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YOGA EXERCISES AND THE MENTAL HEALTH OF ADULTS

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Yoga Exercises and the Mental Health of Adults

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Abstract – The present study is aimed at studying the impact of Yoga exercises on the mental health of the Adults. The sample of the present study consists of 100 adults by purposive sampling technique to form two groups viz. Group-I and Group-II. Group-I constituted the individuals who practice one or more Yoga exercises regularly and Group-II constituted the individuals who do not practice any Yoga exercises in their day to day life. The mental health inventory (M.H.I.) developed by Dr. Jagadisha and Dr. AK Srivastava (1983) was administered to the two groups to assess their mental health status. It was predicted that performing Yoga exercises regularly would significantly affect the mental health of the adults. It was concluded that there is significant difference between adults of Group-I (who perform Yoga) and adults of Group-II (who do not perform Yoga) with regard to their mental health.

Key Words: Yoga, Mental Health, Burn Out, Exercises, Adults.

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INTRODUCTION

Yoga is an ancient Indian science which helps to improve physical, mental, social and spiritual health.

Yoga has been one of the important concepts in Indian culture. It has been a source of various religious and philosophical movements. In today's world man is caught in a mad rush to meet different kinds of needs which has led him to abnormal living habits, straining life style, restlessness, emotional conflicts, social discords and self-estrangement. These have a direct impact on his mental health.

Spirituality can be understood in many ways. It can mean faith or religion; belief that there is a divine force or higher being above any individual; or journey for hope, harmony or wholeness. People can express or develop their spirituality through many ways; like living with certain values, being one with nature or doing things that develop personal control and self-awareness like yoga or contemplation.

Yoga helps people have a good mental health and physical health. It also helps them cope up with stress in their daily routine and it can also keep people grounded. Yoga helps people to deal with periods of mental illness or stress, provides a means of coping with a problem and to rely on the person's own resilience and strength.

Human life is considered the best form of God's creation. His cognitive power is enormous. A state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being and absence of disease and infirmity defines Health. As Kalidasa says, 'Great value is placed on

health of the individual, for body is the primary instrument required for the realization of the goal of life, be it material or spiritual or both'.

The World Health Organization defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, 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". It was previously stated that there was no one "official" definition of mental health. Cultural differences, subjective assessments, and competing professional theories all affect how "mental health" is defined. There are different types of mental health problems, some of which are common, such as depression and anxiety disorders, and some not so common, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

Mental health is the capacity of an individual to make harmonious adjustments with his social and physical environment.

Mental health is not the mere absence of mental illness, but it is a quality of an individual's daily living. According to Goldenson, Mental health is a state of mind that is characterized by emotional well-being, relative freedom from anxiety and disabling symptoms; as capacity to establish constructive relationship and cope with the ordinary demands and stress of life.

A good mental health can be achieved by developing a healthy mind in a sound body. Mental health is balance of all aspects of the life – the social, physical, spiritual and emotional. Our mental health determines

our decisions and how we manage the demands of life.

In Bhagwat Gita, we are reminded that, 'The man is of the nature of his belief'. Thus, man has to seek spiritual remedy to lead a wholesome life. The word 'Yoga' is derived from the Sanskrit root verb "Yuj" means bind, make union, control.

Yoga is the science of right living. It works on all aspects of the person –the physical, vital, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual. Yoga aims at bringing the different bodily functions into perfect co-ordination so that they work for the good of the whole body. From the physical body, yoga moves on to the mental and emotional level.

Yogic exercises play an important role in controlling our emotions like anxiety, fear, tension, panic, guilt and agitation. Yogic asanas make our body and mind stable, thus indicating a good mental health status.

Different yogic exercises like physical asanas, meditation, relaxing asanas etc. Not only make us physically fit but also mentally fit.

A study by Michalsen, A. (2005) showed that yoga reduces stress and anxiety among distressed women and increased their well-being and mental health. Yoga asanas may be used as an adjunct with diet and drugs in the diabetes patients (Malhotra, 2005). Yoga has significant potential as a beneficial physical activity option for cancer survivors (Culos-Reed, 2005).

Regular yoga exercises like physical asanas significantly improves the emotional stability and more effective reducing stress levels among high school students and teachers.

In a study on mental health adults in two groups-pranayama and yogic pranayama, Sakthignanavel (2007) revealed that the mental health of the pranayama group and yogic pranayama group had significantly increased when compared with that of the control group.

The present study is aimed in the direction with the following objectives,

1. To assess the mental health of the Adults.
2. To study the impact of Yoga on the mental health of adults.

Keeping the above objectives in view, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 1: There would be significant difference between the Group-I (adults who perform Yoga) and Group-II (adults who do not perform Yoga) with regard to their Mental health status.

SAMPLE:

The sample of the present study consists of 100 adults. The data was collected by purposive sampling technique to form two groups, viz. Group-I and Group-II. Group-I constituted the individuals who practice one or more yoga exercises regularly like meditation, physical asanas, pranayama etc. and Group-II constituted the individuals who do not practice any Yoga exercises in their day to day life.

Table I: Distribution of the Sample:

SAMPLE	GROUP – I (perform yoga)	GROUP – II (do not perform yoga)	TOTAL
	50	50	80

TOOLS: ASSESSMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH:

The mental health of the adults was assessed using Mental Health Inventory (M.H.I) developed by Dr. Jagdish and Dr. A.K.Srivastava (1983). It consists of 56 statements including 32 'false – keyed' and 24 'true – keyed'. There are four responses for each statement i.e. 'Always', 'Often', 'rarely' and 'Never'. The inventory covers six dimensions of mental health such as – Positive Self-Evaluation (PSE); Perception of Reality (PR); Integration of Personality (IP); Autonomy (AUTNY); Group oriented Attitudes (GOA) and Environmental mastery (EM). Low scores indicate poor mental health and high score indicates good health status.

RESULTS:

Table II: Means, S.D and 't' values on Mental health factors:

Groups	I (perform Yoga)		II (do not perform Yoga)		't' value
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	
Mental Health Dimension					
Positive self-evaluation	31.77	4.42	32.15	3.69	0.41 @
Perception of reality	23.67	3.68	21.70	2.63	2.77 **
Integration of	33.90	4.22	32.00	3.53	2.20 *
Autonomy	19.82	3.16	17.85	2.88	2.98 **
Group-oriented attitudes	29.87	4.75	29.55	4.81	0.30 @
Environmental	32.05	3.49	28.55	3.45	4.51 **
Total	170.12	17.76	157.30	15.97	3.39 **

@ - not significant

* - significant at 0.05 level

** - significant at 0.01 level

A keen observation of the data in the table II clearly indicates that in the Mental health dimensions such as – Perception of reality, Integration of personality, Autonomy and Environmental mastery, there exists difference between adults belonging to Group-I (adults who perform Yoga) and Group-II (adults who do not perform Yoga). This implies that adults who perform Yoga exercises like physical asanas or meditation or pranayama daily have a better mental health as compared to the adults who do not perform any such activity.

However, in factors like Positive self-evaluation and group-oriented attitudes related to mental health there is no significant difference between the two Groups. Therefore, the results warrant accepting the hypothesis that there would be significant difference between Group-I (adults who perform Yoga) and Group-II (adults who do not perform Yoga) with regard to their mental health status.

CONCLUSION:

There is significant difference between adults of Group-I who perform Yoga) and adults of Group-II (who do not perform Yoga) with regard to their mental health. Research is required to investigate whether there are differences between mental health of adults in their capacity to withstand the stresses of daily life and whether continuous practice of yoga can minimize these differences or help adults to improve their mental health status.

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