

EVALUATING THE THERAPEUTIC ROLE OF YOGA IN MANAGING STRESS, ANXIETY, AND DEPRESSION AMONG MALE DRUG ADDICTS UNDERGOING REHABILITATION

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ABSTRACT

Substance use disorders (SUDs) are frequently associated with psychological disturbances such as stress, anxiety, and depression (DAS), which often hinder the rehabilitation and recovery process. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of an eight-week structured yoga intervention in reducing DAS levels among male drug addicts undergoing rehabilitation. A randomized controlled trial was conducted with 80 male participants from rehabilitation centers, divided equally into an experimental group (n=40) and a control group (n=40). The experimental group received daily 60-minute yoga sessions for eight weeks, incorporating asanas, pranayama, meditation, and chanting, while the control group continued with standard rehabilitation routines without yoga. The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21) was administered before and after the intervention to assess psychological changes. Data were analyzed using SPSS, and statistically significant improvements ($p < 0.001$) were observed in the experimental group. Post-intervention, 97.5% of participants reported normal stress levels, 95% showed reduced anxiety, and 85% experienced decreased symptoms of depression. These results confirm the efficacy of yoga as a complementary therapy in addiction treatment, offering a holistic, low-cost, and culturally appropriate strategy to support psychological well-being and recovery in individuals with substance dependence.

Keyword: Yoga, Stress, Anxiety, Depression.

INTRODUCTION

Drug addiction is one of the most severe public health concerns globally, impacting not just the person but also their family and the larger societal fabric. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2023), approximately 39.5 million persons

worldwide were estimated to be suffering from drug use disorders in 2021 alone. Drug addiction, categorized as a chronic relapsing condition, dramatically decreases brain functioning—especially the frontal cortex, which is important for decision-making, self-regulation, and motivation. This neurological disturbance continues a cycle of compulsive drug use, impaired cognitive control, and emotional instability. Among the most typically linked psychological abnormalities among those fighting substance use disorders (SUDs) are stress, anxiety, and depression (DAS). These circumstances not only intensify the addiction cycle but also serve as important risk factors for relapse, so making them crucial targets for management during rehabilitation (Hurst et al., 2018)

Several empirical studies have reinforced the strong correlation between DAS and drug dependency. The presence of unresolved psychological stress, emotional dysregulation, and underlying trauma further intensifies the craving and dependence on psychoactive substances. Stress, in particular, is known to act as a major trigger in reactivating drug-seeking behavior and recalling drug-related cues, which makes sustained abstinence more difficult. While pharmacological and counseling-based rehabilitation programs are commonly employed in addiction treatment, these traditional methods often fall short of addressing the holistic well-being of the individual. Moreover, limited access to psychiatric care, medication side effects, and societal stigma associated with mental health in addiction recovery has fueled the need for more integrative, cost-effective, and non-invasive therapeutic options. (Khunti et al., 2023) (Hart et al., 2022)(Hagen & Nayar, 2014)

Yoga, an ancient mind-body discipline originating from India, has emerged as a promising complementary therapy in the realm of mental health and addiction management. It incorporates physical postures (asanas), breathing techniques (pranayama), chanting (mantra), and meditation (dhyana), all of which collectively aim to restore balance between the body and mind. Modern research has increasingly highlighted yoga's positive impact on the nervous system, particularly in reducing the levels of cortisol—the primary stress hormone—and enhancing the production of mood-regulating neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin, and GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid). These neurochemical changes contribute to improved emotional regulation, reduced impulsivity, and better resilience against cravings, making yoga a suitable intervention for individuals with SUDs. (Hagen et al., 2023) (Munns et al., 2024)

In the Indian context, where spiritual and holistic approaches are widely accepted, integrating yoga into rehabilitation programs has the potential to strengthen mental health outcomes significantly. Several small-scale studies and pilot interventions have demonstrated encouraging results in using yoga to manage symptoms of depression and anxiety in clinical populations. However, there remains a scarcity of large-scale, controlled trials specifically examining the effectiveness of yoga among male drug addicts during their rehabilitation phase. The male population is particularly vulnerable, as many face societal expectations of emotional suppression and self-reliance, which can lead to the internalization of distress and higher rates of substance abuse. This study was designed to fill this critical research gap by systematically evaluating the impact of an 8-week structured yoga intervention on stress, anxiety, and depression in male individuals undergoing drug rehabilitation. By employing a randomized controlled trial design and using the validated DASS-21 (Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale), the study aimed to provide empirical evidence of yoga's efficacy in a real-world rehabilitation setting. The hypothesis driving the research was that participants who received the yoga intervention would exhibit significantly lower post-test DAS scores compared to those who underwent conventional rehabilitation alone. Ultimately, this research contributes to a growing body of evidence advocating for the integration of yoga into standard addiction treatment protocols. It offers a low-cost, culturally relevant, and non-pharmacological strategy that aligns with holistic health principles. By addressing both the physical and psychological dimensions of recovery, yoga may serve not only as a therapeutic tool but also as a sustainable lifestyle practice that enhances long-term sobriety and mental well-being among individuals recovering from substance use disorders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Neha Pathak & Abhishek K. Bhardwaj, 2023) The global epidemic of obesity is mostly attributable to people's lack of physical activity and their consumption of calorically packed and nutritionally poor meals. Overweight and obesity killed more people than underweight did in the world's population. Obesity has several causes, including but not limited to genetics, a lack of physical activity, stress, and environmental pressures. In this review, we look at the research on yoga and its potential benefits for treating obesity and associated symptoms. The goal of this research is to find out how different yoga programs affect different anthropometric metrics that have to do with obesity and overweight. The review searched many databases, including Google Scholar and PubMed, for articles mentioning Yoga, obesity, and overweight. Studies that are relevant to this topic are included, such as

randomized control trials and experimental studies. Unsuitable studies without quantitative measurements were omitted from the study. As a treatment for obesity, the Yoga program was overwhelmingly beneficial in the trials. Obesity treatment and preventive techniques are lacking and come with a host of negative side effects. Many people have found that yoga is a helpful therapeutic technique for improving their health and feeling better about their bodies. In addition to significantly lowering anthropometric measurements and body weight, it provides the finest way for a person to reach his or her full physical, mental, and spiritual potential.

(Sarla, 2020) The purpose of this research is to summarize the many advantages of practicing yoga on a regular basis and to evaluate the results of some papers that have focused on the therapeutic benefits of yoga. We used Google Scholar and PubMed to search databases for studies and treatments that looked at yoga's therapeutic benefits. Articles published between 1993 and 2007 were retrieved using the following keywords: Yoga, therapeutic benefits, stress, anxiety, depression, chronic illness, arthritis, low backache, diabetes, cancer, and pregnancy. It turns out that Yoga is a great way to manage and lessen stress, worry, and depression, and it also enhances your mental, intellectual, spiritual, and physical health. Additionally, it suppresses sympathetic activity, which is an indicator of the neurohormonal pathways that provide health advantages. Since yoga has many positive effects on health, including enhancing relaxation, boosting self-confidence and body image, increasing efficiency, strengthening interpersonal relationships, increasing attentiveness, decreasing irritability, and encouraging an optimistic outlook on life, it should be thought of as a way to supplement or replace medical therapy for mood disorders like depression, anxiety, and stress. A great way to alleviate the stresses and strains of contemporary life is to practice yoga, which helps us to relax, calm down, and connect with our inner selves.

(Roberts et al., 2023) Substance use disorder (SUD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) often occur together and provide significant treatment challenges. Uncertainty surrounds the nature of optimal practice, and there is a dearth of evidence-based treatment standards. The purpose of this article is to detail the process that led to the final guidelines for the evaluation and psychological treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and co-occurring substance use disorders (SUDs). Research Approach: For the purpose of representing the ESTSS Board, a small group of professionals knowledgeable in PTSD and substance use disorders came together to create a committee. After going through a two-step procedure, the committee came up with its suggestions. First, we looked at other recent

systematic reviews that were relevant to the topic and finished a randomized controlled trial of psychiatric treatments for PTSD and SUD co-morbidity. The second step was to examine and compile current advice, good practices, and consensus recommendations from methodologically rigorous clinical practice guidelines to supplement the recommendations based on systematic research. The two-step procedure yielded nine assessment-related suggestions and twenty-one treatment-related suggestions.

(Alves et al., 2020) Substance addiction disorders may arise from a wide range of potential causes. Depression and early-life stress have been identified as significant factors among these. We don't yet know how these two elements interact to make adolescents more or less likely to consume drugs, even though they commonly happen at the same time. This research examined the effects of mother separation (MS) on adolescents' mental states and drug addiction vulnerability using Wistar and Wistar-Kyoto rats, which are diverse in their susceptibility to depression. During the second to fourteenth postnatal day, mothers and their litters were treated to 180 minutes of MS daily. Observing the exploratory activity of the offspring allowed us to measure their emotional status. Cocaine conditioning was used to evaluate susceptibility to drug misuse. In both strains, MS affected the emotional state. In response, Wistar began to explore more, but Wistar-Kyoto exhibited more anxious behaviors. Regardless of the fact that the two strains reacted differently to the behavioral tests, MS had an equivalent effect on drug conditioning in both. Adolescent drug misuse susceptibility seems to be influenced by early-life stress even in the absence of a depressive history, indicating that emotional state is the primary element causing risk.

(Calpe-López et al., 2022) We survey the limited but expanding body of research on the topic of social stress resistance and its impact on the rewarding effects of addictive substances. We explain what resilience is and how it relates to studies on substance abuse. Individual behavioral features and social support are two examples of the external protective variables linked with resilience, which we also detail. We continue by outlining the stress response and how resilience elements influence it. The following section provides an overview of the animal models typically utilized to investigate resilience in the face of social stress. Specifically, we zero in on the ways in which various animals exhibit symptoms of depression, anxiety, cognitive impairment, and addiction as a result of chronic social defeat (SD), a form of stress that is induced by repeatedly losing an agonistic encounter. Studying resilience in the face of persistent SD stress and its consequences on anxiety and depression-related behaviors in rats allows us to synthesize what is known about the neurobiological

bases of resilience. Lastly, we summarize the present information and identify areas for future study by concentrating on the few studies that have investigated resistance to the impacts of SD stress on the rewarding features of drugs of addiction. ; Differing Objectives: The writers have stated that they are free from any conflicts of interest.

(Shilpi Singh, 2023) There is a growing danger to society due to the widespread issue of substance misuse. There are so many factors associated with drug addiction that it will be difficult for any nation to eradicate the issue entirely. However, no society can claim to be responsible until its communities, countries, and governments recognize and reject social evil for what it is. A meta-analysis of rehabilitation center programs found that exercise's beneficial effects on patients' recuperation were underappreciated. The researchers hope to learn anything useful about the efficacy of Yoga therapy for drug abusers from this study. This inquiry will mostly serve as an exploratory one. After sixty male participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group, they were each given a twelve-week treatment plan that included either a standard de-addiction program or Yoga. The time commitment for the Yoga therapy program remained same. The study's results were measured using the WHO -QoL questionnaire. The number of observations that were deemed statistically significant was much greater in the group who participated in the Yoga treatment program. Those who have battled drug abuse may find success with Yoga therapy, according to the findings of this research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a randomized controlled trial design involving 80 male participants selected from drug rehabilitation centers. All participants were aged between 20 and 55 years and had a history of substance use involving drugs like heroin, cannabis, alcohol, or combinations thereof. After obtaining informed consent and screening for eligibility, the participants were randomly divided into two groups: an experimental group (n=40) and a control group (n=40). The experimental group participated in a structured yoga intervention for eight weeks, practicing yoga for 60 minutes daily (excluding Sundays) under supervision, while the control group followed standard rehabilitation routines without yoga. Psychological states were assessed before and after the intervention using the DASS-21 (Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale-21). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software, and t-tests were applied to assess within-group and between-group changes. The results demonstrated

statistically significant improvements in the experimental group, indicating the positive impact of yoga on stress, anxiety, and depression during rehabilitation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The current research set out to determine whether or whether male drug users participating in an eight-week organized yoga intervention saw a reduction in DAS (depression, anxiety, and stress). Eighty people were randomly assigned to either an experimental or control group and given the DASS-21 to assess their mental health both before and after the intervention. The control group continued with their regular rehabilitation regimen unaffected by yoga, while the experimental group did yoga every day. Statistical study (using SPSS) revealed that the experimental group's psychological well-being was significantly higher than the control group's. This part provides a comprehensive review of the research and places the results in the context of previous studies, drawing attention to the ways in which yoga might supplement current addiction treatment methods.

Table 1: Components of the Structured Yoga Intervention Program

Type	Description	Duration
Prayer	Opening prayer	2 min
Yogic Sukshma Vyayama	Preparatory movements (neck, waist, shoulder rotation), light warm-up, stretching	7 min
Suryanamaskara	4 rounds of Sun Salutations	5 min
Shavasana	Deep relaxation	1 min
Asanas	Simple postures (Tadasana, Marjariasana, Bhujangasana, etc.)	25 min
Pranayama	Nadishodhan (6 min) and Bhramari (3 min)	9 min
Aum Chanting	Repetitive chanting of AUM	9 min
Meditation	Breath meditation	2 min
Total		60 min

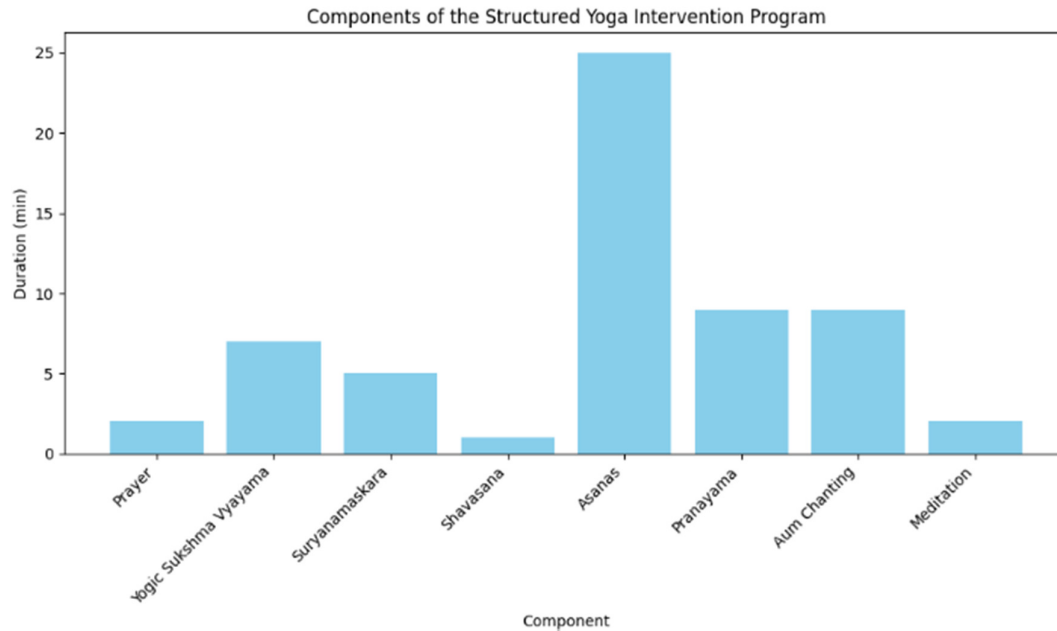


Figure 1: Components of the Structured Yoga Intervention Program

The experimental group was given a yoga module that was well-structured, as seen in the table and figure. A well-rounded mix of physical, mental, and breathing exercises made up the daily 60-minute program. Prayer and yogic sukshma vyayama served as a warmup, and the class moved on to dynamic movements in Suryanamaskara and asanas (postures) such as Tadasana, Marjariasana, and Bhujangasana, which increased flexibility, strength, and awareness of one's body. After that, we loosened up in Shavasana, practiced pranayama (breath regulation) methods like Nadishodhan and Bhramari to soothe the nervous system, chanted AUM (Aum Sangha) to bring about inner serenity, and meditated briefly to improve concentration and emotional control. Individuals in recovery from drug use often have physiological and psychological issues; this integrated approach intended to treat both. The experimental group showed a substantial decrease in stress, anxiety, and sadness, which was likely due in part to the structured design's ability to guarantee sustained engagement while addressing several areas of well-being.

Table 2: Distribution of DAS Severity Levels Pre- and Post-Intervention Among Control and Experimental Groups

Parameter	Level	Control Group (%)
Pre	Experimental Group (%)
Pre	Control Group (%)
Post	Experimental Group (%)
Post
Stress	Normal	32.5	47.5	67.5	97.5
	Mild	10.0	7.5	25.0	2.5
	Moderate	30.0	20.0	5.0	—
	Severe	20.0	20.0	—	—
	Extremely Severe	7.5	5.0	2.5	—
Anxiety	Normal	27.5	30.0	57.5	95.0
	Mild	5.0	7.5	7.5	2.5
	Moderate	17.0	15.0	17.5	2.5
	Severe	20.0	20.0	12.5	—
	Extremely Severe	30.0	27.5	5.0	—
Depression	Normal	20.0	25.0	25.0	85.0
	Mild	7.5	10.0	22.5	7.5
	Moderate	32.5	17.5	40.0	7.5
	Severe	20.0	17.5	7.5	—
	Extremely Severe	20.0	30.0	5.0	—

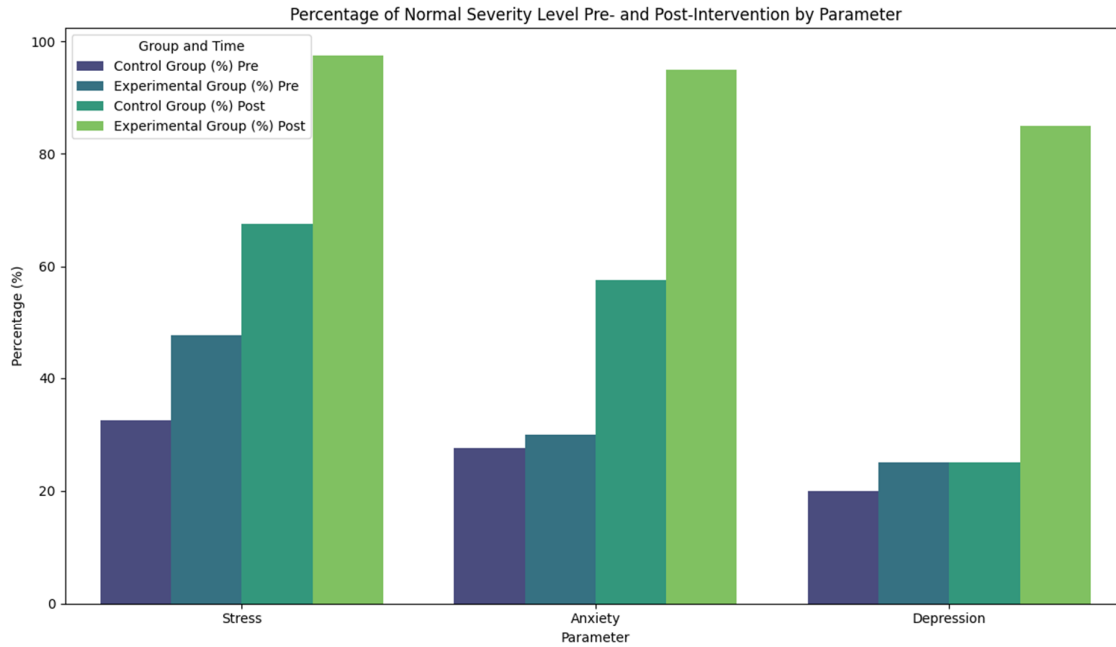


Figure 2: Distribution of DAS Severity Levels Pre- and Post-Intervention Among Control and Experimental Groups

Both the control and experimental groups' pre- and post-intervention percentage distributions across different DAS severity levels are shown in Table and Figure. There was a considerable amount of moderate to severe DAS in both groups before the intervention. After the intervention, however, the experimental group's levels shifted dramatically toward moderate and normal, particularly in stress and anxiety, where 95% and 97.5% of subjects exhibited normal values, respectively. However, the control group showed a much weaker recovery, with larger residual levels in the moderate and severe categories, perhaps as a result of frequent rehabilitation. This goes beyond what was accomplished via traditional rehabilitation methods and indicates that the yoga module significantly reduced psychological suffering. The significant variation across the groups highlights the therapeutic benefits of yoga as an all-encompassing and efficient intervention.

Table 3: Statistical Comparison of Mean DAS Scores Between Control and Experimental Groups

Variable	Control Group (CG)	Control Group (CG)	Experimental Group	Experimental Group	Within Group t-value &	Within Group t-value &	Between Group

	>Pre (Mean ± SD)	>Post (Mean ± SD)	(EG) >Pre (Mean ± SD)	(EG) >Post (Mean ± SD)	p- value (CG)	p- value (EG)	Mean Differe nce
Stress	19.95 ± 9.86	10.60 ± 7.39	16.05 ± 10.95	3.15 ± 3.87	t = 7.811, p < 0.001	t = 7.066, p < 0.001	5.650
Anxiet y	15.10 ± 10.66	7.85 ± 7.12	12.90 ± 8.83	2.00 ± 2.40	t = 6.032, p < 0.001	t = 8.102, p < 0.001	4.923
Depres sion	18.85 ± 9.48	13.65 ± 7.03	19.05 ± 11.48	3.90 ± 4.32	t = 4.236, p < 0.001	t = 8.703, p < 0.001	7.474

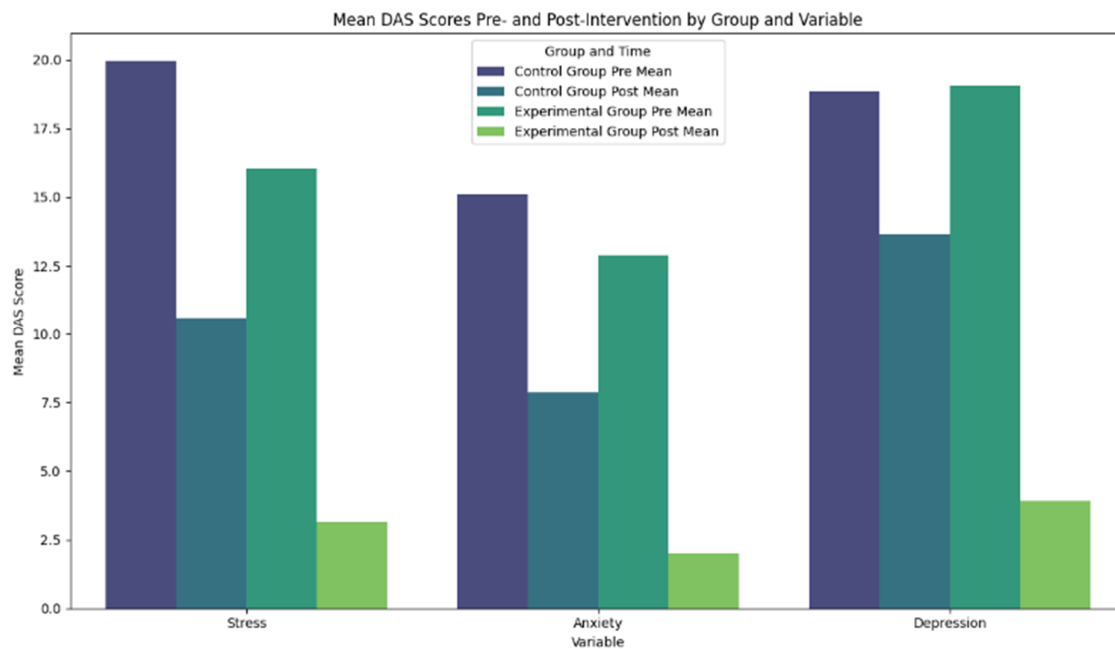


Figure 3: Statistical Comparison of Mean DAS Scores between Control and Experimental Groups

The statistical analysis of the control and experimental groups' mean scores for depression, anxiety, and stress (DAS) before and after the intervention is shown in Table and Figure. There were statistically significant decreases in all three psychological variables in both groups, with the experimental group showing much larger declines. One example is the

difference in the two groups' mean post-intervention stress scores; the former fell from 16.05 to 3.15, while the latter had a lesser reduction. Anxiety and sadness follow similar trends, with the experimental group showing more improvement. According to the t-values and p-values, which are both less than 0.001, these differences may be considered statistically significant. The 8-week yoga intervention was successful in enhancing psychological well-being, as shown by these results. This finding further supports the idea that regular rehabilitation does help certain people with drug use problems, but that adding yoga to the mix greatly improves their mental health results.

DISCUSSION

This research set out to determine whether or not male inpatients at treatment facilities for substance abuse may benefit from an eight-week organized yoga intervention in reducing DAS symptoms. According to the results, people who are overcoming substance use disorders (SUDs) benefit greatly from yoga as an additional treatment option, which boosts their mental health. Those in the yoga-practicing experimental group showed significantly lower DAS levels than those in the control group, who adhered only to traditional rehabilitation methods. This confirms what other studies have found: that emotional dysregulation and stress have a significant role in both the maintenance and recurrence of drug addiction. Problems with decision-making, impulse control, and emotional regulation are among of the ways in which the brain's normal functioning is disrupted by chronic drug misuse (Nanduri, 2023). Because of this, it is essential to implement therapies that may improve cognitive performance and calm emotional reactions. According to this study, yoga helps with these issues by regulating the autonomic nervous system, which in turn lowers the stress hormone cortisol and increases the release of the feel-good and mentally stable neurotransmitters serotonin, dopamine, and gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA).(Nanduri, 2023).

One of yoga's many effects is the substantial decline in DAS scores shown in the study's experimental group. The parasympathetic nervous system is responsible for relaxation and stress reduction, and practices like meditation and pranayama are thought to stimulate it. Yoga postures (asanas) and mindfulness practices can aid recovering addicts in being more self-aware and in charge of their own lives, which is crucial for overcoming anxiety and regaining confidence. In addition to helping with relaxation and concentration, the yoga module's breathwork and meditation practices may be useful in overcoming addictive

thoughts and behaviors. Additionally, the research found that anxiety and depression levels improved similarly in the experimental group, and virtually all of the individuals (97.5% to be exact) reported normal stress levels after the intervention. The statistical significance of these benefits ($p < 0.001$) highlights the practical importance of integrating yoga into rehabilitation programs. These findings are consistent with those reported by (Zhu et al., 2020) who noted similar improvements in mental health metrics through yoga-based interventions.

Although the control group did show a decrease in DAS scores, it was not as significant as the experimental group. This might be explained by the supportive atmosphere and counseling services that are often offered in rehabilitation clinics. The complementary nature of yoga when combined with more traditional forms of therapy is further supported by this disparate result. There were a number of drawbacks to the research, albeit its positives. The research only included male participants within a certain age range and geographical location, and the sample size was quite small ($n=80$). Additionally, there was no follow-up over an extended period of time to see whether the benefits were maintained. The inability to distinguish the benefits of yoga from those of regular exercise or a regimented schedule is further compounded by the lack of a control group that participated in non-yoga physical activities. In any case, the findings are encouraging and add credence to the idea that yoga should be a part of regular rehabilitation regimens. Longitudinal studies with bigger and more varied samples, particularly those representing women and people from varying socioeconomic backgrounds, should be the focus of future study. To have a better understanding of how to customize yoga-based therapies for addiction recovery, it would be helpful to study different yoga styles, session lengths, and follow-up effects.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that yoga may help male drug users in recovery deal with emotional and mental challenges more effectively as a supplemental treatment. The results show that the DASS-21 measures of stress, anxiety, and depression were significantly reduced in individuals who participated in an eight-week organized yoga program. By the conclusion of the session, most individuals in the experimental group had moved from severe to mild psychological discomfort, a significant improvement in emotional well-being when compared

to the control group. These results highlight the promise of yoga as a culturally appropriate, non-invasive, and inexpensive intervention, particularly in the Indian setting where yoga is widely practiced and well-respected, and they also confirm the short-term effectiveness of yoga. Yoga, according to the findings, may improve the efficacy of rehabilitation programs for drug use disorders when added to current procedures. One of the best ways to strengthen mental resilience and avoid relapse is to practice yoga, which has beneficial effects on the neurological system, emotional control, and neurochemical balance. Positive trends suggest larger-scale investigation, despite study limitations such as limited sample size, male-only participation, and absence of long-term follow-up. To fully understand the long-term effects of yoga on rehabilitation, future research should recruit a more representative sample of the community. Yoga, according to this research, is an important part of holistic addiction therapy as it may help with mental health and lead to successful recovery in the long run.

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