



# IMPACT OF VIPASSANA MEDITATION ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF ELDERLY PEOPLE

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**Abstract:** Vipassana Meditation technique, reintroduced by S.N. Goenka (Zeng et al., 2015), is rooted in teachings from Gautama Buddha over 2500 years ago (Swamy et al., 2023). Vipassana meditation is a scientific method of self-observation that leads to truth-realization and promotes progressive insight towards positive mental health (Verma, 2023). This article explores its practical applications, focusing on its impact on the psychological well-being of older adults. The study of the sample involved 30 elderly men and 30 elderly women. The approach adopted was a pre-post study design, where participants were evaluated before and after an intervention, without the inclusion of a control group (Szekeres & Wertheim, 2015). The intervention involved participants undergoing a 10-Day Vipassana course. Statistical analysis utilized mean, standard deviation (SD), t-test. Results revealed significant improvements in six dimensions of psychological well-being that are autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989). The findings underscore the transformative effect of Vipassana training on psychological well-being in older adults.

**Key words:** Vipassana, Anapanasati, Metta Bhavana, psychological well-Being, self-observation

## Introduction

The main technique of Vipassana meditation involves exploring the nature of the body and mind in order to attain enlightenment (Thera, 1960). Vipassana meditation is also called insight meditation or mindfulness meditation. It directs awareness to the present moment. One of the ancient forms of meditation is called vipassana, which means insight and realization of the truth (Melnikova, 2014). Its practice helps people break free from deeply rooted mental patterns (Easterlin & Cardena, 1998). Vipassana practitioners focus their attention on breathing or physiological sensations rather than external stimuli like people, objects, and circumstances (Geffre, 2011). Both modern clinical studies and ancient manuscripts underscore Vipassana's capacity to enhance consciousness, self-acceptance, patience, consequently leading to a significant reduction in mental and physical stress (Schlieter, 2017).

## Psychological well-being

The feeling of 'Life going well' is an assessment for psychological well-being. It is the harmonious balance of social, mental, and physical factors. The ability to manage or control unpleasant situations or painful emotions is essential for long-term well-being. However, experiencing painful emotion is a normal part of life and is not a measurement for sustainable well-being (Huppert, 2009). Psychological well-being includes the absence of disorders, such as major depression or schizophrenia (Adler et al., 2017). A person's psychological well-being is influenced by a variety of everyday circumstance challenges, including relationships, mental health, emotional stability, social support, financial difficulties, and the impact of one's surroundings. To enhance psychosocial well-being, vipassana meditation is a powerful tool.

## Old age psychological issues

As individuals grow older, they undergo both physical and psychological transformations, particularly during their later stages of life. Many health problems accompanying old age might range from long-term illnesses to cognitive decline. Promoting senior citizens' well-being and quality of life requires an understanding of

these health issues. According to the findings of Wrosch and their team, adaptive levels of health engagement control strategies (HECS) serve as a psychological mechanism that can protect older adults from the harmful emotional and biological impacts of physical health issues (Wrosch et al., 2007). Health management in old age is a multifaceted endeavor aimed at promoting well-being, preventing illness, and effectively managing any health conditions that may arise during this stage of life. Vipassana meditation has shown promising potential in aiding the elderly to alleviate and manage various effects of aging, including loneliness, emotional and physical stress, and depression. This ancient practice offers a holistic approach for achieving well-being, addressing the interconnectedness of the mind and body. By cultivating mindfulness and self-awareness through Vipassana meditation, older individuals can develop coping mechanisms to navigate the challenges of aging more effectively (Nguyen Van, 2013).

### Tool

This study uses Ryff numerical 18 item scale to measure psychological well-being (Karas & Ciecuch, 2019). The scores obtained from the self-reported questionnaires (Springer & Hauser, 2006). This design allows to compare the variable scores of each individual before and after the Vipassana training. The Ryff psychological well-Being questionnaire includes measures of six dimensions that are autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Burns & Machin, 2009).

### Variables

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables
1. Vipassana Meditation 2. Age 3. Gender	1. Psychological Well-Being

### Hypothesis

There would be a significant impact of Vipassana meditation on the psychological well-being of elderly people.

### Research Design

This design is commonly referred to as a pre-test/post-test without control group design, facilitating the comparison of the impact of the intervention (Vipassana training) by examining changes over time (Singh et al., 2024). It operates as a within-subject design, wherein the same participants undergo measurements both before and after the intervention the following:

- Pre-Test (Before Vipassana Training): Administered the Ryff scale to all individuals
- Intervention (Vipassana Training): Provide Vipassana training to all individuals.
- Post-Test (After Vipassana Training): Administered the Ryff scale again to the same individuals.

### Sample

The study recruited individuals who were new to Vipassana meditation and enrolled in 10-day courses at Vipassana Meditation Centers situated in Andhra Pradesh state, India. These centers provide structured meditation programs with the goal of promoting mindfulness and enlightenment.

### Sample Selection Procedure

A total of 60 elderly individuals, comprising 30 men and 30 women, were recruited for the study from those who expressed interest in attending the 10-Day Vipassana courses at the Vipassana Meditation Centers for the first time. Participants were selected using a random sampling method over a three-month period to ensure a sufficient sample size.

### Inclusion Criteria

Participants were required to meet the following inclusion criteria:

- Individuals aged between 65 and 75 years old.
- Willingness to participate in the 10-Day Vipassana course for the first time.
- Ability to understand and respond to study of the assessments.

- Absence of any serious physical or mental health conditions that may obstruct participation.

## Participant Characteristics

The mean age of participants was 69.46 years, with a range of age 10 years. Among the participants, 50% were male, and 50% were female.

## Ethical Considerations

Participants were provided with detailed information about the study objectives, procedures, and benefits before obtaining their informed consent to participate. Confidentiality and anonymity of participant data were strictly maintained throughout the study.

**Table 1: Distribution of the Sample**

Age Group	Old aged	
	Male	Female
Before	30	30
After	30	30
Total (N)	60	60

## Method

The participants were asked to complete the questionnaires carefully and they were also assured that their personal information would be confidential. After completing the questionnaire, the vipassana technique was taught through a 10-Day residential course, after passing the course over ten days, again a Ryff questionnaire was given to the subjects. During the ten days participants remain within the area of the course site, having no contact with the outside world. They refrain from reading and writing, and suspend any religious or any other practices, working exactly according to the instructions given. For the entire period of the course they follow a basic code of morality which includes celibacy and avoiding from all intoxicants, they also maintain silence among themselves for the first nine days of the course and also Conducting a doubts clearance session with the teacher every day and playing an audio discourse voiced by S.N. Goenka in the evening of the day (Goenka, 2012). Vipassana meditation comprises three key components that are Anapanasati, Vipassana, and Metta Bhavana (Seema, & Ajithkumar, 2019). During the first three days, the participants practice anapanasati meaning mindfulness of breathing that targeting keeps the mental concentration. The technique of Vipassana, which is introduced in the afternoon session on the fourth day of the course. Further steps within the practice are introduced each day, so that by the end of the course the entire technique has been presented in outline and on the ninth day, During the afternoon session, Metta Bhavana was introduced, emphasizing universal love and compassion towards all living beings. On the tenth day silence ends. The course concludes on the morning of the eleventh day. The majority of Vipassana practitioners have been taught Vipassana technique in the tradition of S.N. Goenka (Barua, 2023). Participants focus on observing bodily sensations, regardless of whether they are gross or subtle, and remain without reacting mentally or emotionally to these sensory experiences. The Vipassana meditation technique involves attentively scanning sensations throughout the body in an iterative and cyclic fashion, scanning from the top of the head to the toes. Practitioners repeat this process repeatedly during meditation practice, adopting an attitude of non-reactivity to any sensations and thoughts that may arise. Maintaining peace and silence is essential for following these determined disciplines during the course. The objective of this research was to assess the influence of Vipassana meditation training and consistent practice on enhancing psychological well-being among older adults. This was achieved by employing the six-dimensional questionnaire developed by Ryff to measure psychological well-being.

## Data Analysis

The obtained data are subjected to descriptive statistics such as mean and SD and inferential statistics such as paired sample t-test, test the hypothesis.

Table 2: old-aged male scores of mean,SD and t-values

Source	Before		After		t-values
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Psychological well being	90.30	22.15	218.30	25.88	20.581
Autonomy	14.87	5.16	37.10	5.32	16.425
Environmental Mastery	14.33	5.64	35.87	7.20	12.900
Personal growth	15.20	5.54	34.00	7.61	10.941
Positive relations with others	15.33	5.49	37.27	6.97	13.541
Purpose in life	14.53	5.89	35.77	7.02	12.692
Self-acceptance	16.03	7.24	38.30	7.19	11.953

An observation of table-2 shows that there is a phenomenal increase in mean scores of subjects on all the six dimensions of psychological well being and t-values are all significant beyond 0.01 level suggesting that engaging in Vipassana meditation has significantly enhanced their psychological wellbeing.

Table 3: old-aged female scores of mean,SD and t-values

Source	Before		After		t-values
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Psychological well being	109.90	23.79	229.80	34.64	15.629
Autonomy	18.70	6.26	37.60	6.33	11.628
Environmental Mastery	18.40	8.02	38.23	7.13	10.128
Personal growth	17.40	7.76	38.40	7.04	10.980
Positive relations with others	18.40	7.21	37.20	7.75	9.727
Purpose in life	18.53	5.64	38.77	7.86	11.458
Self-acceptance	18.47	6.36	39.60	6.33	12.901

An observation of table-3 shows that there is a remarkable growth in the mean scores across all six dimensions of psychological well-being as a result of engaging in Vipassana meditation. The corresponding t-values are all statistically significant beyond the 0.01 level, underscoring the significant enhancement of participants' psychological well-being through Vipassana meditation.

## Results

The implementation of Vipassana meditation training leads to a notable enhancement in individuals' psychological well-being. Statistical analysis of data from tables 2 and 3 indicates a significant increase in the level of psychological well-being among participants following Vipassana meditation practice.

## Conclusion

According to S.N. Goenka, the Vipassana technique aids individuals in transitioning from self-admiration to mental maturity and ignorance or darkness to enlightenment. This method strengthens concentration, facilitates the purification of the mind, and eliminates deep-seated defilements and impurities of the mind (Qazinezam et al., 2014).

According to the research conducted by Soe and their team, the application of Vipassana meditation leads to improvements in the "Quality of life." The study highlights its psychotherapeutic potential and benefits, as well as its practical applicability across various human domains (Soe et al., 2023).

Radhi finds that The practice has been noted to enhance concentration, anger and anxiety management, emotional stability, and strengthen identity development. These benefits are among the outcomes of meditation. Consistent meditation practice can guide individuals towards the ultimate objective of holistic well-being, liberation from suffering, and enlightenment (Radhi, 2002)

Previous studies suggest that applying the Vipassana meditation technique can lead to significant positive changes in various dimensions of life, including psychosocial well-being. These changes are observed to contribute significantly to enhancing individuals' overall quality of life and social functioning. The study finds that Participating in vipassana meditation actively 10 hours daily for 10 days has significantly enhanced the psychological well being.

## Limitations

*Duration of Practice:* The study may not capture the long-term effects of Vipassana meditation, as it might only assess participants over a limited time frame. Longer-term follow-ups would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the sustained impact of the practice.

*Self-Report Measures:* Relying on self-reported measures for assessing psychological well-being means asking individuals to share their own thoughts and feelings about their mental state. However, there's a risk that these responses may not always be entirely accurate. People might project themselves in a more positive light or provide socially desirable answers, which could potentially bias the results of the study.

*Influential Variables:* Absence of investigation into other influential variables affecting individuals' changes while practicing the Vipassana technique, such as the quality of practice, mood changes, mindfulness levels, and so on.

## Recommendations for future research

- Investigating the potential influence of demographic features such as education, occupation, geographical location, marital status, economic, and social status on how the Vipassana technique impacts individuals.
- To conduct longer-term follow-up studies aimed at assessing cognitive changes in individuals over time with continued perseverance in the Vipassana technique.
- To explore the effects of residential and non-residential Vipassana meditation retreats on various aspects of human life.

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