

Mitigating Emotion Dysregulation in Adolescents: The Effectiveness of Vipassana Meditation

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Abstract

Introduction. Mood swings, hypersensitivity, stress, and frustration intolerance are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the problems adolescents have in properly controlling and regulating their emotions. Their relationships, ability to make decisions, and general happiness may all suffer because of their difficulties with emotional regulation. Vipassana meditation (VM) promotes awareness of the need for change, enhances mental focus, and opens the door to more introspective thought. **Methods.** The purpose of this research was to examine the impact of vipassana meditation (VM) on adolescents' (n = 60) inability to control their emotions. Participants were randomly assigned in groups: vipassana meditators (those who practise meditation daily) or non-meditators (those who don't practise any form of meditation). A measure of emotional dysregulation, the DERS-36, was administered concurrently to both groups. **Results.** A statistically significant difference was discovered between the two groups using SPSS-27, suggesting that vipassana meditators have better than non-meditators at keeping their emotions in check. The effect size of vipassana meditation was also investigated, and researchers found it to be 197.136 which indicates a strong impact of vipassana meditation. Overall, vipassana meditation has good impacts 77.9% of variance on the level of emotion dysregulation among adolescents. **Discussion.** The statistics show that people struggle to keep their feelings in check, suggesting that VM could be helpful. Young people have a better chance of thriving as adults if they are helped when they are struggling.

Keywords

adolescents, breathing technique, emotion dysregulation, emotion reactivity, meditation, mental health, vipassana meditation

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Introduction

Our lives are deeply influenced by our emotions. Each day has its own unique set of highs and lows for everyone. Some of these are easy to manage, while others are more complex. It's acceptable to be down in the dumps occasionally, because we've all been there. Having difficulties controlling your emotions for a lengthy period might have a negative impact on your mental health. Emotional dysregulation is the inability to keep one's feelings in check for extended periods of time. This is what occurs whenever someone is experiencing extreme difficulty: anxiety, sadness, personality disorders, and psychosis all have well-established psychological roots. If they struggle to control their own emotions, they are more likely to experience mental health issues. Problems with cognition, mood, and behaviour are common in young adults. Right through this period, a lack of emotional regulation impairs the ability to make reasonable decisions in daily life. Both suppressing feelings expressively and reappraising them mentally are methods of emotion control. Acceptance (not trying to change the emotions, accepting them) and cognitive reappraisal (re-examining the emotions) are often more adaptive coping mechanisms for managing emotions than suppression (the control of one's emotional state and its display), avoidance (the act of evading unwanted circumstances), and non-acceptance (negative emotions that arise as a result of the primary negative emotion) (Gross & John, 2003).

A growing collection of evidence shows that difficulties controlling one's emotions contribute to many forms of potentially high-risk disruptive behaviour. Emotional dysregulation is common in the non-clinical population and is a severe clinical concern in a wide range of psychiatric, somatic, and medical conditions. Clinically relevant behaviour and psychological problems, such as intentional self-harm, have been linked to emotion dysregulation (Gratz & Roemer, 2008). According to research by Yang, Wang, Elhai & Montag (2022), the level of emotional dysregulation among adolescents is correlated with their problematic use of technology. There was also a strong correlation between emotional dysregulation and other factors (such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, etc.). Those who believe they can effectively control negative emotions are more likely to procrastinate, according to research by Rebetz et al. (2018). Reducing thought avoidance provides insight into the connection between trait mindfulness and enhanced emotion regulation, with young people having a stronger meditative pathway than older ones, as reported by Prakash, Whitmoyer, Aldao & Schirda (2017). Schreiber, Grant & Odlaug (2012) reported that two subscales of impulsivity were substantially higher in the high emotion dysregulation group as paralleled to the low emotion dysregulation group.

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Adolescents' social functioning (including their peer relationships, prosocial behaviour, and social competence) depends on their ability to regulate their emotions, and difficulties with regulation have been linked to the development and amelioration of psychiatric disorders like anxiety, depression, and aggression (McLaughlin, Hatzenbuehler, Mennin & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2011). In a nonclinical sample of college women, Messman-Moore, Walsh & DiLillo (2010) found that emotional dysregulation was significantly related with hazardous sexual conduct in the prior six months. Changes in the brain's social and emotional system (dopaminergic system) lead to greater emotional reactivity, risk taking, and impulsive conduct, as reported by Steinberg (2008). Emotional distress may be a risk factor for the emotional and behavioural issues of all people if any developmental stage is stress sensitive. Therefore, we must prioritise a universally successful prevention programme to teach emotion control skills to all, not just those at higher risk of difficulties, as part of a comprehensive social and emotion management skills.

Vipassana Meditation

Vipassana Meditation (VM) which is founded on the principles of awareness was first taught by Buddha (Bhikkhu, 2011). VM is currently being taught in India and many other countries following in the footsteps of Vipassana's main instructor, S. N. Goenka. To accomplish lasting behavioural changes, it promotes awareness of the need for change, enhances mental focus, and opens the door to more introspective thought. Vipassana, from its original Pali, means "insight." Most of the Pali words and phrases used in Vipassana are also taught alongside their English translations. Morality (sila), mental focus (samadhi), and the purifying power of insight (panna) are the three pillars of the Eightfold Path to Enlightenment (Goenka, 2001). Goenka's method of Vipassana practise is currently being taught and preached at various Vipassana centres across the world, and meditators are using Goenka's recorded teaching sessions to guide them through 10-day and longer periods of silent practise. Vipassana's main purposes are to purify the mind and alter one's character drastically. In order to better embody more human virtues like universal generosity and compassion, as well as a stronger feeling of empathy, humility, and inner calm, persons who practise Vipassana Meditation seek to purge their minds of their more illogical inclinations. This is achieved scientifically through the practise of Right Mindfulness and non-reactivity, which entails training oneself to pay close attention, without any mix of subjective judgements or reactions, to whatever is going on in one's entire body, with all five senses and the mind operating within and through it.

The Effectiveness of Vipassana Meditation

Goenka (2001) says that by practising Vipassana, meditators may oversee their minds, behave according to their morality, and still remain equanimous, providing further evidence that Vipassana meditation is about increasing insight inside meditators (Marques & Dhiman, 2009). Consistent practise of Vipassana meditation leads to an

increase in both awareness and serenity. According to Goenka (2001), there are three causes of unhappiness in life that can be remedied by Vipassana practise: raga/lobha (Craving), dosa (Aversion), and moha (Ignorance) from the Pali language. In keeping with Goenka's teachings, (Marques & Dhiman, 2009) stated that the most crucial aspect of Vipassana meditation is to maintain equanimity and non-judgment towards the sensations and to neither like nor detest their observation. Otherwise, meditators risk erecting barriers in their own minds rather than removing them. (Bhargava & Srivastava, 2019) concluded that Vipassana meditation obviously increases mental stability, will strength, and makes a person less worried, sad, furious, and tense. Also, it has been discovered to be an extremely powerful short-term meditation practise that may affect practically every aspect of one's life. Studying the impact of Vipassana meditation on workers' happiness, Pradhan & Vadaki Vethhi., (2019) discovered that meditating workers report more happiness in their lives, regardless of their demographics. The findings also provide credibility to the practise of Vipassana meditation as a remedy in the workplace. Emotional processing, including emotion intensity, memory formation, and emotional attention biases, can be enhanced with brief mindfulness meditation (Wu et al., 2019). Agarwal & Dixit (2017) looked at 100 Indian youths between the ages of 17 and 24 to see if there was a link between meditative habits and contentment with life. With consistent practise, they discovered that Vipassana meditation improved practitioners' ability to deal with the stresses of daily life and raised their levels of happiness and self-esteem. They concluded that regular Vipassana training can boost meditators' happiness and contentment. After reviewing the literature, researchers, Szekeres and Wertheim (2015) found that participants who took a Vipassana course reported greater feelings of well-being, self-kindness, and heightened awareness. A study by Pradhan & Vadaki Vethhi (2019) looked at the effectiveness of vipassana meditation (VM) as an intervention for psychological well-being (PWB) of employees. The results demonstrated that demographics, intervention, or VM usage had no bearing on the outcomes of meditation. This demonstrates how meditating can bring about a change on the inside by fostering the growth of inherent qualities. Present-moment awareness and non-judgmental acceptance training have been shown to increase sensitivity to affective and incipient emotional signals (Teper, Segal & Inzlicht, 2013), which in turn increases one's repertoire of affective coping mechanisms and foreshortens the onset of negative emotions like anger. Equanimity can be attained from both the inside and the outside through the practise of Vipassana meditation. While it is true that regular practising of Vipassana meditation has many benefits, the most profound insights and realisations typically occur during a silent, multi-day meditation practice (Pagis, 2008).

Emotion regulation is a major factor in psychological research. While there is a plethora of studies demonstrating their value, few of them focus on emotion regulation in an Indian context. There is a lack of studies focusing solely on Vipassana meditation. Further research is needed into the effects of Vipassana on young people, who should be made aware of India's cultural past was argued by Gairola and Mishra (2020). Fewer studies have concentrated on the present evidence relating to the variable and Vipassana

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meditation, despite the growing interest in emotion regulation research and clinical connections between meditative practises and individual quality of life. In the disciplines of mental health and health psychology, the findings of this study may contribute to a deeper understanding of these factors and their role in treatments based on mindfulness meditation Vipassana meditation may be the one good way for this.

After examining the existing literature, the following **research gap** was found:

- There is a scarcity of research examining the effects of Vipassana meditation on adolescents' emotional dysregulation. The unique developmental needs and challenges encountered by adolescents may necessitate a separate examination, as the majority of studies on Vipassana meditation tend to focus on adult populations.
- In numerous existing studies on Vipassana meditation and emotional dysregulation, appropriate comparison groups are lacking. Comparative studies with control groups receiving alternative interventions or no intervention at all can help establish the specific effects of Vipassana meditation on adolescents' emotion dysregulation.
- Vipassana meditation can be taught and practised in a variety of methods, resulting in implementation differences between studies. It is difficult to compare findings and reach definitive conclusions due to the lack of standardisation in meditation protocols. More research is required to investigate the effects of specific Vipassana meditation techniques or variations on adolescents' emotional dysregulation.

The **goal of this study** is to see if there is a link between vipassana meditation and emotion dysregulation, and if VM can help people overcome inner conflicts about how to feel and respond positively. Most people regulate tough emotions in one or two ways: they express them through words or actions, or they conceal them, which leads to maladaptive behaviours such as high impulsive behaviour, violence, and so on. This study investigates the impact of vipassana meditation by first defining the type of emotion dysregulation and then determining the relationship between vipassana meditation and emotion dysregulation.

Methods

Aim

The current study's aim is to examine the level of emotion dysregulation in adolescents and the effect of vipassana meditation on meditators.

Objectives

Following objectives are investigated in this study:

1. To determine the level of emotion dysregulation in adolescents.

2. To find out the gender difference in emotion dysregulation in adolescents.
3. To study the differences in the level of emotion dysregulation between vipassana meditators and non-meditators in adolescents.
4. To investigate the effectiveness of vipassana meditation on emotion dysregulation in adolescents.

Hypotheses

H1: There will be high level of emotion dysregulation in adolescents.

H2: There will be no gender difference in emotion dysregulation in adolescents.

H3: There is significant difference in the level of emotion dysregulation in vipassana meditators and non-meditators in adolescents.

H4: Vipassana meditation has effect on emotion dysregulation in adolescents.

For the present study, **60 adolescents** having difficulties with emotion regulation from the age of 15–18 years were selected from Delhi/NCR., India. The sample was chosen using a purposive sampling technique. Two groups were named as vipassana meditators and non-meditators. Two participants dropped out after two weeks due to personal and health issues, so the final study was done on 58 participants, 30 in the vipassana meditators group and 28 in the non-meditators group. The individuals were drawn from a non-clinical population. Prior to the start of the study, the researchers received informed written and verbal agreement from all participants and parents.

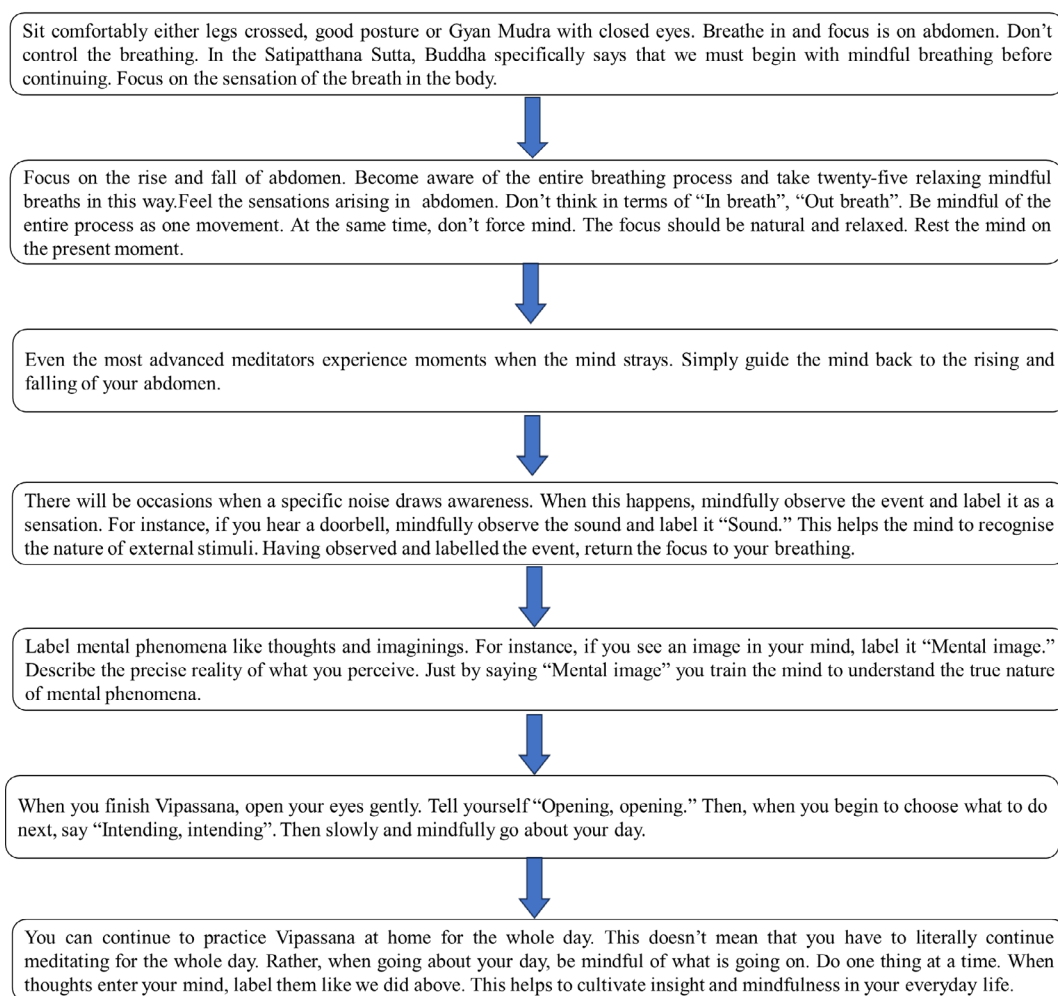
1. **Inclusion Criteria:** Adolescents having high level of emotion dysregulation; who practice meditation at least five days a week and have done minimum three course of vipassana meditation(ten-days); Willing to participate in the research and fluent in English language.
2. **Exclusion Criteria:** Symptoms of psychosis or any other clinically suggested mental disorder; Alcohol or drug abuse; Any delays in the development and Individuals who have been given any other therapy or treatment within one year of period.

Description of Vipassana Meditation

The description of Vipassana Meditation is shown in Figure 1.

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Figure 1
The description of Vipassana Meditation



Research design

This research is intended to be descriptive in nature and follows a cross-sectional research design. The participants or samples were sorted according to meditation practice; so, there were two separate groups, one of which did and one who didn't get into the habit of any kind of mediation.

Measures

Difficulties in Emotion Regulation (DERS-36): Individuals' levels of emotion dysregulation are measured across six areas with the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale, a 36-item self-report psychological tool (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). The DERS was shown to have a high degree of test-retest reliability of 0.88 as well as adequate conceptual and predictive validity. The items were recoded to reflect greater emotion dysregulation if the sum is high. Internal consistency was found to be good in the current sample (.81). Six dimensions of DERS-30 are: Non-acceptance, Goals, Impulse, Awareness, Strategies and Clarity. For scoring, total scores and scores of each domain will be taken into consideration. The higher the score, the more challenging it is to regulate one's emotions.

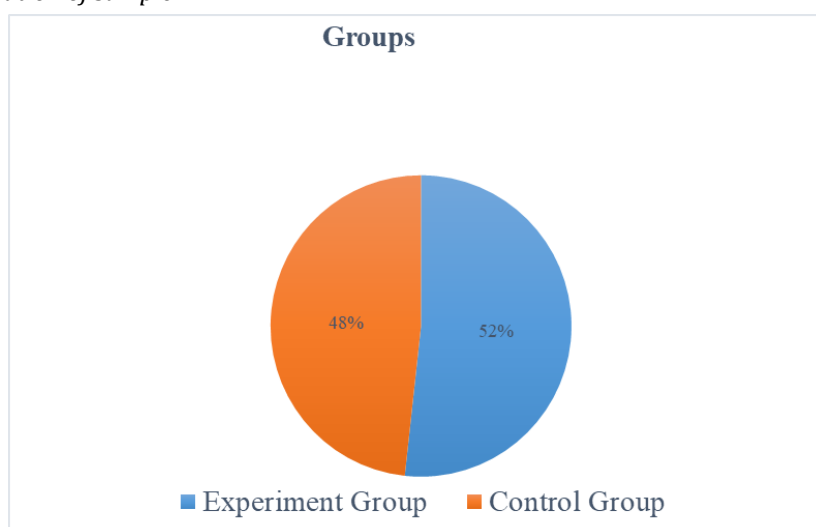
Results

The following techniques were employed to analyse and illustrate the results. The frequency and descriptive statistics were used for graphical presentation of the sample distribution. The descriptive analysis provides quantitative data on the construct measure of the study. Independent t-test reveals the difference between the groups on the level of construct. The linear regression analysis is utilised to demonstrate the impact of therapy on the dependent variable. SPSS-27 was used to do the calculations. The analysis and interpretation are presented in the following sections.

Figure 2 showcases the group distribution of the sample in the present study in two categories: experiment group consisting 52% of the sample while control group 48% of the sample i.e., 30 and 28 sample in each group respectively.

Figure 2

Group distribution of sample



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Table 1 depicts the descriptive scores of emotion regulation. The mean score for emotion regulation in total was 100.38 with SD of 22.02 where the SD score of all suggested the value of deviation of the score from its respective mean scores.

Table 1
Mean and Standard Deviation of emotion dysregulation among adolescents

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Non-acceptance	16.47	3.724
Goals	14.69	3.983
Impulse	16.78	4.272
Awareness	15.59	3.559
Strategies	22.24	5.407
Clarity	14.62	4.099
Difficulties in Emotion Regulation (DERS-36)	100.38	22.02

Table 2 shows the difference between the scores of the level of emotion dysregulation in males and females, where it was .598 and .596, which was not significant at any level of confidence, suggesting that there is no significant difference between genders.

Table 2
Differences in mean of vipassana meditators and non-meditators on the level of emotion dysregulation on the basis of gender

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Emotion Dysregulation	Males	30	98.70	21.278	.598	.552	-15.137	8.180
	Females	28	102.18	23.044	.596	.554	-15.175	8.218

Table 3 illustrates the difference between the means scores of the level of emotion dysregulation in vipassana meditators and non-meditators among adolescents shows that emotion dysregulation is more in non-meditators as compared to vipassana meditators. All the values show the significant difference with the mean difference.

Table 3
Differences in mean of vipassana meditators and non-meditators on the level of emotion dysregulation among adolescents

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Emotion Dysregulation	Vipassana Meditators	30	81.77	8.123	-14.041	<.001
	Non-Meditators	28	120.35	12.475		

For this calculation in Table 4, a dummy variable was calculated on SPSS as there is one variable considered in the research. The F statistic for emotion dysregulation was found to be 197.136 which indicates a strong impact of vipassana meditation. Overall, vipassana meditation impacts 77.9% of variance on the level of emotion dysregulation among adolescents.

Table 4
Regression coefficients of vipassana meditation on the level of emotion dysregulation among adolescents

Variable	Coefficient β -value	T	p value	F	R square
(Constant)	120.321	60.926	<.001	197.136	.779**
Vipassana Meditators	-38.555	-14.041	<.001		

Discussion

In the current scenarios of society, mental health issues during the phase of adolescence are quite prevailing additionally physical health issues for the longer period will also lead to consequences as mental health problems (Mittal, Mahapatra & Ansari, 2022). To deal with such concerns, lost but valuable meditation has been rediscovering its place. Mindfulness has not been a new pop-up in ancient Indian history, but it is a relatively new idea in psychotherapy, and it has captivated the attention of scholars and therapists alike in recent decades. It assists individuals in focusing on the current moment, comprehending their personal experiences, establishing a non-judgmental attitude toward them, acknowledging their thoughts and feelings, trying to limit their responses to them, and managing them effectively.

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The purpose of the study to explore the role of emotion dysregulation and effect of vipassana meditation on it within a sample of non-clinical background. The hypothesis 1 of the research was to assess the level of emotion dysregulation among adolescents. The mean scores of 100.28 suggest that adolescents are facing difficulties in emotion regulation. Another hypothesis 2 stated that difference between the scores of the level of emotion dysregulation in males and females, where it was .598 and .596, which was not significant at any level of confidence, suggesting that there is no significant difference between genders.

The first hypothesis (*Table 1*) of the study was to determine the level of emotion dysregulation among adolescents. The mean score of 100.28 indicates that teenagers are struggling with proper regulation of emotion. Another hypothesis i.e., H2 (*Table 2*) claimed that the difference in the levels of emotion dysregulation in males and females was .598 and .596, respectively, which was not significant at any level of confidence, implying that there is no significant difference between genders. It's safe to say that males and females progress at around the same rate. Results may have been different as contextual factors including meditation experience, socioeconomic background, academics, had not been taken into account. However, somewhat related to this it was found in a study (Yaremtchuk, Bakina & Sityaeva, 2021) that females of the age range 18–22 experience lesser happiness and life satisfaction in comparative to male though it is associated with increase in the lifeworld's difficulty.

Research have proved the efficacy of mindfulness therapy on emotion regulation and other related dimensions. Brockman et al. (2017) discovered a correlation between mindfulness and suppression of .49 (95% CI = .43.54), indicating that daily mindfulness was associated with lower levels of daily emotion suppression ($r = .28$, $t(3025) = 4.24$, $p < .001$). In the study, *Table 3* (Hypothesis-3) clearly showed that the difference in the level of emotion regulation between in vipassana meditators and non-meditators among adolescents was significant at 0.001 level of confidence, proposing that there is a significant difference between the two groups. The mean scores of the groups were 81.77 and 120.35, with t-value of -14.041 which clearly states that participants who practices vipassana meditation are able to regulate their emotion more properly than the non-meditators. In support of this, MehdiNejad (2020) discovered a significant difference between the study sample's mean DERS-SF score of 20.33 and the community sample's mean of 33.57 ($t = -20.01$, $p < .001$). According to the data, Vipassana meditation practitioners have a stronger ability to regulate their emotions than the normative group. However, *Table 4* (Hypothesis 4) showed the impact level of vipassana meditation or can say effectiveness of it by depicting the F score to be 197.136 and R square was .779%. It illustrates that vipassana meditation did have an impact. Empirical data has shown how it has effectively treated other psychological difficulties, such as in a study by (Bjureberg et al., 2016) study's findings, as Vipassana meditators had much lower DERS-SF scores than a population sample of 482 participants, which had an average DERS-SF score of 33.57. Whereas this study adds to the expanding body of knowledge about emotion

dysregulation and vipassana meditation, there are a few limitations to consider. It is crucial to emphasise that the measure of emotion dysregulation utilised in this study correlates strongly with behavioural measures of emotion control and readiness to suffer emotional pain. Nonetheless, future research on emotion dysregulation would benefit from include non-self-report (e.g., behavioural, physiological) measurements, as many studies rely only on self-report measures, which may be influenced by participants' willingness or uncontrollable circumstances. Additionally, the sample size is low because in India finding adolescents who practice vipassana meditation was not easy. The authors have limited the locale of sample for this research.

Despite these limitations, this study's findings add to a growing body of research emphasises the importance of emotion dysregulation and the efficacy of VM as a blessing. Since impulsive behaviour and substance abuse are just two of the many psychological issues linked to emotion dysregulation (Najavits, 2002), more study is needed to see if this treatment mitigates these problems by reducing emotion dysregulation.

Conclusion

Mindfulness practise has a lot of power to help young people grow up healthy by helping them in reducing stress, promoting wellness, and suggesting those positive strategies for emotional regulation. In conclusion, the effectiveness of Vipassana meditation in mitigating emotion dysregulation in adolescents holds great promise. Emotion dysregulation is a common and significant challenge faced by many adolescents, and its negative impact on their well-being and overall functioning cannot be understated. Traditional approaches such as psychotherapy and medication have shown some success, but there is a growing recognition of the need for complementary and alternative interventions. Vipassana meditation, a mindfulness-based practice, has emerged as a potential solution for emotion dysregulation in adolescents. The practice involves non-judgmental awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations, allowing individuals to cultivate a deeper understanding and acceptance of their inner experiences. Numerous studies have investigated the effects of Vipassana meditation on emotion regulation, demonstrating its positive impact on reducing emotional distress and enhancing emotional well-being. Additionally, more rigorous research is needed to establish the long-term effectiveness of Vipassana meditation and its comparative efficacy when compared to other interventions. Also, continued research, along with the integration of Vipassana meditation into comprehensive treatment approaches, can further contribute to its understanding and application in clinical and educational settings, ultimately benefiting the emotional well-being of adolescents.

Future implications

The study on mitigating emotion dysregulation in adolescents through Vipassana meditation provides valuable insights into the potential benefits of this mindfulness

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practice. As we look to the future, there are several implications arising from this research that could have significant implications for both the field of psychology and the well-being of people and welfare of society:

- The effectiveness of Vipassana meditation in mitigating emotion dysregulation among adolescents suggests the importance of integrating mindfulness-based interventions into existing therapeutic approaches. This integration can help promote mental well-being and foster emotional resilience during this critical developmental stage.
- The study's findings pave the way for the development of targeted mindfulness programs specifically designed for adolescents. Researchers and practitioners may explore the adaptation of Vipassana meditation techniques to make them more accessible, engaging, and tailored to the unique needs of this age group. These programs could be implemented in schools, community centers, and mental health settings, providing adolescents with practical tools to regulate their emotions effectively.
- Examining the long-term impact will help determine whether the benefits observed during the study endure over time or require ongoing practice. This would provide valuable information for developing comprehensive and sustainable intervention strategies.
- Further investigations could delve into the underlying mechanisms through which Vipassana meditation exerts its positive effects on emotion dysregulation in adolescents. Neuroscientific studies, for example, could explore the neural correlates of meditation practice in this population, shedding light on the specific brain regions and processes involved. Understanding these mechanisms could enhance our understanding of mindfulness interventions and contribute to the development of more targeted and effective treatments.
- Cultural Adaptation and Global Implementation: Vipassana meditation has its roots in ancient Indian philosophies and practices. Future research could explore the cultural adaptation of mindfulness interventions to suit diverse populations and contexts worldwide. This could involve studying the effectiveness and acceptability of Vipassana meditation within different cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic groups, ensuring that the benefits of mindfulness interventions are accessible to all adolescents globally.

The study on mitigating emotion dysregulation in adolescents through Vipassana meditation holds promising implications for the future. By integrating mindfulness practices, developing targeted programs, conducting long-term follow-up studies, exploring mechanisms of action, and promoting cultural adaptation, we can build upon this research to enhance the well-being of adolescents and inform evidence-based interventions.

Main conclusions

- Adolescence is the phase of life which effects all the other phases positively or negatively;
- Emotion regulation difficulties can lead to serious mental and physical health problems in adolescents;
- Vipassana meditation (VM) is one of the lost gems of India in the field meditation, indeed it is gaining back its place as VM makes the individual feel the present, accept the past and aware in all the moments;
- The proper guidance to learn the vipassana meditation is always suggested.

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Author Contributions

Santwana Mani came up with the idea of carrying out this study as she herself had done courses of vipassana meditation and interpreted the need of study to the co-authors. Author collected the data. The author came up with the study design idea and have done the data processing. The first draft of the paper was made. At last, the final version of the manuscript was made.

Dr. Roopali Sharma helped in data collection. Improvised the study design and helped in data-analysis. Changes made in the draft.

Dr. Navin Kumar helped in data collection. Re-analyzed the data and helped in interpretation of result. Finalize the draft.

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Conflict of Interest Information

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.