



Jul 03, 2025

## Beliefs about Mindfulness: a comparative study

 [PLOS One](#)

DOI

<https://dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.n92ld6bxxg5b/v1>

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**DOI:** <https://dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.n92ld6bxxg5b/v1>

**External link:** <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0331021>

**Protocol Citation:** philippine chachignon, Emmanuelle Le Barbenchon, Cécile antzer, Lionel Dany 2025. Beliefs about Mindfulness: a comparative study. [protocols.io](#) <https://dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.n92ld6bxxg5b/v1>

**Manuscript citation:**

Chachignon P, Barbenchon EL, Dantzer C, Dany L (2025) Mindfulness beyond secularization: Beliefs across meditators and non-meditators reflect a consensus on personal development over health and spirituality. PLOS One 20(9). doi: [10.1371/journal.pone.0331021](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0331021)

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**Protocol status:** Working

**We use this protocol and it's working**

**Created:** July 03, 2025

**Last Modified:** July 03, 2025

**Protocol Integer ID:** 221659

**Keywords:** mindfulness, beliefs, qualitative approach, health, motivations, beliefs about mindfulness, mindfulness, background mindfulness meditation, traditional buddhist form, association of the belief, possible differences in belief, belief, comparing meditator, classes of belief, meditator, sense belief, contents of belief, mm belief, limited research on mm belief, health behaviour, beliefs with each variable, psychological issue, different stance, psychological variable, sociodemographic characteristic, beliefs about mm scale, ethics, motivation for mm practice

# Abstract

## Abstract

### Background

Mindfulness Meditation (MM) has followed a 2500-year-old trajectory, from its traditional Buddhist form to its modern

versions such as therapeutic protocols. Initially acclaimed for its efficacy in addressing health and psychological issues, this trendy practice is also debated due to potential adverse effects, loss of ethics or compliance with neoliberal imperatives. Therefore, the question of the extent to which these different stances are integrated into the common-sense beliefs is timely. Yet, the limited research on MM beliefs either overlook exploring the content(s) of the beliefs or comparing meditators with non-meditators.

**Objective** This study aimed to fill these gaps by exploring the contents of beliefs, including what is missing in these contents, and comparing possible differences in beliefs between meditators and non-meditators. We examined the association of the beliefs with 4 categories of variables: sociodemographic characteristics, practice and motivation for practicing, health status and health behaviours, and psychological variables.

### Methods

167 participants (n = 105 meditators) completed an online survey where they were asked to produce 5 words that they associated with MM and to indicate their valence. Subsequently, they took a questionnaire that included the Self-Motivation for MM practice and the Beliefs about MM scales along with a series of questions on their characteristics.

### Results

817 free associations were generated, of which 65% were rated as positive. A descending hierarchical classification analysis yielded 5 classes of beliefs, which we labelled as "Body-based Relaxation", "Stereotyped Descriptions", "Psychological and Affective Well-Being", "Focus on Inner-Self" and "Experience of MM". Four classes were common to both meditators and non-meditators. Different families of variables were associated with the classes.

**Conclusions** Our findings highlight a consensus on MM as a beneficial tool for self-regulation, self-awareness and self-knowledge, and an operant secularization process. The association of the classes of beliefs with each variable is fully discussed.

## Research procedure

- 1 Literature review on the representations and beliefs associated with mindfulness.
- 2 Design of the questionnaire (pre-tested by 10 individuals from various backgrounds) using a mixed-methods approach:
  - 2.1 Open-ended questions: free associations with the stimulus word "Mindfulness".
  - 2.2 Closed-ended questions: standardized scales (attitudes, beliefs, motivations) and behavioral/sociodemographic data.
- 3 Submission of the ethics application.
- 4 Online dissemination of the study and recruitment (via social networks, mailing lists, and mindfulness organizations).
- 5 Data collection and cleaning (exclusion of responses that are incomplete, suspicious, or indicate random answering).
- 6 Qualitative analysis (e.g., thematic analysis and prototypical analysis using IRaMuTeQ).
- 7 Quantitative analyses (e.g., descriptive statistics, T-Tests).
- 8 Writing of the report and preparation of publications.