

Impact of meditation on the students of Faculty of Traditional Medicine.

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Abstract

Meditation is one of the most essential and popular technique globally to keep one's mind in constant concentration besides other benefits. This study was intended to assess the impact of Friday meditation session on the students of Faculty of Traditional Medicine. The study was carried out with cross sectional study employing both quantitative and qualitative method. The data were analyzed manually in Microsoft excel and worksheet. The other discussions are interpreted using graphs and diagrams with the use of Microsoft Excel Programs as shared above in method. This research was held at Faculty of Traditional Medicine at Kawajangsa, Thimphu. The participants were selected among the students of FoTM using systematic random sampling method. 30 informants attempted the questionnaire and in-depth interviews were carried out with 10 participants. The participants were both genders (male and female). The informants were interviewed individually by using questionnaires' to collect data and to examine the benefit of meditation on students at FoTM during Friday session. The study found that meditation helped the students of the Faculty of Traditional Medicine to improve their memory power, reduce stress and worries, and keep themselves healthy and also extend help to others.

Background

As per the royal command in 1967, traditional medicine system was established for the welfare of Bhutanese people and to preserve the culture and tradition. The Institute of Traditional Medicine Services was first established in 1968 at Dechencholing followed by Kawangjansa in 1979. It is found in the heart of the

capital of Bhutan, located on a hilltop of National Library and below Sangaygang. The faculty provides training services and conducts research on traditional medicines, partially looking forward to develop new products. Meanwhile it has been an official part of Bhutan's public health system along with the western medicine. It is mainly originated from Tibetan traditional medicine and widely known as *gSo-ba-Rig-pa*. The traditional ways of diagnosis include feeling the pulse, urine analysis, examining the tongue and eyes of the patients and asking questions. As of today, traditional medicine school is identified as the Faculty of Traditional Medicine under KhesarGyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan. A total of eighty trainees are undergoing the courses; Bachelor of Science in Traditional Medicine, Diploma in Traditional Medicine and Pharmacy in Traditional Medicine.

Everything existing in the universe including human beings and animals are composed of five important elements such as earth, fire, water, air and space. Thus, the traditional medicine system is based on three elements of body called air, bile and phlegm. When these three elements are balanced equally, the person is known to be in good health, (Phuntsho, 2010). In contrast, the imbalanced state of these three elements makes the people prone to unhealthy life. The insight understanding of traditional medicine somehow shows the great link with meditation, the inner healing. However, the plain thought of people could not come to clear understanding about the fact. Choden,(2017) stated that meditation and *gSo- ba- Rig- pa* are interrelated to one another.

Meditation is about realizing the Buddha nature that we have within us. It concerns realizing the truth; not conventional or intellectual truth, but truth that is primordial. That truth reveals to us the essence of the Tathagatagarba (Buddha nature) that we have. The Buddha said that we have Buddha nature. This does not mean that we are realized beings. We have not realized Buddha nature but

we do have that essence within us to realize this pristine wisdom. Despite having this nature, we have not been able to work out. For instance, from milk comes butter, cheese and yogurt but if we don't churn the cream of the milk, then we will get nothing out of it. The milk remains as milk. We have this nature but we have not worked with this.

In order to enhance the spiritual wellbeing and concentration of the students, the faculty have started to adopt the system of meditation before the start of every lesson. In accordance to the system of practicing meditation in every schools and colleges, the Faculty of Traditional Medicine also follow the routine of meditation on every Friday gathering. The students are expected to control their mind by meditating. It also helps the students to gather their concentration and focus on studies. Besides, it is well proven that meditation helps to get rid of mental disorders. In the meantime, there is no evidence proved that meditation is really helping the above statements. Therefore, this study was carried out in order to find out how effective the meditation is for the students. The study also covered the general advantageous of meditation, types and its practice.

Literature review

Meditation can be defined as a practice where an individual focuses their mind on a particular object, thought or activity to achieve a mentally clear and emotionally calm state. Meditation has been used to reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and pain. Meditation has been practiced since antiquity in numerous religious traditions and beliefs. Since the 19th century, it has been spread from Indian origins to western cultures where meditation is commonly practiced in private and business life. According to the research done by Dr. Creswell (2008), he firstly recruited 35 unemployed men and women who were seeking work and experiencing considerable stress. Blood has drawn and brain scans were given.

Half the subject was then taught formal mindfulness meditation at a residential retreat center. The rest completed a kind of sham mindfulness meditation.

Later he found that meditation group paid close attention to bodily sensation than the others. At the end of three days participant also reported that they felt so refreshed and better able to withstand the stress of unemployment.

Dr. Black(2015), an assistant professor of preventive medicine at the University of Southern California said, “Given the many health concerns pertaining to sleep aid meditation use in older adults, meditation appears to be a safe and sensible health promoting practice to improve sleep quality,”

Clifford Saron (2015), PhD at UC Davis is a pioneer of the scientific research on meditation. His ambitious Shamatha Project randomly assigned 60 healthy people with prior meditation experience to an intensive for 3 month meditation retreat or a control group. Therefore at the end of the 3 months, he found surprisingly that the people who were assigned with the meditation could perform better than those who are not. Baruch Rael Cahn said that, the large review of studies involving close to 3,000 people found that mindfulness meditation was lined with a reduction in feelings of depression, anxiety, and even physical pain. Many of us go through the day with worrisome thoughts or concerns whispering at the back of our minds. We often push these thoughts aside rather than dealing with the feelings they bring up. Something about meditating whether it's the physical space we set up for ourselves each day or the mental space we make by regularly clearing the mind, help us to deal with those negative thoughts.

In a recent article for scientific American, neuroscientist Richard Davidson and lutz (2014) along with Buddhist monk Ricard (2014), wrote that the discovery of meditations benefits coincides with recent neuroscientific findings showing that the adult brain can still be deeply transformed through experience.

Meditation is seen by number of researchers as potentially one of the most effective forms of stress reduction (Hassed, 1996). However, according to the research by West (1987), in the West where meditation has been instituted and practiced for more than 70 years the data showed meditation wasn't consistently effective. Further, on the contrary, physicians have found that health conditions were significantly less for those practicing meditation than those not practicing. Therefore, majority of researchers have found that the meditation is a helpful tool to calm mind and achieve healthy life.

The practice of meditation has been instituted across the schools in Bhutan while a similar practice is adopted at the Faculty of Traditional Medicine during every Friday speech session. In the era where students are burdened with increased pressure to perform better in academic achievement and teachers are pressured to the demand to do well in teaching to meet the needs of students, meditation is found to play a beneficial role in reducing stress (Broderick, 2013). Moreover, according to Davidson (2008), neuroscience has revealed that meditation leads to increased neuroplasticity, which in turn can have profound effect on learning by creating and strengthening the neural pathways that regulate the emotional and cognitive functioning of the mind. In Bhutan, though this practice has been started several years before, there is no scientific study done on its impact on the mental state and external performance of the students. Same can be said with the meditation practice at the Faculty of Traditional Medicine where its impact on the students is not yet scientifically assessed. Therefore, this study assessed the impact of meditation practice on the trainees and see if the benefits mentioned above are happening to them.

Research question

Does the practice of meditation have any impact on the students of FoTM?

General objective: To assess the impact of Friday meditation session on the students of the Faculty of Traditional Medicine.

Specific objectives

- To determine the students attitude towards meditation.
- To determine the positive effect of meditation in controlling mind.
- To identify the various factors that is influenced by meditation.

Methods

Study area,

The study was held at Faculty of Traditional Medicine at Kawajangsa, Thimphu. The participants were selected among the students of FoTM using systematic random sampling method. 30 participants were made to attempt the questionnaire. The participants were both genders (male and female). The informants were interviewed individually by using questionnaires' to collect data and to see the actual benefit of meditation at FoTM during Friday session. The self-assessed benefit reports gathered from the informants were stored in the computer, ensuring the protection and the confidentiality of the information gathered. The data collected were analyzed with Microsoft Excel Programs. This was a cross sectional study employing both quantitative and qualitative method. The data were analyzed manually.

Ethical Consideration

The first and important step considered in this study was to seek informed consent from the individual participants. The participants, selected were introduced to the study beforehand by informing them about the overall purpose of the study. The informed consent were taken from the participants only after they had clear insight into the research design and their role in the study. The

participation were based on voluntary and they were given the full right and freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. No other people had access to the research documents besides the researcher and the participants. All research documents, consisting mainly of questionnaires and process notes were destroyed upon the completion of the research.

Finding and discussion

a. Demographic Characteristics

A total of 30 informants were recruited out of which 27 of them responded with the response rate of 90%. The informants consisted of 40% male and 52% female.

Participants understanding about meditation and its effectiveness.

The study attempted to find out the participants' understanding of meditation. When asked to rate their level of understanding, maximum number of participants (44%) rated 'Good' which indicated that their understanding about meditation is moderate. However, 19% of them rated poor as shown in the figure no. 1. In order to enhance the spiritual wellbeing and concentration of the students, the faculty have initiated meditation session in the start of every class and every Friday gathering. In line with that the overall result of the study depicted that meditation helped them in study since out of 27 informants, 59% percent of them said yes while only 4% of them responded doesn't helped in study. The figure 2 below will help you understand the effectiveness of meditation in study for informants.

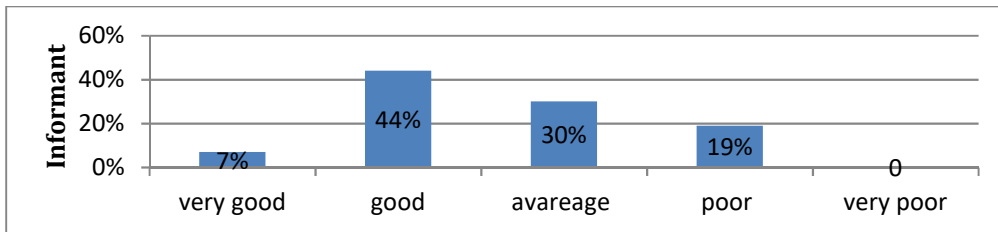
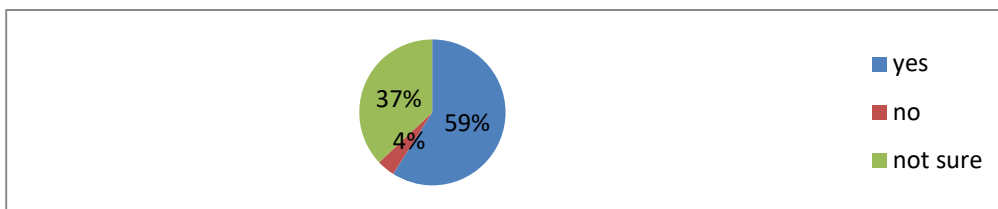
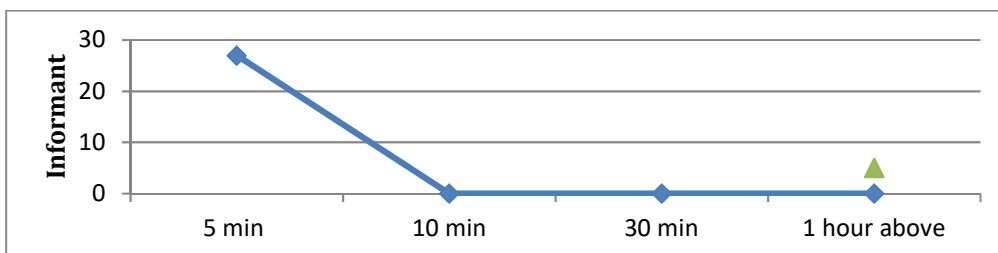


Fig.1: Understanding of informants on meditation.



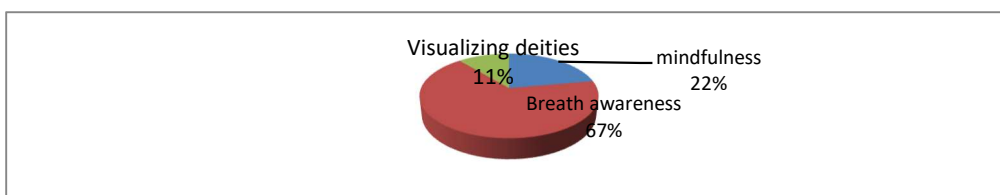
(Fig.2) Effectiveness of meditation in study

According to the findings, most of the student says that they do meditation only once a day. But as it is shared above the effectiveness of meditation was high. When asked why they do meditation only once a day? They said they do not get much time as they need to involved themselves in study but good news is even the little time given to meditation showed them great effect not only in performance but also in keeping one's mind peace. The following graph (Fig 3) shows the amount of time that they spend for meditation per day.



(Fig.4) Amount of time spent for meditation per day

In the meantime, the study attempted to find out the type of meditation the informants practice the most. In fact there were many type of meditation but for this study kept only three which were so popular and most of the informants are comfortable with the kind breath awareness . 67% of informants does breath awareness meditaion(fig)4.



(Fig.5) Type of meditation practiced

In Bhutan, meditation is also considered as one way of healing depression and other mental disorders. According to the informants selected in the study, it was found out that the understanding pattern of the meditaion is moderate. It is only that the people are left without being able to practice it everyday. This table below shows the understanding of meditation (Fig.6).

Conclusion

The study also shows that the system of meditation adopted in our college helped the students in many fields. The most important advantage that they gained is in terms of concertration which helped them in memorizing. Through meditation, they were able to see lot of changes such as being able to help others and themselves. At the same time, it also helped them to be free of worries and anxieties.

After withnessing all those advantages, i feel that meditation should be further be prevailed in education system. Some of the informants even pointed out that the duration of meditation should be increased to some minutes more so that they

can pay more attention. With the help of meditation that they practice in their life, they are expecting to see positive changes in their life.

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