

## BUDDHISM BASED MINDFULNESS TRAINING FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING IN SRI LANKANS

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### Introduction

Mindfulness training is a health enhancing behavior that has been shown to help reduce psychological problems in various populations. Hence, mindfulness training is implemented as techniques of psychotherapy for various psychological problems in many parts in the world today. Some of them have been developed based on the Buddhism for example Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). Researchers have found that reduction in psychological symptoms following formal MBSR training decreased the use of medications for common mental health including stress, anxiety, depression drug addiction and sleep disorders. These improvements in mental health are expected to result in better health related quality of life, in other words health, psychological hygiene or psychological well being. Buddhism has a rich teaching relating to individuals' mental states as well as working on mental process. Sri Lankans have their history of practicing Buddhism more than twenty five thousand years. Therefore practicing of mindfulness (as a form of *Vipassanā* meditation) is a not a new concept for them. Although, Sri Lankans practice mindfulness they hardly think of its therapeutic aspect. Most of them do not notice and do not pay attention for the psychological benefits that can be achieved through the mindfulness training for enhancement of the quality of their day to day lives. This would be because they used to practice meditation as the path to attain *nibbāna*. The aim of this study was to examine and make the awareness of Sri Lankans

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about the psychological well being in the sense of positive affects and positive family relationships that could be anticipated through the mindfulness training that they usually practice in their daily lives as the form of Vipassana meditation.

### **Method**

This study was done as a survey. Interview method is implemented for the collecting data. Sample comprised with twenty five daily *Vipassanā* mediators. Especially Buddhism based mindfulness trainees (*Vipassanā* mediators) including both males and females in Matale district with the age range of 45- 65 years. Collected data was analyzed under the theme analysis.

### **Result and Discussion**

In order to examine the influence of Buddhism based mindfulness training on psychological well being 25 persons have been interviewed. These people are the ones those who have practiced mindfulness training more than one year at least 30 minutes per day either morning or the evening. The questions of the survey aimed to address the changes that have taken place in their lives as a result of *Vipassanā* meditation. The answers given by the mediators were positively supported to our investigation. One of the answers given by a mediator was that “meditation has restrained me from having bad feelings” this indicates the enhancement of the psychological well being of the mediator through developing positive thinking pattern in him. Another answer given by a mediator was that “meditation training helped me maintain my patience”. Being patience is also causes to develop individual’s mental calm and well-being. “I gained control over my mind” is the other answer given by a mediator. The ability to control of one’s thoughts and motives are also a good determination of one’s psychological well being. Other related answers are “meditation made me calm and compassionate” meditation helped to develop loving kindness, healing and peace” “I used to be prone to anger now I am not” these all statements indicate that mediators have developed positive thoughts as a result of their meditation training. The other aspect of psychological well being which was taken into account in this study was the quality of family relationships. The answers given by mindfulness trainees were positive in this regard for

example “My family members and I are more at peace now than before” “I love and respect my husband very much” “my relationships with my co-workers has improved” these all statements indicate that mediators have developed more positive relationships with their family members as a result of mindfulness training. They also believe that these changes have occurred because of the mindfulness training.

## Conclusion

The aim of this research was to examine whether the mindfulness training helps to enhance human psychological well being. Psychological well being was considered in the sense of positive affects and positive family relationships. The answers given by mindfulness trainees indicated that they have developed positive affects and positive relationships as a result of the practicing mindfulness. The majority of the Sri Lankans are Buddhists. They usually do mindfulness training in the form of *Vipassanā* meditation from the childhood in many situations for example as a ritual, as their religious activity. Most of them do not practice mindfulness in order to enhance their psychological well being. Therefore it is necessary make them aware that the mindfulness practice causes to enhance their psychological well being. Then, they may eager to involve in mindfulness training and enhance their psychological well being more and more. Hence, based on this study it can be said that mindfulness can be implemented to enhance psychological well being in Sri Lankans.

**Keywords:** mindfulness, training, psychological well being, Sri Lankans

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