



Exploring the Benefits of Yoga Therapy for Depression in Diverse Cultural Contexts

Nagarjuna Reddy Aturi

Corporate Director and Isha Holistic Yoga Teacher, Isha Foundation Phoenix, Arizona, USA

ABSTRACT

The intended belief was yoga assists with self-development believed to reduce stress, increase beauty, strength, and muscle flexibility. Yoga was originally founded in South Asia and it was practiced by various South Asian individuals. It is a spiritual practice about the mind and body, as well as the meaning of life and the nature of the universe. Several psychological interventions have demonstrated efficacy in improving holistic health outcomes, for example Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Behavioural Therapies and Problem Solving Therapies. There is increasing recognition that the holistic goals of the child and family should be prioritised, and that interventions and outcomes should reflect these goals. The case of yoga and its appropriation by the Western culture creates a paradoxical situation. In this situation, approval and adoption of yoga in the West have made the practice trendier among middle-class urban Indian consumers and helped re-brand the practice. Such re-marketing has allowed to make yoga more appealing to the modern consumer and more concerned with the aspects related to physical performance, health and scientific explanation.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received June 02, 2024
Accepted June 06, 2024
Published June 15, 2024

KEYWORDS

Yoga Therapy, Western culture, holistic goals, Behaviour Therapy, Behavioural Therapies, practice, prioritized.

Introduction

Depression is a global mental health challenge, impacting individuals across various cultures and societies. While conventional treatments like medication and psychotherapy are widely used, alternative approaches such as yoga therapy are gaining attention for their potential benefits in managing depression. Yoga therapy, which integrates physical postures, breathing exercises, and meditation, offers a holistic approach to mental well-being. This article explores the benefits of yoga therapy for depression, particularly in diverse cultural contexts, highlighting its adaptability and effectiveness. Yoga therapy emphasizes the integration of mind and body, addressing both the physical and psychological aspects of depression. This holistic approach can be appealing across various cultures that value interconnectedness and holistic healing. Yoga can be customized to fit cultural beliefs and practices. For instance, in cultures where meditation and mindfulness are already present, yoga therapy can be seamlessly integrated.

Literature Review

Yogic practice brings many health benefits at both physical and mental levels [1]. Yoga has many therapeutic aspects and the research on yoga therapy is increasing day by day. It encompasses yoga therapy for lifestyle-related disorders like hypertension, diabetes, cancer, stress, anxiety, depression, and more. Yoga - Exploring the Health Benefits and Diverse Dimensions explores

different dimensions of yoga, such as traditional knowledge, health impacts, and other aspects promoting mental, emotional, and physical health backed by scientific research.

Yoga was developed primarily as a tool for self-mastery and spiritual progress [2]. However, over the past few decades, the therapeutic applications of yoga in mental healthcare have been explored with promising results. This article aims to inform psychiatrists about the clinical usefulness of yoga for mental disorders. We discuss the rationale and latest evidence base for the use of yoga in psychiatric practice, including the neurobiological mechanisms and indications and contraindications for yoga therapy. We suggest practical yoga techniques that can be used as an add-on for managing common psychiatric conditions.

Though it is presumed that children and adolescents with migraine are at risk of internalizing symptoms and disorders, high-level summative evidence to support this clinical belief is lacking [3]. In this study, children and adolescents with migraine were at higher risk of anxiety and depression symptoms and disorders compared with healthy controls. It may be beneficial to routinely screen children and adolescents with migraine for anxiety and depression in clinical practice. It is unclear whether having anxiety and depressive symptoms or disorders has an affect on migraine outcomes or incidence.

Because the prevalence of mental health concerns is high and access or full responsiveness to pharmacological or psycho-

Contact Nagarjuna Reddy Aturi, Corporate Director and Isha Holistic Yoga Teacher, Isha Foundation Phoenix, Arizona, USA.

therapeutic treatment for many individuals is low, there has been increased interest in yoga as a potential therapy for many mental health concerns [4]. Findings from efficacy trials largely support the notion that yoga can help reduce symptoms of many psychiatric conditions, including anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms, above and beyond the effects achieved by standard pharmacological treatments alone; however, most evidence is of poor to moderate quality.

Depression is prevalent among adolescents with chronic illness [5]. However, little is known about how depression affects chronic illness over time. This review aimed to synthesize longitudinal relationships between depression and disease control, self-management behaviors, illness-related morbidity, and quality of life. Evidence supports the need for mental health care strategies suitable for adolescents with chronic illness. Future research is needed to examine the effects of depressive symptoms across diversified chronic illness populations.

The Science behind Yoga Therapy for Depression

Yoga therapy has been shown to influence the body and mind in several ways that are beneficial for individuals with depression:

Neurobiological Benefits: Yoga increases the levels of neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine, which are often depleted in individuals with depression. It also reduces the levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, promoting a sense of calm and relaxation.

Mindfulness and Emotional Regulation: Yoga emphasizes mindfulness, helping individuals become more aware of their thoughts and emotions. This awareness can lead to better emotional regulation, reducing the intensity of depressive symptoms.

Physical Activity: The physical aspect of yoga contributes to overall health, improving sleep, boosting energy levels, and reducing physical symptoms associated with depression, such as fatigue and body aches.

Cultural Considerations in Yoga Therapy

The application and acceptance of yoga therapy can vary widely across different cultural contexts. Understanding these cultural nuances is crucial for effectively integrating yoga therapy into diverse communities:

Western Contexts: In Western countries, yoga is often seen as a form of physical exercise, with its mental and spiritual benefits sometimes overlooked. However, there is a growing recognition of its therapeutic potential, and it is increasingly being integrated into mental health care.

Eastern Contexts: In countries like India, yoga is deeply rooted in cultural and spiritual traditions. Here, it is often viewed as a holistic practice that encompasses physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. This cultural acceptance can enhance the effectiveness

of yoga therapy for depression, as individuals may be more open to its benefits.

Indigenous and Non-Western Cultures: In some indigenous and non-Western cultures, traditional healing practices may align with the principles of yoga, making it easier to incorporate yoga therapy into existing mental health practices. However, cultural sensitivity is crucial to avoid imposing external practices in ways that might be perceived as disrespectful or inappropriate.

Case Studies and Evidence

Yoga therapy can be effective across various cultural contexts:

United States: Studies have found that yoga therapy can significantly reduce symptoms of depression in both clinical and non-clinical populations. Yoga therapy has been integrated into wellness and healthcare practices, often focusing on physical and mental health. For example, a study at Boston University showed that participants who practiced yoga experienced a significant reduction in depressive symptoms compared to those who did not.

India: The birthplace of yoga, where it is deeply rooted in spiritual and holistic health traditions. In India, yoga therapy has been used alongside conventional treatments for depression, with studies demonstrating its efficacy in reducing symptoms and improving overall quality of life. The integration of yoga therapy into mental health care is often seamless due to the cultural acceptance of yoga.

Brazil: In Brazil, where yoga is becoming increasingly popular, research has shown that yoga therapy can be a valuable tool in managing depression, particularly when combined with other therapeutic approaches. Cultural adaptation of yoga practices has been important in making it accessible and effective.

East Asia (e.g., China, Japan): Where traditional practices like Qigong and Tai Chi may influence the practice of yoga therapy.

Middle East and North Africa: Regions where religious and cultural factors may affect the perception and adoption of yoga therapy.

Latin America: Where the practice might blend with local spiritual traditions and health practices.

Challenges and Considerations

While yoga therapy offers significant benefits, there are challenges to its implementation in diverse cultural contexts:

Cultural Appropriation: There is a risk of cultural appropriation when yoga is removed from its cultural and spiritual roots and repackaged solely as a form of exercise or therapy. This can lead to a loss of the holistic benefits that yoga offers.

Accessibility: In some cultures, yoga may be inaccessible due to

socioeconomic factors, lack of awareness, or limited availability of trained yoga therapists. Efforts to make yoga therapy more accessible must consider these barriers.

Adaptation to Cultural Beliefs: Yoga therapy must be adapted to align with the cultural beliefs and practices of the population it is intended to serve. This may involve modifying practices or integrating yoga with traditional healing methods.

Cultural Adaptability

Cross-Cultural Appeal: Yoga has origins in ancient Indian traditions but has been adapted across various cultures. Its flexibility allows it to be integrated into different cultural contexts, making it accessible to a wide range of people.

Incorporation of Local Practices: In diverse cultural settings, yoga therapy can be tailored to include or complement local wellness practices, such as Tai Chi in Chinese culture or indigenous healing practices in Native American communities. This integration can enhance acceptance and effectiveness.

Objectives

- To determine the efficacy of yoga therapy in improving general wellbeing and quality of life (QOL) of patients with depression disorders.
- To determine if the positive effects of yoga therapy on depression disorders are related to concurrent changes in general wellbeing and QOL.
- To Examine how cultural, religious, and social factors influence the adoption and adaptation of yoga therapy in different regions.
- To analyze the reported health outcomes and benefits of yoga therapy across different populations.
- To assess a person's global judgment of life satisfaction and measures change in subjective well-being and intervention outcomes.

Research Methodology

Yoga therapy may be defined as the application of yoga principles and yoga techniques to a particular patient with the objective to cure the disease and to create, stimulate, and maintain an optimum state of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health. It comprises a wide range of mind/body practices, from postural and breathing techniques to deep relaxation and meditation. Therapists should be clear about what types of yogic practices would be appropriate with regard to each patient's physical limitations. Conduct interviews, focus groups, and case studies with yoga practitioners, therapists, and patients from various cultural backgrounds. Use surveys to gather data on the prevalence of yoga therapy, common practices, and perceived benefits in different countries. Traditionally the control in randomized controlled trials refers to studying a group of treated patients in comparison to other groups of patients, the control groups. Present study is a randomized controlled trial, therefore individual yoga sessions were taken considering each patient's state of mind and severity of the illness. Patients were explained about the proper diet with yoga practice. The yoga intervention consisted of a package particularly designed to suit patients suffering from depression disorders.

Data Analysis

Depression and Mindfulness

By integrating mindfulness into daily life, individuals with depression can develop greater emotional resilience, improve their mood, and cultivate a sense of inner peace. While professional treatment such as therapy and medication is often necessary, mindfulness practices can be a valuable complementary approach to managing depression. Focusing on the breath can help ground you in the present moment.

Table 1: Representing Mean and Standard Deviation on the Five Facets of Mindfulness for the Experimental Groups and the Control Group

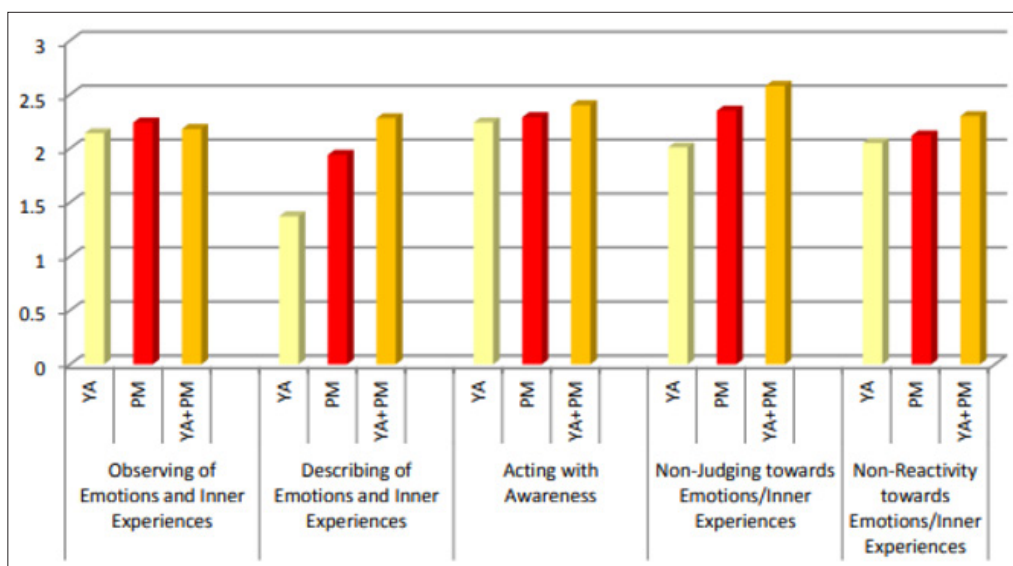
Table 1: Representing Mean and Standard Deviation on the Five Facets of Mindfulness for the Experimental Groups and the Control Group

S. No.	Pretest-Posttest	Experimental Group-I (YA) (N=70)		Experimental Group-II (PM) (N=70)		Experimental Group-III (YA+PM) (N=70)		Control Group-IV (CG) (N=70)	
		t	Sig.	T	Sig.	t	Sig.	t	Sig.
1	Pretest- Posttest (Observing of Emotions and Inner Experiences)	2.14	0.04	2.24	0.03	2.18	0.03	1.75	0.08
2	Pretest- Posttest (Describing of Emotions and Inner Experiences)	1.37	0.18	1.94	0.06	2.28	0.03	0.45	0.65
3	Pretest- Posttest (Acting with Awareness)	2.24	0.03	2.29	0.03	2.40	0.02	1.22	0.23
4	Pretest- Posttest (Non-Judging towards Emotions/ Inner Experiences)	2.01	0.05	2.35	0.02	2.58	0.01	0.38	0.71
5	Pretest- Posttest (Non-Reactivity towards Emotions/ Inner Experiences)	2.05	0.04	2.12	0.04	2.30	0.02	1.31	0.19

Table-2 represents the results of the analysis of paired t-test that was run on the sample to determine whether there was a statistical significance in the mean difference of the five facets of mindfulness in participants, before they underwent the 3-months intensive Hatha yoga intervention as compared to after the intervention. This assessment was done for all the experimental groups as well as the control group.

Experimental Group-I (Yoga asanas) exhibited a statistically significant difference in means with an increase in the ability to observe emotions and inner experiences after the intervention ($t=2.14$, $df=69$, $p<.05$), accepting the proposed alternative hypothesis.

Findings Summarizing the Effects of the Three Months Intensive Hatha Yoga Intervention on the Five Facets of Mindfulness



Graph 1: Graph Representing the Level of Gain Experienced by the Three Intervention Groups on the Five Facets of Mindfulness

Graph 1 validates speculations made for the combined intervention group involving yoga asana and pranayama and meditation. Findings indicate that the combined intervention group exhibited the most significant difference and scored the highest on four out of five facets of mindfulness followed by the pranayama and meditation group and yogasana group respectively.

Conclusion

Yoga therapy may provide an inexpensive, effective alternative to conventional treatments presently used in the treatment of anxiety disorders. Yoga therapy is relatively safe and well tolerated with very few side effects when practiced correctly. Yoga therapy has been understudied, and more well-designed studies are needed before definitive conclusions can be drawn about yoga's use for specific depression disorders. Its effectiveness across diverse cultural contexts highlights its adaptability, but cultural sensitivity and awareness are crucial for its successful integration. As mental health professionals and researchers continue to explore the benefits of yoga therapy, it is important to consider the cultural context in which it is applied, ensuring that it is accessible, respectful, and effective for all. Yoga therapy offers a valuable tool in managing depression, particularly when adapted to diverse cultural contexts. Its holistic, non-pharmacological approach, combined with cultural sensitivity and adaptability, makes it a promising intervention. Yoga therapy offers a promising, culturally adaptable approach to managing depression. The insistence that yoga therapy should be conducted under the supervision of a well-trained, qualified instructor and therapist only, a factor limiting widespread use of yoga therapy in psychiatric disorders, could be a potential reason for the lack of trials. Future studies should examine dose response and whether more classes per week and a longer follow-up predict a greater effect.

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