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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LONG-TERM MEDITATORS AND NON-MEDITATORS ON SELF-REPORTED LEVELS OF MINDFULNESS, PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS, RESILIENCE AND QUALITY OF LIFE: A PILOT STUDY

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Meditation is a set of self-regulatory practices that result in mental states of relaxation, concentration and calmness. This cross-sectional, comparative and analytical pilot study aimed at 1) investigating and comparing differences in self-reported levels of mindfulness, psychological distress, resilience and quality of life (QOL) between long-term meditators (LTM) and non-meditating controls in a Sri Lankan context, and at 2) reporting pilot study data. A purposive sample of LTM (n=11) and matched non-meditating controls (n=11) completed the culturally adapted and validated Sinhala versions of the Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21), the abbreviated version of the World Health Organization Quality of Life questionnaire, the Resilience Scale, a demographic details questionnaires and the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ-39) (*content and consensually validated to be used in the current study*) which includes the subscales; *observing, describing, non-reactivity, non-judging and acting-with-awareness*. Data was analyzed using IBM SPSS statistics 23 at an alpha level of 0.05, where non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U test) were used for data analysis. In terms of, mindfulness, greater *observing* in LTM compared to non-meditators ($U=19, p=.019$) and greater *non-reactivity* in LTM compared to non-meditators ($U=11.5, p=.003$) were observed. Final sample size for FFMQ-39 analysis was, n=20 (LTM; n=10, non-meditators; n=10) and other analyses were conducted with a final sample size of, n=22 (LTM; n=11, non-meditators; n=11). Psychological distress was measured using the three sub-scales of the DASS-21; *depression, anxiety, and stress* where non-meditators showed higher levels of depression than LTM ($U=31.5, p=.047$). LTM ($M=146.10, SD=1.52$) showed moderately high to high resilience (145<) while non-meditators ($M=137.36, SD=3.35$) showed moderate resilience (125-145). QOL; LTM showed higher levels of QOL related to psychological health ($U=16.5, p=.004$) social relationships ($U=30.5, p=.043$) and environment ($U=19.5, p=.007$) compared to non-meditators. Findings of the pilot study suggest the beneficial nature of meditation on facilitating mindfulness in terms of *observing* and *non-reactivity*, reducing levels of depression, and elevating perceived QOL related to psychological health, environment, and social relationships in meditation practitioners in a Sri Lankan context.

Keywords: Anxiety, Depression meditation, Long-term meditators, Mindfulness, Psychological distress, QOL, Quality of life, Stress

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