



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Yoga**

**THE IMPACT OF YOGA-PREKSHA MEDITATION ON STRESS IN COLLEGE GOING STUDENTS: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY**

**KEY WORDS:**

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**ABSTRACT**

A comprehensive study was conducted involving 120 college going students of the age ranging between 18 to 30 years divided into two groups of 60 students (both boys and girls) each-one with those who were practicing (PG), and the other with those who were not practicing (NPG), Yoga-Preksha Meditation to compare, inter-alia, the level of stress. This study was conducted at Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, Ladnun and Government College, Sujangarh, in Rajasthan using the stress scale developed by Dr Vijay Laxmi and Dr Shruti Narain. The independent sample 't' test was applied to compare the stress level of students of the two groups. Findings of the study showed that students in the PG had low level of stress as compared to those in the NPG.

**Introduction**

With the ever-changing life styles and economic situations all over the world for the past about half a century, the lives of children who were earlier leading simple lives far away from the present day complexities of undue competitiveness, parents' pressurizing intervention, and multiplicity of auxiliary activities not only in the field of education but also in the arena of games and other socio-economic spheres, have also changed tremendously. The children all over the world are now at peril since it has led to a number of problems particularly psychological, which these children stand exposed to today. Having realized the great loss to the humanity in general and children in particular, each country in the world, within their respective sphere of duties, responsibilities and resources, are now trying to undo the great harm to the human beings especially at the nursing level i.e. the children.

When overloaded with such an unbearable psychological pressure, due to such changes, and not able to cope up with these sudden developments and the problems, the children at times get frustrated. This frustration, in turn, leads to mental conflict and then to anxiety which finally converts into psychological stress. As a matter of fact, there are considered to be two components of the term 'Stress'-psychological and physiological. This fact was suggested for the first time by Cannon (1914).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984), had defined stress as an individual's physical and psychological reaction to an event or object which is appraised as a threat. Campbell and Moore (2004) had also stated that stress is an adverse reaction that individuals manifest when they encounter excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them. Thus stress could be explained to be an emotion which arises especially when individuals are under overwhelming situation and believe that they are incompetent to handle it.

Stress, therefore, generally speaking, is an inescapable part of life which touches a wide range of groups of population irrespective of their age, gender, educational status or socioeconomic status. But inspite of this fact, stress, depression and anxiety are the most prevailing mental health problems among college students (Kitzrow, 2003; Marthoenis et al., 2018). This could be due to the fact that the college students have to face a number of educational, social, environmental and psychological adjustment difficulties when they are placed under new campus atmosphere which, in turn, may affect their psychosocial well-being and learning outcomes. The generality of the reasons for such

problems for the college students is that the new tertiary educational system has a big difference in its methods of teaching, academic requirements, type of relations between faculties and even relations among students themselves (Thawabieh & Qaisy, 2012). So to wrap up, stress appears to be very common in college students' life because they need not only to ensure their academic survival but also prepare themselves for their further career.

Before we talk slightly more about the stressors generally faced by the students, we would like to quote Baskar (2015) to make the perception of the word "stressor" clear. Baskar (2015) explains that occurrences of any situation through the stress are labelled as stressors. In America, a study by Dusselier et al. (2005) showed that 55% of students in that country, nationally, claimed their biggest stressor to be academic in nature. But, as mentioned above also, there are many other stressors also faced by the students during this period. Shannon et al. (1999) also find in their study that College students experience stress related to changes in lifestyle, increased workload, new responsibilities, and interpersonal relationships.

There is another aspect of stress which needs some elucidation at this stage. As we all know generally that stress is of two types- good and bad. This fact applies equally to the students also. The stress which prompts and motivates them to meet goals by studying more, working harder or sticking with a challenging task is good. But if the same stress reaches an unhealthy level is considered bad stress. So, while stress is an inevitable part of life, we can always improve upon the way we respond or react to different situations involving stress and avoid or change such situations particularly those which create negativity. This fact will also apply equally to the students' community. Hence our study, which is intended to draw a comparison between the two categories of students following different life styles.

It is believed widely that learning and practicing of Yoga and Preksha Meditation by children in the environs where they happen to be present for substantial part of their day specially in the educational institutions where they spend a considerable time of the day during their academic pursuit, may not only reduce the disequilibrium caused to an individual by a poor fit between an individual's capacity/resources and the demands of his environment; but may also prepare him/her for more endurance power in such tough situations.

It is also acknowledged by the generality of people that Yoga

brings together physical and mental disciplines which may help a person achieve peacefulness of body & mind and thus relax and manage stress and anxiety. Yoga can also enhance one's mood and overall sense of well-being. There is a fundamental principle of Yoga which says that our body and mind are inter connected. Stress in one domain would thus affect the other and vice versa. There is another aspect of Yogic practices which is relevant to the matter under this study. Practicing of Yoga can train one's counter-stress response system called the parasympathetic nervous system. With regular yoga practice, our chronic daytime stress hormone levels drop and our heart rate variability increases. This is a measure of our ability to tolerate stress. This has been shown to improve even after a few sessions of yoga.

The purpose of the present study was to compare the level of stress between practitioners and non-practitioners, of Yoga-Preksha Meditation. From the view point of earlier researches it was hypothesized that the subjects of practicing group of Yoga-Preksha Meditation would have low level of stress as compared to those of the non-practicing group.

**Materials and Methods**

**Design**

The purpose of the study was to compare the level of stress between the subject students of Yoga-preksha Meditation practicing group (PG) and those of Yoga-preksha Meditation non- practicing group (NPG). These students were drawn from two selected departments one each from two different institutes located in/near Ladnun, Dist. Nagaur, Rajasthan. The research design adopted was the cross sectional research design. The stress scores of all the participants were assessed in single session.

**Participants**

Totally 120 college going students with the age range of 18 to 30 years with satisfied inclusion/exclusion criteria had agreed to participate in this study. All the participants were of similar socio economic status and selected through mixed sampling method (accidental sampling method and purposive sampling method) in this investigation. The subjects were allocated to two groups viz. i. Yoga-Preksha Meditation practicing group (PG) and ii. Yoga-Preksha meditation non-practicing group (NPG)-each group having 60 students both boys and girls. Since it was to be a comparative empirical study, the students (participants) of the practicing group were selected from the Department of Yoga and Science of Living, Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, Ladnun (Rajasthan) and those of the non- practicing group were selected from Sujala Government College, Sujangarh, Churu, Rajasthan.

**Inclusion criteria:** Healthy College going students were included in this study. **Exclusion criteria:** Students having chronic physical & psychological illnesses. Necessary consent was obtained from the respective authorities of the concerned institutes and the students as well.

**Parameters (Measures):**

The scale of stress used in this study was developed by Dr Vijay Laxmi and Dr Shruti Narain and published by National Psychological Corporation, Agra, INDIA. This scale consisted of 40 items with four dimensions: (i) Pressure, (ii) Physical stress, (iii) Anxiety, and (iv) Frustration.

**Process of Data Collection:**

All the 120 participants of Yoga-Preksha Meditation Practicing Group (PG), and Yoga-Preksha Meditation Non-Practicing Group (NPG), were assessed for the stress. Necessary demographic data about personal information, socio-economic status etc. was taken from all the participants. Through an introductory address, the necessary details of the Scale of stress were explained to the participants. The scale was used group wise. While administering the scale, all the

members being assessed, were given clear instructions as per the requirements of the scale printed in the manual of the Scale before they were asked to fill up the questionnaire. They were given adequate time as per the guidance given in the relevant manual, to complete this work. The work of data collection was thus, completed in this manner in respect of all the 120 participants belonging to both the groups.

**Data Analysis**

SPSS version 18.0 was used for data analysis. An independent or unpaired t-test was applied to compare the level of stress between Yoga-Preksha Meditation Practicing Group (PG), and Yoga-Preksha Meditation Non-Practicing Group (NPG). The detail of statistical data analysis is given in the following paragraph with sub-title "Results".

**Results**

Yoga-Preksha Meditation Practicing group (PG) showed significant decrease in their stress level in comparison to Yoga-Preksha Meditation Non-Practicing Group (NPG), as shown in the Table 1.1 below:

**Table- 1.1 't'-ratio of Practicing and Non-Practicing of Yoga & Preksha Meditation Groups (PG and NPG) with respect to 'Stress'**

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	SEd	't' Value	Level of Significance
Stress	Practicing Group (N=60)	22.27	4.356	0.824	2.851	Significant at 0.01 level
	Non-practicing Group (N=60)	24.62	4.669			

Table-1.1 shows the comparison of 'stress' level between the students who are practicing Yoga & Preksha Meditation and those who are not being exposed to such a practice. The mean score of practicing group was 22.27±4.356 and the mean score of non practicing group was 24.62±4.669. The value of 't' test was 2.851. This demonstrates that the statistically significant difference was found in 'stress comparison' at 0.01 level of confidence. The practice of Yoga & Preksha Meditation in a day to day life contributes significant enhancement of educational aspiration with reduction of 'stress'. Therefore, it was concluded that making Yoga & Preksha Meditation a part of their day-to-day routine would help the students in dealing with their academic stress and improving their aspiration towards education.

**Discussion**

Our study under discussion has demonstrated that Yoga-Preksha Meditation practice significantly decreases the level of stress in the college going students. The results of this study are in tune with the outcome of many earlier studies which found that meditation, practiced over long periods, produces definite changes in perception, attention, and cognition. In the study conducted by Kumar and Tewary (2014), on college going students, it was found that the Yogic relaxation technique i.e. Yoga Nidra had reduced their anxiety level. Similarly, Singh and Singh (2016) found that one month's yoga intervention had decreased the level of stress and anxiety. In another study by Maddux et al. (2018) also, it was found that there was significant reduction in stress within the Yoga group over a period of 16 weeks. Compared to the control group, yoga practitioners had shown significant decreases in stress, anxiety, general psychological health, and significant increases in well-being. Results of the present study also get corroborated by the outcome of the studies conducted by Brent et.al. (2011) and Manocha, et.al (2011) wherein they found that meditation training program reduces stress and anxiety.

Apart from these studies there had been some other studies also whereby it was found that stress reduces in students and also in other categories of people too along with improvement of other health parameters. Physical activity like yogic practice and sports plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress (Reddy & Ammani, 2013); Yoga is effective in enhancing emotional well-being and resistance to stress in the workplace (Hartfiel et al, 2011). In another study Woodyard (2011) observed that Yoga helps relieve stress by keeping the body healthy and releasing endorphins, natural hormones that make you feel better. Yoga also relieves stress through stretching. Hence the findings of the present study and all the supportive studies reveal that students who practices Yoga and Meditation module showed a significant reduction in the level of stress.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The present Study suggests that during the academic pursuit of the college-going students, if parents, teachers and authorities of the concerned academic organizations could invest in strategic preventive-interventions like Yoga and Preksha Meditation, academic achievements of these students may increase and their mental monotony may reduce. Thus the study encourages policy makers to initiate Yoga-Preksha Meditation as a daily activity at school and college levels through standardized Yoga and Meditation curricula, besides providing a good support for therapists to apply yoga as a rehabilitative adjunct therapy to address students' violent behavior and stress. Though we cannot fully protect our children from being victims to aggression, stress and frustration, we can surely equip them with suitable dexterities by exposure to preventive Yogic life style.

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