

The Yoga Effect: Reducing Stress and Improving Well-being in Educational Institutions

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Abstract

Yoga, Yoga practice, Meditation, and Yoga exercises have been somewhat known in our society since ancient times. Yoga is an ancient method that has been directly or indirectly initiated since the beginning of human civilization, and we can still see its necessity in it's evolved from today. Yoga practice is deeply intertwined with human breathing, thus its necessity remains immense even today. Many believe that Yoga practice serves as a great remedy for mental stress and maintaining health. In school education, there are some changes in the curriculum every year, either directly or indirectly. It impacts not only teachers' teaching methods but is also significantly reflected in students' studying methods. To establish and sustain oneself in today's competitive job market or educational field, it is essential to improve the educational system while also enhancing brain development, as well as to adopt new teaching methods. In order to adjust oneself in the field of education, it has become absolutely necessary to resort to yoga practice to cope with the pressure that needs to be endured. School education is not pursued by students merely to get a job. Rather, many current students pursue education to establish themselves in society and to advance towards some innovative creative endeavors. In this process, it is very important for students to stay healthy. Along with freeing oneself from the pressure of educational institutions' curricula, staying healthy, engaging in even higher education, and showcasing the country to the world, yoga or yoga practice has become an indispensable aspect; it can be said at this moment.

Keywords: Yoga, Educational Institution, Pressure of Study, Mental stress, Well being

Introduction

The concept of Yoga rooted form ancient Hindu Texts i.e. is Veda. The “Yoga” is a Sanskrit term means “to Yoke” or “to Unite”. According to Yogic scriptures, the practice of Yoga unites individual consciousness with Universal Consciousness, symbolizing a state of perfect harmony between mind and body, and between humanity and nature. Yoga refers to the goal, unity and harmony with oneself and others, but also to the methods by which that goal achieve. Yoga practice is deeply intertwined with human breathing, thus its necessity remains immense even today. Mental health is a crucial aspect of overall health and well-being. Disorders like depression, anxiety, and stress impact

millions of people globally, placing a heavy burden on both individuals and society. Traditional treatments for mental health conditions typically include medication and psychotherapy. As a result, alternative therapies such as yoga have become increasingly popular as complementary approaches. Yoga, an ancient practice with a long history, has been used for centuries to enhance both physical and mental wellness. (Baghel, 2023). Every year, the school curriculum undergoes various changes, both directly and indirectly. As a result, students today are constantly occupied with completing the syllabus, managing academic pressure, handling assignments, attending tuitions, and preparing for various exams such as unit tests, midterms, and summative assessments. In today's education sector, it has become absolutely necessary to take refuge in yoga to cope with the mental and physical stress that must be endured to adapt oneself appropriately. School education is now not only aimed at obtaining a job, but many students pursue education with the goal of establishing themselves in society and contributing to society through new creative and innovative works. Study shown that, in ancient times, yoga and physical education were highly valued in Gurukul as and regarded as essential components of a student's overall education. Similarly, by around 800 BC, the ancient Greeks had established a structured physical education system. They created specialized training centers known as gymnasiums, where both boys and girls received physical and military training. In the 1800s, various countries such as Germany, the United Kingdom, and Sweden began introducing physical education programs into their school systems. (Singh, 2016)

Review of Literature

Chauhan & Saxsena (2024) studied on 'Yoga and Mindfulness in Educational Settings: Impact on Student well-being and performance'. The study revealed that yoga has positive effect on students wellbeing and it improves emotional regulations and enhance overall mental wellbeing among students. Daily practice of yoga reduces anxiety and depression of students. Not only that, the study also, highlighted the practices of yoga associated with growing self awareness, empathy and builds a good interpersonal relationship among students. (Saxena, 2024). Bhagel (2023) studied on 'Effects of Yoga on Mental Health'. The study revealed that regularly practicing of yoga has significant effect on mental health. It reduces stress, anxiety, depression and deal with overall wellbeing and quality of life. Thus yoga can be considered as a complementary therapy for individuals and mental health condition. (Baghel, 2023). Anburani et.al (2023) conducted a study on 'The Role of Yoga in Enhancing Student Well-being and Academic Performance: A Comprehensive Review'. The result found that, yoga promotes emotional balance and resilience and improve positive school atmosphere. That is beneficial for students, educators and policymakers too. The study also highlighted, students who practice yoga on a regular basis they have better understanding and wellbeing metrics and higher academic achievement than students who do not practice yoga. (Siddappa Naragatti, 2023). Singh (2016) studied on 'Implementing Yoga Education in schools for holistic development in students' and said that, Yoga education plays a vital role in the development of personality of Childs. Daily practice of yoga restores our mental balance and harmony, develop a positive good health. The researcher also mentioned that, yogic exercise increase self confidence, physical fitness and make a balance between psycho-social relationship. So, that yoga education has become important component of school education. (Singh, 2016)

Importance of Yoga in Mental Health: Yoga plays a vital role in promoting holistic health by fostering the integrated development of the body, mind, and spirit. This harmonious balance is essential for achieving overall well-being and a higher quality of life.

Types of Yoga and Benefits: Different styles of yoga associated with unique benefits, each contributing to physical, mental, and spiritual wellness:

Hatha Yoga: focuses on physical postures (asanas) and breath control (pranayama), improving strength, flexibility, and mental stability.

Raja Yoga: emphasizes meditation (dhyana) and mental discipline, helping individuals gain control over their thoughts and attain spiritual growth.

Bhakti Yoga: is centered on devotion and love for the divine, cultivating inner peace, emotional balance, and a sense of bliss.

Karma Yoga: advocates selfless action and service, purifying the heart and mind while guiding one toward spiritual liberation. (Nishad, 2021)

Mental Stress and Well-being: How can yoga contribute.

Yoga can be described as a process of conscious evolution that fosters four-fold awareness by enhancing individuals' awareness of their body, mind, and emotions, while also developing meta-awareness—the realization of one's own lack of awareness (Gitananda, 1981). It is believed to support holistic health by positively influencing mental, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual wellbeing (Bhavanani, 2014). Psychologically, yoga has been associated with increased somatic awareness, improved mood, and greater subjective wellbeing. Regular practice may enhance self-acceptance, self-actualization, and social adaptability, thereby helping to reduce anxiety and depression. Additionally, cognitive functions such as attention, concentration, memory, and learning are often reported to improve through consistent yoga practice (Bhavanani, 2014). Thus from the various studies it can say that, yoga practice has an immense role for well-being. Yoga has emerged as an effective method for reducing stress among students, who often face academic pressure, performance anxiety, and emotional challenges. Incorporating practices such as asanas (physical postures), pranayama (breathing techniques), and meditation can help students manage stress by calming the mind and improving focus. These techniques activate the relaxation response, reducing cortisol levels and promoting a sense of inner balance. Regular yoga practice has been shown to enhance concentration, emotional regulation, and overall mental wellbeing, enabling students to cope better with academic demands and social pressures. As a result, yoga can be a valuable tool in improving both academic performance and psychological resilience.

Yoga for well-being of students: Education has been regarded as an essential aspect of human life since ancient times. In the modern age, the standards of education are often determined through formal degrees and prestigious job titles. However, in the past, education was not confined to just the classroom. Rather, students learned under the direct supervision of a teacher (acharya/gurus) in the

sacred environment of gurukul situated in natural surroundings. There, various arts, sciences, and life skills were taught through an integrated approach, with a special emphasis on discipline, ethics, and personal development and increasing of concentration.

Improves attention and concentration: With the concept of that, now days in the schools yoga has been introduced, which Yoga practice has been proven to be especially effective for students' breathing. It helps to increase their attention in school and reduce mental distractions. Various studies have shown that regular mindfulness practice in educational institutions makes students more focused on their studies and classroom activities. Additionally, research shows that yoga enhances memory and decision-making skills, leading to improved academic performance. It aids in increasing students' overall mental processing abilities and has a positive impact on exam preparation.

Reduce stress and anxiety: Research has proven that regular yoga practice helps students to manage their emotions and stay calm during exam time, keeping them mentally healthy.

Yoga in Educational Institution: The New Education Policy (NEP), introduced on 29th July 2020, has brought significant changes to the Indian education system. Under this policy, the academic structure has been reorganized into five stages: 5+3+3+4 and enhanced emphasis on technical, professional, and skill-based education. The policy also prioritizes the integration of Indian languages, arts, and culture through the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). This includes elements such as Indian healing practices, traditional sports, and aiming to preserve and promote India's rich heritage. At least one subject related to these areas is made compulsory, ensuring exposure to traditional wisdom and opening avenues for research and development. Overall, the policy not only modernizes education but also reinforces the importance of India's cultural and traditional strengths, especially in the context of health and wellness. (Mrs. Rashmi P. Ranade¹, 2023) Practicing yoga poses—such as Tree Pose, Downward Dog, and Warrior Pose—offers several benefits for school students. These exercises enhance physical fitness, flexibility, and muscle strength, while also reducing the risk of injuries during sports and physical education activities. Beyond physical health, yoga fosters emotional intelligence through breathing exercises and self-awareness techniques, helping students pause, reflect, and respond mindfully to various situations. Additionally, yoga has a positive impact on self-esteem. As students learn and master new poses and breathing practices, they build confidence, which translates into greater self-assurance both inside and outside the classroom. As academic expectations and syllabus intensity increase, schools across India are turning to yoga to help students manage stress, improve attention, and maintain overall wellbeing during rigorous study schedules.

Notable examples of schools and state initiatives where yoga is practiced

1. Haryana Government Schools: Yoga has been officially included in the curriculum for Classes I to X in government schools, integrating both theoretical and practical components akin to physical education ^{The Times of India+11The Indian Express+11The Times of India+11The Tribune}. The state has also rolled out village-level yoga centers and appointed trained instructors to promote grassroots participation.

2. Karnataka (State-wide plan): From the 2023–24 academic years, yoga becomes a formal part of the curriculum in high schools and colleges in Karnataka. Experts have worked with educators to prepare curricula and train teachers to deliver yoga as a structured subject .

3. Jharkhand Government Schools: The Jharkhand Education Project Council launched a “Yoga Olympiad” to institutionalize yoga in daily school life. Government and aided schools formed yoga clubs, conducted weekly sessions, monthly contests, and even participated in mass Surya Namaskar events under a standard 32-pose protocol .

4. Chennai Private Schools: Several Chennai schools—including Bala Vidya Mandir, Vidya Mandir, Ahobila Math, Vael’s Vidyashram, and Balalok Matriculation—regularly conduct yoga sessions to improve student concentration and reduce mental stress. Sessions are incorporated into the school routine, often during physical education periods or morning assemblies

5. Delhi Government Schools: The widely implemented Happiness Curriculum includes daily mindfulness and emotional education for grades Nursery through VIII. Yoga and breathing practices form part of broader efforts to promote mental well-being and decision-making skills among students

6. Private International and Other Schools: Schools like TVS Matriculation (Madurai), Oberoi International (Mumbai), and Hiranandani Upscale School (Chennai) offer yoga as part of their extracurricular activities and wellness programs, alongside art, meditation, and sports.

Advantages of yoga in school: Yoga promotes holistic development by nurturing students' physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. It plays a significant role in reducing stress, helping students regulate their emotions and develop effective coping strategies. Additionally, yoga enhances focus and concentration, which positively influences academic performance and cognitive functioning. On the physical front, regular yoga practice contributes to better flexibility, strength, and posture. It also supports emotional wellbeing by providing students with tools to manage their emotions, build resilience, and maintain a positive mindset. Lastly, integrating yoga into education helps students develop a deeper connection to Indian culture and heritage, instilling a sense of pride in the country’s ancient traditions.

Conclusion: Yoga is an essential component of a well-rounded educational experience, contributing significantly to the holistic development of students. It not only nurtures physical health but also plays a vital role in enhancing mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. By fostering self-awareness, discipline, and inner balance, yoga supports the development of a student’s total personality. National Policy on Education (NPE) 1992 emphasized the value of integrating constructive social programs within the curriculum and observed a strong positive correlation between student participation in such programs—including yoga, sports, and games—and their personal growth and social responsibility. Moreover, regular practice of yoga has been shown to enhance physical fitness, which positively influences academic performance by improving concentration, memory, and energy levels. Emotionally, yoga encourages resilience, self-regulation, and a calm mindset, contributing to a more positive and focused learning environment. Importantly, the benefits of yoga extend beyond students—it also supports the health and wellbeing of teachers and school staff, fostering a healthier, more harmonious



school atmosphere. In this way, yoga becomes not just a physical activity, but a transformative educational tool that enriches the entire school community.

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