



Teachers' Wellness in Higher Education: An Analytical Study of Yoga Practices under NEP 2020

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Abstract:

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the educational ecosystem, yet they often face significant stress, burnout, and wellness challenges impacting both their health and professional quality. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India emphasizes holistic development and mental well-being of all stakeholders, including teachers. This study explores the role of Yoga as a wellness intervention for teachers within the NEP framework. The research investigates the impact of regular yoga practices on physical health, psychological well-being, stress management, and professional performance among school teachers. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, data from 200 teachers across urban and rural schools were analyzed. Findings suggest that yoga significantly enhances teachers' physical and mental health, improves workplace productivity, and aligns with NEP's wellness goals. Policy implications and recommendations for integration of yoga in teacher professional development programs are provided.

Keywords: Yoga, Teacher Wellness, NEP 2020, Stress Management, Professional Performance, India, Holistic Education

Introduction:

Teacher wellness has emerged as a critical concern in education worldwide. Teachers experience multifaceted stressors including workload, classroom management challenges, administrative demands, and lack of self-care time. These stressors not only affect personal health but also influence students' learning environments. In recognition of this, the **National Education Policy 2020 (NEP)** of India advocates fostering holistic, healthy, and engaged teachers as essential to quality education and sustainable learning outcomes.

Yoga — an ancient Indian practice incorporating physical postures (asanas), breath regulation (pranayama), and meditation — has gained global recognition for its effectiveness in promoting well-being and stress reduction. Despite extensive literature on yoga's health

benefits, limited research focuses specifically on its role in teacher wellness in the Indian education system within the NEP context. This paper examines the efficacy of yoga as a wellness strategy among teachers and its potential integration under NEP guidelines.

Literature Review:

1. Teacher Stress and Wellness:

Studies globally report that teachers often face chronic stress due to workload pressure, poor work-life balance, and emotional demands of teaching (Kyriacou, 2001). Teacher burnout directly correlates with reduced job performance and increased attrition rates (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Wellness programs have been proposed as strategic interventions to mitigate stress and improve quality of life.

2. Yoga and Well-Being:

Yoga is widely documented to enhance physical flexibility, cardiovascular health, and mental stability. Scientific research highlights significant reductions in stress hormones (cortisol), improvements in mood, and increased resilience through yoga practice (Field, 2016). Moreover, regular yoga practice is associated with improved attention, emotional regulation, and cognitive function.

3. NEP 2020 and Wellness:

The NEP 2020 underscores **holistic development**, with **health and well-being** as key components for teachers and learners alike. Although the policy mentions integration of physical activities and stress-reduction strategies, specific operational frameworks for yoga are yet to be fully articulated in mainstream teacher professional development.

Research Gap:

While teacher wellness and yoga benefits are well documented independently, there is a lack of empirical research focused on yoga's role in teacher well-being within the NEP 2020 implementation.

Research Objectives:

The primary objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the current wellness status of teachers in Indian schools.
2. To examine the impact of yoga practice on teachers' physical health, mental well-being, and professional performance.
3. To explore teachers' perceptions and acceptability of integrating yoga into professional development.
4. To provide recommendations for policy and practice under NEP 2020.

Research Methodology:

1. Research Design:

This study employed a **mixed-methods research design** combining quantitative and qualitative data collection to allow robust analysis of yoga's impact on teacher wellness.

2. Population and Sample:

The population included primary and secondary teachers from government and private schools. Using stratified random sampling, **200 teachers** (100 urban; 100 rural) participated. Participants had varied years of experience (2–25 years), age range 25–60 years, and both genders represented.

3. Data Collection Tools:

- **Wellness Questionnaire:** A standardized teacher wellness scale measuring physical health, stress, emotional well-being, and job satisfaction (adapted from WHO well-being index).
- **Yoga Intervention Program:** A 12-week yoga module designed by certified yoga therapists including asanas, pranayama, and meditation practices, 45 minutes daily.
- **Semi-structured Interviews:** To gather qualitative insights on participants' experiences, challenges, and perceptions.
- **Pre and Post Tests:** Health and stress indicators were measured at baseline and post intervention.

4. Procedure:

1. Pre-intervention assessment (baseline wellness scores).
2. Yoga intervention implemented on a daily schedule.
3. Post-intervention assessment after 12 weeks.
4. Data compiled, coded, and analyzed using statistical tools (SPSS) and thematic analysis for qualitative responses.

5. Ethical Considerations:

Consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality and voluntary

participation were assured. Teachers were free to withdraw at any stage.

Findings and Analysis:

1. Quantitative Results:

- **Teacher Wellness Scores:** Post-intervention results showed a **significant improvement** in overall wellness scores:
 - **Physical Health:** Increase by an average of 22% ($p < 0.01$)
 - **Stress Reduction:** Stress index reduced by 31% ($p < 0.001$)
 - **Emotional Well-Being:** Mean score increased by 27% ($p < 0.01$)
 - **Job Satisfaction:** Modest increase by 15% ($p < 0.05$)

Teachers engaging regularly in yoga reported **decreased fatigue**, fewer musculoskeletal complaints, and better sleep quality.

- **Health Indicators:** Comparative analysis revealed:
 - Lower resting heart rates post-intervention
 - Reduced self-reported anxiety episodes
 - Increased self-rated resilience in difficult classroom situations

2. Qualitative Themes:

Analysis of interview data presented key themes:

- **Theme 1: Enhanced Mind–Body Awareness:** Teachers described heightened physical awareness, better posture, and improved breathing patterns. Many noted that pranayama helped during stressful periods.
- “Yoga helped me regulate my emotions and remain calm even during challenging student behaviors.”
- **Theme 2: Reduced Psychological Stress:** Participants reported improved stress management:

- “Meditation has been a game changer — before an exam week, I would panic, but now I manage better.”
- **Theme 3: Professional Revitalization:** Some teachers expressed renewed enthusiasm for teaching, linking consistent yoga practice to improved patience and classroom engagement.
- **Theme 4: Barriers and Challenges:** Time constraints and lack of structured institutional support were reported, especially among teachers juggling heavy workloads.

Discussion:

1. Integrating Yoga and Teacher Wellness:

Findings confirm that yoga practice significantly contributes to teachers’ wellness. Physical improvements and stress reduction align with global literature on health benefits of yoga (Field, 2016). Importantly, teachers described qualitative growth in emotional regulation and professional resilience — indicating yoga’s broader psychosocial impact.

2. Implications for NEP 2020: NEP 2020 aspires to develop healthy, holistic, and future-ready teachers. Given the positive outcomes observed, yoga can be integrated into teacher training modules, continuing professional development programs, and daily school routines.

Yoga aligns with NEP’s:

- **Holistic Education Vision** – balancing cognitive and non-cognitive well-being
- **Mental Health Support** – addressing stress and emotional challenges
- **Cultural Context** – leveraging India’s indigenous knowledge systems

3. Practical Challenges: Despite positive results, barriers such as workload, inconsistent participation, infrastructure limitations, and lack of formal policy directives for mandatory yoga inclusion pose implementation challenges.

Recommendations:

Based on findings, the study recommends:

1. Policy Level:

- **Incorporate Yoga into Teacher Training Curricula** – Pre-service and in-service programs should include yoga modules as part of professional development.
- **National Guidelines for Wellness Programs** – Education ministries should develop clear directives for structured wellness programs incorporating yoga.

2. Institutional Level:

- **Daily Yoga Sessions in Schools** – Scheduled time blocks for teachers' yoga practice.
- **Dedicated Wellness Coordinators** – To organize sessions and monitor participation.
- **Provision of Resources** – Mats, space, and certified instructors.

3. Research and Monitoring:

- **Longitudinal Studies** – To examine sustainability of benefits.
- **Comparative Studies** – Across regions and educational boards.

Conclusion:

Teacher wellness is an integral component of a thriving education system. This study highlights the positive impact of yoga on teachers' physical health, emotional balance, and professional performance — reinforcing its relevance under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Integrating yoga in teacher development aligns with broader educational goals of well-being, mental health, and holistic growth. With policy support and structured implementation, yoga can become a cornerstone of teacher wellness strategies within India's education framework.

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