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### THE EFFECT OF YOGA PRACTICE IN ADOLESCENTS WITH DEPRESSION – CASE STUDY

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#### **Abstract**

Adolescence is one of the most significant stages of development. Many physical emotional and social changes along with exposure to poverty, abuse and violence can make adolescents prone to mental health problems. Globally depression is the fourth most leading cause of illness in adolescents in the age 15-19 and it's the fifteenth most common reason for illness for those in the age 10-14. Yoga and mindfulness are identified as the most ancient mind-body medicine and interventions. Research studies indicate that yoga practice has helped in reducing depression, Becks Depression Inventory (BDI) 95% of the times.

Research design: Case Study method. Observations were made systematically and the opinions of parents, school counsellors and doctors were recorded. General Objective: Specific Objective: 1) To study the socio-demographic profile of adolescents. 2) To study the depressive symptoms in adolescents after yoga practice. 3) To study depressive symptoms in adolescents after meditation. Ethical Concern: concern of the adolescent and parent was obtained before the study. Ethical clearance obtained from Amrita Ethical Committee attached. Results: Three groups of 5 students were studied at different times each group were recommended by parents/ school councilors/doctors. Yoga therapy for 2 – 4 weeks or more can reduce depression. The depressive emotions like sadness, feeling of worthlessness, sleeplessness, loneliness, lack of concentration and hopelessness could be reduced significantly. The parent's teachers and doctors stated that positive indications were visible after yoga therapy. Conclusion: We can conclude that therapeutic yoga can be identified as an auxiliary method in treating depression both clinical and non-clinical depression, the medication should not be altered without doctors consent.

## Introduction

Adolescence is a unique developmental period. Many physical, emotional and social changes along with exposure to poverty, abuse and violence can make adolescents vulnerable to mental health problems. Promoting the psychological wellbeing of adolescents and protecting them from risk factors that may affect their development and their physical health should be protected in adulthood. Globally depression is the fourth most leading cause of illness and disability in adolescents in the age group 15 -19 and fifteenth most leading cause of illness for those who are aged 10-14<sup>(1)</sup>. Unipolar depression is common among adolescents worldwide but is often unrecognized. The occurrence of depression increases notably in girls after puberty. The burden of adolescent depression is high in lower-middle-income countries<sup>(2)</sup>. There is a significant association ( $P < 0.01$ ) between the extend of depression at ages 17 to 18 years and occurrence of depressive symptoms, major depression, treatment of depression, anxiety disorder, treatment of anxiety disorders and suicidal attempts. The results of the covariate factors indicate the extend of depression at ages 17 to 18 is associated with later depression and suicidal attempts<sup>(3)</sup>. Studies indicate that yoga and mindfulness is identified as the most ancient forms of mind-body medicine interventions that have shed light on the fine detail and complex dynamic interplay with body and mind. Yoga and meditation in the west fall under the broad category of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)<sup>(4)</sup>, randomized, controlled pilot trial indicates that yoga practice helped in reducing depression, Becks Depression Inventory (BDI) 95% of the times. In the sub-analysis, the participants completing 8 weeks measures were more likely to achieve remission, defined per BDI score  $\leq 9$  (p-value =0.018). The effect of yoga in reducing BDI score was significantly large<sup>(5)</sup>. The results of the study Yoga for Depression: a systematic review and meta-analysis indicate that regarding depression, there was moderate evidence for short-term effects of yoga compared to usual care, and limited evidence compared to relaxation, and aerobic exercise. Limited evidence was found for short- term effects of yoga on anxiety compared to relaxation. The study concludes that yoga could be considered as an auxiliary treatment for patients with depressive disorders and individuals with elevated levels of depression<sup>(6)</sup>. The study Yoga for depression; The research evidence has identified five randomized controlled trials each of which used different forms of yoga interventions in which the levels of depression ranged from mild to severe. All the studies reported positive findings<sup>(7)</sup> The studies indicate that yoga can be identified as an ancillary method to treat depression. Most of the studies have indicated positive results, the studies also suggest doing further research to identify the effect of yoga on depression.

## Methods

**Research Design:** Case study method has been used to understand how yoga practice affects adolescents with depression. The researcher has taken care to systematically observe and record varying aspects, the observations have been

analyzed – keeping in mind the aim of the study and care has been taken to keep the observations and analysis within the theoretical framework.

**General Objective:** To study the effect of Yoga practice in adolescents with depression

**Specific Objectives:** 1) To study the socio-demographic profile of adolescents. 2) To study the depressive symptoms in adolescents after yoga practice. 3) To study depressive symptoms in adolescents after meditation.

**Ethical Concern:** concern of the adolescent and parent was obtained before the study. Ethical clearance obtained from Amrita Ethical Committee attached.

### Theories employed

1) Enjoyment of Highest attainable standard of health as Fundamental Right  
a. Health: “state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely absence of disease or infirmity”<sup>(8)</sup>.

b. Mental Health: is the state of wellbeing in which each person has the capacity of individual to understand his own potential, can deal with normal stress and strain of life, can work fruitfully and is able to give back to his community<sup>(9)</sup>.

2) Yoga Therapy: specific therapy including breathing techniques, Yoga asana or postures, dietary modifications, daily routine or timetable corrections are given. The physical illnesses are also addressed as “a healthy mind resides only in a healthy body”. The medical conditions of the client are noted down during the admission for reference, the data is confidential and will not be shared. Special care is taken to ensure that the sessions are interactive, enjoyable and produce measurable results. Yoga is “*Chitta Vritti Niroda*” (as defined by Sage Patanjali) which means “*Chitta*” = mind, “*Vritti*” = Thoughts and “*Niroda*” = Retrain or stop i.e. to restrain the unwanted thoughts of the mind. *The first step* is to install a good discipline. The installation of discipline is of vital importance i.e. installing a proper timetable, this is to ensure that the body’s biological clock works properly. *The second step* is to cultivate good hygiene, eating and sleeping habits, then the person is taught proper breathing. *The Third Step* the person is taught “asana” or postures which would help to resolve his physical illnesses and to enhance the functioning of the body. Each “asana” or posture targets specific muscles and internal organs. *The fourth step* is carefully reflecting the completion of task and objectives set by the clients. *The fifth step* is to strengthen the group and to identify the leaders and to slowly transfer authority. *Lastly* follow up and refresher programmes are offered<sup>(10)</sup>.

3) Task centred practice: short term therapeutic sessions where clients decide on measurable goals as per their needs and the therapist teach the client how to use simple techniques to address the specific problem of the client. The focus is to enable the client to understand his problem and to seek timely help. The to-do list or check-list are given to clients which is evaluated and good practises are recognised<sup>(11)</sup>.

### Results

**The case I** (5 students with non-clinical depression participated in yoga therapy for one month)

The indicators of depression have reduced significantly among the students after two weeks of yoga therapy. The mood of the students significantly improved they no longer exhibited sadness, instead they gained a positive insight towards life. The students showed more satisfaction in their day to day activities. Their social interactions with people improved and the students had improved appetite. The sleeping pattern of the students of students also improved significantly. The parents of the students stated that they have become more energetic and active in the day to day activities and they displayed an interest in studies, doing yoga and indulging in recreational activities.

**Case II** (5 students with lack of concentration, lack of interest in studies and non-clinical depression referred for yoga therapy for 45 days, referred by school counselors.)

Then after 3 weeks of yoga therapy, the concentration of students improved, they could concentrate for 5-10 minutes without difficulty. Depressive emotions like sadness, feeling of loneliness and lack of interest in day to day activities reduced. The school counsellors stated that the students showed improvement in studies and were able to concentrate and the meditation techniques were very effective to improve concentration. The parents stated that the energy level of the students improved and they engaged in day to day activities with more interest.

**Case III** (5 students with clinical depression under meditation were referred for yoga therapy for 3 months)

After a month of yoga therapy the depressive emotions - sadness, feeling of worthlessness, hopelessness, lack of satisfaction on the day to day activities reduced significantly. The psychiatrist said that yoga therapy has helped in improving the student's digestibility and body metabolism which improved the functioning of the medicine, the doctor also said that yoga therapy has improved the student's mood significantly. The parents said the energy level of the students have improved and they started to do their day to day activities better.

### **Discussions and Conclusions**

**Discussions:** Each client often needs a different approach or combination hence the skill of the yoga therapist is of crucial importance. The study has not employed any tests, but medical examination can be done (provided the client gives consent.) All the aspects of yoga therapy have equal significance and hence cannot be isolated

**Limitations:** the researcher has not controlled the other factors which may interfere with the client's mental health. Considering the ethical principles all means of recording i.e. audio-video recording of sessions is not done. Generalizations are not easy since each client requires a tailor-made approach. The cultural barriers, self-awareness, educational status, socio-economic status and family support are confronting variables

**Recommendations:** Yoga therapy can be used to improve the psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents with depression. The Yoga Therapy will attract more adolescents with depression or mental health contingencies to the health care

centers as it has less stigma and more acceptability. The yoga and meditation can be made a daily routine in schools as it would improve student's wellbeing. Care should be taken to employ practitioners with substantial knowledge in the field as a yoga therapist only then they will be able to address the individual need of the client.

Conclusion: the results indicate that the symptoms of depression can be reduced employing yoga therapy for a month or more. The depressive emotions like sadness, feeling of worthlessness, sleeplessness, loneliness, lack of concentration and hopelessness could be reduced significantly. The parent's teachers and doctors stated that positive indications were visible after 2-4 weeks of Yoga therapy. The doctors also stated that the medicines became more effective as the Yoga therapy helped in boosting body metabolism and digestion. The school counsellors stated that the meditation techniques improved the concentration of the students and the students were able to concentrate for 5 – 10 minutes. The yoga therapy can be understood as an auxiliary or supplementary method, it can enhance the functioning of the medication and can serve as preventive methodology, and it can also help in reaching to the people with stigma. We can conclude that therapeutic yoga can be identified as an auxiliary method in treating depression both clinical and non-clinical depression, the medication should not be altered without doctors consent.

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