



Effect of Yoga on mental health : A Review Study

Dr. Suruchi Sindhu, Assistant Professor

Swasthvaritta in Quadra Institute of Ayurveda, Roorkee, Uttrakhand, India

email: suruchihooda@gmail.com

Abstract

The present review paper is an attempt to study the effect of yoga on mental health. This research paper is an extract of several studies conducted on the effect of yoga on mental health. The benefits of Yoga have been recognised, and the health has been put to use in the treatment of both long-term illnesses and the relief of the discomfort associated with shorter-term ones. Yoga has been shown to have positive effects on the mental and emotional health of adolescents, and this has been emphasised by a number of research. There is a comprehensive review here that looks at how yoga can help adolescent brains and hearts. After reading of several studies it was concluded that yoga may be very helpful to release helpful brain chemicals, relieve depression; reduce stress; ease anxiety; improve sleep; enhance social life; promote other healthy habits; Yoga may also help with other health goals, such as weight loss, smoking cessation, and chronic disease management. Then again, you may have a different outcome. The effectiveness of your yoga practise may hinge on your mental approach, the expertise of your teacher, and the nature of your practise.

Key words: Yoga, mental health, anxiety, stress, depression,

Introduction

Yoga is a spiritual practise with its roots in a subtle science that aims to unite spirit and matter. Healthy living is both an art and a science. The Sanskrit root 'Yuj', from which we get the word 'Yoga,' means to yoke, join, or unite. Yoga, as described in the Yogic texts, results in a state of perfect harmony between the mind and body, Man and Nature, and the Universal Consciousness. According to today's scientific consensus, all objects in space are really different expressions of the same underlying quantum firmament. A yogi is one who has achieved the liberation known as mukti, nirvana, or moksha via the practise of yoga and has an awareness of the unity of all things. The ultimate goal of Yoga is enlightenment, or the realisation of one's true nature, which can then be used to achieve moksha, or release from all forms of suffering (Kaivalya). The primary goals of Yoga practise should be the attainment of health and harmony, as well as the attainment of a life of greater personal freedom. "The term "yoga" can also refer to an inside science that offers a number of techniques for individuals to attain this synthesis and take charge of their own destinies. Since its origins in the Indus Valley, around 2700 B.C.E., yoga has been widely regarded as a "immortal cultural consequence" that has contributed to the material and spiritual betterment of humankind. Yoga Sadhana is a way of life based on fundamental human ideals.

Yoga is thought to have been practised from the beginning of human civilization. There is evidence that yoga as a scientific discipline dates back thousands of years, to a time before the



establishment of any organised religions or philosophical systems. According to traditional yoga texts, Shiva is both the first yogi (known as Adiyogi) and the first teacher (known as Adi Guru). Adiyogi imparted his wisdom to the famous Saptarishis or Sages on the shores of Lake Kantisarovar in the Himalayas a few thousand years ago, there are seven wise men. The sages disseminated this potent yogic science all throughout the world, from Asia and the Middle East to North Africa and South America. Scholars of the modern era have made notice of and marvelled at the striking similarities between ancient civilizations from all over the world. The yogic discipline, however, reached its full flowering in India. The sage and wanderer Agastya, who spent time all around India, formed this civilization on a yogic philosophy.

There has been a recent global explosion in the popularity of yoga. Citizens on every continent are engaging in this activity. The benefits of Yoga have been recognised, and the health has been put to use in the treatment of both long-term illnesses and the relief of the discomfort associated with shorter-term ones (Woodyard, 2011). But does it also improve mental health? Is it a viable alternative to more common forms of psychotherapy? Does it have the potential to treat patients' mental health needs even while they deal with life-threatening physical illnesses? Does Yoga entail more than just a series of physical postures, breathing exercises, and meditative activities aimed at bettering psychological health? Can scientific research provide factual validation for the tremendous accomplishments purportedly accomplished by the renowned Yoga practitioners? In many cases, less focus has been placed on these issues. However, governments and NGOs are eager to introduce Yoga to classrooms and other public spaces as a means of promoting health. People who work in mental health still have the impression that treatment is based on identifying and correcting deficiencies. Indian culture views Yoga as a means to happiness, relief from suffering, mental calm, and harmony. Seekers of enlightenment (commonly referred to as Rishis or Yogis) have used yogic techniques to restore mind-body harmony and increase their chances of reaching enlightenment since ancient times. Many different states have been used to define the latter stages of mental health development in humans. Nirvana is used by Buddhists, Moksha by those who follow the Samkhya I philosophy, Atmasakshaatkar by Vedantists, etc. However, the common thread connecting these concepts is the idea that it is possible to achieve freedom from pain. In the first aphorism of the well-known Yoga Sutra (Yogah Chittvritti Nirodhah) (Iyengar, 2005), the sage Patanjali—responsible for collecting, coordinating, and systematising the Yoga tradition—declared the primary goal of Yoga to be the control of the mind. The Bhagavad Gita, which provides in-depth descriptions of many types of Yoga, also states the importance of Yoga for alleviating suffering and maximising happiness. Hath Yoga is a branch of Yogic thought that places an emphasis on physical practises (such as certain postures, breathing techniques, energy locks, and meditation) as a means of accessing higher states of consciousness.

Yoga's many psychological benefits include treating and preventing psychological illness. Yoga, first, can bring to a state of mind-body harmony (Singh, 2012). In addition, it is far more easily accepted than conventional psychological methods because it is grounded in actual



experience (Kakar, 2003). Third, there is great potential for addressing people's mental health difficulties through training and adopting the service of yoga therapists because it is cost effective. An estimated \$145 billion per month is spent in India on medication, doctors' fees, and transportation to and from appointments for those with mental treatment problems; if yoga were used instead, this money could be saved. The costs of absenteeism, incapacity, absentee voting, and unthinkable substance misuse all lead to indirect savings (Math, 2010). In addition to easing many bodily, mental, and social ills, it is the fourth holistic benefit it provides. It's worth noting that highly acclaimed theory-based procedures are not the sole determinant of success when it comes to psychological therapy. The need for individualised, non-conformist, and intuitive therapy methods is growing. As a result, yogic activities are often reported as being used as a supplement to conventional psychotherapy.

According to Shroff and Asgarpour (2017), there is a pressing need for efficient methods of promoting the mental health of the general populace because both the prevalence of mental health problems and the limitations of conventional medical care are on the rise worldwide (citation). Reduced stress levels may improve health and reduce the risk of disease. As a beneficial method for the human body and mind, yoga is rapidly expanding in popularity around the world. Yoga improves focus, memory, self-awareness, attention, and social adaptability, according to Joshi and Paul (2022). Teens who engage in yoga may find it easier to cope with emotional distress and more successful in the classroom as a result. Yoga has been shown to have positive effects on the mental and emotional health of adolescents, and this has been emphasised by a number of research. There is a comprehensive review here that looks at how yoga can help adolescent brains and hearts.

According to Verma (2022), Yoga improves function in regions of the brain that are crucial for learning, recalling information, paying attention, thinking, and communicating. Imagine it as mental strength training. Brain imaging studies using MRIs and other techniques have shown that regular yoga practitioners have thicker versions of the cerebral cortex (the area of the brain responsible for information processing) and the hippocampus (the area of the brain involved in learning and memory) than those who don't practise yoga. In contrast to the normal thinning that occurs with age, the brains of yogis exhibited less thinning in these regions than those of non-yogis. This provides support for the idea that yoga may mitigate the decline in cognitive abilities that occurs with advancing age.

According to Shashidhara (2020), yoga is more than just a collection of stunning poses and acrobatic exhibitions. Yoga's main aim is to restore a person to their natural, or "original," state. A lifelong practise of yoga should have that effect. Sriranga Sadguru, the yogi-sage, saw and spoke about this. Ashtanga Yoga is woven throughout every aspect of Indian (Bharatiya) culture, from rituals and beliefs to attire and decorations, manners and etiquette, morality and ethics to music and politics to a person's perspective on what they do and how they should feel about it.

Yoga for Mental Health and Emotional Well being



When a person is in a state of mental health, they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, able to deal with the pressures of daily life, create meaningful relationships with others, and make positive contributions to their communities.

Mental illness is a health problem that interferes with a person's capacity for rational thought and action, positive emotional regulation, and meaningful medical interactions. Like diabetes, which is a pancreatic disorder, mental illnesses are medical conditions that can impair a person's ability to function normally in daily life. Major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, OCD, panic disorder, PTSD, and borderline personality disorder are all considered serious mental diseases. The encouraging news is that full recovery from mental illness is feasible. Anyone of any age, colour, religion, or socioeconomic status can be affected by mental illness. It is important to remember that mental diseases are not due to a lack of willpower, poor moral fibre, or a dysfunctional childhood. Mental disorders can be helped. The majority of persons who have been diagnosed with a severe mental illness can find relief from their symptoms by adhering to their treatment plan.

To achieve a harmonious state of being on all levels—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual—Yoga is more than just a philosophy. The ancient Indians practised yoga regularly, and now it is widely recognised as a powerful method for maintaining health and overcoming illness. Truth-finding is, for many people, also a spiritual journey. The modern world is a stressful place to live due to its rapid pace, increasing mechanisation, and intense competition. In addition, the stresses of modernity, urbanisation, consumerism, competition, and the constant evolution of society norms affect people of all ages. All of these emotional and mental health issues, like stress, tension, and irritability (Muchhal & Kumar, 2015).

A wide variety of yoga practises are available. Hatha yoga, which focuses on physical postures and deep breathing, is the most popular style in India. The physical and mental benefits of yoga include enhanced stability, mobility, and power. The positive effects on mental health are more difficult to quantify. A number of studies have found that yoga can:

Release helpful brain chemicals. Most forms of physical activity cause the brain to produce chemicals that make us happy. Dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine are just a few examples of the neurotransmitters in the brain that work to improve one's disposition. Even though yoga is practised at a moderate and steady pace, it nevertheless manages to get your heart rate up, work your muscles hard, and produce feel-good chemicals in your brain. Therefore, yoga has the potential to boost your mood.

Relieve depression. Anti-depressant effects of yoga have been demonstrated in scientific research. Yoga has been shown to have similar therapeutic effects to pharmaceuticals and talk therapy, according to studies. Yoga is a low-cost alternative to conventional medicine that has fewer adverse effects. Patients with serious depression can also get the benefits of this treatment. Because there aren't enough randomised controlled trials examining the efficacy of yoga for depression, additional research is needed.



Reduce stress. Stress management was enhanced by Yoga. Tension can be eased through cycles of tensing and relaxing muscles. As an added bonus, most yoga courses feature tranquil settings, soothing music, and upbeat instructors.

Ease anxiety. Lowering anxiety through yoga is possible. Because of the link between anxiety and breathing difficulties, the breathing exercises that are part of yoga may be particularly helpful. Yoga may not benefit those who have been diagnosed with an anxiety problem. Nonetheless, there are psychologists that use yoga as a complementary therapy.

Improve sleep. Sleep quality may be enhanced by practising yoga, according to the research. Those of a senior age may find this to be especially true. Those over the age of 60 who practised yoga in a single research reported improved sleep quality and duration. Their sleep efficiency, defined as the proportion of time spent in bed that is really spent sleeping, also improved.

Enhance social life. A yoga session in person gives you the opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals, which may help you get more out of your practise. The mental and physical well-being of a health may benefit from strong social bonds. Often, there are special societal benefits to working in harmony with others, also known as synchronicity. To feel more connected to the group, try synchronising your breathing and movements with theirs.

Promote other healthy habits. Yoga practitioners may be more inclined to make healthy eating selections. As an added bonus, yoga may serve as a springboard into other forms of exercise. Just being around people who are committed to living a healthy lifestyle can be motivation enough to make some of those changes yourself.

Yoga may also help with other health goals, such as weight loss, smoking cessation, and chronic disease management. Then again, you may have a different outcome. The effectiveness of your yoga practise may hinge on your mental approach, the expertise of your teacher, and the nature of your practise.

Risks of a Yoga Practice

Although sprains and strains are the most common kinds of injury experienced by those who practise yoga, it is important to remember that this does not make it a completely risk-free activity. Injuries can occur due to improper technique, preexisting problems, or even just trying too hard. A lack of proper training on the part of teachers may be to blame for some of the accidents that have occurred. Most people who enjoy yoga don't let the possibility of harm discourage them. When asked if they stopped doing yoga because of an injury, less than 1% of individuals who had suffered an injury while practising did so.

Older people, who may have less muscle power and lesser bone density, are more susceptible to the dangers associated with yoga. If you've been hurt during your workouts, you should consult a doctor before continuing. In addition, yoga is not meant to replace conventional medical treatment.

Conclusion

There is a significant responsibility for psychologists in spreading the word about Yoga and its many advantages, as well as dispelling any misconceptions that may exist about the yoga. There is a need to investigate the psychological significance of the varying ethical and moral



standards presented by various yogic traditions. Scientists also need to examine the personal and societal barriers to Yoga practise. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary for the researcher to engage with Yoga not just from a theoretical or historical perspective, but also from an experiential one. In order to accomplish this, there must be closer cooperation between researchers and practitioners. Yoga's mystique can be dispelled if researchers apply both quantitative and qualitative methods, opening the door for it to be recognised as one of many effective individualised therapies and approaches for the psychological health of individuals.

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