

Effectiveness of Yoga on Mental Health of Students

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ABSTRACT

Mental health is mainly concerned with the maintenance of the health of human mind. Along with physical health to maintain a balance state of mind is very important. Today keeping up mental health is one of the serious problems of the entire world. Due to rapid growth of industrialization and modernization, an individual often fails to maintain a balance himself and his social circumstances. "Mental health is the full and harmonious functioning of the whole personality" (Hadfield). Yoga is one of India's most amazing gifts to mankind. It is the science of yoga which helps to develop a person in all the aspects of life such as physical, mental, emotional, moral, spiritual development etc. This chapter summarizes the recent research evidence based on effects of yoga on mental health of the students. Present chapter highlights the meaning of yoga, different yogic practices, importance of yoga to maintain a healthy lifestyle, benefits of yoga. These research reviews give an idea about several areas where yoga may be beneficial for the student as well as for the people of the society. More research article is required urgently on this relevant topic.

KEYWORDS: Yoga, Mental health, Students

INTRODUCTION

Due to changes in the society such as globalization, modernization, industrialization influence the human being and the present situation has become highly competitive, and students and youth have to face this competition at every sphere of their life. So today a student is not free from stress, overload, anxiety, depression in their daily life style. A student more or less lives a light rope existence where he trying to cope up with the tremendous pressures form his family, parents or society. As a result, those students suffer various psychological problems which create challenges for the physical health and specially for mental well-being of the students.

The report of World Health Organization suggests that nearly half of the world's population are affected by Mental illness with an impact on their self-esteem, relationship and ability to function in everyday life. The role of mental health in human life is very important because it influence not only in individual's life but also it influences to maintain peace and harmony in societies as well. A healthy person is not only physically fit but also mentally healthy. If a person is physically fit, emotionally sound, well-adjusted in different circumstances of life, balanced mature personality, desirable social and moral values

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then only he is considered as mentally healthy person. In recent few times much, emphasis has been given on the physical and mental wellbeing of the students and promote overall development of the society. Mental health is a basic factor which is responsible for developing good physical health, intellectual development, emotional stability, social development, moral development, developing adjustment capacity, satisfaction, happiness, realization of goals, development of integrated personality etc.

Yoga plays a very important role in promoting mental well-being of an individual. Practicing yoga is not only popular in India but it is also popular in western countries as method for overcoming with the serious problems of life that is stress and improves the quality of life. Yoga is not an exercise only but it is a way to develop all round health-physical, social, mental, emotional and spiritual.

Concept of Yoga:

Thousands of years ago the concept of yoga was originated in India. It is considered as the oldest system of personal development in the world encompassing body, mind and spirit. The word yoga comes from the root YUJ which means to join or

unite. It is restraint of the activities of the mind, and is the union of the individual soul with the supreme soul. Yoga is one of the oldest known sciences of self-development, originated in ancient India. Yoga is a science which enables one to learn to unite his jeevatma (individual soul) with the paramatma (universal soul) and the final union is the fulfilment of 'yoga'. Even the techniques which promote one's progress towards realization of the supreme are called "yoga" (**Chakrabarti and Sahana's 1984**).

Maharishi Patanjali, was known as the father of modern concept of yoga and he was a great physician, in the 300 BC defined yoga as the complete mastery of mind and emotions. Theoretically the yoga system is based on the same tenets of Samkhya philosophy and also incorporates some of the teaching of Vedanta. There are various schools of yoga among which karma yoga (action), bhakti yoga (devotion), jnana yoga (self-study), and raja yoga (will-power) are especially well known. The eight components of the yoga system are as follows: Yamas (restraints), niyamas (observances), asana (posture), pranayama (breath control), pratyahara (sense withdrawal), dharama (concentration), dhyana (mediation) and Samadhi (spiritual absorption). These are so inter-related that without one the other is irrelevant and ineffective.

The yoga and yogic practices are among one of the most popular contribution which has a significant role in the whole world. As we all know that the main aim of yoga itself is an integration of personality in its all aspects of life. In order to achieve such development various techniques were employed by the people. These techniques or practices enjoyed in yogic literature and handed down in different traditions also go under the name of yoga (**Gharote, 1976**). The yoga and yogic practices are very effective today not only to treat physical and mental disorders but also to maintain, preserve and promote a healthy happy and successful life. Owing to the importance and usefulness of yoga and yogic practices for the people, the United Nations (UNO) has declared June 21 of each year as International Yoga Day.

Yogic practices are classified under three categories-

A. Asanas: It is one of the most important systems of physical culture ever invented. It is the main yogic tool for balancing the physical body. It refers to special patterns of postures which stabilize the mind and the body through stretching. Its aim is to establish the proper rhythm in the neuromuscular tonic impulses and improve the general muscle tone.

B. Pranayama: It was considered as a science of breath control. It consists of series of exercises

especially intended to meet the body's needs and keep it in vibrant health. The main purpose of Pranayama is to gain control over the autonomic nerve system through it influence the mental function. It provides deep relaxation to the body and mind, strengthen the nervous system as well as respiratory system, improves concentration, relieves stress, depression etc.

C. Meditation: It is the practice which involve the control of the mental function which starts from the initial withdrawal of the senses from external objects to the complete oblivion of the external environment. The basic principle of meditation is to develop internal awareness. Meditation improves physical, mental and emotional health of an individual.

All these yogic practices are psycho physical in nature. Some practices emphasize on the direct control of mental process and other practices are more physical or psychological.

Importance of yoga:

Yoga is a complete science of life and it is considered the oldest system of personal development in the world encompassing body, mind and soul. The art of practicing yoga helps an individual in a multiple way.

- It is rightly said that, "Health is not everything, but without health everything is nothing". Exercises of yoga have a physical health benefit and it helps to bring a balance between body, mind and soul. Practicing yoga helps an individual to maintain a good physical health.
- Along with good physical health to have a good mental health condition is very much important. Yoga helps to develop a balanced and peaceful condition of the mind and promote and develop mental health of an individual. Different yogic practices help to deal with various mental disorders, tensions, frustration etc.
- It develops social health also. Social health means the ability to be happy within oneself and to be able to make others happy. Simply it is the ability to relax and experience life in all its beauty. Practicing yoga help to develop positivity among the people's mind so that they can work for the benefit of the society, work to preserve their nature and environment etc.
- It also helps in the process of intellectual development of the individual by improving the functions of the brain.
- Yoga is very important for spiritual development of an individual. Yoga helps an individual to understand the responsibility of every individual to protect life and respect the individuality and

independence of all forms of life. It develops positive thinking, tolerance, concentration, principle of non-violence which ultimately leads to spiritual health development.

- It helps the people in the process of self-realisation. Yoga helps the people to realize their real nature and inner self, God. Practicing yoga helps to develop self-control, self-mastery, self-confidence, develop independent judgement, develop pure love and helps the people in realization of the divine within themselves.
- Yoga helps an individual to manage stress. According to National Institutes of Health, scientific evidence shows that yoga supports stress management, mental health, mindfulness, healthy eating, weight loss and quality sleep.
- It helps in the attainment of perfect equilibrium and harmony.

Effectiveness of Yoga on Mental Health of Students (Summary of reviews):

According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2014), mental health is not just the absence of mental illness. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. There are many benefits of yoga such as physical benefit, mental benefits and spiritual benefits. Various research studies were already done who found that yoga helps an individual in their physical as well as mental health development.

Beddoe A.E and Murphy S.O (2004) studied on meditation and yoga decrease stress and foster empathy among nursing students and results of the study shows that favourable trends were observed in a number of stress dimensions including attitude, time pressure and total stress. Findings of the study further suggested that being mindful may also decrease tendencies to take on other's negative emotions.

Singh T and Kaur, P. (2004) conducted a study on effect of meditation on self confidence of student-teachers in relation to gender and religion and found that both male and female and both Hindu and Sikhs (religion) student-teachers have equally benefitted from meditation when pre-self confidence and general intelligence were statistically controlled.

Ray U.S et al., (2007) conducted a study on effect of yogic exercises on physical and mental health of young fellowship course trainees and found that there was improvement in various psychological parameters like reduction in anxiety and depression and a better mental function after yogic practices.

Sharma et al., (2010) in his study, yoga and cognitive behaviour techniques for academic stress and mental wellbeing among school students found that certain specific Asanas, Mudras and Pranayams of yoga were combined with some specific techniques of cognitive behaviour therapy to reduce the academic stress and to enhance the mental wellbeing of the selected group of school children and the results have shown a significant relief from academic stress and significant improvement in the mental wellbeing of these children.

Woodyard C (2011) exploring the therapeutic effects of yoga and its ability to increase quality of life and found that yoga is superior in its favourable effects for mitigating the effects of anxiety, stress and depression.

Menezes et al., (2015) reviewed the emotion regulation potential of yoga practice and found that yoga produces improvements in emotional functioning in healthy subjects and people who suffer from some physical illness, particularly in psychological self-reported variables. In the conclusion summarizes that yoga may help foster healthier psychological responses, indicating its potential as an emotion regulation strategy.

Gupta et al., (2016) in his article, does yoga influence happiness and mental balance: a comparison between yoga practitioners and non-yoga practitioners? shows that yoga practitioners showed higher levels of happiness and mental balance compared to non-yoga practitioners. Participants with yoga experience had high level of happiness and mental balance compare to non-yoga practitioners.

Tiwari, G.K (2016) discussed on yoga and mental health an underexplored relationship and describe the real meaning of yoga and assess the role of yoga and yogic practices in achieving, preserving and promoting mental health. Further the study concludes that yoga and yogic practices have sufficient capacity to help maintain, improve, cultivate and nurture health and happiness in the lives of individuals, societies and communities. The future research work on these related issues was emphasized urgently.

Rajkumar, M (2017) in his study find that mental health, self-concept and achievement motivation level were significantly improved due to the influence of yoga and meditation therapy among school students.

Singh A.P (2017) in his review paper entitled, Yoga for mental health: opportunities and challenges summarize that yoga can empower individual's positivity to take charge of their own psychological wellness and save a large expenditure for treatment and prevention of mental health problems. It can offer

immense help in sustaining wellness, addressing concerns related with increasing suicidal tendencies, anxiety, deal with frustration and conflicts in society and to opt career choices with full awareness of one's own abilities and potentialities.

Discussion and Conclusion:

These reviews suggest a number of areas where yoga may be beneficial, but more research work is needed to understand in detail about yoga and different yogic practices. Different research study concludes that yoga enhances happiness, deals with mental issues, helps physical, mental, moral, spiritual wellbeing of an individual, reduces psychological disorders, improves self-awareness, maintain emotional stability, it seems suitable in dealing with the type of issues faced by adolescents.

Yoga is a complete science which harmonise our growth and helps in the development of all the areas such as physical health, mental health, emotional development, promote peace and harmony etc. thus yoga is a practice of recognizing and re-educating habitual patterns of thinking by cultivating positive thoughts and values. There are different yogic practices which helps an individual to maintain balance, flexibility, strengths, focus, relaxation, awareness and self-confidence. These reviews prove that yoga and yogic practices have the ability to help maintain, improve, cultivate and nurture health and happiness in the lives of an individual, society as well as communities. Education system, psychology researchers need to play an important role to increase the level of awareness regarding different forms of yoga and its importance in one's life and bust negative stereotypes related to yoga.

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