

## A Study of Yoga and Mental Health

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### Abstract

The study aims to investigate relationship between yoga and mental health. It involves a review of 20-25 literatures to comprehend their relationship from diverse societal views, it elaborates on the concept of a healthy relationship between the two. Yoga is a practise with an ancient history that has both spiritual and philosophical foundations. Yoga has strong mental health benefits in addition to its physical health advantages. Yoga is a method of living that combines mental, physical, and spiritual qualities to promote wholeness, meaning, excellence, and completion in all spheres of human functioning. It involves energising and fueling processes that inspire someone to achieve the best social, psychological, spiritual, and moral coordination in opposition to the most creative and productive functioning at the individual, family, community, societal, national, international, and cosmic levels. It also encourages someone to make a balance in their personality.

The current study makes an effort to define and evaluate the function of yoga and yogic practises in achieving, maintaining, and promoting mental wellness. It has been discussed and proven that yoga and yogic practises have positive effects on human functioning and mental wellness. There has been extensive discussion of the main yogic practises and psychotherapy methods based on yoga. Additionally, based on research in psychological science, adequate consideration has been paid to the mechanisms by which yoga and yogic practises affect human functioning and mental wellness.

The conclusion of this study shows that it is important to communicate to people all over the world the true significance and worth of yoga and yogic practises. The moment has come to educate people about yoga's true significance and worth and to utilise this as a platform to show how closely related yoga and mental health are to one another.

**KEYWORDS: Yoga, Mental Health, Relationship, Psychological Benefit**

### INTRODUCTION

In this verse, Maharshi Patanjali gives a precise definition of yoga: Yogahchittavritti nirodhah. Yoga is the stilling of the mind's (consciousness's) oscillations. What are these mental alterations? We can start to comprehend them by comparing them to the rising and falling sea waves. Additionally, our minds are constantly generating various emotions and cognitive patterns. These feelings or ideas can be joyful or depressing. The sage has identified five different sorts of vrittis based on manifestations: Praman, Viparyay, Vikalpa, Nidra, and Smriti. The five vrittis can be divided into two groups: Klisht and Aklisht. Klisht, which means "one who gives sorrow and pain," makes life sad for those who are seeking it, and they obstruct the way of yoga. The Aklisht is beneficial.

Yoga is a form of spirituality with roots in traditional Indian thought. Asanas (postural exercises), pranayama (breathing exercises), and dhyana (meditation) make up the majority of the current yoga practice. Yoga is a method that has been proven to help people improve all facets of their well-being—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual—and deal with the problems brought on by contemporary lifestyles. Yoga seeks to unite the individual and social selves as well as the mind and body. According to the cosmology of Hatha Yoga, everything in the universe is made up of two energies: manas shakti, or mental energy, and prana shakti, or life force. As a result, Hatha Yoga acts as a mechanism for balancing these two shaktis, Ida and Pingala. Along with asana, Hatha Yoga practices.

Mental health refers to cognitive, behavioural, and emotional well-being. It is an integral and essential component of health. According to World Health Organisation (2021), "Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community". It is fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living, and enjoy life.

Studies on Hatha Yoga, mindfulness-based meditation, and Sudarshan Kriya have all examined their respective advantages. When you practise yoga, your brain cells form new connections, and both structural and functional changes take place, which improves cognitive abilities like learning and memory. Memory, attention, awareness, cognition, and language-related brain regions are strengthened by yoga.

- Studies using MRI scans and other brain imaging technology have revealed that regular yoga practitioners had thicker cerebral cortexes and hippocampuses than non-practitioners. The cerebral cortex is the area of the brain responsible for processing information, and the hippocampus is the area involved in learning and memory. These brain regions decrease as we age, but older yoga practitioners showed less loss than non-yoga practitioners.
- Serotonin, sometimes known as the happy molecule because it helps to promote emotions of wellness and happiness, is naturally produced during exercise. The natural mood stabiliser serotonin, which is found in the brain, has also been linked to reducing anxiety and stress.
- Deep concentration and careful breathing are two skills that regular yoga practise imparts, both of which are crucial for combating depression. Participants can sharpen their present-moment focus, declutter their minds, and improve their mind-body connection.
- Holding poses and taking deep breaths put your physical and mental stamina to the test. This improves stamina, power, and flexibility.
- It aids in modulating the stress response by bringing down blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing. Additionally, it may aid in controlling pain tolerance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between yoga and mental health and its ramifications have been investigated in numerous studies over the years, along with the use and application of various intervention techniques to assess and discuss effectiveness in the field, while also indicating the need for appropriate training programmes that encourage positive changes in individuals' lifestyles, cognitive, and behavioural patterns. Every evaluation of the literature asserts that there is a direct link between yoga and a person's mental health.

**Singh et al. (2022)** conducted tests on sedentary women to determine the effects of brief virtual training of the iRest yoga programme on sedentary women's depression, anxiety, and stress, during the second Covid-19 outbreak. In this study, the intervention group was given the assignment of all sedentary women. It was decided to use a descriptive survey with pre- and post-intervention periods. Before and after iRest meditation, participants completed a 21-item DASS questionnaire that included three validated stress, anxiety, and depression measures. The Virtual iRest Yoga Nidra (ViRYN) Programme was offered online for 6 weeks to the intervention group. The researcher can therefore draw the conclusion that a six-week ViRYNP Programme can aid sedentary people in managing their melancholy, anxiety, and stress during the Covid-19 epidemic. Findings indicate that it is not necessary to run pricey day programmes with a significant structure, personnel, and time commitment in order to reduce depression, anxiety, and stress and promote well-being. In this experimental study, guided short-form Yoga Nidra meditation provided online was found to have similar health benefits to long-form meditation. Additionally, it is advised to participate in the ViRYN Programme for one's own wellbeing and psychological health both during and after the Covid-19 Outbreak. **Sagar et al. (2022)** aimed to assist novice practitioners, academics, and workers in understanding the fitness mantra without stress or strain, through Indian-style yoga and meditation. The findings centre on reviewing the traditional yoga and meditation techniques of ancient Indian Vedic culture and enhancing employee quality of life. This study offers businesses a way to manage employee wellness by incorporating yoga and meditation into the workplace as stress-relieving activities.

**Rajan G., and Venkatachalam R., (2022)** studied locomotive pilots in the Pune region to ascertain the efficacy of yoga and meditation in lowering blood pressure brought on by work stress. A clinical psychologist's intervention was combined with a study with 63 loco pilots

between the ages of 25 and 50. The group was required to take part in a one-week yoga and meditation practise. Employees with hypertension were observed both before and after the programme was conducted. Following training, the symptoms of occupational stress, such as headache and hypertension, considerably decreased (HT). 81% of the patients' diastolic and systolic blood pressure levels were reported to have decreased.

**Sharma et al.(2022)** conducted a quasi-randomized control study in the covid wards of a hospital in order to determine the effectiveness of an additional yoga intervention in lowering stress, anxiety, and depression in the covid affected patients who were being kept in isolation. The study's conclusions demonstrated that adding yoga to standard medical care was a more efficient technique for treating COVID-19 positive patients' stress, anxiety, and depression levels. All things considered, an additional yoga intervention seems well adapted to address the mental health issues brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic's uncertain period.

The aim of the study was to find out how laughter yoga affected chemotherapy-treated cancer patients' mental health. In 2018, 69 cancer patients receiving chemotherapy at Reza Medical Centre in Mashhad, Iran, participated in this randomised controlled experiment. The mean post-test WEMWBS score in the intervention group was found to be considerably higher than that in the control group, according to the findings. The clinical use of laughter yoga is advised in this study because it can improve the mental health of chemotherapy patients. **(N.N. Muhammad and S. Mohajer, 2019)**

**Bombell &Tullo, et al. (2018)** conducted researches for relevant trials in the following electronic databases. Trials examining the impact of physical yoga on HRQOL and/or mental health in individuals 60 years and older were considered. Yoga has a moderate impact on HRQOL. Yoga therapies led to minor to significant improvements in HRQOL and mental health in individuals 60 years and older. More research is required to discover the ideal yoga dosage to optimise health benefits.

**Domingues (2018)** conducted a study to look at how current postural yoga, which places a lot of emphasis on physical postures, affected PMH markers in clinical and nonclinical populations. The 14 studies that were reviewed produced a variety of findings, from no significant impacts in respect to baseline levels and control groups to considerable positive benefits of yoga practise on outcome variables. Nevertheless, the majority of research found that practising yoga improved PMH markers.

The study offers support for yoga's use in promoting health, preventing disease, and treating depression and other mental health issues. The findings demonstrate that yoga's capacity to promote larger feelings of tranquilly lies at the core of deep, slow breathing combined with movement and other parts of the practise. It accomplishes the three goals of bettering care, enhancing health, and cutting costs. In a recent piece, it was questioned whether there was enough proof for family doctors to advise their patients to do yoga. **(Shroff & Asgarpour,2017)**

**Gupta et al.'s (2017)** conducted a study to compared the mental health and anxiety levels of primary school teachers who participated in 15 days of yoga practise in a residential setting with those who stuck with their regular schedule. There was an improvement in general mental health and a decrease in state anxiety after 15 days in the residential yoga programme. The non-yoga control group exhibited greater baseline levels of state anxiety, perhaps as a result of continuing to work. A 15-day comparative controlled trial served as the study's design. The outcomes demonstrate that primary school teachers improved in all facets of mental well-being and experienced less state anxiety after participating in the residential yoga programme for 15 days.

**Tiwari,(2016)** conducted a study in order to clarify and evaluate the function of yoga and yogic practises in achieving, maintaining, and enhancing mental wellness. The findings of this project show that it is important to communicate to the world's population the true significance and worth of yoga and yogic practises. It is reasonable to draw the conclusion that research on the connection between yoga and mental health is lacking, and that future studies must approach this topic with greater rigour and objectivity.

The purpose of the study is to provide an overview of the literature on the benefits of yoga for adult non-clinical populations' positive mental health (PMH). The meta-analysis includes a total of 17 RCTs. Psychological well-being, life satisfaction, social connections, and mindfulness were discovered to represent four PMH indicators. The results showed that yoga significantly increased psychological well-being compared to no active control. Due to insufficient reporting, the overall risk of bias was unclear. When compared to no intervention but not when compared to physical activity, yoga was found to significantly boost psychological well-being. **(Cramer, Hendrix, 2017)**

**Sheffield, K. M., & Woods-Giscombe, C. L.(2016)** conducted a study to review the empirical research on yoga's impact on women's health and well-being during the perinatal period. Results showed that prenatal yoga therapies are often successful in lowering anxiety and depression. Yoga's potential to enhance both mothers' and babies' mental health and wellbeing during the perinatal period is promising. Future research on yoga interventions and clinical work with pregnant women can benefit from this review.

The purpose of the study is to look at the outcomes of a customised yoga intervention. In terms of lowering depression scores, there were statistically significant changes between the yoga and control groups. No statistically significant differences in lowered anxiety levels were found. On the overall DASS, statistically significant differences in favour of yoga were also discovered. **(Manincor et al. 2016)**

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between various aspects of mental health and sickness and various levels of yoga engagement. Comparing highly involved yoga practitioners to those who were only marginally/moderately involved in yoga or to those who were in the gymnastics control group, they showed a considerably higher level of mindfulness and religious/spiritual well-being as well as decreased mental symptoms like depression. **(Gaiswinkler & Unterrainer, 2016)**

**Bansal et al. (2013)** through his study aimed to evaluate the effect of a brief, organised yoga intervention on MBBS students' mental health. Following the intervention, the students reported greater physical and mental well-being, and the difference was shown to be extremely significant. The overall and mental health of MBBS students may be improved with a brief, targeted yoga intervention. It is feasible and useful to incorporate yoga practise into community medicine block posts.

**Hagen and Nayar (2014)** undertook a study to examine yoga as a potential stress-reduction and self-regulation strategy for kids. According to this study, yoga can be a useful tool for kids. They held that the adage "If you practise yoga every day with perseverance, you will be able to face the turmoil of life with steadiness and maturity" is also true for children and young people. The corporate world has realised the benefits of yoga. In recent years, yoga training facilities, practise facilities, private organisations, and people from the profit and non-profit sectors have opened studios and scheduled sessions using a variety of formats. For the use of these spaces and to do yoga, many people pay fees. But schools, childcare centres, and the public sector of education are not keeping up with the trend, despite having the primary responsibility for helping children and young people reach their full potential.

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A study on the impact of yoga and ayurveda on geriatric depression was conducted where, 69 people older than 60 who were residing in a residential facility were screened. Participants were divided into three groups at random—Yoga, Ayurveda, or Wait-list Control—based on their age and gender strata. Prior to the intervention as well as three and six months afterwards, depressed symptoms were evaluated using the 15-item Geriatric Depression Scale. One of the three groups' participation lasted for 24 weeks. Yoga exercises, relaxation methods, controlled breathing, spiritual songs, and lectures were all included in the programme. For the duration,

the Ayurveda Group got a herbal mixture twice daily. The findings showed that the Yoga Group's depression symptom scores at 3 and 6 months dramatically dropped from a baseline average of 10.6 for the group to 8.1 and 6.7, respectively. None of the other groupings changed. Therefore, a holistic approach to yoga that included the mental and philosophical practises in addition to the physical ones was beneficial for elderly people who were institutionalised. (Krishnamurthy 2007)

**Kirkwood, G., Rampes, H., et al. (2004)** conducted a systematic evaluation of the research evidence on the efficacy of yoga for the treatment of anxiety and anxiety disorders was undertaken by. There were eight studies reviewed. Despite numerous methodological flaws, they reported encouraging outcomes. Yoga cannot be recommended for the treatment of anxiety or anxiety disorders in general due to the wide range of conditions it treats and the low quality of the majority of the research. Nevertheless, there are positive effects, especially for obsessive compulsive disorder. Additional thorough research is required, and it would be most fruitful if it focuses on certain anxiety disorders.

### KEY LEARNING

- Yoga and meditation have traditionally been associated with stress reduction due to their capacity to diminish physiological arousal. Yoga Postures and Sahaj Yoga style of meditation efficiently reduce physiological responses to stress.
- Turner claims that yoga has helped her identify and deal with her own poor self-esteem. "Yoga is a psychology—the whole practise helps us work with the nature of the mind, the nature of being a human, how emotions live in our bodies, how they affect our behaviour and our minds," Turner adds. This course is regaining the practice's deeper foundations, including its mental and emotional benefits, in addition to its physical rewards.
- It switches your sympathetic (fight-or-flight) nervous system to the parasympathetic (rest-and-digest) nerve system. Usually, you feel less anxious and become more relaxed. When you begin to breathe deeply, your body slows down out of the fight-or-flight response and your nervous system becomes calmer.
- Yoga lowers stress. Yoga increases relaxation and lessens stress by reducing the release of cortisol, the main stress hormone. Additionally, it enhances quality of life and mental health. Yoga is a potent tool for managing stress.
- This calms anxiety. I have observed a lot of people using yoga to manage their anxiety. It helps ladies who are suffering from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). Women who practise yoga can conquer their fear of traumatic event.
- Yoga places a strong emphasis on the value of being in the now and discovering calm, which lowers anxiety.
- Positivity is introduced by yoga. Yoga is mental hygiene, like vacuuming your mind. The mental imprints are removed, relieving the mind of unneeded emotional baggage and releasing its positive energy. It is one of the many advantages of yoga for mental wellness.
- It boosts mental fortitude. Yoga increases flexibility and strengthens the mind. Yoga teaches you to be self-effective and consider your preferences, dislikes, strengths, and limitations. Yoga focuses on making commitments and strengthens self-control.
- It aids in the battle against depression. Yoga has an antidepressant impact and aids in lowering depressive symptoms and indications. Cortisol (the stress hormone) levels drop as a result of yoga. Yoga is helpful for those battling alcoholism and drug abuse. An example of a specific yoga posture for rhythmic breathing is Sudarshan Kriya.
- It has been noted that yoga is beneficial at lowering ACTH levels, which control the release of cortisol. Yoga can be used alone or in conjunction with other forms of treatment to combat ailments.

### CONCLUSION

Yoga takes both physical and, more importantly, mental wellness into account. Yoga, which places a strong emphasis on the universal, is the ideal counterpoint to human endeavours that

emphasise the individual and offers an infinite source of motivation and joy. The "seed of yoga" is discovered concepts of generosity organically flourish in a rich soil, gently but establishing themselves in every aspect of existence. Through the numerous relaxation techniques taught in the yoga science, we may "unwind" with the aid of yoga and balance the enormous tension and strain that are a natural part of daily life. Oneness with the cosmos is the ideal condition of harmonious health, and meditation teaches us to be alert to our own biorhythms, our own physical, mental, and emotional cycles. In order to facilitate updated insights and self-regulatory processes, self-awareness is required. (Ehrlinger, Johnson, Banner, Dunning, & Kruger, 2008).

Since psychosomatic problems cannot be treated without awareness, it provides us with a wide range of realistic, everyday means of action to become aware. The feeling that one's life is going well, which is correlated with traits like self-worth, optimism, self-reliance, introspection, and pro-social behaviour, is what matters most in today's world. Yoga poses not only direct but also activate numerous glands, muscles and other body components that are connected to emotional response or mental processes. Asana, breathing, and the metaphors of the positions may all stimulate the nervous system. Given the current fierce competition, teenagers are coping up with wide range of difficulties. People often do not have personal time due to their busy schedules, but through practicing Super Brain yoga, they may enhance both their mental and physical health. since it may improve both intellectual and physical fitness with the help of squats. Basically, the Super Brain yoga formula is 2s, which stands for a combination of an acute intellect and a powerful body. The implementation of this strategy may prevent issues prior to the occur.

Call it prevention of diseases like stress, tension, anxiety, and depression, which cause a host of other health issues. Yoga breathing exercises are included in this context because "the body gets strong and healthy. Reduced fat is excessive. The face is listless. Eyes have a diamond-like gleam. Voice becomes melodic and pleasant. In conclusion, yoga as a natural way of life can help with many of the psychosomatic illnesses afflicting people today.

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