socio-economic status of participants.

2. Quality of Life Scale: This scale was developed by Dubey, B. L. and Dwivedi, Padma in 2009. It is Likert type scoring system, consisting of five response categories of agreement-disagreement on each item. The weights for each item ranges from 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) with range of 24-120. Items 02, 05 and 23 are scored in reverse direction. Higher scores indicate better quality of life. Reliabilities is found to be ($r=0.87$) satisfactory.

Procedure

Pre-test: A large group of participants were administered the quality of life scale. Only those were selected for the study who has scored low on quality of life. Then the participants were assigned into two groups randomly. For random assignment of groups the random number table was used. The experimental group consists of 60 students who received Vipassana Meditation. The control group consists of another 60 students who do not received Vipassana Meditation training and the group kept into close observation.

Intervention: One month of Vipassana meditation course was given to students of experimental group. The course was given to the students to practice ten hours per day and took three hundred total hours. The students must declare themselves willing to comply fully and for the duration of the course with the teacher's guidance and instruction that is, to observe the discipline and to meditate exactly as the teacher asks, without ignoring any part of the instructions, nor adding anything to them. This acceptance should be one of discrimination and

understanding, not blind submission.

Investigator meets the students of experimental group in meditation hall. After initial interactions, day one activity was beginning with chanting of eight precepts. Then investigator gives all information regarding daily practices and code of conduct in the meditation hall. Information includes-daily time table, meditation technique, do and don'ts of meditation. The investigator is available to meet students privately between 12 to 1:00 p.m. Questions may also be asked in public between 9:00 and 9:30 p.m. in the meditation hall. The interview and question times are for clarifying the technique and for questions arising from the evening discourses for the interview can be on individual and group interview of the students. All students must observe Noble Silence from the beginning of the course until the morning of the last full day. Noble Silence means silence of body, speech, and mind. Any form of communication with fellow students, whether by gestures, sign language, written notes, etc., is prohibited.

To clarify the spirit behind the discipline and rules may be summarized as follows; Take great care that your actions do not disturb anyone. Take no notice of distractions caused by others. It may be said that a student cannot understand the practical reasons for one or several of the rules. Rather than allow negativity and doubt to develop, immediate clarification should be sought from the teacher. It is only by taking a disciplined approach and by making maximum effort that a student can fully grasp the practice and benefit from it. The emphasis during the course is on work. A golden rule is to meditate as if one were alone, with one's mind turned inward, ignoring any inconveniences and distractions that one may encounter. Finally, students should note that their progress in Vipassana depends solely on their own good qualities and personal development, and on five factors: earnest efforts, confidence, sincerity, health and wisdom.

There are two stages of Vipassana Meditation

1. Sitting Meditation: The meditator approaches a quiet place; sits comfortably, keeping his body straight and his head erect; closes his eyes and starts to meditate. If the meditator chooses Anapana Satipatthana the touch of air on one point of his nostril will be noted. Incoming breath will cause a sensation of on that point of the nostril; so also the outgoing breath, which will cause a sensation of touch on that same point of nostril. The meditator just focuses his mind on that sense of touch. If the meditator is following the instruction, the rise of his abdomen caused by incoming breath will be noted. Also the fall of his abdomen caused by the outgoing breath will noting. The mind of the meditator, while trying to concentrate on the rise and fall of the abdomen at all times, will wander outside his body a lot, too.

The meditator should note the rise of the abdomen. The next noting is on the fall of the abdomen, the third noting is on the sense of touch of his bottom on the seat (hardness). If the meditator finds that his mind is still wandering, the following second approach is recommended. The meditator should note the rise of the abdomen. The next noting is on the fall of the abdomen, the third noting will be on the manner of sitting, and then fourthly, on the sense of touch of his bottom on the mediator should disassociate his mind from the shape or the shape or the features of his body. He must note the sense of support (rigidity) in his body. If the mediator finds it too stressful to note four-steps, he should change to the change to the two-steps noting. When the mind wanders, he must note the wandering mind two to three times. He was find that the wandering mind ceases to exist at one of his noting.

2. Walking Meditation: For the meditator who aims to reach the Path and Fruition, it is very important to practice walking meditation. It contributes a lot to his sitting meditation, and as much to his general noting. One-Step Noting: When the meditator is moving his left foot, he

notes “walking”. When he is moving his right foot, he notes “walking” The shape and form of the foot must not be in the mind of the noting meditator. Shapes and forms are pannatti (conventional truths) only. When striving to find paramattha (absolute truth), the mediator must confine his awareness to the sense of movement only. Two-Steps Noting: When the mediator lifts his foot to move, he notes “lifting”. The manner of movement of his foot upwards is to be noted. When the mediator puts his foot down, he notes “putting down”. The manner of downward movement is the only interest of meditation to the mediator. Three-Steps Noting: When the mediator lifts his foot up, the manner of upward movement must be noted. When the foot moves forward, he notes the forward motion. Then he notes the gradual downward press of his foot to the ground. In Vipassana Meditation, conventional names and forms are not interest of noting. The mediator should try to see the manner of movement in terms of the four constituent elements (Dhatu) in all matter, namely: Pathavi-Dhatu (element of extension or earth elements), Apo-Dhatu (element of cohesion or water element), Tejo-Dhatu (element of kinetic energy or fire element), Vayo-Dhatu (element of support of motion, or wind element). When he lifts his right foot, he would notice that it becomes lighter and lighter as it goes up. That is the indication of the presence of the element of fire and the element of wind. When he puts his foot down to the ground, he would notice that it becomes heavier and heavier. That is the indication of the presence of the element of earth and the element of fluidity. Knowing the four constituent elements is a significant step for the mediator. Only then can he comprehend paramattha sacca. The essence of Vipassana Meditation is the ability of the mediator to be aware of all phenomena (1) as it is, and (2) when it happens. Six- steps Noting: The mediator notes the beginning of the lifting of his foot (heels). Next he notes the end of the lifting of his foot.

Third he notes the beginning of the forward movement of his foot. Fourth he notes the end of the forward movement of his foot. Fifth he notes the beginning of the downward movement of his foot. If the mediator makes full use of his walking meditation time, in addition to his sitting meditation time, within the thirty days of his retreat. He will find that, because he desires to lift his foot, his foot starts to lift. Because he desires to put his foot down, the foot comes down.

Post-test: Quality of life scale was administered for both experimental and control group immediately after the intervention. The effect of the intervention on experimental group was studied and compared in pre-post test phases. Later the same intervention activities were conducted to the control group also for ethical considerations.

Data Analysis

In order to test the hypotheses, General Linear Model- repeated measures of ANOVA were utilized to find out the significance of variance within-subjects group effects and between-subjects group effects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No.1 Mean, SD and t values for pre-test and post-test scores on Total quality of life of men and women of both experimental and control groups.

GROUP	GENDER	PRE TEST		POST TEST		CHANGE
		MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	
Experimental	Boys	40.87	3.821	81.03	7.435	40.160
	Girls	40.97	2.399	80.20	4.012	39.230
	Total	40.92	3.164	80.62	5.938	39.700
Control	Boys	39.70	1.803	53.50	4.478	13.800
	Girls	40.67	2.202	56.17	4.411	15.500
	Total	40.18	2.054	54.83	4.607	14.650
Total	Boys	40.28	3.020	67.27	15.158	26.990
	Girls	40.82	2.288	68.18	12.819	27.360
	Total	40.55	2.682	67.73	13.986	27.180

Table No.2 Summary results of GLM repeated measures ANOVA within and between subjects of quality of life of men and women both experimental and control groups in pretest and post test situation.

Within Subject Effects				
SOURCE OF VARIANCE	SUM OF SQUARES	MEAN SQUARES	F	p
Change pre & post test	44308.837	44308.837	3168.982	.000
Change Expt and Control group	9412.538	9412.538	673.188	.000
Change Gender	2.204	2.204	158	.692
	26.004	26.004	1.860	.175
Interaction Expt-Control Group and gender	1621.917	13.982	3168.982	.000
Error (Change)	44308.837	44308.837		
Between Subject Effects				
Expt – Control Groups	10547.004	10547.004	505.785	.000
Gender	31.537	31.537	1.512	.221
Expt – Control Groups and Gender	71.504	71.504	3.429	.067

Table No.1 and 2 reveal the Summary results of GLM - Repeated Measures of ANOVA within and between subjects for quality of life. In quality of life scores, Repeated Measures of ANOVA revealed a significant increase from pre to post test situation irrespective of the groups. 'F' value 3168.982 was found to be highly significant ($p < .001$). Irrespective of the groups in pre-test, the mean quality of life score 40.55 is increased to 67.73 with the improvement of 27.180. When increases in the quality of life scores with reference to groups are concerned again a

significant 'F' value is observed ($F=673.188$; $p < .000$) indicating a differential increase for experimental and control groups. From mean values it is evident that experimental group had an increase of 39.700 scores (from 40.92 to 80.62), whereas control group had increase of only 14.650 scores (from 40.18 to 54.83). So the increase in the quality of life has basically in the experimental group which can be attributed to the effective vipassana meditation. However the interactions between gender with respect to change in the scores and gender with respect to

groups and change in scores were found to be non-significant.

In between-subjects effects between groups together significant difference were observed ($F = 505.785$; $p < .000$). However gender wise and interaction between groups and gender was found to be non-significant.

Previous studies are also reporting similar findings (Kochargaonkar, 2005; George et al. 2003; Joshi, 2010; Kela, 2003; Khurana and Dhar 2002; Chiesa, 2010; Germer, Siegel and Fulton, 2005). All the above clinical studies have found that Vipassana meditation reduces stress and cultivates mindfulness, a nonjudgmental awareness of the present. The vipassana meditator's performance also seems to increase life satisfaction, quality of life, self-esteem, greater awareness, positive mood, acceptance, lower anxiety levels, lower stress, and a healthier sense of control self-concept and help the subjects to develop greater tolerance of common stressors in life. Therefore the above studies support the findings of the present study.

CONCLUSIONS

- 1.The Vipassana meditation enhances the quality of life.
- 2.There is no gender difference in enhancement of quality of life by the vipassana meditation.

Implications of the studies

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