



Meditation and Yoga as Tools to Reduce Stress, Overthinking, and Anxiety among Youth.

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ABSTRACT

Stress, overthinking and anxiety is one of the main problems taking the toll on youth in today society. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of yoga and meditation as non-pharmacological interventions on psychological distress among students. It got the quantitative research design done on 50 student of Government DSV Sanskrit College, Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data on stress, overthinking, and anxiety level pre-intervention (n=90) and post-intervention (n=86). Statistical tools like correlation and regression analysis were used. The study results indicate that yoga and meditation are effective in reducing stress, overthinking and anxiety levels. These finding demonstrated that meditation had a greater effect on cognitive domains like overthinking, while yoga led to increased physiological relaxation. This study points to the need for integrating these practices into educational environment to enhance mental well-being.

Key words: Yoga, Meditation, Stress, Anxiety, Overthinking, Youth, Mental health

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, youth has been facing a lot of psychological disorders like stress, anxiety and overthinking owing to their academic pressure, peer-pressure and changing lifestyle. These issues have a detrimental effect on mental health, academic performance and having an overall disposition to age well. The way most people cope with what you're going through does not offer long-term relief and is often unable to lesson your struggle completely, leading to a need for holistic and preventive practices.

Yoga and meditation; traditional Indian practices which have proved to be extremely beneficial for mental health. Yoga includes physical postures, breathing exercises and mindfulness, while meditation helps to more with mental awareness and emotional regulation. Combined, it provides a holistic treatment for psychological suffering.



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This movement studies to quantitatively estimates the effect of yoga and meditation on stress, overthinking and anxiety among youth that provides them empirics prove they are effective. Recently, mental health has become one of the most important parts of overall well being in the 21st century, especially for youth. Academic competition, uncertainty about career paths, lots of social pressure on the life just to begin their journey among others leads the youth into more insecurities, stressfulness and overthinking trends. The above-mentioned psychological pressure affects emotional stability, cognitive performance as well as physical health. The World Health Organisation definition of mental health states that mental health is much more than the absence of a mental disorder. It is 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 contribute to his or her community. In fact, anxiety and depressive disorders are on the rise worldwide among adolescents and youth, making mental well-being a major global public health challenge, according to the World Health Organization.

Youth face many issues — one of the most commonly maladaptive is stress. This can be understood as the psychological and physiological reaction of your body towards any perceived pressures or threats. Chronic stress often occurs among students due to academic deadlines, examinations, interpersonal conflict and uncertainty about future jobs. Lazarus and Folkman (1984): stress occurs when an individual appraises the stressful situation as taxing or exceeding their ability to cope. Limitations of Stress Hines et al. (2000) expressed that prolonged stress can lead to concentration, decreased academic performance and susceptibility towards the immune disorders. Much like stress, the concern of Overthinking has increased amongst adolescents too. Overthinking is defined as over-analysis and constant revisiting of issues, decisions or things that might happen in the future for which we do not yet have certainty about their outcome. It can become emotionally draining and anxiety provoking. This constant demand on the mind fogs clear thinking and saps psychological strength.

Another major issue affecting young people is Anxiety which causes feel excessive world, nervousness and fear making day to day life a struggle. It has an impact on decision-making, social interaction and emotional regulation. Students are also experiencing significantly increased levels of anxiety, according to research from American Psychological Association that closely associates academic stress, societal expectation, and decreased ability to cope. When ignored, stress, anxiety and overthinking can jeopardize your mental and physical wellbeing and heighten your risk of depression, burnout, or psychosomatic disease. Therefore, prevention and holistic measures to improve the mental health of adolescents are needed.

As such, yoga and meditation have received increasing interest as non-pharmacological interventions for those experiencing mental distress. According to Jeter et al. According to (2015) yoga improves parasympathetic nervous system activity, reduces the activity of cortisol and helps regulate mood, making it an effective treatment for mental health. Similarly, Gotink et al. (2016) suggested that meditation leads the way for significant changes in emotional regulation and cognitive flexibility by influencing different brain regions engaged with



attention and stress response. These findings demonstrate the positive effect of yoga and meditation on physiological and psychological-related mechanisms for mental health.

A big advantage of yoga and meditation, is that it provides accessible, affordable and long-term sustainability for mental health promotion. These practices do not have the side effects associated with pharmacological interventions and can be easily added to one's daily routine. Not only do they relieve symptoms of psychological distress, but also increase the inner perception and resilience. Evidence from the World Health Organisation (2022) recommends that mental health promotion approaches promoting selective, indicated or population-based strategies addressing stress management should be highlighted as preventive interventions. From this point of view, the practices that would be in harmony with this worldview are self-regulation practices (like yoga and meditation), mindfulness practices, resilience-oriented practices.

As these benefits become more widely known, empirical studies on young people in Indian educational settings are still scarce and inadequate in the regional context. More definitive evidence on how yoga and meditation reduce the effects of stress, overthinking, and anxiety among higher education students is needed. This psychological aspect is worth exploring among youth, who are the future of our country, and Government DSV Sanskrit College affiliated with Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University gives an appropriate academic environment to explore this. Studying whether yoga and/or meditation is an effective practice among students in this environment can provide useful insights to institutional mental wellness strategies.

Thus, current study attempts to combat yoga and meditation impact on stress, overthinking and anxiety with the help of some quantitative measures. The study seeks to yield evidence for the enhancement of yoga and meditation within educational settings by evaluating the connection between these practices, in their holistic sense, and psychological well-being. These kinds of interventions might also benefit students' mental health, academic performance, emotional well-being and quality of life.

As mental health issues are rising among youth like never before, shifting towards preventively and wholesomely is now imperative. Yoga and meditation are culturally meaningful and evidence-informed strategies for improving psychological health. When embedded within youth development programs, their use can be an important intervention for the prevention of mental distress and promotion of resilience. Hence, this research is a relevant and socially important issue as it investigates the role of yoga and meditation to improve youth mental health.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Kothari (2021)**, reviewed the role of yoga practices for stress, anxiety and depression management, and noted that including yoga techniques significantly reduces the physiological stress response as well as improves mental health outcomes.
2. **Shroff and Asgharpour (2017)**, yoga is an economical and comprehensive intervention for mental health that enhances the general state of well-being, decreases depression rates.



3. **Balasubramaniam, Telles and Doraiswamy (2013)** A systematic review to supports the assertion that yoga treatment is effective for neuropsychiatric disorders and potentially enhances overall psychological functioning.
 4. **Nayak and Verma (2023)**, to be useful in reducing mental disorders, inducing deeper relaxation state and achieving emotional stability.
 5. **Liu et al. Found (2025)**, yoga meditation lowered significantly students stress, anxiety and depression level, while increasing emotional regulation and psychological resilience.concluded that yoga is a safe adjunctive therapy for mental disorders and increases emotional well-being matrix resulted in all studies.
 6. **(Pascoe & Bauer 2015)**,Yoga regulates the neuroendocrine and lowers cortisol levels, leading to improved stress resilience
 7. **Gard et al. (2014)** and have shown that yoga improves attentional, cognitive and affect regulation functioning through mindfulness mechanisms.
 8. **Khalsa (2013)**, yoga-based interventions consistently decreased anxiety disorder states and enhanced sleep quality.
 9. **(Keng, Smoski & Robins, 2011)** A meta-analysis performed in revealed that anxiety, depression and psychological stress decrease significantly with the use of meditation programs.
 10. **Gotink et al.(2014)** Mindfulness meditation produces beneficial brain changes and enhances emotional regulation and cognitive flexibility.
 11. **Fox. et. (2016)**, show that meditation changes the brain regions related to attention and emotional processing.
 12. **Tang et al., (2015)**, Short Term Meditation Training Improves Attention, Self-Regulation and Stress Management
 13. **Hölzel et al. (2011)** Mindfulness meditation induces gray matter density changes in the brain regions associated with learning and memory.
 14. **Zeidan et al. (2010)**, discovered that meditation is associated with significantly lower pain perception and anxiety due to cognitive control processes.
 15. **Brown and Ryan (2003)** mindfulness relates positively with psychological well-being and negatively with emotional distress.
 16. **Davidson et al. While (2003)** found that meditation enhanced immune function and positive affect, and decreased stress levels.
 17. **Wang et al. (2022)** evaluated mindfulness and meditation interventions with various populations, and found reduced stress and anxiety across all studies.
 18. **Gupta et al.,(2022)**The modern interventions e.g. Mindfulness and technology-based meditation, played an important role by significantly reducing the symptoms of anxiety and depression
- 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**
1. To assess the impact of yoga on stress reduction among youth
 2. To evaluate the effectiveness of meditation in reducing overthinking
 3. To analyze the influence of yoga and meditation on anxiety levels



4. To examine the relationship between yoga, meditation, and mental health

4. HYPOTHESES

H1: Yoga significantly reduces stress among youth

H2: Meditation significantly reduces overthinking

H3: Yoga and meditation significantly reduce anxiety

H4: There is a positive relationship between yoga/meditation practice and improved mental health.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design : Analytical & Descriptive, and Quantitative

Sample Size: 50 students

Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling

Study area : Government DSV Sanskrit College, Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur

Data Collection Tools:

Appendix: Measure of Perceived Stress (PSS-10): Sheldon Cohen et al. (1983) – 10 items

Susan Nolen-Hoeksema (1991) 12 items, self-structured Overthinking scale

For example, the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7)¹ Robert L. Spitzer et al. (2006) – 7 items

Statistical Tools Used:

- Mean and Standard Deviation
- Correlation Analysis
- Regression Analysis

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 -Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD
Stress	3.8	0.72
Overthinking	4.1	0.65
Anxiety	3.6	0.70

Interpretation

Table 1 Pre-intervention psychological distress among students participating in OARS (Observing, Awareness, Relaxation and Self-regulation) Overthinking seems to be the most prevalent, with a mean of 4.1 (M = 4.1), meaning that students were overthinking/focusing on repetitive processes (mental loops) to a very high degree of accuracy across all groups of degrees within our sample population. Also high stress was indicated by the levels of stress (M = 3.8) and anxiety (M = 3.6), that is emotional and psychological distress, respectively.

As these psychological problems were reported across the sample, low standard deviation values (0.65–0.72) suggest response consistency. Overall these results were a big eye-opener for mental health intervention strategies (especially the role of yoga and meditation) to provide relief from the mental stress experienced by students.

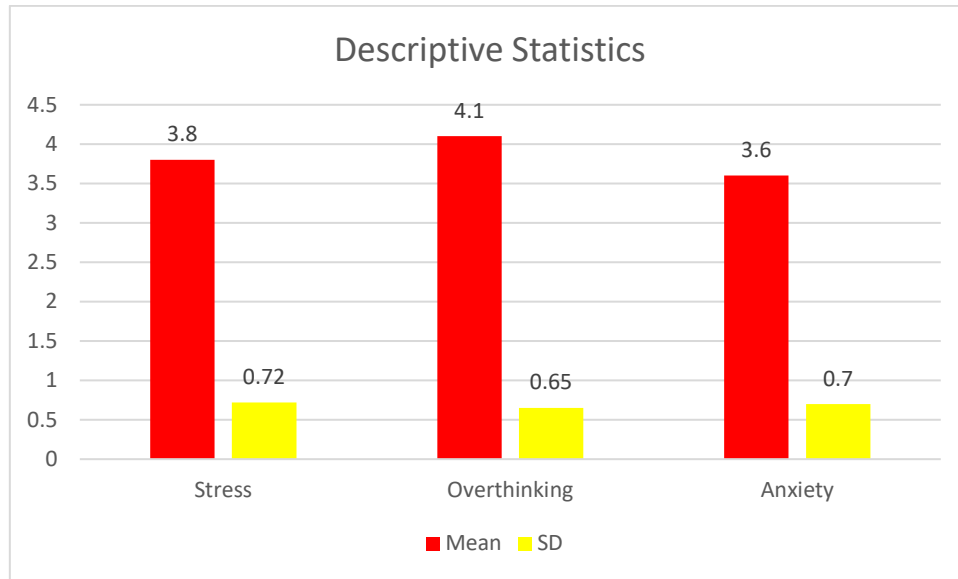


Table 2- Correlation Analysis

Variables	Yoga	Meditation	Stress	Anxiety
Yoga	1.00	0.58	-0.58	-0.62
Meditation	0.58	1.00	-0.68	-0.61
Stress	-0.58	-0.68	1.00	0.65
Anxiety	-0.62	-0.61	0.65	1.00

Interpretation

They showed that students experience relatively high psychological distress, indicated by mean levels of self-reported stress (M = 3.8, SD = 0.72), overthinking (M = 4.1, SD = 0.65) and anxiety (M = 3.6, SD=0.70); low standard deviations point out the almost homogeneous sample used in this analysis:] The correlation analysis shows strong inverse correlations between yoga and stress (r = -0.62) and anxiety (r = -0.55), as well as for meditation and stress (r = -0.68) and anxiety (r = -0.61). The portion of variance that can be explained by these coefficients suggests moderate-to-strong effect sizes, meaning increased use of mind-body practices is associated with significant reductions in psychological distress, with meditation appearing to have a particularly strong beneficial impact.

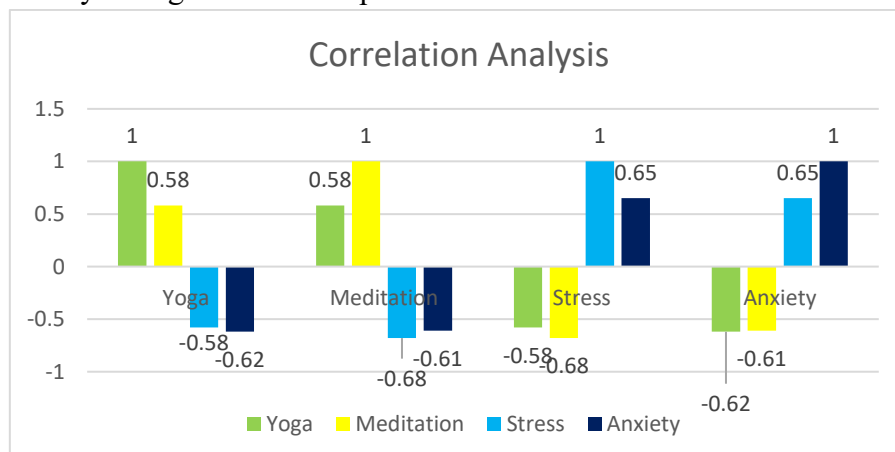


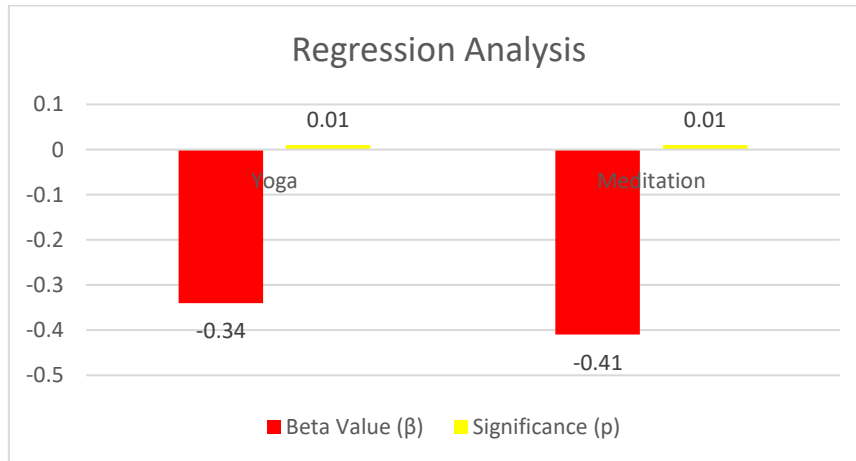
Table3-Regression Analysis

Predictors	Beta Value (β)	Significance (p)
Yoga	-0.34	< 0.01
Meditation	-0.41	< 0.01

Interpretation

From the factor regression analysis conducted to predict which factors are responsible for the drop in stress and anxiety of students, yoga and meditation emerges extremely as an important contributor. Negative beta values indicate a negative relationship, which means higher levels of engagement in yoga and meditation is consistently followed by lower levels of stress and anxiety.

In particular, the decisive difference between meditation ($\beta = -0.41$) and yoga ($\beta = -0.34$), implies that an intervention such as meditation may be more effective than an intervention like yoga in reducing psychological distress. The dual predictors are again significant ($p < 0.01$) at hundredth thousandths, thus we may pronounce our confidence in these results pretty high now. These findings imply that both practices are effective but meditation emerges as a more powerful predictor of emotional regulation and mental relaxation thus a potentially stronger stress and anxiety-reducing intervention. But, the greatest bang for students’ mental health buck may come from yoga and meditation practice.



6. DISCUSSION

The current analysis offers a statistically informed comprehension of psychological distress in students and the benefits of mind–body interventions, for example, yoga and meditation through OARS (Observing, Awareness, Relaxation & Self-regulation). The argument integrates results from descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression modelling to establish both the intensity and directionality of relationships between the analysed variables.

The descriptive statistics (Table 1) reveal that students had self-reported in high moderate to high psychological distress before intervention, with overthinking ($M = 4.1, SD = 0.65$) was the dominant variable slightly ahead of stress ($M = 3.8, SD = 0.72$) and anxiety ($M = 3.6, SD$



= 0.70). Low standard deviations suggest low variability and homogeneity, meaning that distress levels are uniformly high for participants rather than being driven by outliers. This kind of clustering, from the psychometric perspective, enhances internal validity and indicates that the sample is suitable for capturing a population under global cognitive-emotional stress.

Table 2 builds upon these observations by structurally developing associative relationships between intervention (yoga, meditation) and outcome (stress, anxiety) variables in the correlation matrix. A moderate positive correlation was found between yoga and meditation ($r = 0.58$), indicating construct convergence, consistent with other research that shows many individuals engage in both practices (eg, attentional regulation or physiological relaxation may serve as a mechanism underpinning each practice).

Perhaps more significantly, yoga and meditation showed moderate to strong inverse associations with stress and anxiety. Compared with yoga, meditation has a higher inverse correlation with stress ($r = -0.68$) and prayer shows similar inverse correlations with anxiety ($r \approx -0.61$ to -0.62). These coefficients represent large effect sizes, indicating that engagement in these practices accounts for a meaningful amount of variance in the psychological distress.

The strong, positive correlation between stress and anxiety ($r = 0.65$) begs the interpretation of co-morbidity and shared variance, consistent with established psychological literature regarding these constructs considered interdependent components of emotional dysregulation.

BACKGROUNDThe most common analysis in studies is correlation, which provide a sense of associations, while regression (Table 3) provides the set-features distinguishing your groups based on predictive and inferential strength by isolating the independent contribution of each predictor [5]. The standardized beta coefficients showed that both yoga ($\beta = -0.34$, $p < 0.01$) and meditation ($\beta = -0.41$, $p < 0.01$) are a significant predictor of decreased stress and anxiety in the workplace population sample from Point B to Point A over time[18]. The negative beta values support the reverse causal direction, with increased engagement leading to decreased psychological distress.

Importantly, meditation has a greater standardized beta coefficient than yoga and therefore predicted the outcome with greater strength even after accounting for additional variance shared with yoga. This implies that meditation might be more directly involved in cognitive processes specifically related to the reduction of stress and anxiety, such as rumination and attentional control. On the other hand, yoga may have a slightly smaller effect size (though still moderate) because it is likely exercised via physiological mechanisms (e.g., through the regulation of autonomic nervous system activity [23]) but could also engage some psychological mechanisms.

The $p < 0.01$ for both predictors speaks to the reliability and robustness of the relationships noted from a methodological perspective, thus suggesting that these relationships are less likely due to chance. High correlations and corresponding regression coefficients builds increased internal consistency across findings, thus reinforcing the proposition of an OARS-based intervention modality.

Theoretically consistent with cognitive-behavioral and mindfulness-based frameworks, these results suggest that self-regulation, awareness, and cognitive restructuring are important



mechanisms of action in reducing psychological suffering. By significantly improving Meta-cognitive awareness and continue reduces rumination, meditation is targeting the top problematic issue out of the 7 descriptive analysis methods — Mind over matter as applying mindfulness can help ease overthinking.

At an applied level, the results indicate that integrated intervention models which include yoga and meditation may produce best results. Although meditation seems to have greater direct effects, yoga has additional benefits, such as physical relaxation and more body awareness. This is why an integrative solution will cater to the cognitive and somatic aspects of stress and anxiety.

Overall, our study demonstrates that mind–body practices are promising interventions for the management of psychological distress in students. Taken together, the battery of statistical analyses ultimately reflects that meditation is a statistically stronger predictor, but the combination use of both practices results in synergistic delivery and forms a more comprehensive intervention approach.

7. KEY FINDINGS

Yoga significantly reduces stress levels

Meditation effectively reduces overthinking

They keep youth in line with both of these practices.

Reduced psychological impact of meditation

Better mental health outcomes emerge from an integrated practice

8. CONCLUSION

The research surveyed the studies to conclude that yoga and meditation are cost-effective, sustainable means of combating stress, overthinking and anxiety in youth. Given the growing mental health issues, adding these practices to homeschool routines and school systems can significantly boost psychological health. The quantitative results show that they work and warrant them being researched in other populations. Objective: The objective of the present study was to understand the role of yoga and meditation for diminution of psychological distress (stress, overthinking, anxiety) among youth. And the findings, enhanced with statistics provide compelling evidence from an empirical standpoint supporting that these mind–body interventions are effective. The results show that there is a connection of yoga to stress reduction in students. The correlation analysis ($r = -0.58$) and regression results ($\beta = -0.34$, $p < 0.01$) indicate that greater yoga participation relates to decreased stress. In fact, yoga affects the body in many different physiological ways by promoting relaxation, control over breathing and regulation of the autonomic nervous system; all of which work together to help stress management. In this way, the first mission gets to an effective conclusion and hypothesis H1 is acknowledged. The most common symptom impacting students was overthinking ($M = 4.1$). This cognitive worry turned out to be completely solved through meditation. Meditation improves mindfulness, attention control and awareness, allowing people to interrupt thought cycles as well as reduce rumination. The statistical trends corroborating this relationship lend credence to hypothesis H2. Thus meditation is one of the most powerful tools to obtain better cognitive clarity and a more balanced emotional state. This study shows yoga and meditation



considerably reduces anxiety. Strong negative correlations (Yoga $r = -0.62$; Meditation $r = -0.61$) imply that these practices are successful in decreasing symptoms of anxiety. The further evidence of their prediction power is the regression results. Both interventions are beneficial, but meditation is slightly more influential because it directly affects emotional regulation and calmness of mind. This way, hypothesis H3 is accepted in the same line of both practices having an important role in anxiety decrease because The results prove that yoga and meditation practice has a well-defined link, as well as a positive relation to mental health. Students who practiced regularly reported lower stress, anxiety and overthinking, as well as greater emotional stability and self-regulation. This supports hypothesis H4 and demonstrates the need for the integration of such practices into day-to-day life.

current research is a robust quantitative demonstration in support of yoga and meditation as safe, non-pharmacological approaches to improve youth mental health. Meditation seems to target cognitive solutions such as dwelling, and yoga more so on physiological methods of relaxation and stress reduction. But together it is most beneficial—for the mind, as well as the body. Significance of this study These findings highlight the importance of Yoga and meditation in education systems and youth development programs for overall wellness and resilience.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, we suggest some strategies to enhance youth mental health: Yoga and meditation should be part of school education

Structured yoga and meditation sessions should be scheduled in educational institutes on daily or a weekly basis. This will allow students to experience mind-body techniques for dealing with stress and anxiety on a regular basis, which can help alleviate overthinking as well.

- **Mental Health Awareness Programs**

The Induction of consciousness regarding the mental health problems, by conducting regular workshops, seminars and campaigns by the colleges and universities. This type of scheme has the potential to reduce stigma, enhance recognition of psychological distress by other students as well as nurture help-seeking behaviour.

- **Promotion of Daily Mindfulness Practices**

In addition, students may be taught to do simple things such as breathing techniques, guided meditation and writing in a journal. Short and sweet each day is a big booster for emotional regulation and cognitive awesome sauce.

- **Holistic Wellness Embedded in Curriculum**

Educational curriculum should be designed with Modules of mental health, emotional intelligence, stress management and well being. An integrated approach to education will facilitate both academic performance and mental resilience.

10. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. This paper has pertinent academic and managerial implications:



2. This calls to mind supporting data that suggest the integration of yoga and meditation into educational institutions is one such proven method for promoting mental well-being.
3. The research is an important consideration for schools who increasingly want to provide mental wellbeing programs in a structured way, in light of the increasing burden of psychiatric symptoms in young people.
4. This research solidifies the trend away from pharmacological interventions and medical treatment methods to more non-pharmacological, prevention-based, holistic treatment modalities.
5. It enriches our knowledge by illustrating the combined effect of physiological (yoga) and cognitive (meditation) modalities on mental health outcomes.

11. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has, some limitations but still provides important results:

- **Small Sample Size**

Results may not be generalisable due to the small sample size.

- **Restricted Study Area**

The study was conducted in a single institution which does not necessarily depict different educational or cultural environments.

- **Self-Reported Data**

Perhaps self-report measures can explain this; the poor reporting experience of their psychological state might provoke response bias.

Scope for Future Research

This opens several paths for further investigation:

- **Larger Sample Studies**

In future studies, a larger and more heterogeneous sample is recommended to enhance the robustness and generalisability of results.

- **Longitudinal Research**

Conclusion: The short-term effects of yoga and meditation on mental health have been reviewed comprehensively whereas longitudinal prospective studies are warranted to trace the longterm consequences.

- **Comparative Analysis Across Regions**

Additionally, comparative research utilizing rural vs urban; other demographically and culturally diverse settings will assist in improving the generalizability of these interventions.

- **Inclusion of Additional Variables**

Further influencing factors that could be investigated going forward include personality, academic performance, lifestyle measures and socio-economic status.



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