

Study protocol: Developing a validated tool to study Buddhist meditation experience which can be used in scientific studies

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Introduction and objectives: Meditation has been practised around the world for thousands of years. Studying Buddhist meditation for scientific research has been a trend among the scientific community in the modern world. But the problem is the lack of a proper tool to study the experiences of Buddhist meditators. Hence this study will be undertaken to develop a tool to measure the experience of the Buddhist meditators to fulfil the requirement/s in a research project of meditation, mindfulness and health. This will be the first tool being scientifically developed to study Buddhist meditation experience in Sri Lanka.

Methods: At the preliminary stage, it was tried to find a validated tool to study Buddhist meditation experience considering the objectives of the research study. As the researchers were unable to find a validated tool, it was decided to develop the Buddhist Meditation Experience Questionnaire (BMEQ). In the initial construction of BMEQ, potential items will be drawn and pooled from literature on Buddhist meditation, existing meditation-related scales and interviews with experienced Buddhist meditators

Results: the 1st draft of BMEQ (BMEQ_D_1) will be designed as a self-administered questionnaire which will also consist of a definition for Buddhist meditation experience. The BMEQ_D_1 will be distributed among reviewers (i.e. 7 reviewers - including experts in questionnaire designing and identified long-term Buddhist meditators). They all will be asked to comment on the structure and content of the questionnaire. Subsequent to obtaining comments and considering research objectives relevant to the BMEQ, contents and structure of the questionnaire will be further changed to develop the 2nd draft of BMEQ (BMEQ_D_2). The BMEQ_D_2 will be pre-tested (n=10) and upon receiving the feedback, it will be revised as 3rd draft of BMEQ (BMEQ_D_3). The number of 30

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regular Buddhist meditators will be surveyed with the aim of identifying the administering issues in BMEQ_D_3 at the preliminary pilot test. Depending on the obtained feedback, BMEQ_D_3 will be revised as the 4th draft of BMEQ (BMEQ_D_4) and it will be sent to a Delphi panel which will consist of 5 members for reviewing. Face validity, content validity and consensual validity of the BMEQ will be ensured.

Conclusions: As the definition for "Buddhist meditation experience" will also be subjected to reviewing, a validated definition for Buddhist meditation experience which can be utilized in scientific research studies will be generated as a byproduct of this process. Future studies will be planned to ensure criterion-validity of this tool which in due course.

Keywords: Buddhist meditation, Buddhist meditation experience