



# REGULAR PRACTICES OF YOGA AND ACADEMIC STRESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

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**Abstract :** Excessive stress among students may reduce effectiveness of their study which contributes to bad habits, and results in negative long term consequences, including absenteeism, poor academic performance, decline cognitive ability and institutional dropout. Social situation is another important factor in causing stress. These stressors may affect their learning ability, academic performance and health. When stress is perceived negatively or becomes excessive, it can affect both health and academic performance. Yoga is an ancient Indian practice that has been utilized in several ways, for several reasons, between many groups of people for centuries. Stress can also have a detrimental effect on cognitive function. Higher stress levels, were found to be directly related to an increased number of everyday academic life.

**Keywords:** Yoga practices, stress, cognitive function, Higher education

## INTRODUCTION

The present context of the college environment can challenges to the emotional, physical and mental health of students. Yoga is an ancient Indian practice that has been utilized in various ways, for various reasons, among many groups of people for centuries (Tran, Holly, Lashbrook, & Amsterdam, 2001). The practice of yoga can help an individual to improve their full potential and increase consciousness. Higher education students is recognized as a stressful environment that often exerts a negative effect on the academic performance. Students are subjected to different kinds of stressors, such as the pressure of academics with an obligation to succeed, an uncertain future and difficulties of integrating into the system. The students also face social, emotional and physical and family problems which may affect their academic performance (Chew et. al, 2003). The background of yoga has its origins in ancient Indian philosophy. Asanas, breathing Pranayama and meditation practices that cultivate awareness and ultimately more profound states of consciousness. Yoga is a way of life that includes the practice of specific postures, regulated breathing and meditation. It is designed to bring balance and health to the physical, spiritual, emotional, mental, and dimensions of the students.

### Stress contributes poor academic performance

Higher stress levels, were found to be directly related to an increased number of everyday cognitive failures. Stress impedes cognitive ability, the relationship between perceived stress and response inhibition has not been given substantial attention. It is important to more clearly elucidate the effects that yoga can have on individuals' stress levels and cognitive performance. Healthy social-emotional development in adolescents' correlates with healthy cognitive development and therefore creates a strong foundation for future academic achievements. Yoga has multiple physical, mental and spiritual benefits and holds that the influence of the mind on body is far more powerful than the influence of body on mind. Yoga helps in gentle and automatic massaging of internal organs and thus helps in enhancing functioning of nervous system. Academic performance is a quantity and quality of learning attained in a subject or group of subjects after a long period of instruction. The continuous evaluation process, exhausting work hours, striving for earning high grades, goals etc are source for stress of the students in higher education (Tennant, 2002). A more recent study showed that that social situation of the students could activate stress (Singh et.al. 2012). Students of higher education experience high stress at predictable times each semester due to academic commitments, financial pressures, and lack of time management skills. Too much stress can cause physical and mental health problems, reduce students' cognitive ability and may affect students' academic achievement (Niemi & Vainiomaki, 1999). There is overwhelming evidence suggesting that an inverse relationship between Academic stress and cognitive ability exists due to the presence of intrusive thoughts, which can be defined as any distinct, identifiable cognitive event that is unwanted, unintended, and recurrent (Shipherd & Fordiani, 2015). Student's stress may reduce and controlled through regular practice of yoga. Yoga is an ancient Indian science designed to bring balance and health to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the individual. Yoga has multiple physical, mental and spiritual benefits and holds that the influence of the mind on body is far more powerful than the influence of body on mind. Yoga helps in gentle and automatic massaging of internal organs and thus helps in enhancing functioning of nervous system, and



endocrine system, (Khalsa, et.al 2012). Yoga teaches participants to quiet the mind and concentrate (Tran, Holly, Lashbrook, & Amsterdam, 2001). The relaxing the mind through yoga practice are crucial to cognitive health but are often neglected or compromised when subjected to consistent, long term stress (Tennant, 2002). An example of long-term stress experienced by vast groups of people is the stress associated with being a college student, particularly a female college student. Stress can have a negative effect on cognitive abilities, leaving a female student susceptible to poor academic performance in college (Tennant, 2002). The practice of yoga might be helpful in reducing high level of stress, improving cognitive function and academic performance.

### CONCLUSIONS

Yoga has multiple physical, mental and spiritual benefits and holds that the influence of the mind on body is far more powerful than the influence of body on mind. It is important to more clearly elucidate the effects that yoga can have on individuals' stress levels and cognitive performance. The practice of yoga can help an individual to improve their full potential and increase consciousness.

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