

OP-33: Self-reported differences in resilience and psychological distress between Sri Lankan skilled meditators and non-meditators: a preliminary cross-sectional analysis

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Introduction: Meditation is viewed to result in calm and relaxed states of mind which may buffer against psychopathology. The current study explored differences between self-reported levels of psychological distress (namely depression, stress, and anxiety) and resilience in a sample of Sri Lankan skilled meditators and non-meditators.

Methods: A purposive sample of skilled meditators (SM; n=32) with a meditation experience of more than three years, who followed meditation practices taught in Sri Lankan Buddhist meditation centres/temples/monasteries, and as identified through the “Colombo intake interview to recruit skilled meditators for scientific research (CIISMR)” and a community sample of age and gender-matched non-meditating controls (NM; n=32) participated. They completed the Sinhala versions of Resilience Scale, the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21), and a demographic details questionnaire, after providing informed consent for participation. The study (EC-19-095) was approved by the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo.

Results: The SM (n=32) ranged from 27-59 (M=42.13; SD=9.26) years of age and reported 4-21 hours of meditation per week and 3-25 years of meditation practice. The NM (n=32) ranged from 28-58 (M=42.16; SD=9.0) years of age. In terms of findings, a series of Mann-Whitney U tests indicated that levels of resilience were greater for SM (Mdn=145) than for NM (Mdn=139) (U=365; p=0.048). Levels of depression were greater for NM (Mdn=4.0) than for SM (Mdn=2.0) (U=312; p=0.006); levels of anxiety were greater for NM (Mdn=2.0) than for SM (Mdn=0) (U=328.5; p=0.009); stress levels were greater for NM (Mdn=10.0) than for SM (Mdn=4.0) (U=340.5; p=0.02); and levels of total DASS-21 scores were greater for NM (Mdn=21.0) than for SM (Mdn=8.0) (U=314.5; p=0.008).

Conclusions: Skilled meditators who follow buddhist-based meditation as practised in a Sri Lankan context show greater levels of resilience and lower levels of psychological distress.

Keywords: buddhist-based meditation, psychological distress, resilience, depression, anxiety

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