

## **Improve mental resilience through yoga and meditation practice**

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### **Abstract**

The majority of individuals today are less concerned with their mental health. Due to this problem, it will have a bad impact on their lives, and they may become nervous and have a number of psychological problems as well. The main objective of this research is to examine the significance of yoga and meditation for enhancing psychological well-being. The sub-objectives are to identify the reasons why people practice yoga and meditation with the intention of optimizing their mental resilience, to find out the benefits of yoga for psychological well-being, and to examine the challenges and difficulties of practicing yoga for a healthy lifestyle. 104 respondents were randomly taken as the sample. The study includes mixed research methodologies, and a deductive methodology was used together with a descriptive research design. While secondary data was gathered from books, journals, and online sources, primary data was gathered through surveys. Quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were used. The findings reveal that people's motivations for doing yoga and meditation are based on their perspectives. The majority of them do it to reduce stress, maintain mental fitness, enhance immunity and find inner peace. Yoga and meditation have numerous psychological benefits, including increased mental resilience; decreased stress, anxiety, and depression; increased positive attitudes; increased self-awareness; spirituality; and improved mindfulness. The main challenges to practicing yoga and meditation were identified, such as lack of time, lack of motivation, poor health conditions, and lack of knowledge about its benefits. Thus, it can be concluded that yoga and meditation sound effects can make people feel better in their daily lives by reducing stress and improving psychological wellbeing.

**Keywords:** Yoga, Meditation, Psychological well-being, Mindfulness, Stress

### **Introduction**

This research paper is an attempt to study the significance of yoga and meditation to enhance psychological well-being. This refers to the coming

together of the individual and universal selves. Yoga is a Hindu spiritual and ascetic discipline that incorporates breath control, simple meditation, and the adoption of specific bodily postures, and it is widely practiced for health and well-being. The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit term "yuj", which signifies union or combination. Yoga is a traditional Indian way of living that entails the practice of specific postures (asanas), focused breathing techniques (pranayamas), and meditation (Arndt et al., 2012). In fact, yoga and meditation are becoming more popular as a way to improve people's overall health and fitness.

Yogic exercises have become more significant in today's society for developing a sustained healthy lifestyle due to their potential to boost mental health and immunity (Nagarathna, et al. 2021; Parshad, 2004). Moreover, yoga also has a positive impact on a person's physical, intellectual, psychological, and spiritual health. In similar ways, meditation has been practiced for thousands of years, as part of a spiritual practice. However, mindfulness and yoga have become popular in recent years as a tool to help people manage stress and enhance their overall well-being. Both meditation and yoga, which consist of physical postures and breathing techniques, are beneficial in the treatment of a range of healthcare and psychological conditions. They also significantly improve coping abilities, which we all need to enhance. Moreover, the world has realized the value and significance of yogic practice and meditation, and it is now practiced all over the world. As a result, yoga has evolved to the point where 30 million people around the world practice it for their overall well-being and psychological growth.

This study also addressed a research lacuna, or deficiency. There has not been a comprehensive investigation that looks into the effectiveness of yoga and meditation for psychological well-being. According to the data, the majority of specialists from other nations have covered a number of themes in this domain. However, no one has particularly brought up this issue in relation to the Sri Lankan context. Consequently, this investigation is being carried out in order to make up for the gap.

Nowadays, people are mainly less concerned about their mental health. So, it has become a major issue not only for their own lives but also for the lives of their loved ones. In today's society, every person must deal with numerous challenges during times of crisis, such as the current global epidemic caused by COVID-19 and the current economic downturn. This will have a direct negative impact on their mental health, and they may get anxious and experience a variety of psychological issues as a result. Such problems cannot be remedied only through medical intervention. It extends beyond medicine and necessitates a balance of mental well-being. Based on this situation, it will become a severe problem for everyone's healthy living. Therefore, without a doubt, it will become a recurring hurdle to overcome this problem for many individuals, with detrimental consequences for

their mental health and lifestyle. As a consequence, the researcher's purpose is to address this issue in this context.

With regard to the above, this study is primordially aimed at examining the benefits of yoga and meditation to improve the mental health of human beings in Sri Lanka.

### **Research Objectives**

- Identify the reasons why people practice yoga and meditation with the intention of optimizing their mental resilience.
- Investigate the benefits of yoga and meditation for psychological well-being.
- Examine the challenges and difficulties of practicing yoga and meditation for a healthy lifestyle.

People are more concerned with their physical health than with their mental health. However, focusing on mental well-being is vital for every human because it is a major requirement of their healthy lifestyle. Therefore, knowing how yoga and meditation can improve people's overall mental health is an important part of the healthy lifestyle. Yoga and meditation have a positive impact on all elements of a person's life, including their physical, psychological, intellectual, and spiritual well-being (Arora, 2008; Büssing, et al. 2012). However, the study only looks at the effects of yoga and meditation on psychological well-being, not the other way around.

### **Research Methodology**

The main research objective of the study is to investigate the importance of practicing yoga and meditation for improving human psychological well-being. In order to address the research objectives, the study has employed a mixed research methodology. A descriptive research design and a deductive approach were employed for this study. Primary data was collected using questionnaires, and secondary data was collected using journals, books, journals, and online sources. Data analysis was done both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The data was collected using a survey method from a sample of 104 respondents of different age groups who live in the Colombo district and practice yoga and meditation, and they were chosen using a simple random sampling method. The main research instrument used for the research was the questionnaire designed by the researcher, and it was distributed to the participants. The data for the study was acquired using an exploratory research approach. To present and analyze the data, the quantitative analysis in this study was conducted using SPSS and descriptive statistics.

## Data Analysis

The demographic characteristics of the respondents is shown in Table 01.

**Table 01: Demographic Characteristics**

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	42	40.3
	Female	62	59.6
<b>Age</b>	15 – 25 Years	15	14.4
	25 – 35 Years	44	42.3
	35 – 45 Years	37	35.5
	45 – 55 Years	08	7.6
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	71	68.2
	Unmarried	33	31.7

The sample included 104 respondents as 62 females and 42 males. From the total sample of 104 respondents 60% represent females and 40% represent males. The percentage shows that the female respondents are higher than the male respondents.

The analysis presented in Table 01 reveals that the sample is dominated by young category respondents between the ages of 25 -35 years, who represent 42.3% of the total sample. The majority of the respondents are female and married.

Table 02

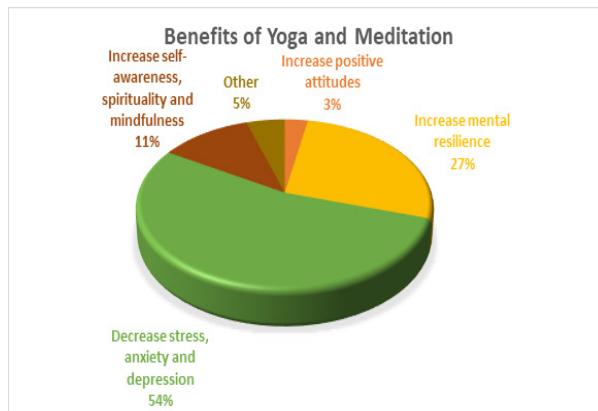
### Frequency Analysis for reasons for practice yoga and meditation

Reasons for practice yoga and meditation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Enhance immunity	3	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Find inner peace	4	3.8	3.8	6.7
	Maintain mental fitness	29	27.9	27.9	34.6
	Reduce stress	68	65.4	65.4	100.0
	Total	104	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey Data, SPSS output

As shown in Table 02, the majority of respondents practice yoga and meditation to relieve stress resulting from a variety of factors, which represents 65.4% of all respondents. 27.9% of respondents indicated they practice yoga and meditation to maintain their mental fitness. The remaining 3.8% of respondents practice yoga and meditation to attain inner peace, while 2.9% practice it to strengthen their immune systems.

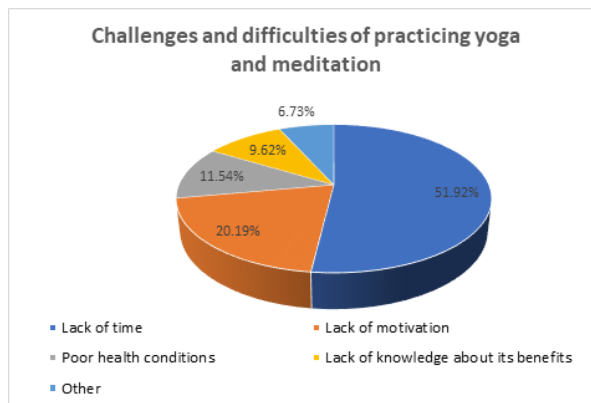
Chart 01: Benefits of yoga and meditation



Source: Research Data

According to the majority of respondents (54%) in Chart 01, performing yoga and meditation makes them feel less stressed, anxious, and depressed. While 11% of respondents were able to improve their self-awareness, spirituality, and mindfulness by incorporating yoga and meditation into their lifestyle, 27% of respondents reported receiving benefits from increased mental resilience. 5% of those respondents claimed that they also receive the other benefits.

Chart 02: Challenges and difficulties of practicing yoga and meditation



Source: Research Data

In Chart 02, the majority of respondents (51.92%) identified time constraints as their primary difficulty. 21% have lack of motivation. 11.54% of people have poor health. The remaining 9.62% lack understanding about how to practice yoga and meditation, and 6.73% face various obstacles that make it difficult to practice yoga in daily life.

## **Discussion**

According to the findings, most people who practice yoga and meditation gain psychological benefits in their lives. Reducing stress, depression, and anxiety, enhancing mental resilience, improving quality of life, and strengthening immunity are just a few of the purported advantages. As a result, a large majority of people believe that yoga and meditation can help them enhance their mental well-being.

It has been found that the majority of the people who stayed physically active during the epidemic did so primarily to keep their mental health. The study also revealed that females tend to practice yoga and meditation more than males due to aforementioned reasons. The findings of the study show that adopting a yoga-based lifestyle significantly reduces stress and anxiety. Thus, the findings of this research are similar to a few studies from foreign researchers who demonstrate yoga enhances mental well-being.

A study indicated that practicing mindfulness meditation reduced psychological symptoms of illness, anxiety, and stress-related disorders while increasing psychological well-being (Carmody J., Baer RA., 2008; Brewington, 2011; Goyal et al, 2014; Ross, 2010). A study done by Descilo T, Vedamurtachar A, Gerbarg PL, Nagaraga D, Gangadhar BN, Damodaran B, et al. (2010), pointed out that yoga breathing can treat depression and stress disorder. According to Amy Novotney (2009), yoga may enhance social bonds, decrease stress, and relieve anxiety, sadness, and sleeplessness. In a qualitative study, Uebelacker et al. (2010) from the USA found that practicing Vinyasa yoga for two months led to significant reductions in depressive symptoms as well as significant increases in behavioral activation and mindfulness in depressed individuals. According to a study by Kazufumi et al. (2014), practicing yoga can potentially lower levels of anxiety, despair, rage, and fatigue-related mental health indicators. Further, Jue-Ting Fan and Kuei-Min Chen's (2011) research, showed that the elderly with dementia who reside in long-term care institutions can benefit from yoga exercise on both a physical and mental level. Hence, in these long-term care facilities, it is advised that yoga be added as one of the regular activities.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of the study was to determine how successful yoga and meditation are at improving psychological well-being. According to the research data, the following conclusions can be drawn:

People's motivations for doing yoga and meditation are based on their perspectives. The majority of them do it to maintain mental fitness, enhance immunity, find inner peace, and reduce stress.

Yoga and meditation have numerous psychological benefits, including increased mental resilience, decreased stress, anxiety and depression, increased positive attitudes, increased self-awareness, spirituality, and improved mindfulness.

The main challengers to practicing yoga and meditation were identified, such as lack of time, lack of motivation, poor health conditions, and lack of knowledge about its benefits etc.

This study reveals the potential benefits of yoga practices for lowering depressive symptoms and promoting wellbeing. In light of its potential, yoga might make a suitable addition to the list of appropriate treatments for mental wellbeing. Therefore, it can be concluded that practicing yoga and meditation is very important for everyone to improve their psychological well-being.

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