https://doi.org/10.4038/caj.v6i1.112

CINEC Academic Journal Volume 6 Issue I 2023

Original Article

ASSESS THE IMPACT OF MEDITATION OF SUSPECTS ON TRIAL ON CRIMINAL OFFENCES IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

The term Meditation is a process whereby one can make a conscious effort to relax and achieve profound peacefulness in mind. Meditation supports people to strive for transformation of the mind to take control of their inner self, understand the reality of life, practice the art of detachment and lead a simple lifestyle. This paper fundamentally assesses the impact of meditation of suspects on trial on criminal offences based on a selected prison in Sri Lanka.

According to the prison performance report 2017, there is a significant growth of inmates in readmission for island wide prisons in Sri Lanka. Some of the key previous findings (Blatt, 2002) highlights, meditation is of key importance to center the focus of one's life and enhance self-relaxation. The prime objective of this study is to assess the impact of current meditation applications for suspects on trial on criminal offences in Mahara Prison in Sri Lanka.

The total population of the study is 110 inmates, and the study population was demarcated to the inmates who have been convicted and served the punishment for more than 10 years for various offences. The study population was finally determined for 48 and the researcher distributed the questionnaire for 35 inmates which cover over 70% of the study population. The researcher used primary and secondary data and descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the respective data.

One of the key findings of the study is that the Content of the meditation programme has a significant positive impact on mediating the inmates. It also highlights that the duration of the programme also has a positive impact on meditation, not only that the knowledge and the skills of the presenter also have a positive high impact on the meditation programme.

Index Terms: Impact of meditation, Meditation Programms, Criminal offences

INTRODUCTION

This paper fundamentally assesses the impact of meditation of suspects on trial on criminal offences based on a selected prison in Sri Lanka. When considering the Prison Institutions in Sri Lanka, There are four closed prisons which are situated at Welikada, Bogambara (Dumbara), Mahara and Angunakolapalassa. In addition, there are eighteen remand prisons, ten work camps, and two open prison camps, two correction centers for youthful offenders, twenty three lock-ups and one training school. There is a clear distinction maintained between convicted and unconvicted prisoners. Suspects are unconvicted prisoners awaiting trial. Between the period of 2016 to 2020 considering the total population of suspects, the statistics under the government website; Buddhists had been around 65,000, Hindus about 20,000, Muslims about 15,000 and Christians about 6,000. Rehabilitation of prisoners is a vital fact not only for their own self-discipline and correction but also a social responsibility. The selection of Mahara Prison was due to being one of the largest prisons in Sri Lanka which was built by the British authorities in 1875 situated in the western province. Other factors such as obtaining approval, easy access and finally the numbers of those who remained as criminal suspects comprising of a statistically viable size, enabled the study to be completed within the anticipated time frames.

The simple meaning of the term Meditation is a process whereby one can make a conscious effort

to relax and achieve profound peacefulness in mind. Meditation supports people to strive for transformation of the mind to take control of their inner self, understand the reality of life, practice the art of detachment and lead a simple lifestyle. Meditation requires continuous perseverance, clear focus and self-training. Things that happen in life mostly, remains beyond our control. However, a mind that has been developed to take control and ownership in facing challenges in life, during sudden unexpected situations, understand the way people react and interact with the society which would result in peace and harmony.

Roger Walsh & Shauna Shapiro (2006) further explores that there are various types of Meditation such as body scan or progressive relaxation, mindfulness meditation, breath awareness meditation, Kundalini yoga and Zen meditation. These are the basic types of meditation which help to relax and achieve profound peacefulness in mind. One of thesis particular practices of Meditation which will pave way to understand the mental patterns and state of the mind better and understanding the path of disuniting 'suffering'. Continuous practice with a clear focus under a capable teacher will provide on-course corrections and achieve desired results.

Meditation and mindfulness are one of the ways to reduce the anxiety and depression of the people. Mindfulness meditation is a form of meditation that has been prevalent for thousands of years and is only becoming increasingly more popular to address variety of issues in the community.

A 'suspect' is a person who is accused of committing a crime state by Donna S (2010). The suspicion would have arisen based on evidence, statements recorded from eye witnesses, certain suspicious activities, video footage, the last person who was with the victim, someone who has threatened to kill the victim in public etc. A suspect is someone arrested for a criminal activity and by no means indicate that he has committed the crime. The fundamental rule of 'not guilty until its proven' will apply.

A criminal offence needs to be proven 'beyond reasonable doubt'. A criminal act is done against the state, as a crime is considered having done against all citizens. Hence the Respondent is an officer representing the state. The Penal Code will specify the criminal activities and the punishments imposed if proven guilty. Similarly, a person on trial or pronounced by courts as guilty of a Criminal Offence, an individual on Trial means a person who is subject to the process of litigation and the case against him/her is still pending and not concluded yet. In contrast, a person who is guilty of a criminal offence has to face the punitive action imposed on him whereby the maximum punishment would be life imprisonment.

The Mahara Prison is one of the largest prisons in Sri Lanka. Situated in the old city of Mahara in the Western Province, it was built in 1875 by the British colonial government. Currently the total unconvinced population of the Mahara prison is 5727. According to the prison statistical report of 2018, there are no female inmates at Mahara prison. It further highlights that there is an exponential growth in admission of convicted and UN convicted inmates since 2013 to 2018 due to various offences that they have made. This may be one such reason that inmates do not undergo a proper meditation activity to strive for transformation of the mind to take control of inner self.

The prime objective of this study is to assess the impact of current meditation applications for suspects on trial on criminal offences in Mahara Prison in Sri Lanka. This study is geographically limited to a specific prison (Mahara Prison) and specific ward (K Ward) where inmates currently reside, due to the difficult access of information of all the prisons in the island.

Currently, various spiritual, religious, and cultural rehabilitation programs such as Meditation Programs, Buddhist Dhamma Sermons, Mindfulness Programs, Observe Sil programs, Counseling Programmes and family unification programs are being conducted weekly, fortnight and monthly basis by the Mahara Prison for the betterment of the inmate's future.

A.Research Objectives

Primary Objective

- The prime objective of this study is to assess the impact of current meditation applications for suspects on trial on criminal offences in Mahara Prison in Sri Lanka.

B. Research Question

- What is the impact of current meditation Practices for suspects on trial on criminal offences in Mahara Prison in Sri Lanka?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review includes the current knowledge including substantive findings, as well as theoretical and methodological contributions where other scholars have done on meditation of suspects on trial on criminal offences. Some of the key findings highlights (Blatt, 2002) meditation is of key importance to center the focus of one's life and enhance self-relaxation. Furthermore, as viewed by the author, meditation is solely a spiritual practice bringing about vast benefits for the human kind such as relieving stress, enhancing self-esteem, reducing anxiety and reducing depression. It also highlights that the duration and the content of the meditation program is also vital to reap the benefits of the meditation.

As per a study conducted in United States for inmates, it was revealed that the inmates who were prisoned due to drug abuse were treated using meditation as one of the key treatment mechanisms, which is identified as a major treatment mechanism for inmates with addictions (Lyons & Cantrell, 2016). Among most of the studies being carried out to treat inmates, most of the studies revealed that perception of the presenter and perception of the mediation programme as one of the key meditation mechanisms used to control the behavior of inmates. For example, as per a study conducted among male inmates in "Oregon State" it was revealed this mechanism of meditation drastically reduced trauma of mail inmates ranging from anxiety, depression up until hypertension (Nidich, et al., 2016).

America is a country battling severe crime which causes costs over $700 billion annually. As a result, they have pin point techniques for crime eradication such as "Drug Abuse Resistance Education" and midnight basketball, which weren't resulting in proper rehabilitation of criminals due to failure to address the root cause behind crime which is "stress". However, the study recognized "Transcendental Meditation" as one of the techniques for proper rehabilitation of inmates, because it addresses the root cause behind crime which is "stress" (Alexander, Walton, Grme-Johnson, Goodman, & Pallone, 2003).

An addictive behavior such as drug abuse has an increasing trend, where a study has revealed, the trend towards drug usage has reduced drastically from transcendental meditation. As per a study conducted in year 1971 in Sweden, two groups of drug addicts were tested in a controlled experiment where one set of participants were forwarded for a meditation program, whereas another set of participants were not provided with medication program. These two groups were separately analyzed later and was revealed that there is a drastic decrease in drug use by the group provided with multiple sessions of transcendental meditation. Moreover, the study revealed some benefits of meditation as an increase in "adjustment" and "psychological stability", whereas a reduction in "anxiety", "tension" and "psychomotor coordination" were also evident among the participants who followed the medication program (Aron & Aron, 1980).

METHODOLOGY

This study is focus on assessing the impact of meditation of suspects on trial on criminal offences in Mahara prison Sri Lanka. The researcher mainly focuses to assess the impact of the meditation by measuring the effectiveness of the current meditation programs conducted by the Mahara prison. The researcher used a quantitative approach to collect the data through a multi structured questionnaire based on 05 grade Likert scale measurement. The questionnaire contains

the information about the psychological aspects of meditation and demographic background of the inmates. At the same time the researcher interviewed 10 prison officers in the rehabilitation unit to identify their perception on such programs to assess the impact on mediation programs.

To obtain a more realistic result that could be used to represent the entirety of the population, the study used non-random sampling technique. The researcher used purposive and convenience sampling method to gather the respective data with reference to the access issues and the sensitivity of the information. The total population of the "K" ward was recorded as 110 inmates and the study population was demarcated to the inmates who have convicted and serving the punishment for more than 10 years for various offences. The study population was finally determined for 48 and the researcher distributed the questionnaire for 35 inmates which cover over 70% of the study population. The statistical software of SPSS used to analysis the gathered data. Researcher used both descriptive and inferential statistics tools to analyses the data.

A. *Conceptual Framework*

The theoretical and conceptual framework explains the path of a research and grounds it firmly in theoretical constructs. The overall aim of the two frameworks is to make research findings more meaningful, acceptable to the theoretical constructs in the study. The researcher obtained the independent variables derived from the literature such as content of the programme, duration of the programme, knowledge and the perception of the presenter, practical application of the content and the demographic factors. The moderate dependent variables of the study were taken as the effectiveness of the progamme which delivers positive or negative aspect of the programme. Moderate dependent variables such as change in the mind set, inmates feel more relax and consulate, effective anger management, improvement of metabolic conditions have taken into consideration to measure the impact of the mediation of the current programmes. The following figure-01 shows the conceptual frame of the study.

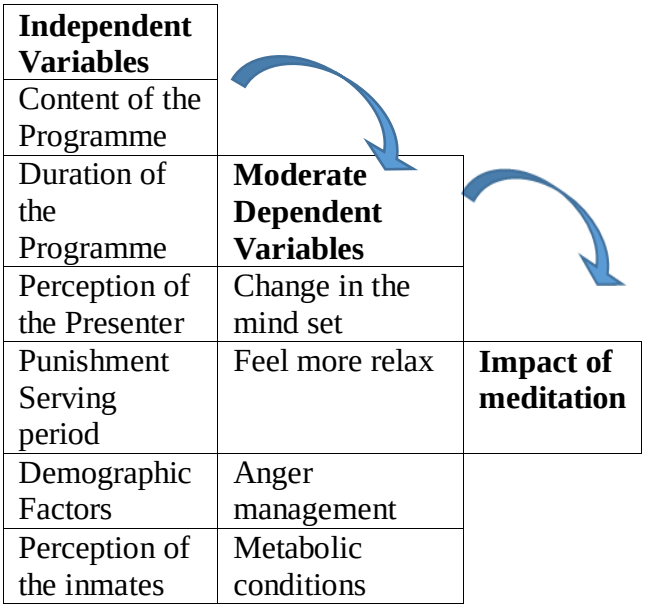

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The above independent variables and moderate dependent variables are measured through a multi structured questionnaire based on 05 grade Likert scale measurement. Total questions were altogether 20. For example, is content of the prgromme" is helpful to change your mind set?" is the content so important? These questions were measured 05 grade Likert scale from highly agreed to highly disagree. Likewise, all the dependent and independent variables were respectively measured.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH

The statistical software of SPSS used to analyze the gathered data. Researcher used both descriptive and inferential statistics tools to analyze the data. The researcher initially tested the consistency and reliability of the independent variables using the tool of Cronbach alpha, the value denotes from each variable from 0.68 to 0.85 which means all the independent variables are highly constantan and reliable to create as an independent variable. The mean of all the independent variables are moderately deviated as the mean was stood around 3.6, standard deviation also moderately deviated from 0.20 to 0.56, The distribution Skewed between -1 to +1 and the absolute values of kurtosis are less than

three times of standard error of kurtosis, based on the value denoted by the variables. Which means that the distribution is normally distributed, and researcher can further analysis the date using inferential statistical tools.

According to the Karl Pearson correlation coefficient, the value of the independent variables denotes, Content of the Programme .0.86, Duration of the Programme 0.788, and Perception of the Presenter 0.66, Punishment Serving period 0.67, Perception of the inmate 0.75, which means that all the independent variables are positively highly correlated with the dependent variable.

Based on the study following inferential statistical tools are further utilized to estimate the population factors.

A. *Effect of the current meditation programme*

Effect of individual independent variable factors on dependent variables have been tested using regression model. Model summary is given below.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.630[a]	.564	.558	.32824	2.083

Table 1: ANOVA Model Summary Table

Source : Research Data

Multiple correlation "R" is 0.630. This says that there is a strong association between the individual factors and impact of the current mediation programme. R-square is 0.564. This indicates that 56.4% of dependent variable has been covered by the model. Adjusted R-square is also representing that 55.8% of the dependent variable has been covered by the model. As the value is more than 60%, regression model is nicely fitted.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	23.870	4	3.410	31.650	.000[a]
	Residual	8.296	31	.108		
	Total	32.165	35			

Table 2: Anova Table

Source : Research Data

a.Predictors: (Constant), content, duration, Knowledge, perception, demographic

b.Dependent variable:
Impact of the meditation

Probability of F test statistics of the regression ANOVA is highly significant. This means that the model is jointly significant. Therefore, independent factors jointly influence the current meditation.

Table 3: Coefficients Table

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.862	.563		1.513	.134		
	Content	.571	.112	.452	4.204	.000	.390	3.452
	Duration	.415	.124	.219	2.215	.000	.343	3.316
	Knowledge	.673	.110	.672	6.001	.000	.283	5.451
	Perception	.112	.155	.119	1.316	.002	.540	6.619
	Demographic	.376	.101	.301	3.501	.000	.215	3.955
	Punishment Serving Period	.528	.114	.112	5.114	.000	.544	5.322

Source: Research Data

a.Dependent variable: Impact of the meditation programme

Probabilities of content of the programme, knowledge of the presenter and punishment serving time items are highly significant with positive beta values. Other variable such as duration and demographic factors are also since the p value is less than 0.05. This implies ŧ that they influence positively on current meditation programme conducted by the prison. Therefore, following regression formula can be developed.

$$Y = \alpha+\beta x_1 +\beta x_2 +\beta x_3+\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots+ \beta x_n\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots +\dot{\varepsilon}$$

Y = 0.862 + 0.571(Content) + 0.415(Duration) + 0.673(Knowledge) + 0.112(Perception) + 0.376(Demographic) + 0.528(Punishment)

Based on the above formula for example, it shows that content of the programe has nearly 57% impact on the meditation programme and changing the content of the programme by one unit has had an impact of 57% to the entire programme. Other variables are also having similar kind of impact to the current meditation programme.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the descriptive and inferential statistical analysis, it shows that the current meditation programmes has a significant impact on the suspects on trial on criminal offences in Sri Lanka. With reference to the outcome of the analysis following points can be highlighted and make certain recommendation for the betterment of the inmates.

Content of the meditation programme has a significant positive impact on practice of mediating the inmates. Thus, when content of the programme is developed, it should be equally important for the all inmates and should not be religion bias. It was revealed that convicted inmates for the drug offences, are reluctant to attend the meditation programmes because of the inappropriateness or impractical aspects of the programs.

The duration of the programme also has a positive impact on meditation. Accordingly, the research suggests limiting the duration of the programme for 01 hour since inmates reluctant to continue beyond one hour. It could dilute the effectiveness

of the meditation and may tend to defeat the objective of the progaramme if the duration is more than one hour.

The knowledge and the skills of the presenter also has a positive high impact on the meditation programme. Thus, suggest outsourcing the meditation activities or hire qualified, experienced and skillful presenters on a contract basis at for a short period. This will enable to explore new avenues of meditation best practices.

Inmates serving punishments for more than 10 years have a significant willingness to attend meditation programms. Therefore, such programms should be implemented in a regular interval rather than being held once a month.

Inmates serving punishments for drug smuggling and illicit drug dealing are having high tendency of skipping most of the mediation programs. Therefore, shot courses of meditation programms or simple best practices such as talking to them personally more often, should be implemented for them as they have a very high re admission rate not only in the Mahara prison but also island wide.

The prime objective of this study is to assess the impact of current meditation programme applications for suspects on trial on criminal offences in Mahara Prison in Sri Lanka. Based on the findings of the study it is apparent that there is a significant impact of practicing various types of meditation programms for the people who are serving long term punishment. Many inmates have had changed their mind set based on the meditation. Also many inmates have managed their anger or controlled their animosity towards others by adopting spiritual techniques of meditation. This has a direct impact on increasing the health and wellness of the inmates. Currently there is no legal provision in the prison system to carry out permanent mediation programms inside prisons in Sri Lanka. This study enables to open avenues to implement such programs island wide and suggest considering the necessary changes in terms of policy making. Consequently, the rehabilitation and correction of prisoners plays a key role which need not be ignored or condoned. Even though certain small types of suspects pay less interest towards meditation; some have taken it quite seriously exhibiting positive results. The irony of the exercise of practice of meditation apparently by nature being a voluntary aspect practiced by individuals, the value addition needs to be realized within the suspects themselves, the impact of it on the society as a whole will be a great reward.

In addition, providing sustainable legal provision also will create a great platform to enhance the life style of the inmates.

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