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Potentials of Yoga for Mental Health of School Students: An Integrative Review

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Abstract: Background- The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has released a report on the mental health survey of students in Classes 6 to 12. As per the findings, 29 percent of students lack concentration, while 43 percent have mood swings. The survey also found that 81 percent of students suffer from anxiety caused by studies, exams, and results. It affects the overall quality of life and is associated with anxiety, stress, and other psychological factors.

Objective- The purpose of the study was to conduct a review of the evidence base underpinning the effect of yoga on children's mental health.

Method- A review was conducted using the keywords 'yoga OR mindfulness AND school AND children OR child OR youth OR adolescent OR mental health' and all the probable terms in national and international data repositories such as PubMed, Scopus, Science Direct, Google scholar, web of science. The search was limited to studies in the English language.

Result- The evidence for yoga therapies in children is encouraging, although studies include methodological flaws such as small sample sizes and sparse information on interventions.

Conclusion- This review has examined whether school-based yoga effectively promotes mental health in school-aged children. This review has highlighted the positive effects of school-based yoga interventions on children's mental health.

Keywords -Yoga, mindfulness, school, children, adolescents, mental health

I. INTRODUCTION

In order to prevent and promote societal well-being overall, there has been a lot of focus in recent years on the physical and mental health of children and adolescents. The current era has grown extremely competitive due to globalization and modernization, and children and youth must contend with this competitiveness throughout every stage of their lives. There are numerous stressors that affect school-aged children. A child today faces an abundance of daily stressors and struggles to keep up with the enormous pressures from all institutions, including school, family, and society. These are leading to a variety of stress-related illnesses and psychological issues, which pose risks to the physical and mental health of school-age children.

The global versus the local, the universal versus the individual, culture, tradition vs. modernity, long-term vs. short-term considerations, the need for competition vs. the concern for equality of opportunity, extraordinary expansion of knowledge vs. human capacity to assimilate it, and the UNESCO report on the international commission on education for the twenty-first century all serve as dividers and barriers. Children and teenagers are more and more likely to experience academic stress. From the time a child enrolls in nursery school until they graduate into senior high school, there is increased pressure on children to succeed academically. School dropouts, poor performance, teenage violence, suicide, alcoholism, drug misuse, disaffection, demoralization and disillusionment, and depression are all signs of the mounting pressures placed on youngsters.

In recent years, academic stress has become a serious mental health issue. According to estimates, 10 to 30 percent of students deal with stress that has an impact on their ability to focus in class, their ability to adjust to social situations, as well as their overall emotional and physical health. Information overload, high expectations, academic pressure, unattainable goals, scarce chances, and intense competition are some of the major stressors that cause tension, worry, and anxiety. Academic stress victims frequently struggle with poor academic achievement, decreased peer popularity, focus issues, depression, physical symptoms, and substance addiction because they lack the knowledge to deal with these issues.

As a way to manage stress and enhance the quality of life, yoga is becoming more and more well-liked in both India and Western nations. One way to accomplish a goal of good health is by practicing yoga. Yoga significantly contributes to improving mental health, which is necessary for effective performance in all spheres of life.

80, grade 9 girls chosen based on their emotionality and test anxiety were the subjects of Sud & Prabha's study on the effectiveness of cognitive/relaxation training in reducing test anxiety.

Amoresen provided easy-to-implement suggestions for using yoga and meditation to assist young children in dealing with stress.

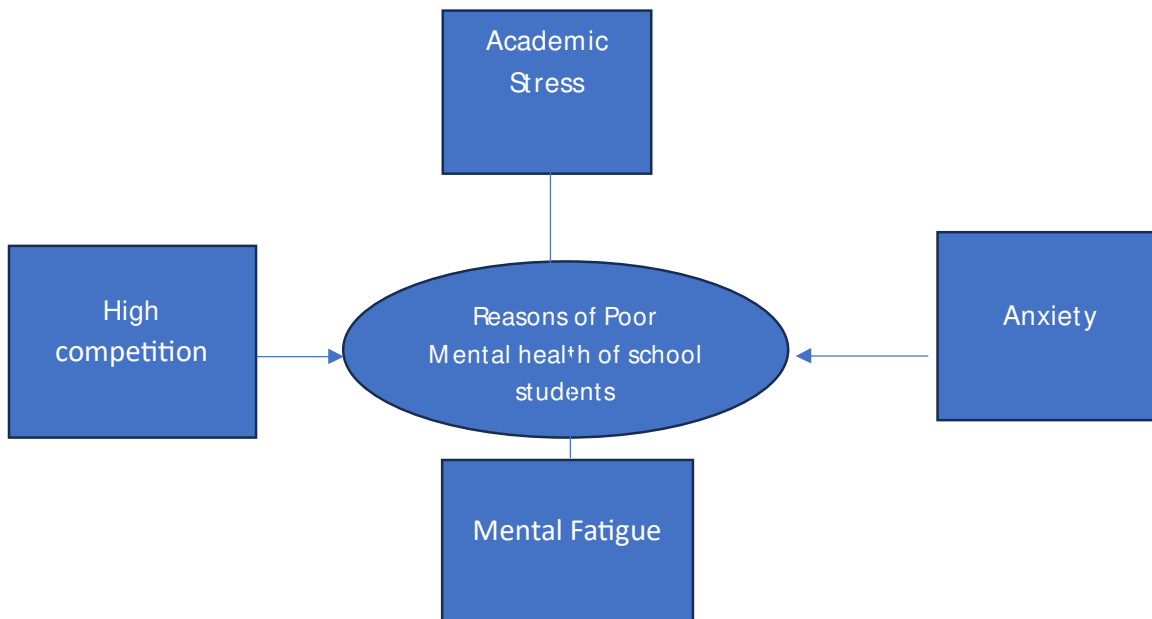


Figure 1. Factors causing poor mental health

II. CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, AND MENTAL HEALTH

(Telles et al., 2012) studied the effect of yoga on different aspects of mental health. The study showed a significant decrease in state anxiety, improvement in self-rated quality of sleep, decrease in somatization of stress, and in symptoms of discomfort due to over-breathing following one week of yoga. She concludes that yoga improves children’s physical and mental well-being. The ancient practice of yoga may help children and young people cope with stress and thus contribute positively to mental health.

(Khalsa, 2013) suggested in his study that today’s children require a creative, interactive syllabus, and participatory method in the teaching–learning process. This approach is applicable to learning yoga too. Thus, if we can communicate with children and young people effectively, they can adopt yoga as a powerful tool for themselves to minimize stress, as well as develop resilience to deal with it.

(Gururaja et al., 2011) helps to improve the mental health of both the young and seniors by reducing stress. Yoga can be wisely applied in welfare programs to improve the Quality of Life in all age groups.

What can we do as researchers and responsible citizens concerned with the healthy development of children and young people to give them a joyful environment and possibilities to reach their full potential? We would want to present the justifications for selecting yoga in light of this fundamental question. (Hagen & Nayar, 2014) concluded that short-term solutions oftentimes involve pharmaceutical treatments for children with mental health problems, which could leave them to face the immediate and long-term negative effects of medication. To provide children and young people the means to develop self-reflection, self-protection, self-regulation, and holistic self-development, we must look for additional solutions that include empowerment.

(Büssing et al., 2012) claims-

Yoga may well be effective as a supportive adjunct to mitigate some medical conditions, but not yet a proven stand-alone, curative treatment. Larger-scale and more rigorous research with higher methodological quality and adequate control interventions is highly encouraged because yoga may have potential to be implemented as a beneficial supportive/adjunct treatment that is relatively cost-effective, may be practiced at least in part as self-care behavioral treatment, provides a life-long behavioral skill, enhances self-efficacy and self-confidence and is often associated with additional positive side effects.

Despite such assertions, we need more scientific research enriched with demonstrative practice among children.

III. POTENTIAL OF YOGA FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH

The beauty of yoga is that its benefits are available to students of every school-age group,” according to Henningsen. She discusses how yoga can be a comprehensive approach to stress, something which is needed in the often tension-filled lives of children today.

(Kauts & Sharma, 2009) in their study stated that Yoga can enhance sleep, establish internal locus of control, and generally promote a healthy, balanced lifestyle. Yoga may also help youngsters become more self-aware of their own signs and emotions, which can help offset harmful societal and cultural pressures like the current media trend of always being available online. Regular yoga practise generally leads to enhanced attention and concentration, which frequently leads to better academic performance.

(Diamond A, Lee K., n.d.) suggested that yoga helps children with attention problems as well as to support executive function development A number of studies have also suggested that yoga can assist children with special needs.

According to (Vempati & Telles, 2002), the mental benefits of yoga are related to heart rate reduction, which tells the brain to activate the parasympathetic nervous system. Similar to this, yoga helps people relax since it lowers sympathetic activity.

Similar to adults, when toddlers are exposed to sensory overload, the sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight) is frequently activated. Activating the parasympathetic nervous system, on the other hand, improves our capacity for concentration and learning. Seniors and young individuals alike are believed to experience less anxiety because to yoga. Yoga may therefore promote healthy growth and lifelong learning.

A series of recommendations for how to include yoga into the lives of children and adolescents, based on a cultural perspective on child development and childhood sociology, is what we believe is still lacking. Yoga is frequently marketed as a discipline of global benefit, with a philosophy and method to attain harmony and encourage human growth. However, yoga pedagogy must be context-specific and tailored to the individual practitioner audiences. Additionally, we think that serious, multidisciplinary yoga instruction should be grounded in children's needs and daily lives while also being joyful and enjoyable.

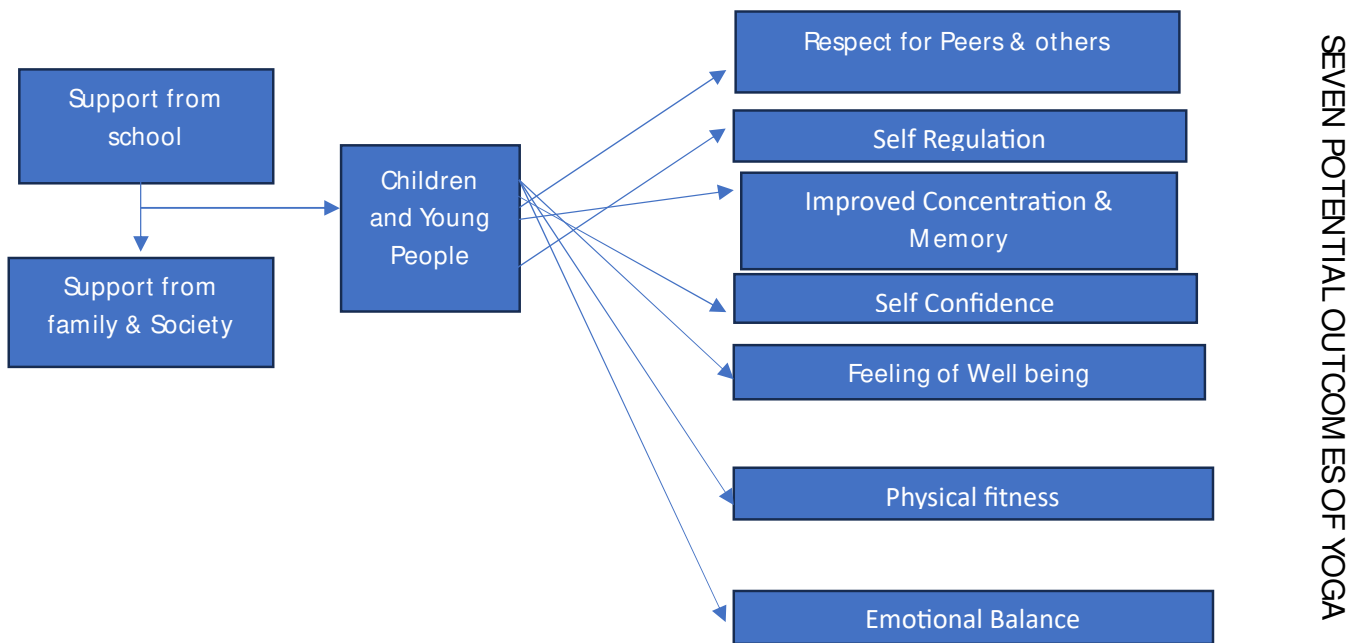


FIGURE 2. YOGA FOR YOUNG PEOPLE’S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING.

IV. DISCUSSION

According to this article, yoga can be a useful tool for kids. The adage, "If you practise yoga every day with perseverance, you will be able to meet the challenges of life with steadiness and maturity," is one that we believe also applies to children and young people." (BKS Iyenger, n.d.)[p. 127].

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 classes using a variety of formats. For the use of these spaces and to practise yoga, many people pay fees. However, while having the primary role of fostering the development of children's and adolescents' full potential, schools, pre-schools, and the public sector of education are not keeping up with the trend.

Children of today deserve a dynamic, interactive curriculum and a participatory approach to teaching and learning. This method can be used to learn yoga as well.



Therefore, if we can properly connect with children and young people, they will be able to adopt yoga as a potent tool for themselves to reduce stress and build resilience to handle it. We think research should be a priority in order to better understand how kids and teens may learn yoga, practise it consistently, and apply it to their daily lives. Any form of mental or social stress can be relieved through yoga. From a social standpoint, we believe that yoga can make people more socially aware, which may boost the likelihood of children and young people developing social skills.

As previously mentioned, yoga practise has the ability to enhance children's and adolescents' mental health. We have maintained that children and young people are agents with the capacity to evolve both as individuals and as members of society, and that yoga is a way to achieve both parties' holistic wellbeing. In an effort to restore social democratic structures for yoga and the mental health of children and adolescents, we may include this conceptual value framework of the individual and society into a continuum.

We believe it's crucial to remember that kids' yoga is a distinct practise and not just an adult version of yoga when teaching it to kids. In order for kids to enjoy yoga, it's necessary to meet them where they are. Yoga teachers' primary motivation should be to help kids develop self-confidence and attention by helping them become more aware of who they are on the inside.

V. CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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