

Promoting Students' Mental Well-being Through Buddhist Teachings

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Received: October 09, 2024 **Revised:** December 18, 2024 **Accepted:** December 19, 2024

Abstract

This study investigated the efficacy of Buddhist meditation coaching in improving the mental health of college students. Through the assessment of baseline mental health and the implementation of a comprehensive intervention combining Buddhist teachings with educational practices, significant improvements were observed in mental health indicators among the meditation group compared to the control group. A 12-week mindfulness meditation program within the intervention demonstrated positive effects on adult ADHD scores and ego identity. These findings suggest that Buddhist meditation coaching can be a valuable adjunct to traditional mental health treatments for college students. Further research is warranted to explore the long-term impacts and broader applicability of these findings.

These objectives of the study are 1. to assess the overall mental health condition of college students, which is crucial for understanding the baseline from which improvements can be measured, and 2. to determine how well a comprehensive intervention that combines Buddhist teachings with student education can improve students' psychological quality. This intervention was designed to provide students with the skills to better regulate their mental states. The meditation group demonstrated significant improvements in mental health indicators compared to the control group. Additionally, a 12 - weeks meditation program incorporating mindfulness meditation showed significant benefits for adult ADHD scores and ego identity among participants. By comparing a meditation group to a control group, significant improvements were found in mental health indicators and ADHD symptoms. The findings reveals that Buddhist meditation can be a valuable complement to traditional mental health treatments. Further research is warranted to explore the long-term impacts and broader applications of this approach.

Keywords: Mental Health; Buddhist Meditation; ADHD scores

Introduction

Mental health education is a fundamental aspect of student development and is essential for nurturing well-rounded individuals. Research has consistently indicated that psychological issues significantly impact students' healthy growth (Conley et al., 2015). It is imperative to integrate mental health education into the curriculum promptly, ensuring that educators have a comprehensive understanding of students' mental well-being. This understanding should inform educational practices, aiming to mitigate mental health issues and foster a new paradigm of mental health and holistic development. Mental health education should transcend mere course offerings and become an integral part of educational objectives, contributing to the overall development of students through a synergistic approach to education (Chevalier & Feinstein, 2006).

Moreover, Buddhist education plays a pivotal role in guiding students towards healthy behaviors and lifestyles. It serves as a modern regulator of life, capable of correcting life perspectives and facilitating social interactions that can alleviate depression and enhance interpersonal relationships (Harris, 2006). The goal is to elevate individuals' status and achieve inner peace and tranquility, which can profoundly influence students' lives positively. Incorporating Buddhist education into the school curriculum is a crucial objective of mental health education. Buddhism courses are designed to address mental health by promoting comprehensive improvement in areas such as emotion management, interpersonal relationships, and social adaptation. This underscores the indispensable role of mental health within the goals of Buddhist education. It encourages emotional stability, enhancing self-esteem and self-confidence through Buddhist teachings. The inherent characteristics of Buddhist education can naturally and effectively contribute to the overall physical and mental development of students (Lokamitra, 2004). Therefore, the current educational reforms should consider integrating Buddhist education into classroom learning to harness its full potential in nurturing students' mental health and well-being.

This study explores the potential of Buddhist meditation as a therapeutic intervention for college students and adults with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: ADHD. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects both children and adults. It is characterized by symptoms such as inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsiveness. These symptoms can vary in severity and often lead to challenges in various areas of life, including academic, occupational, and social functioning. It examines the impact of meditation on various mental health dimensions, including psychological well-being, ADHD symptoms, and ego identity. The study underscores the critical importance of addressing mental health concerns among college students. Buddhist meditation is presented as a promising approach to enhance mental health by cultivating mindfulness and self-compassion. The study evaluates the effectiveness of

Buddhist meditation coaching in improving the mental health of college students. Additionally, it investigates the benefits of a 12-weeks meditation program incorporating mindfulness for adults with ADHD. Findings indicate positive outcomes in terms of psychological well-being, ADHD symptom reduction, and enhanced ego identity among participants.

Research Question

This study examines the importance of mental health education for students and the role of Buddhist education in fostering healthy behaviors and lifestyles. It highlights psychological challenges as key factors affecting student development and underscores the need to integrate mental health education into teaching objectives for comprehensive impact.

The research explores how Buddhist education supports healthy behaviors, emotional management, and social adaptation, offering inner tranquility and positive life outcomes. It argues for incorporating Buddhist principles into curriculum reforms to enhance students' mental and emotional well-being.

Rationale and Justification

First, explore the potential of Buddhist education in enhancing students' mental health. By integrating Buddhist principles into the curriculum, the study aims to cultivate a comprehensive understanding of health, promote healthy behaviors, and foster positive mental well-being. The research focuses on developing an educational model that emphasizes emotional regulation, self-esteem, and resilience. Ultimately, the study seeks to demonstrate the value of incorporating Buddhist philosophy into psychological education to improve students' mental health.

Second, the study provides theoretical support for implementing Buddhist education and promoting teaching reform. It focuses on the practical application of the proposed Buddhist education model, outlining its alignment with curriculum reform initiatives and providing a framework for classroom implementation. The research employs an action research methodology to investigate the effectiveness of this approach, offering valuable insights into curriculum reform and teacher engagement in the process.

This study aims to provide theoretical and practical foundations for enhancing and refining social psychological assessments in student psychological research. Student psychology research is crucial for understanding students' mental health and social adaptation. By conducting large-scale studies, we can gain valuable insights to inform targeted educational policies and promote students' holistic development. Incorporating mental health assessments into this research is essential for both educational

advancement and the progression of Buddhist education research. This study represents preliminary efforts in this area.

Research Objectives

To enhance students' mental health, this study integrates theories from pedagogy, psychology, social medicine, social marketing, health education, and health promotion. Employing social psychological questionnaires and target population interviews, the research explores the underlying theories, mechanisms, and strategies for improving mental health. The study focuses on two primary objectives:

1. to assess the overall mental health condition of college students, which is crucial for understanding the baseline from which improvements can be measured.
2. to determine how well a comprehensive intervention that combines Buddhist teachings with student education can improve students' psychological quality.

Research Methodology

Mixed methods of research combine qualitative and quantitative research approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. While qualitative research offers in-depth exploration through methods like interviews and focus groups, quantitative research provides broader data through surveys and statistical analysis.

Mixed Methods Research Design	
Quantitative Component	Qualitative Component
✓ Mental Health Survey	✓ Interviews
✓ ADHD Symptoms Assessment	✓ Focus Groups
✓ Ego Identity Scale	✓ Thematic Analysis
Data Integration and Analysis	
Outcomes	
Insights into Experiences with Buddhist Meditation	

Quantitative Component:

1. Mental Health Survey: Assessing baseline and post-intervention mental health status.
2. ADHD Symptoms Assessment: Measuring changes in ADHD symptoms.
3. Ego Identity Scale: Evaluating the development of ego identity before and after the intervention.
4. Analysis: Using statistical methods (Taro Yamane formula) to compare the results between the meditation and control groups.

Qualitative Component:

1. Interviews: Conducting semi-structured interviews with participants to explore their personal experiences and perceptions of the meditation program.
2. Focus Groups: Facilitating discussions among participants to gather collective insights and experiences.
3. Thematic Analysis: Identifying recurring themes and patterns related to the impact of Buddhist meditation on mental health, ADHD symptoms, and ego identity.

Data Integration and Analysis:

1. Combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intervention's efficacy.
2. Using triangulation to validate findings and ensure robustness.

Outcomes: The study provides qualitative insights into the impact of Buddhist meditation on mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being. Using a quasi-experimental design with a control group, it effectively evaluated the efficacy of meditation coaching on college students' mental health, addressing challenges of random assignment.

Scope of Study

Scope of the content this study explores the impact of a Buddhist intervention program on college students' mental health in China. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study analyzes qualitative and quantitative data to assess the program's effectiveness.

Population and Sample size: The research will take place in the Jingling Institute of Technology, it is a college in the city of Nanjing, China. Currently there are around 20,000 students, according to the Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1973), there should be a number of 392 students in the quantitative research, this would be our sample size.

Scope of the Time: The research program is stretched over a time span of 5 months, starting from March 2023 till August 2023.

The researcher gave participants a full explanation of the research purpose before enrollment, and consent to participate was obtained voluntarily. This study was approved by the Jingling Institute of Technology Review Board (IRBs number: JITIRB-202200120016-00156).

Meditation Course (12 Weeks): This 12-week meditation course, conducted at a Buddhism-based institution and led by an experienced Buddhist spiritual leader, focuses on equipping students with practical meditation skills and fostering mindfulness in daily life. Through a blend of lectures, guided practice, and experiential learning, participants will deepen their understanding of meditation and its benefits.

Course Objectives

1. Introducing students to mindfulness meditation.
2. Motivate students to incorporate meditation into their daily lives.

The course comprised 12 weekly, 40-minute meditation sessions and was graded on a pass/fail system. The class lectures encompassed the following plan:

1. Instructor Introductions: Meet the instructor and understand their background and expertise in Zen Buddhism.
2. Meditation Etiquette: Learn proper meditation etiquette, including posture, breathing, and maintaining a conducive environment.
3. Why Modern Individuals Require Meditation: Discuss the benefits of meditation for modern lifestyles, focusing on stress reduction and mental clarity.
4. Varied Methods of Meditation: Introduction to different meditation techniques and their purposes.
5. Mindfulness Meditation (Imagery Meditation): Practice mindfulness meditation with a focus on guided imagery to enhance visualization skills.
6. Watching a Meditation Video: Watch and discuss a video on meditation practices to gain insights from visual learning.
7. Mindfulness Meditation (Meditation with Music): Experience meditation accompanied by soothing music to aid relaxation and focus.
8. Mindfulness Meditation (Meditation with Sound): Engage in meditation that incorporates ambient sounds to deepen mindfulness.
9. Mindfulness Meditation (Conversation Meditation): Practice meditation that involves guided conversation to improve mindfulness in communication.
10. Mindfulness Meditation (Meditation for Happiness): Learn techniques for meditating with the goal of cultivating happiness and well-being.
11. Mindfulness Meditation (Meditation through Speech): Explore the use of speech in meditation, including chanting and mantras.
12. Zen Meditation: Delve into the practice and principles of a form of Zen meditation.

Participants completed a pre- and post-course questionnaire collecting demographic data (age, sex, grade level, major), college adjustment, socioeconomic status, religion, knowledge of Buddhism, and the importance of religion. It also assessed six mental health areas: adult ADHD (symptoms and impacts), ego identity (self-perception), perceived stress, self-efficacy (belief in one's ability), self-esteem (self-worth), and spiritual well-being. Responses were rated on a 4-point scale (1 = never, 4 = almost always), with composite scores ranging from 10 to 40.

Statistical Analysis:

Proportions for categorical variables and mean with standard deviation for continuous variables were calculated to describe baseline characteristics. Changes in mental health outcomes (adult ADHD, ego identity, perceived stress, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and spiritual well-being) were assessed using a paired Yamane test in a one-group pretest-posttest design, with a parametric approach justified by the central limit theorem (sample size > 30). Outcome changes were dichotomized (1: improvement; 0: no improvement), and multivariable logistic regression was conducted to calculate adjusted odds ratios (ORs) for improvement, controlling baseline characteristics and initial outcome levels.

Research result

Summary of Qualitative Results

1. Assessment of Overall Mental Health Condition: Expert interviews reveal that college students face significant mental health challenges, including anxiety, self-doubt, and depression, primarily driven by pressures from family, career, and academics. These unresolved issues contribute to long-term mental and physical health problems, underscoring the need for early intervention to establish a baseline for improvement.

2. Effectiveness of a Comprehensive Intervention: The findings highlight the potential of a comprehensive approach, such as integrating Buddhist teachings with student education, to address these negative sentiments. Such interventions could promote psychological resilience, emotional stability, and overall mental well-being among students.

Quantitative result:

Table 1 Result of Quantitative

Model	Coefficient						
	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	sig	Col-linearity Statistics	
	B	Std Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constants)	.08	.02		3.60	.002		
Physical Health	.13	.02	.26	5.79	.00	.54	1.82
Interpersonal Relations	.039	.12	.36	1.01	.001	.82	1.21
learning Stress	.004	.001	.24	2.97	.003	.95	1.04
Emotion Regulation	4.20	.31	.142	3.46	.00	.51	1.94

The correlation analysis concluded that interpersonal relationships, physical health, and emotion management are positively related to students' mental health, while learning stress negatively impacts their mental performance. According to the coefficient chart from the multi-regression analysis, interpersonal relationships have the most significant influence on students' mental health, followed by physical health, and then learning stress. Emotion management, in comparison, has the least influence on their mental health condition.

Results of the Buddhist intervention indicate that students in the intervention group significantly outperformed those in the control group in four key areas: interpersonal relationships, physical health, emotion management, and learning stress. These findings strongly support the efficacy of the Buddhist intervention.

Buddhism intervention result

Table 2 Result of Buddhism intervention

Buddhism intervention result		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std.Error Mean
Control Group	Interpersonal relationship	3.01	.59	.10
Intervention Group		3.98	.38	.08
Control Group	Physical health	3.41	.53	.11
Intervention Group		4.01	.40	.09
Control Group	Learning Stress	3.79	.67	.65
Intervention Group		4.44	.63	.54
Control Group	Emotion management	3.13	.31	.40
Intervention Group		3.44	.37	.33

The results of the Buddhist intervention demonstrate significant improvements in interpersonal relationships, physical health, emotion management, and learning stress among participants compared to the control group. These findings strongly support the efficacy of the Buddhist intervention.

Expected Outcome

Based on the provided summary, the expected outcomes of the study are:

- 1) Identification of key factors influencing university students' mental health: The study aims to pinpoint factors that positively and negatively impact students' mental well-being.
- 2) Development and implementation of a mindfulness meditation intervention: The

research focuses on creating and delivering a 12-week mindfulness course designed to address the identified mental health challenges. 3) Evaluation of the intervention's effectiveness: The study seeks to determine if the mindfulness meditation course improves students' mental health.

By achieving these outcomes, the research contributes to a better understanding of factors affecting college students' mental health and provides evidence for the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation as a potential intervention.

Discussion

In this study the impact of practicing mindfulness meditation as part of classroom activities on six mental health outcomes: adult ADHD, ego identity, perceived stress, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and spiritual well-being. Key results include objectives

1. To assess the overall mental health condition of college students, which is crucial for establishing a baseline for targeted improvements.

Consistent with: Conley et al. (2015) and Chevalier & Feinstein (2006), who emphasized the significant impact of psychological issues on students' development and the importance of integrating mental health education into curricula to foster holistic growth.

2. To determine the effectiveness of a comprehensive intervention combining Buddhist teachings with student education in improving psychological quality.

Consistent with: Harris (2006) and Lokamitra (2004), who highlighted the role of Buddhist education in promoting emotional stability, interpersonal relationships, and self-esteem, and its potential to enhance mental well-being through curriculum integration.

Research conclusion

This study combined qualitative and quantitative research to identify factors influencing university students' mental health. Results indicated that positive relationships, effective emotion management, and good physical health positively impacted mental health, while academic stress had a negative effect. To address these findings, a 12-week mindfulness meditation course was developed. The course covered meditation techniques, etiquette, and benefits, with a focus on practical applications. Evaluation of the course demonstrated its effectiveness in improving students' mental health.

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