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A Focused Approach to Mindful Attention Awareness and Emotion Regulation: Vipassana Meditation

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The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between mindful attention awareness and emotion regulation as well as the effect of vipassana meditation on these two constructs. The Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS-15) and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation (DERS-36) are used for data collection. Out of 248 participants, 123 are Vipassana Meditators, who practised Vipassana Meditation at least five times per week for the previous two years and had attended at least one 10-day Vipassana Meditation Course from any Vipassana Centre, and 125 are non-meditators, who did not practise any meditation at all. The obtained data analysis was done on SPSS-25 and found to have a significant relationship between mindful attention awareness and emotional regulation. The results also revealed that there is a significant difference in the samples' mindful awareness and emotional regulation. The results of the study help to complement and understand clearly, as well as present a unique contribution to the current body of information on Vipassana Meditation and its highly beneficial impact.

Key words: Emotion Regulation, Mindful Attention Awareness , Vipassana Meditation

Introduction

India has been a country of rich culture, heritage, beliefs, and practices. We somehow lost our essence in the process of modernization, and others took advantage. Vipassana and meditation have deep roots in Indian history but have lost their existence. Meditation has only recently gained academic recognition, owing to the emergence of scientific evidence demonstrating its valuable effects on psychological, neural, endocrine, and immune variables, as well as a constructive effect on well-being and biological as well as psychological processes.

Regulating emotions plays an important role in psychological functioning and can have a positive social, emotional, and academic effect (Schipper &Petermann, 2013). The ability to grasp, categorize, and accurately mark one's feelings or emotions is an integral part of emotional regulation. Acceptance and tolerance of excessive feelings is therefore the essence of the principle of emotion regulation. Schipper &Petermann (2013) stressed that the risk of psychopathology in people rises when they have difficulties controlling their feelings. Karmakar& Majumdar (2021) investigated the new normal in young and mid-adults using emotional regulation strategies such as cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. The sample comprised 150 adults (80 young adults with an age range of 20–39 years and 70 middle-aged adults with an age range of 40–55 years). Mid-adults pointedly outperformed their young adult counterparts on cognitive reappraisal. In the instance of expressive suppression, there's also no discernible difference. Males perform significantly better on cognitive reappraisal than females, whereas the opposite is true for expressive suppression. An inability to control one's emotions can lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, and dissatisfaction in life, and it can occur when a

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person cannot focus on the moment and cannot communicate with their inner self (Grant et al., 2018; Kneeland et. al., 2016; Lazuras et. al., 2019; Ntemsia et. al., 2017; Renna et. al., 2018).

Vipassana Meditation (VM) is an ancient meditation technique that Gautam Buddha revived over 2500 years ago. Under the direction of Goenka, the Vipassana principal teacher, VM is presently being imparted not only in India but in many other countries too. It encourages conscious lifestyle changes, improves mental concentration, and allows for deeper psychological introspection in order to achieve long-term behavioural changes. The Pali word "Vipassana" means "insight." Most of the terms used in Vipassana are taken from the Pali language and taught in the original language along with their equivalents in English. 'Sila' means morality, 'Samadhi' means concentration and signifies the mastery of the mind, and 'Pragya' means wisdom and refers to insight that purifies the mind (Goenka, 2001). Right now, his technique for practising Vipassana is preached in different Vipassana centres throughout the world, and meditators engage with the practise through Goenka's recorded teaching sessions for 10 silent days and more.

The primary goals of Vipassana are to cleanse the mind and completely transform a person's personality. VM is a strategy for purifying the mind of its baser inclinations, enabling the manifestation of authentically human characteristics like general generosity, compassion, caring, sensitivity, humility, and inner peace, while also obtaining insight into the fundamental nature and purpose of human existence. This is accomplished scientifically through the structured cultivation of right mindfulness in connection with non-reactivity; that is, the development of the habit of paying close attention to everything that occurs in our entire body, with its five senses and the mind that operates within and through it, without any mixture of subjective opinions or reactions.

Marques & Dhiman (2009) stated that Vipassana meditation is about developing insight within meditators, and this can be supported by the words said by Goenka (2001) that by practising Vipassana, meditators can be in charge of their minds, act according to their morality, and still stay equanimous. Therefore, awareness and equanimity are the results of continued Vipassana meditation. Goenka (2001) stated three reasons for being unhappy in life, which are raga/lobha (craving), dosa (aversion), and moha (ignorance) in Pali, and all three are addressed in Vipassana practice. Again, in line with Goenka, Marques & Dhiman (2009) mention that the most important part of practising Vipassana meditation is to remain equanimous and non-judgmental toward the sensations and to not like or dislike their observation. Otherwise, meditators will create mental blocks for themselves instead of ultimately making their minds free.

Empirical evidence has also proved the worthiness of mindful meditation and Vipassana meditation. Pradhan and Ajithkumar (2019) investigated a study to determine the effect of Vipassana meditation on employee life satisfaction. The sample for this study was 240 non-meditators and meditators. The results indicate that meditating employees have a higher level of life satisfaction, which is independent of demographic factors. Additionally, the results validate the use of Vipassana meditation as a treatment in an organisational setting. Wu et al. (2019) revealed that brief mindfulness meditation can improve certain elements of emotion processing, including emotion intensity, memory formation, and emotional attention biases.

Agarwal and Dixit (2017) studied 100 adolescents in India between the ages of 17 and 24 to determine the correlation between meditation practises and life satisfaction among adolescents. They found that Vipassana meditation had a positive impact on increasing life satisfaction and self-esteem and helped the practitioners endure everyday stressors, specifically with regular meditation. Overall, they found that Vipassana practise can help meditators increase their well-being and self-satisfaction. Vipassana has been found to be a very effective short-term meditation technique that touches almost every sphere of life after a thorough review of literature (Bhargav & Srivastava, 2016). According to Szekeres and Wertheim (2015), the Vipassana course decreased subjective stress and increased wellbeing, self-kindness, and general awareness. Kumar (2016) examined the efficacy of vipassana meditation (VM) on employees' psychological well-being when employed as an intervention, as well as the effect of demographic characteristics on meditation results in meditators. The findings substantiated the research objective and

confirmed both the use of VM as an intervention and the fact that demographics had no effect on meditation outcomes. This indicates how meditation contributes to the development of intrinsic traits and culminates in internal transformation. Delgado-Pastor et al. (2013) conducted research in which Vipassana meditators did an auditory oddball task prior to and following meditation (in a single session), and random thoughts offered electrophysiological evidence for meditation-induced attentional benefits. In a critical study, Teper, Segal, and Inzlicht (2013) have shown that present-moment awareness and non-judgmental acceptance training enhance sensitivity to affective and incipient emotional signals, which improves the ability to use different affective strategies and helps to strengthen responses to incipient affective and emotional control strategies, including activating emotion-regulation and anger before they occur. Pagis (2010) stated that Vipassana practise suggests equanimity not only from the inside out, but also from the outside in. While Vipassana meditation can be practised in daily life, it is worth mentioning that deep benefits and awareness usually come from a long meditation retreat where participants are not allowed to talk or make eye contact.

In a study of incarcerated people, Bowen et al. (2006) discovered a link between Vipassana Meditation and substance abuse and discovered that after being released from jail, individuals in the VM course experienced a significant decrease in alcohol, marijuana, and crack cocaine usage, compared to those in a standard treatment control condition, implying a decrease in alcohol-related disorders. In addition, VM participants had lower levels of psychiatric symptoms and higher levels of positive psychosocial outcomes. Based on their research on Vipassana, the authors concluded that mindfulness-based treatments for substance abuse have a positive utility.Sterling (1996) studied 47 meditators with a mean age of 47.32 to evaluate emotion regulation. The meditators participated in a 10-day Vipassana meditation retreat. In contrast, a control group of 32 participants with a mean age of 38.16 did not attend the Vipassana meditation retreat. A self-reported protest and post-test measurement evaluated positive and negative emotions such as joy, contentment, guilt, and depression. Sterling found that contentment and depression scores increased and tension-anxiety scores decreased among the meditators, but did not find any significant changes in the other scales. Interestingly, none of those scale scores changed among the control group during the pre-test and post-test.

Emotion regulation and mindful attention awareness are quite prominent variables in the field of psychology. The ocean of research is also less to prove their worthiness and importance, yet there is a dearth of research to empirically indicate the relationship between mindful attention and emotion regulation in an Indian setting. Only a small amount of research has been done specifically on Vipassana meditators. According to Gairola, and Mishra (2020), the field of Vipassana needs some serious exploration in relation to adolescents and also in light of the fact that they should be aware of the fact that India as a country has a rich heritage. Despite the growing interest in mindful attention and emotion regulation research, as well as clinical correlations between meditative practises and individual quality of life, fewer studies have specifically focused on current evidence relating to the relationship between these variables and Vipassana meditation. The findings of this study may help to advance knowledge of these variables for mindfulness meditation-based treatments in the fields of mental health and health psychology.

The purpose of this research is to see if there's a link between mindful attention and emotion regulation in Vipassana meditators. Given the role of meditation in increasing wellbeing and improving life quality in individuals, as demonstrated in previous research studies, the aim of this study was to compare the mindful attention and emotion regulation of Vipassana meditators to a control group who did not practise any kind of meditation. Vipassana meditation appears to facilitate deep psychological introspection because it encourages the development of inspection, self-examination, and awareness. As a result, it appears that a scientific evaluation of some of the positive effects this type of meditation can have on individuals is warranted.

Objectives

1. To investigate the link between mindful attention awareness and emotion regulation in Indians.

2. To investigate the role of vipassana meditation on mindful attention and awareness.

3. To investigate the role of vipassana meditation on emotion regulation.

4. To study the gender difference in mindful attention awareness and emotion regulation among Indians.

Hypotheses

H1: There will be a significant relationship between mindful awareness and emotion regulation.

H2: There will be a significant difference between Vipassana meditators and non-meditators in mindful awareness.

H3: There will be a significant difference between Vipassana meditators and non-meditators on emotion regulation.

H4: There won't be a big difference between men and women in how Indians pay attention and control their emotions.

Method

Sample

The sample size in the study was 248 with an average age ranging from 25 to 45 years, of which 121 were females and 127 were males. The total number of acceptable questionnaires is 248 out of 300. 22 questionnaires were rejected because they were wrongly filled out; 21 people have not reverted, and 9 were incomplete. Hence, the response rate is 87%, which is an acceptable percentage for such a study. The participants were chosen using a purposive sampling technique, and two groups were formed: a. Vipassana Meditators, who had practised Vipassana meditation at least five times per week for the previous two years and had attended at least one 10-day Vipassana meditation course from any Vipassana Center, and b. Non-Meditators, who had not practised any meditation at all. Samples came from all walks of life in India, with no restrictions on religion, education, social status, marital status, or financial situation.

Research Design

This research is intended to be descriptive in nature and follows a cross-sectional research design. Based on past literature research, the study's independent variable was Vipassana meditation. However, mindful attention, awareness, and emotional regulation were dependent variables. The participants, or samples, were sorted according to meditation, so there were two separate groups, one of which did and one of which did not get into the habit of Vipassana meditation.

Tools

The Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) - The MAAS is a 15-item scale that assesses the basic characteristics of mindfulness. For scoring the scale, the mean of the 15 items is calculated. Higher scores reflected higher levels of dispositional mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003). The MAAS demonstrated good internal consistency (.82) and test-retest reliability (interclass r =.81) over a 4-week period. For the current study, 0.92 reliability was found, which is good to use with the participants.

Difficulties in emotional regulation (DERS): Emotional dysregulation is a core feature of many psychological conditions (Kaufman et al., 2016). The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) is a 36-item self-reported measure of emotion regulation difficulties that is used widely throughout the world. Higher scores suggest greater problems with emotion regulation. The measure yields a total score (SUM) as well as scores on six subscales: strategies, non-acceptance, impulse, goals, awareness, and clarity. Participants respond to each item on a five-point Likert-type scale according to how often they use the tactic or statement, which a score of 1 means. almost never, and 5 means almost always. DERS's reliability was 0.80 to 0.89 (Cronbach Alpha) and it had good construct validity. For the present study, 0.87 reliability was found, which is good to use with the participants.

Results

After scoring the data, SPSS-25 was used for analysis. The descriptive analysis included the calculation of mean and SD, whereas inferential statistics included the t-test as well as correlation analysis and chi-squared. After these calculations, interpretations, and conclusions have been made.

Table 1
Mean and SD on Mindful Attention Awareness and Emotion Regulation

Variables	Vipassana Meditators N=123		Non-Meditators N=125	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Mindful Attention Awareness (MAAS-15)	4.8168	.36749	1.9413	34771
Strategies	13.78	2.507	17.14	3.303
Non-acceptance	13.74	2.508	16.91	2.426
Impulse	15.94	2.200	20.18	2.899
Goals	27.76	2.159	25.68	2.903
Awareness	20.97	2.737	24.75	4.717
Clarity	16.73	2.368	17.90	1.842
Emotion Regulation (DERS-36)	108.92	6.147	122.56	10.621

Table 1 depicts that the mean score for Mindful Attention Awareness for Vipassana meditators was 4.8168 with SD of.36749, as well for non-meditators was 1.9413 with SD of.34771, and Emotion Regulation for Vipassana meditators was 108.92 with SD of 6.147, as well for non-meditators was 122.56 with SD of 10.621, where the SD score of all suggested the value of deviation of the score from its respective mean scores. All the dimensions' mean scores and SD values are represented in the table.

Table 2
Pearson's Correlation between Mindful Attention Awareness and Emotion Regulation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Mindful Attention Awareness (MAAS-15)								
2.Strategies	-.470**	-						
3.Non-acceptance	.516**	.522**	-					
4.Impulse	-.592**	.568**	.531**	-				
5.Goals	.368**	-.482**	-.332**	-.539**	-			
6.Awareness	-.397**	.724**	.509**	.581**	-.542**	-		
7.Clarity	-.226**	.161*	.233**	.330**	-.116**	.230*	-	
	-.567**	.809**	.747**	.773**	-.382**	.831**	.470**	-

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 shows the relationship between mindful attention awareness and emotion regulation. The relationship between mindful attention awareness and emotion regulation came out to be -.567**, where all the correlation values were negatively significant at p-0.01. The value advocate for a negative correlation between the variables, indicating that as mindful attention awareness increases, emotion regulation difficulties will decrease.

Table 3
Difference in mean of Vipassana meditators and non-meditators on the level ofMindful Attention Awareness

Variables	**Groups**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**df**	**t**
Mindful Attention	Vipassana meditators	123	4.8168	.36749	246	63.30
Awareness	Non-meditators	125	1.9413	.34771	246	

Table 3 illustrates the difference between the mean scores of the level of Mindful Attention Awareness in Vipassana meditators and non-meditators using the t-test. The score came out to be 63.30, which was significant at 0.01, suggesting a significant difference between the two groups

Table 4
Difference in mean of Vipassana meditators and non-meditators on the level of Emotion Regulation

Variables	**Groups**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**df**	**t**
1.Strategies	Vipassana meditators	123	13.78	2.507	246	± 9.000
	Non-meditators	125	17.14	3.303	246	
2.Non- acceptance	Vipassana meditators	123	13.74	2.508	246	± 10.123
	Non-meditators	125	16.91	2.426	246	
3.Impulse	Vipassana meditators	123	15.94	2.200	246	± 12.937
	Non-meditators	125	20.18	2.899	246	
4.Goals	Vipassana meditators	123	27.76	2.159	246	6.382
	Non-meditators	125	25.68	2.903	246	
5. Awareness	Vipassana meditators	123	20.97	2.737	246	±7.712
	Non-meditators	125	24.75	4.717	246	
6. Clarity	Vipassana meditators	123	16.73	2.368	246	±4.355
	Non-meditators	125	17.90	1.842	246	
7.Emotion Regulation	Vipassana meditators	123	108.92	6.147	246	±12.354
(DERS-36)	Non-meditators	125	122.56	10.621	246	

Table 4 illustrates the difference between the means scores of the level of emotion regulation in Vipassana meditators and non-meditators using the t-test and score came out to be in total ±12.354 which was significant at pd" 0.01, suggesting a significant difference between the two groups.

Table 5
Difference in mean of Vipassana meditators and non-meditators on the level of Mindful Attention Awarenessand Emotion Regulation on the basis of gender

Variables	Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t	P
1.Mindful Attention Awareness	Male	127	15.22	3.343	246	.171	.865
	Female	121	15.74	3.408			
2.Strategies	Male	127	15.18	2.948	246	±1.201	.231
	Female	121	15.50	2.916			
3.Non- acceptance	Male	127	17.98	3.136	246	±.867	.387
	Female	121	18.18	3.538			
4.Impulse	Male	127	26.94	2.718	246	±.484	.628
	Female	121	26.46	2.793			
5.Goals	Male	127	22.72	4.057	246	1.378	.170
	Female	121	23.04	4.547			
6. Awareness	Male	127	17.13	2.215	246	±.594	.553
	Female	121	17.53	2.164			
7. Clarity	Male	127	115.17	10.683	246	±1.448	.149
	Female	121	116.45	11.420			
8.Emotion Regulation (DERS-36)	Male	127	3.3832	1.49482	246	±.919	.359
	Female	121	3.3510	1.47891			

Table 5 shows the difference between the mean scores of the level of mindful attention awareness and emotion regulation in males and females, where the score was .171 &. 919, which was not significant at any level of confidence, suggesting that there is no significant difference between genders.

Discussion

The present study was planned to study the role of Vipassana meditation on the mindful attention awareness and emotion regulation of Indians and to explore the relationship between mindful attention awareness and emotion regulation. On the basis of these objectives, a few hypotheses were formulated. The authors discovered after the literature review that meditation entails taking responsibility for one's own mental states and training oneself to change how people respond to difficult experiences so that they produce outcomes that are more conducive to wellbeing and happiness (whether from within, in terms of the mental states an individual experiences, or externally, in aspects of the situations that people help create). Even in a short span of time, meditation has been empirically proven to improve life quality and lower the negative aspects of mental and physical health. As per the study's hypothesis 1, that there will be a correlation between mindful awareness and emotion regulation, this comes true after the data analysis. In the current study, the Pearson correlation was r = -.576** (p.001).The scores and the negative correlation showed that those with higher scores on MAAS experienced fewer difficulties with emotion regulation than the group norm. The indirect relationship was in the predicted direction (inverse), revealing a pattern toward the finding that mindful attention awareness was negatively associated with difficulties with emotional regulation. Vipassana is the oldest Buddhist meditation practice, which Buddha used to achieve enlightenment. Gunaratana (2002) stated that "Vipassana can be

translated as insight, a clear awareness of exactly what is happening as it happens" (p. 3). In the present study, hypotheses 2 and 3 were about the significant difference between Vipassana meditators and non-meditators on mindful awareness, where the t-test score came out to be 63.30, which was significant at p 0.01, and for emotion regulation, it was 12.354, which was significant at p.001, suggesting a significant difference between the two groups. In support of this, MehdiNejad (2020) discovered a significant difference between the study sample's mean DERS-SF score of 20.33 and the community sample's mean of 33.57 (t = -20.01, p.001).The findings indicated that practitioners of Vipassana meditation have a greater capacity to regulate their emotions than those in the normative sample. Other research also corroborated the current study's findings, as Vipassana meditators had significantly lower DERS-SF scores than a community sample of 482 subjects (Bjureberg et al., 2016), which had an average DERS-SF score of 33.57. Another hypothesis, 4, shows the gender difference in the level of mindful attention awareness and emotion regulation in males and females, where the scores were 171 and 919, which were not significant at any level of confidence, suggesting that there is no significant difference between genders. It can be concluded that males and females are growing at the same pace. The probable explanation for the obtained findings is that situational factors such as meditation duration, life circumstances, financial standing, marital status, and type of meditation were not considered in the current study. Zeng, Oei, and Liu (2014) mentioned that in Vipassana practice, individuals should pay attention to their bodily sensations and live in the here and now. Body sensations and emotions are associated with each other, and being aware of the sensations can bring a level of awareness to one's emotions. They found that in Vipassana meditation, awareness and acceptance are combined, which leads the practitioners to be more aware in their daily lives. When people are aware of their emotions, they can have more self-control and be more flexible. Many therapies have been based on traditional meditation practises, such as Vipassana meditation and meditation in Zen Buddhism. In line with all the past literature, it can be concluded that vipassana meditation is quite an effective technique that can affect different aspects of an individual's life and that anyone can follow it. Because Vipassana meditation is a nonreligious practice, people from all cultures and religions began to practise it when it was introduced to the world (Pagis, 2009).

Conclusion

The study's primary objectives were to determine the effect of vipassana meditation on Indians' mindful attention awareness and emotion regulation as well as to analyse the relationship between mindful attention awareness and emotion regulation. According to the results analysis, there is a negative significant correlation between mindful attention awareness and emotion regulation, implying that as individuals' mindful attention awareness increases, so will their difficulties with emotion regulation.The results also showed a significant difference between the two groups: Vipassana mediators and non-meditators. The findings from this study can be used to advocate for the inclusion of Vipassana meditation in health (physical and mental) policies.

Implications of the study

The current study will be advantageous in a variety of ways. Theoretically, it will contribute to our understanding of the level of emotion regulation and mindful attention awareness among adults in India. On the other hand, this research can assist people in better understanding how to manage their emotions and react with regard to the repercussions. Additionally, the research may assist colleges and organisations in establishing programmes to enhance individuals' well-being. Additionally, this article provides a deeper understanding of how Vipassana meditation may be related to other psychological characteristics, such as an individual's well-being or ill-health. Furthermore, the research can help individuals who are having difficulty dealing with and balancing their emotions in a positive and appropriate manner, as well as ill-attended awareness.Additionally, practising MiCBT can assist individuals in connecting with their authentic selves, encountering their inner wellspring, and becoming more present in the present moment. This research may aid anyone seeking self-improvement.

Limitations and suggestions

The study only included participants in the age range of 25–45 years. Vipassana meditation has open wings for all age groups. Future studies may target children, adolescents, or elderly people too. Only quantitative data collection methods were used. Future research can use both qualitative and quantitative data to capture

all variables and uncover the underlying causes of vipassana meditation's effectiveness or ineffectiveness.All self-reported tools were used in this study, and the participants' willingness to answer questions about their current situation may have influenced their responses.By eliminating the aforementioned limitations, future studies could be planned with a bigger sample size, including children, adolescents, and older adults, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, so that the effectiveness of Vipassana meditation can be understood on a larger scale, which may help or be used as an intervention for the improvement of the wellbeing of individuals.

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