



## Yoga for Mental Health in Education: A Systematic Review in the Context of NEP 2020

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### **Abstract:**

*Academic pressure, competition, and lifestyle changes have led to a rising trend in mental health challenges like stress, anxiety, emotional dysregulation, and burnout among students and teachers alike. NEP 2020 lays greater emphasis on holistic development, stress-free learning, and the integration of Indian knowledge systems into education. Yoga has emerged as a time-tested mind-body discipline that has received scientific recognition for its role in promoting mental wellbeing. The present study intends to systematically review existing empirical studies relating to yoga-based interventions for mental health in educational settings and analyze their relevance to the objectives of NEP 2020. Peer-reviewed studies published between 2010 and 2024 are retrieved by a systematic search of major academic databases following PRISMA guidelines. Structured yoga programs decrease significantly the levels of stress and anxiety, improve attention and emotional self-regulation, sleep quality, and overall psychological well-being of students and teachers. Integrated yoga modules of asanas, pranayama, and meditation were noted to be more effective compared to isolated practices. The review concludes that yoga is a scientifically supported, culturally rooted, and policy-aligned intervention capable of fostering stress-free learning environ*

**Keywords: Yoga, Mental Health, Education, Stress-Free Learning, NEP 2020, Physical Education.**

### **Introduction:**

Mental health is one of the central issues in education these days worldwide. With increasing academic pressures, fierce competition, constant digital bombardment, and less physical activity, students and teachers alike are suffering more from stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout. Such struggles affect thinking, mood, school performance, and overall well-being.

In response, India's NEP 2020 emphasizes holistic development, well-being, and learning free of stress. It calls for weaving together the physical, mental, emotional, and ethical facets of education, while valuing traditional Indian knowledge.

Originating in ancient India, yoga weaves together a series of postures or asanas, breathing techniques, and meditation for aligning both the body and the mind. Over the past two decades, it has been studied extensively in science and education, with promising improvements in both mental health and cognitive functioning. However, an integrated, single synthesis linking the yoga-related mental health benefits with the NEP 2020 goals remains rather rare. This systematic review intends to fill this lacuna by reviewing existing research and positioning yoga within the framework of the NEP for stress-free learning.

**Objectives of the Study:**

The aims of the current systematic review are:

1. To identify key mental health outcomes influenced by yoga among students and teachers.
2. The aim was to explore the structure, duration, and components of yoga programs used in education.
3. To examine the structure, duration, and components of yoga programs used in education.
4. To analyze the alignment of yoga-based mental health outcomes with the vision of NEP 2020.
5. To formulate evidence-based, policy-relevant recommendations for the systematic integration of yoga into educational curricula and physical education programs, with the aim of promoting mental well-being, stress-free learning environments, and holistic development as envisioned under NEP 2020.

**Methodology:****1. Research Design:**

A systematic review methodology was adopted following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure transparency and rigor.

**2. Data Sources:**

Studies were identified from the following databases:

- Google Scholar
- PubMed
- Scopus
- Web of Science
- ERIC

**3. Inclusion Criteria:**

- Peer-reviewed journal articles (2010–2024)

- Studies conducted in educational settings (schools, colleges, teacher education)
- Yoga-based interventions
- Mental health outcomes measured
- English language publications

**4. Exclusion Criteria:**

- Clinical or medical populations
- Non-educational settings
- Opinion articles without empirical data
- Case reports and editorials

After screening titles, abstracts, and full texts, relevant studies were selected for final analysis.

**Results:****1. Characteristics of Included Studies:**

The review included approximately 40 studies comprising randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental studies, and longitudinal research. Participants included school students, college students, and teachers across diverse socio-cultural contexts.

**2. Mental Health Outcomes:**

Consistent evidence across studies indicated that yoga interventions resulted in:

- Significant reduction in perceived stress and anxiety
- Improvement in emotional regulation and mood stability
- Enhanced attention, concentration, and cognitive performance
- Better sleep quality and reduced fatigue
- Lower levels of burnout among teachers

**3. Yogic Practices Used:**

Commonly employed practices included:

- Asanas: Surya Namaskar, Tadasana, Bhujangasana, Shavasana
  - Pranayama: Anulom Vilom, Bhramari, Kapalbhati
  - Meditation: Mindfulness meditation, breath awareness
- Integrated yoga modules demonstrated

stronger and more sustained mental health benefits.

#### 4. Duration and Frequency:

Effective interventions typically ranged from 6 to 12 weeks, with sessions conducted 3–5 times per week for 30–45 minutes.

#### Discussion:

The findings from this review underline yoga as a powerful psychophysiological intervention to support mental well-being in educational settings. Yoga impacts mental health through the regulation of the autonomic nervous system, reduction in stress hormones, and development of self-awareness. The results directly support the NEP 2020 focus on holistic development, experiential learning, and stress-free education.

Moreover, yoga's place in physical education reinforces educators' role as facilitators of mental well-being rather than teachers of physical fitness. This places yoga as a preventive strategy for mental health and not a remedial one.

#### Implications for NEP 2020 and Physical Education:

The review strongly supports the inclusion of yoga as a core component of the educational curriculum under NEP 2020. Physical education programs should include structured, age-specific yoga modules with mental health outcomes. Teacher training programs should also focus on yoga pedagogy for effective implementation.

#### Limitations:

The reviewed studies exhibited limitations such as small sample sizes, short intervention durations, and lack of standardized yoga protocols. Additionally, long-term follow-up data were limited.

#### Conclusion:

The review strongly supports the inclusion of yoga as a core component of the educational curriculum under NEP 2020. Physical education programs should include structured, age-specific yoga modules with mental health outcomes. Teacher training programs should also focus on yoga pedagogy for effective implementation.

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