

Effect of Mindfulness, Meditation, Yoga on Mental Health

Kanika Sethi*

Abstract

In the last few years to improve quality of life importance has been given to the alternative method of therapy. Yoga, Meditation and Mindfulness has a positive impact on mental well-being. These alternate therapies of healing which help in self-healing tendencies. These alternate ways are both safe and effective treatment and it helps to stimulate positive thinking, destress, resilience, improved interpersonal relationships and increased productivity. Yoga, Meditation and Mindfulness has been offering a holistic approach to health. It helps in offering hope for individuals seeking emotional equilibrium and healing. Yoga itself aims to join the mind and body as well as the individual and universe. According to the study, yoga, meditation, and mindfulness greatly improve people's emotional stability, reduce stress and anxiety, and foster inner calm and spiritual development. This review comprised searches in Medline, Scopus, and Google Scholar and adhered to PRISMA criteria. Due to its emphasis on the mind and body, yoga and mental health are intimately related. As research advances, yoga is emerging as a useful tool for enhancing mental well-being and general well-being in the modern world. Furthermore, regular practice of yoga, meditation, and mindfulness has been associated with improved cognitive functioning, better emotional regulation, and enhanced self-awareness. These practices encourage individuals to develop a balanced perspective toward life challenges, promoting psychological flexibility and adaptive coping mechanisms. By fostering present-moment awareness and reducing negative thought patterns, they contribute significantly to long-term mental wellness, personal growth, and the prevention of stress-related psychological disorders.

Keywords: Yoga, meditation, mindfulness , mental health and psychological well-being

INTRODUCTION

Mental Well -Being

Mental well-being is defined as a positive physical, social and mental state. It is a broad term which encompasses certain factors such as coping with challenges and being resilient, maintaining a healthy interpersonal relationship, feeling connected with the community, having mindfulness and sense of purpose having control over one's life [1–8]. According to Singh et al. [9] (2016), meditation can positively change our brain and body, helping to improve both mental and physical health [1].

Yoga

Yoga it is derived from Sanskrit word ‘Yug’ which means union. It is the union of body and soul or mind. In other sense union of finite with infinity. Yoga aims to help an individual to achieve harmony and balance through spiritual growth [2]. Pranayama (breathing exercises), Dhyan (meditation) and Asanas (postural exercises) are practices of yoga. Main aim of yoga is interconnection and unity with every form of life. Yoga teaching helps to create empathy within and there is deep sense of unity and oneness with all forms of life [3]. Yoga helps a person to view world in calmer effect as it follows 8-fold limbed path these are as follows: Yamas (moral or social codes), Niyama (personal duties), Asanas (poses).

*Author for Correspondence

Kanika Sethi
E-mail: Sethi.kanika24@gmail.com

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Health and Wellness, Air Force School, Ambala, Haryana, India

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Pranayama (breath practices promoting life force) Pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (State of meditation), Samadhi (state of oneness). Yoga's primary objective is to promote physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being [4]. Yoga helps in bringing more positive and social interaction and relationship. Kumar et al. [6] (2021) found that yoga is one of the best ways to stay healthy and feel well because it covers all parts of life. It is a complete practice that connects the body, mind, and soul [5].

Mindfulness

Being in the present moment i.e. having control over one's thought/ feelings or being aware of one's thought and feeling [6]. Mindfulness can occur with the help of meditation or yoga and breathing. Individuals having good mental health would lead to a happy and healthy life. It would also help the individual to:

- use his or her maximum potential
- cope with his or her life
- being more aware and playing a full responsible part in society family and friends

Influences of Culture

Meditation has a long history that dates back thousands of years to ancient civilizations in places like Egypt, China, and India. Earlier meditation was practiced as a means of spiritual and personal development. It was seen as a way to connect bodily consciousness to universal consciousness [7]. For examples in ancient India meditation practices were a part of Vedic traditions and teaching. Vedic text Upanishads describes meditation as a source of self-realization and enlightenment. The Taoist tradition in China, which emphasizes developing balance and harmony both inside oneself and with the natural world, included meditation. In Egypt meditation associated with their belief in the afterlife and the pursuit of spiritual immortality [8].

Buddhism and Meditation

In Buddhism, meditation is a key component of the journey toward enlightenment and pain relief. Buddhist meditation emphasizes developing awareness, compassion, loving-kindness, mindfulness, and non-attachment. In order to gain insight into the essence of reality and the interconnectedness of all things, Buddhist meditation, known as Vipassana, focuses on breath and physiological sensations [9].

Hinduism and Meditation

Meditation was practiced for spiritual development and oneness with the divine in ancient India. It emphasizes visualizing sacred symbols, meditating on a deity, and repeating mantras [10].

Taoism and Meditation

Taoism includes meditation in China. This method focuses on building Yin and Yang energy balance, inner harmony, and alignment with the natural flow. The discipline of 'Inner Alchemy' is central to Taoist meditation [11].

Meditation in Western Culture

- *Christian meditation*: It is a meditative activity that seeks to connect with the holy presence inside and strengthen one's relationship with God. "Lectio Divina," or "divine reading," is the term used to describe Christian meditation [12].
- *Jewish meditation*: Chanting secret songs, repeating prayers, and concentrating on the divine presence are common practices in meditation.

Mindfulness meditation derived from Buddhist tradition has gained popularity over the years. It focuses on the breath and observing thought and sensation without judgement [13].

Review of Literature

Bluth et al. [16] (2015) conducted a study to assess the effectiveness of a school-based mindfulness

program. The objective of the study was to test the effectiveness of school-based mindfulness program in alleviating the stress among school student. The result revealed in the experimental group there was a significant reduction in depression in comparison to the control group [14].

According to WHO predictions, depression will account for the second-largest portion of the world's illness burden by 2020. Poor mental health include alteration in thoughts, feelings and behaviour with cause difficulty in everyday functioning [15]. Good mental health is reflected by a sense of freedom from anxiety and emotional well-being (Carson, et al. [17] 2008).

Gym yoga was effective in reducing stress and improving psychological health in workers over 16 weeks. Compared to the control group, participants' well-being improved and their levels of stress and anxiety decreased.

Hagen et al. [2] (2023) An 8-week yoga course significantly reduced perceived stress, improved sleep, and enhanced well-being, with moderate effect sizes.

Kwok et al. [18] (2019) A study comparing mindfulness yoga and stretching/resistance training in Parkinson's patients found that yoga led to greater improvements in psychological distress, physical health, spiritual well-being, and HRQOL, especially in reducing anxiety.

A yoga-based mindfulness program improved emotional regulation, reduced rumination, and enhanced mental well-being in individuals with depression.

Objective

1. To investigate the effect of regular yoga practice on emotional well being
2. To examine the relationship between mindfulness practices and psychological well-being

Methodology

- *Identification:* This systematic review was done by following the PRISMA guidelines, which help make sure reviews are clear and complete. We searched three online databases—Medline (PubMed), Scopus, and Google Scholar—using the keywords “YOGA AND MENTAL HEALTH, MEDITATION AND MENTAL HEALTH, MINDFULNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH.” To choose the right studies, we followed a step-by-step process: first looking at titles, then reading the summaries (abstracts), and finally checking the full studies.
- *Study selection and eligibility criteria:* We started by looking through the search results from the databases. First, we removed any duplicate entries. Then, we checked the titles and summaries (abstracts) to narrow down the list. After that, we carefully read the full text of the remaining articles to decide if they were suitable for our review. We included studies that focused on how yoga can help improve mental health. Only studies published between 2015 and 2023 were considered.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Effect of Regular Yoga Practice on Emotional Well Being

It is scientifically proven that breathing practices such as Pranayama and meditation both of which help calm and centre the mind. Yoga strengthens brain regions that are important for memory, attention, consciousness, thinking, and language, according to Harvard Health Publishing. There are clinical evidences of changing in both brain structure and function related to practicing of yoga. Evidence shows change in the prefrontal cortex, amygdala, hippocampus and default mode network. prefrontal cortex manages cognitive abilities such as decision making and goal setting. Yoga helps in increased activation of the prefrontal cortex which further strengthens and intuition power of individuals. Yoga may increase in the volume of a hippocampus which involved with memory and learning. Yoga helps in increased concentration. Studies shown it activates Default Mode Network

with controls ADHD. It helps in increase resilience and adaptability. Meditation helps people train their minds to become more self-aware in a healthy way, which can lead to fewer negative thoughts and perceptions.

Relationship Between Mindfulness Practices and Psychological Well-Being

Meditation also reduces activity in the limbic system which has influence emotions. When you are in difficult conditions, you react more comparedly as your emotional reactivity decreases. Yoga promotes emotional, mental, and personal development in addition to helping with physical health issues. It promotes inner serenity and wellbeing and provides a comprehensive route to recovery. Meditation helps in stress reduction as cortisol hormone which creates stress is excreted less. Studies suggest that meditation helps in reducing post-traumatic stress disorders while simultaneously increasing positive emotions, cognition and behaviour which in effect alters physiological processes. Studies has shown that meditation practice has shown increased self-compassion. Studies have indicated that meditation can improve a person's physical and mental health. Meditation helps in bringing the brain waves pattern into the alpha state. This state helps in the healing state of body and mind. Meditation has benefits on three parts that

1. Physiological benefits
2. Psychological benefits and
3. Spiritual benefits

Physiological Benefits

1. Lower level of cortisol and lactate which are associated with stress.
2. Lower heart rate and reduce high BP and decrease cholesterol
3. Increase of air in the lungs
4. High level of DHEAS in elderly

Psychological Benefits

1. Increase level of consciousness
2. Increase brain wave coherence
3. Decrease anxiety, depression and mood swing
4. Increase creativity
5. Increase emotional stability Increase self-compassion or self-love
6. Increase happiness and rejuvenation

Spiritual Benefits

1. It cultivates a sense of calmness and increases self-awareness
2. Deeper connection to self and others
3. It can foster empathy and compassion
4. Strengthening connection with one and other
5. A more balance sense of being
6. Sense of equilibrium

CONCLUSION

The goal of mindfulness, yoga, and meditation is to improve the body's overall health, and the majority of the approaches are meant to help the body repair itself.

The foundation of these treatments is the idea of mind-body connection. Yoga and mindfulness meditation are beneficial for both physical and mental health, which boosts immunity. A person can have a happier and healthier life by practicing yoga and meditation. Yoga helps people discover balance, power, and calm in today's hectic environment by teaching them that the mind and body are

closely related. Numerous studies demonstrate that yoga has powerful healing properties and can be very beneficial for enhancing mental health. Numerous assessments of research indicate that yoga improves mental wellness. These results show that yoga is a helpful and easy-to-access way to deal with mental health problems. They also point out the need to keep learning more about how yoga can be used in mental health care. As science continues to explore yoga's benefits, it's becoming clear that this ancient practice can play an important role in improving mental health and overall well-being in today's world.

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