



Yoga and Mindfulness: A Preventive Approach to Stress in Teenagers

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ABSTRACT

The adolescent years are characterised by rapid changes in physical, emotional, and social aspects. Adolescence is a vital developmental period that is often accompanied with heightened levels of worry and stress. There have been a number of variables that have lately attracted increased attention to the mental health of teenagers. Some of these problems include identity crises, academic pressure, peer pressure, and excessive exposure to the internet. Yoga and mindfulness are two non-pharmacological treatments that have showed promise in recent years. Both of these therapies attempt to promote emotional regulation, self-awareness, and psychological resilience. The primary emphasis of this paper is on the use of yoga and mindfulness practices as preventive approaches to reduce stress levels in teenagers. By incorporating breathing exercises (pranayama), physical postures (asanas), and meditation into their daily routines, adolescents have the potential to create healthier methods of managing stress and improve their mental health. According to the findings of empirical study, adolescents who regularly engage in self-care practices such as yoga and mindfulness report improved concentration, reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression, and increased levels of inner peace and self-esteem. These activities cultivate a mindset that is compassionate and nonjudgmental, both of which are necessary for the development of emotional characteristics and awareness of the present moment. It is possible for educational institutions to cultivate a culture of mental wellbeing and preventive mental health treatment by including structured yoga and mindfulness programs into their curriculums. The implementation of this preventive approach not only reduces the chance of long-term mental health problems, but it also equips adolescents with the skills they need to tackle the challenges that they will encounter in life with poise and clarity.

Keywords: Yoga, Mindfulness, Teenagers, Stress Management, Emotional Well-being, Preventive Mental Health, Pranayama.



INTRODUCTION

There are significant changes that take place on many levels throughout the adolescent years, including the mental, emotional, physical, and social environments. During this period of life, numerous challenges present themselves, including but not limited to the following: peer pressure, academic expectations, family connections, the growing influence of digital media, and the process of constructing one's own identity. These are just some of the many challenges that emerge. The mental health of adolescents may be negatively impacted by these circumstances in a variety of ways, including but not limited to anxiety, depression, impatience, and behavioural disorders. Due to the increasing frequency of stress and mental health issues among adolescents on a global scale, there is a greater need than ever before for interventions that are both comprehensive and preventive. Traditional professional treatments are essential for dealing with major mental health concerns; but, in many instances, these therapies may not be sufficient or readily available. It is for this reason that there is a discernible movement in the area of preventive mental health treatment, which seeks to improve psychological wellbeing, emotional control, and resilience in the face of stress before it develops into a problem.

The practices of yoga and mindfulness have shown their potential as evidence-based methods for regulating emotions and reducing stress in this context. Yoga is a system of physical postures (asanas), breathing exercises (pranayama), and meditative practices that, when considered as a whole, create greater interior awareness and stability. Yoga's roots may be traced back to ancient Indian philosophy, and it is now gaining favour in therapeutic settings. In addition to assisting in the development of a heightened sensitivity to and control over one's internal sensations, mindfulness, which is described as "the non-judgmental awareness of the present moment," is advantageous in this regard. Both of these approaches assist one become more robust and self-assured when confronted with challenging circumstances.

According to research, frequent yoga and mindfulness practice may be beneficial for adolescents in addressing a range of mental health concerns. These issues include decreased levels of the stress hormone cortisol, improved mood, enhanced focus, and increased self-esteem. Through the use of these approaches, which encourage self-awareness, empathy, and healthy ways of expressing emotions, it is possible to experience an increase in emotional intelligence. When they are included into educational programs and community-based initiatives, they have a multiplicative influence on the well-being of both students and communities. As a result of this, engaging in activities such as yoga and practicing mindfulness might be considered effective methods for assisting teenagers in managing stress before it ever begins. Teenagers are the ideal candidates for these strategies since they teach them coping skills that will remain with them throughout their whole lives. Additionally, they are simple for them to utilise and will not do them any harm, which will assist them in developing greater emotional stability, resilience, and awareness. Within the context of advocating for the introduction of yoga and mindfulness into



educational and public health frameworks, this study analyses the role and impact of these practices in lowering stress among teenagers.

OBJECTIVE

1. To investigate the potential of yoga as a stress-relieving practice for teenagers
2. To investigate the relationship between meditation and the reduction of stress in teenagers

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

Third-year English as a Second Language (ESL) students from an Elche school were the participants in the intervention. There were around twenty-five students enrolled in each of the six different classes that were offered this year. Because of this, the sample consisted of 149 adolescents. Each of the groups that were selected was allocated in a random manner. From the three groups that comprised the control group, a total of 75 students were selected for the sample, while from the three groups that comprised the experimental group, 74 students were selected. The average age was around 14.6 years, with a standard deviation of 0.5 years.

Procedure

A quasi-experimental design that was based on convenience sampling was used to conduct the study. The research included two groups, one of which served as a control and the other as an experimental subject. Additionally, the research was assessed at two different periods in time, namely before and after the intervention. At the end of the second quarter, a didactic unit was developed on Block 5, which was titled "Manifestations of Motor Culture." The intervention was comprised of six sessions of fifty minutes each, and these sessions served as the building blocks of the intervention (Figure 1). In order to determine whether or not the intervention had any impact on the kids' emotional awareness, the classes were split into two equal groups prior to the administration of the intervention. The control group continued with the same sessions as before, while the experimental group developed the same didactic unit but incorporated a unique warm-up that included sun salutations, mindfulness exercises, breathing exercises, and relaxation methods as part of each of the six sessions. The control group continued with the same sessions as previously. Furthermore, the primary objective of the first session was to instruct and practise the principles of yoga with the group that was experiencing the experiment. Prior to and during the development of the lesson, students were given the opportunity to express their emotional intelligence via the completion of a questionnaire. In order to get the necessary consent, individuals from the management team of the selected centre were contacted, and a timetable for the completion of the survey was mutually agreed upon. This was done in compliance with Royal Decree, which makes reference to the LOMLOE. The surveys were given out to students during their Physical Education lessons, both at the beginning and the end of a didactic unit that covered the principles of Block 5 and motor culture expressions. It was made available to them all of the information that they need in order to complete the survey in an honest and trustworthy manner. Approximately five minutes was all that was required to complete the questionnaires.

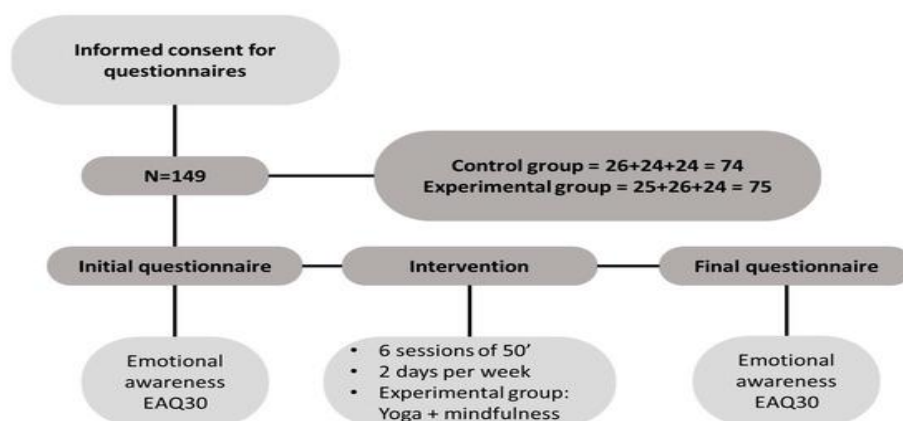


Figure 1. Summary of the procedure.

Measurements

The updated version of the Emotional Awareness Questionnaire (EAQ30) was used in order to assess the level of emotional awareness possessed by students in the context of the Spanish language. The reliability value was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and it was found to be 0.74. This survey has thirty questions, each of which offers a Likert-type answer option, with the possible responses ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 2 (sometimes true) to 3 (extremely true). There are six distinct dimensions shared by these things:

Distinction of Emotions (DE): the following: 1, 7, 13, 19, 24, 29, 30. As an example, consider item 7: "It is hard to tell if I feel angry, sad, or something else."

Verbal Exchange of Emotions (VE): items 2, 8, and 14. Item 8: "I find it hard to talk to someone about how I feel" is one example.

Emotional Reaction (ER): items 15, 20, 25, and 3. "Other people do not need to know how I feel," for instance, is item 3.

Bodily Awareness (BA): 4, 10, 16, 21, and 26. For instance, item 10 states, "I can also feel it in my body when I am upset."

Analysis of Emotions (AE): 6, 12, 18, 23, and 28. As an example, consider item 23: "It's important to know how I feel."

Attention to Others' Emotions (AO): 5, 11, 17, 22, and 27 pieces. Item 5: "It is important to know how my friends feel" is one example.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics calculations were performed on the variables that were being investigated in this research. These calculations included medians, standard deviations, and means. Since there were more than fifty participants in both the control group and the experimental group, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was taken into consideration. All of the variables were examined to see whether or not they were normal. Taking this into consideration, we carried out non-parametric Mann-Whitney U tests in order to compare the results of the groups both before and after the intervention. Additionally, we used the Wilcoxon signed-rank test in order to compare the outcomes of the groups within each intervention group. A non-normal distribution was discovered in the data set. Emotional response, physiological awareness, analysis of emotions,



attention to others' feelings, verbal exchange of emotions, and differentiation of emotions were the components of the questionnaire that served as the dependent variables. The group, which included both the control and experimental groups, was the independent variable in this study. For the purpose of statistical processing, the data was processed using Jamovi 2.0, which is a free statistical application.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

According to what was said before, the questionnaire in question provides information on six distinct elements. Prior to and during the intervention, it was administered to both the control group and the experimental group. In the following table, Table 1, the data for each dimension are shown, together with their respective means and standard deviations.

Table 1. EAQ30 Six Dimensions Descriptive Analysis, Pre- and Post-Intervention

Group	Dimension	PRE (Mean $\pm$ SD)	POST (Mean $\pm$ SD)
Control	Distinction of Emotions	1.73 $\pm$ 0.462	1.89 $\pm$ 0.442
Experimental		1.80 $\pm$ 0.481	1.93 $\pm$ 0.434
Control	Verbal Exchange	2.00 $\pm$ 0.375	1.96 $\pm$ 0.390
Experimental		1.97 $\pm$ 0.335	1.95 $\pm$ 0.366
Control	Emotional Reaction	2.05 $\pm$ 0.467	2.11 $\pm$ 0.440
Experimental		2.05 $\pm$ 0.444	2.06 $\pm$ 0.395
Control	Body Awareness	1.96 $\pm$ 0.469	2.07 $\pm$ 0.432
Experimental		1.95 $\pm$ 0.488	2.03 $\pm$ 0.390
Control	Emotional Analysis	1.99 $\pm$ 0.261	2.03 $\pm$ 0.243
Experimental		2.02 $\pm$ 0.209	2.01 $\pm$ 0.277
Control	Attention to the Emotions of Others	2.30 $\pm$ 0.401	2.27 $\pm$ 0.433
Experimental		2.36 $\pm$ 0.396	2.22 $\pm$ 0.448

Comparative Analysis

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which was used to assess whether or not the data set was regularly distributed, are shown in Table 2. It was shown by the findings that there were p-values that were both more than and lower than 0.05. Due to the fact that the dataset had both normal and non-normal data, it was established that the dataset contains non-parametric information.

Table 2. Mann-Whitney U Test Results

Dimension	Intervention	U Mann-Whitney	Sig. (Bilateral)	Asin.
Distinction of Emotions	PRE	2278	0.330	
	POST	2387	0.596	
Verbal Exchange	PRE	2513	0.992	
	POST	2450	0.779	
Emotional Reaction	PRE	2451	0.789	
	POST	2355	0.507	
Body Awareness	PRE	2476	0.871	
	POST	2367	0.539	
Emotional Analysis	PRE	2431	0.718	
	POST	2389	0.592	
Attention to the Emotions of Others	PRE	2282	0.333	
	POST	2272	0.315	



All of the p-values were more than 0.05, which indicates that there were no significant differences identified in any of the dimensions, as shown in Table 2, which displays the results of the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test.

As a last point of interest, the outcomes of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test are shown in Table 3. With p-values that were lower than 0.05 for each of the dimensions, the findings suggest that there were significant differences between the dimensions of emotional differentiation and physiological awareness. emotional classification with a p-value of 0.009 and an effect size of 0.260 according to the statistical analysis. A p-value of 0.039 was assigned to the effect size of physical awareness, which was found to be -0.222.

Table 3. Results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

Dimension	Z	Sig. Asin. (Bilateral)
DE (Distinction of Emotions)	-2.625	0.009 **
VE (Verbal Exchange)	-0.850	0.395
ER (Emotional Reaction)	-0.545	0.586
BA (Body Awareness)	-1.952	0.039 *
AE (Emotional Analysis)	-0.418	0.676
AO (Attention to Emotions of Others)	-1.555	0.120

DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this research was to examine the degree to which students' emotional awareness had changed both before and after participating in an intervention program that had been carefully designed to include yoga and mindfulness principles. The objective of this research was to provide a response to the question, "Could this unusual combination help improve the emotional consciousness of adolescents?" due to the fact that people of this age are often prone to experiencing emotional breakdowns. There are a number of factors that contribute to the heightened emotional sensitivity that teenagers experience. Some of these factors include hormonal fluctuations, social pressure, academic challenges, and the beginning of identity formation. For the duration of this phase of transition, it is of the utmost importance to include tactics that encourage enhanced emotional control. The relevance of emotional competencies, especially in the context of education, has been the focus of a significant amount of research in the academic world. The results of these studies indicate that there is a strong connection between the characteristics in question and one's psychological well-being. However, it is essential to emphasise that studies that involve adolescents typically have a limited scope of coverage because of the small sample sizes for these studies. On any of the aspects that were taken into consideration, this study did not uncover any statistically significant differences between the groups that were taken into consideration. There were variances within the group for two of the measurements, which is an intriguing possibility. Due to the fact that the intervention in the research was carried out over the duration of a single academic unit, which was comprised of six sessions, it is possible that there was not enough time to arrive at definitive findings. Nevertheless, the potential benefits of such therapies are not decreased by the fact that there is a constraint on the quantity of time. The emotional awareness and mental health of



adolescents might be significantly improved by the implementation of a structured intervention program that is founded on the principles of yoga and mindfulness, according to the findings of a number of studies. It is unfortunate that the outcomes of this research did not provide evidence that this program had a significant impact on the emotional awareness of the students. It is important to keep in mind that even if the results are equivocal, practising yoga and mindfulness on a daily basis may have long-term benefits that aren't always visible in the short-term but become clear when you persist with it.

The fields of education have lately paid a great deal of attention to the practices of yoga and mindfulness, both of which are types of relaxation, due to the fact that they are both beneficial and significant. During the course of a student's growth, they are confronted with a wide variety of emotional responsibilities and challenges, which may be successfully managed by using certain coping strategies. Those who work in the area of physical education have access to a wide variety of techniques that may help them concentrate and relax, and they can simply be included into their lessons. In particular, the practice of mindfulness has been found to provide students with significant advantages in the areas of cognitive functioning, interpersonal relationships, and emotional well-being. It had a significant impact on the mental health of the students when they engaged in mindfulness practices in the classroom, especially during physical education classes. Research conducted in the past has shown that mindfulness might serve as a possible defensive mechanism against a wide variety of mental health problems. Making mindfulness a regular part of your routine is one of the most essential things you can do for your mental and physical health. The benefits of this practice are many. According to a substantial body of research, yoga has been associated with a number of health advantages, one of which is an improvement in mental health during the stage of adolescence. There is a possibility that an educational system that integrates yoga might be beneficial to the mental dispositions and emotional self-regulation of students. It has been discovered by a number of educational institutions that incorporating yoga into their curriculum has a beneficial impact on the students' physical and mental well-being.

On the other hand, despite the fact that our investigation has a number of encouraging components, it does have a few restrictions. Although it lasted for just one academic year, the most of it occurred during a very short amount of time. In light of the findings that we obtained, we propose that future research should make use of bigger samples and longer intervention periods, such as a semester or maybe a whole school year, in order to expand upon the work that we have done. To take this a step further, the inclusion of control groups or the modification of the participants' ages and socioeconomic position may provide insight on the success of the intervention. In addition, it would be fascinating to conduct a research study such as this one, using all of the factors that were previously investigated, but this time with the intention of determining gender differences. The fact that our research makes use of an emotion awareness assessment instrument that was developed in 2008 is a significant limitation. In spite of the



thorough validation it has received, it is possible that this instrument may overlook some of the more recent discoveries and advancements in the field of emotional intelligence. When doing future study, it may be beneficial for researchers to make use of more contemporary methods of assessment in order to get results that are consistent with what is now known about emotional awareness and other related concepts.

The findings of this study contribute to the expanding body of research that has been conducted on the incorporation of yoga and mindfulness practices into many educational settings. Our society is becoming more aware of the significant role that mental health plays in our lives. The primary focus of our educational efforts should be on assisting children in becoming a more well-rounded and emotionally sensitive personality. The incorporation of these tactics into school programs has the potential to assist children in the development of essential skills for maintaining control of their emotions, which may ultimately result in improved mental health outcomes. As the academic and social demands that teens confront continue to increase, it is of the utmost importance to provide them with the skills necessary to keep their emotions under control and to enhance their general health. Intervention programs such as these have the potential to change our educational systems by fostering holistic welfare, emotional growth, and academic performance. This is especially important in light of the rising number of difficulties that adolescents are experiencing with their mental health.

CONCLUSION

It is possible that the physical, mental, and emotional health of adolescents is at peril as a result of the growing stress and emotional imbalance that they are experiencing. This may have an effect on their development, relationships, and academic performance. When these challenges are taken into consideration, yoga and mindfulness stand out as complete, non-invasive, and long-term preventive approaches that equip adolescents with increased emotional intelligence, resilience, and self-awareness to handle the challenges that they experience throughout their formative years. A healthy mind-body connection is fostered by yoga's combination of asanas, pranayama, and meditation practices. Mindfulness, on the other hand, encourages awareness of the present moment and the acceptance of thoughts and feelings without judgement. In conjunction with one another, these techniques help decrease stress by reducing the stress response of the body, enhancing attention and concentration, and soothing the mind. The study indicates that they may decrease symptoms of anxiety, melancholy, and behavioural difficulties in adolescents, in addition to enhancing their ability to manage their emotions and develop healthy relationships. Yoga and mindfulness programs may be used in schools, households, and communities to create a caring atmosphere that puts equal priority on academic performance and mental wellness. This environment can be built by including these activities. Because they teach skills that foster good coping mechanisms and personal development, which are vital throughout life, these practices are particularly relevant in today's fast-paced and demanding world. Personal development and healthy coping mechanisms are crucial throughout life. As a



result, yoga and mindfulness practices must to be included into a preventive mental health framework for adolescents, and not only as extra therapy. They have the potential to be a game-changer in terms of raising generations who are physically and intellectually stronger and more robust. Their widespread application has the potential to be revolutionary.

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