

Management of Mental Health with Yogic Practices in the Era of Mobile Phone and Social Networking

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ABSTRACT

Evolution in technology is drastically becoming automatic and making life easier. Among those technologies, mobile phones are fast changing technology that is equipping humans to work from anywhere. Social Networking Sites (SNS) are one of the most potent tools in the hands of the adolescents to reach out the World. Excessive usage and dependency on mobile phones and social networks make them addicted to such an extent that it adversely affects them overall. Today's people are putting technology to varied use, from texting, tweeting, chatting, updating status, social media etc. The high dependency and prolonged use of mobile phones has led to serious mental health implications. Yoga is the method by which the restless mind becomes calm and the energy directed into constructive channels. The purpose of this paper is to improve mental health of those addicted to mobile phones and social networking with yoga. Yoga has now acquired global acceptance and is used therapeutically to improve human health not only in India but also in other countries. It has been found to enhance focus, clarity, memory and concentration, and helps in achieving heightened state of awareness of body and mind.

Keywords: *Mobile phone, Social networking, Mental health, Yogic Practices*

Worldwide technology and its changes play a major role in each individual's life¹. The current trend of the society is to adopt every change in the field of communication technology that makes life more easier. In this technological world, people become highly dependent on electronic gadgets, especially, mobile phone. It became an indispensable device of modern lives and Social media is one of the greatest communication tools and has changed the way we engage with one another. The social media platform allows us to connect and communicate with anyone, anywhere – whether we post a picture, send a tweet, or update our status².

Mobile phone and Social Networking Sites (SNS) have some merits and demerits also. But excessive use of these things has led to addiction of mobile phones and social networking sites. Mobile phone and SNS addicted people make long phone calls and send a larger number of text messages than originally intended. Social Media is one of the most potent

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tools in the hands of the adolescents and youth to reach out the World². But over use of the social networks make them addicted to such an extent that it adversely affects them overall^{3,4}. A Nielsen study indicates that an American youth spends more than 10 hours with electronic gadgets each day. Another study conducted by the organization “Common Sense Media”, reported that 50% of teens feel addicted to their mobile devices. Available research also tells that while people can't imagine life without their digital tools, unregulated and overuse of technology can also contribute to stress. Excessive use of mobile device and social networking sites finds manifestation in the form of deleterious health effects. A Swedish study found that heavy use of technology was linked to insomnia, depression, increased stress, and mood swings. The findings also indicated that using mobile in bed at night leads to anxiety, insomnia, and less duration and quality of sleep⁵.

Yoga has now acquired global acceptance and is used therapeutically to improve human health not only in India but also in other countries. It has been found to enhance focus, clarity, memory and concentration, and helps in achieving heightened state of awareness of body and mind.

Yoga meaning ‘Union’ is a group of physical, mental and spiritual practices⁶. This review paper discusses various harmful effects of excessive and unregulated usage of mobile phone and social networking sites along with proven effect of Yogic Aasanas, Meditation and Pranayama on eliminating these effects and improve mental health.

Mental health implication of the excessive use of Mobile Phone and Social Networking apps and its management by yogic practices:

Headache

Complaints of headache are significantly higher in long interval smart phone users than in low users. There is also an association between screen time exposure and migraine: the more the exposure, higher is the frequency and duration of headache⁷. In a clinical Trial, few randomly selected migraine patients were given either conventional care or Yoga with conventional care for six weeks. The patients provided Yoga with convention care showed significant improvement in mitigating the frequency, intensity and impact of headache⁸. Sang K. (2015) has found in his study that practising of yoga practices reduced anxiety, headache and depression⁹.

Important Yogic practices found effective to control headaches are:²⁴

- a. **Asanas:** Makarasana, Setu-Bandhasana, Padahasthasana, Marjariasana and Adhomukha Shavasana: These asanas will increase blood circulation and cures headache. Gomukhasana, Balasana, AnandMadirasana, Paschimottanasana, Padadhirasana and Padmasana, calms nervous system and reduces the feeling of pain.
- b. **Pranayama:** Nadishodhana, Sheetali pranayama and Sheetkari pranayama produce mental tranquility and reduce headache.
- c. **Hasta Mudra:** Mahashirsa Mudra, Prana Mudra, Vayu Mudra and Sankha Mudra²⁵. (All these mudras are very effective in relieving headaches, improve mental clarity, strengthen willpower and stamina.)
- d. **Meditation:** Deep breathing, Om chanting, Savita dhyana²⁶. (Sitting in front of rising sun have many benefits, These improve mood and helps stay calm.)
- e. **Relaxation:** Yoganidra, Shavasana (Relaxes Psycho-physiological system by inducing deep state of Meditation)²⁸

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Lack of concentration

Concentration means wholeness unity, equilibrium. It is a focus of attention upon a particular object¹⁰.

In a recent research done by Jennifer Meckles reported that “attention” gets affected due to increase in mobile phone usage. Many students subsequently confessed to lagging behind in academics due to their mobile phone addiction^{11,12}.

According to an article published in ‘Japan Times’ excessive use of electronic gadgets caused sleep deprivation in school children. It also led to poor academic performance due to loss in concentration. Various research studies concluded that yoga and meditation influenced concentration positively^{5,13}.

Important Yogic practices found effective to improve concentration:-²⁴

- a. **Asanas:-** Vrikshasana, Trikonasana, Garudasana, Tadasana, Natrajasana, Utthita hasta padanghusthasana, Padma parvatasana, Padhastasana, Bakadhyanasana, and Sarvangasana: All these balancing asanas are very effective in keeping the balance between mind and body and increase attention and develop concentration.
- b. **Pranayama:-** Nadishodhana, Bhramari Pranayama: It calms the nervous system and helps to achieve the greater concentration.
- c. **Hasta Mudra:-** Jnana mudra, Chin mudra, Sanmukhi mudra and Sankha mudra²⁵. (All these mudras help in sharpens the intellect; reduce daydreaming and mental fantasy during meditation. Help in calming the mind and improve concentration.)
- d. **Meditation:-** Deep breathing meditation, Savitadhyana, Transcendental meditation²⁶. (All these types of meditation are very beneficial in staying calm and focused and increase concentration and mental stability.)
- e. **Relaxation:-** Shavasana and Yoganidra (practicing yoga nidra with proper instructions and keep focusing on breath is very helpful in increasing concentration)²⁸
- f. **Shambhavi Mudra:** It calms the mind and develops concentration, and mental stability.

Insomnia

Insomnia is a sleep disorder. Lack of sleep or insomnia was one of the most common symptoms observed among adolescents now-a-days. Continuous and unregulated usage of mobile phones is one of the biggest reasons for increasing insomnia because short wavelength artificial blue light emitted by electronic devices delay circadian rhythm and suppresses release of sleep inducing hormone¹⁴. Research has showed that 76.4% of participant using electronic device for more than 3 hours a day experienced poor sleep quality¹⁵. By reducing physiological arousal and inducing total relaxation and positivity, Yoga has proven to be an effective treatment for sleep deprivation¹⁶.

Important Yogic practices found effective in improving sleep quality:-²⁴

- a. **Asanas:** Shavasana, Suryanamaskara, Makarasana, Matsyakridasana and Shishuvasana: All these relaxing asanas help to cure insomnia.
- b. **Pranayama:-** Nadishodhana, Bhramari pranayama, Sheetali pranayama and Ujjayi pranayama
- c. **Hasta Mudra:** Jnana mudra, Prana mudra and Prithivi mudra.²⁵ (It helps in calm the mind increase mental stability and improve insomnia.)

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- d. **Meditation:** Deep breathing meditation: It relax the nervous system and helpful to cure insomnia.
- e. **Relaxation:-** Yoga nidra: (practicing it daily before sleep is very effective in curing insomnia)²⁸

Stress

“A condition when a person perceives that demand exceeds personal and social resources the individual can mobilize, is known as stress” as stated by The American Institute of Stress¹⁶. These techno timesavers create unexpected mental and physical consequences^{13,17}. Excessive use of digital equipment also leads to repetitive stress injury [RSI], in which cytokines released and traveling in bloodstream are toxic to the nerve cells¹⁸. In case of stress, Yoga helps in lowering blood pressure and heartbeat. It also has a beneficial effect on the parasympathetic nervous system. It reduces the oxygen demand of the body and thus reduces the vulnerability to stress that can further lead to anxiety¹⁹. A clinical study over 25 healthy volunteers revealed a yoga induced reduction in salivary amylase activity. A decrease in salivary amylase activity depicts reduction in sympathetic response indicating thereby that Yoga has immediate and long term effect on stress and anxiety reduction²⁰.

Important Yogic practices found effective to manage stress:-²⁴

- a. **Asanas:** Gomukhasana, Trikonasana, Murdhasana, Marjariasana, Sarvaangasana, Halasana and Surya namaskara: Increase blood circulation and stimulate nervous system and increase both physical and mental stability hence reduces stress and anxiety.
- b. **Pranayama:** Nadishodhana, Bhramari pranayama, Sheetali pranayama, Shitkari pranayama, Bhastrika pranayama.
- c. **Hasta Mudra:** Jnana mudra, Sankha mudra, Ganesha mudra and Sanmukhi mudra²⁵. (Increase mental peace and helps in reduce stress.)
- d. **Meditation:** Deep breathing meditation, Om chanting, Transcendental meditation. (All these meditation practice helps in release stress, endorphin hormone release while deep inhalation which is known as a natural pain killer, helps in releasing stress and calms the mind.)
- e. **Relaxation:** Yoganidra (practicing this after yogasana or before sleep is very helpful in relieves stress and provide various kind of mental relaxation)²⁸

Depression

Depression is associated with elevated levels of cortisol known as the stress hormone. Studies have demonstrated reduced levels of cortisol in those who practice yoga. (Thirhalli, et al, 2013). Breathing exercises of yoga have also been observed with lowering cortisol in subjects²¹. A correlation is seen between increased symptoms of depression and suicidal thoughts in teens using cell phones and playing video games for more than three hours a day^{5,22}. The level of inhibitory neurotransmitter GABA [Gama-amino-butyric-acid] is decreased in stress ultimately leading to depression. Researchers showed that GABA level in the brain increases immediately after Yoga²³.

Important Yogic exercises found effective to control depression are:²⁴

- a. **Asanas:** Surya namaskara, KashthaTakshanasana, Simhagarjanasana, Uttanasana, Janu-Sirasana and Setu-Bandha, Sarvangasana, Bhujangasana and shirsasana: All these asanas calm the nervous system and relieve stress and depression.
- b. **Pranayama:** Bhastrika Pranayama, Ujjayi Pranayama and Nadishodhana

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- c. **Hasta Mudra:** Chin Mudra, Jnana Mudra, Linga Mudra and Surya Mudra²⁵. (Evokes the feeling of lightness, Calms the mind, Sharpens the intellect, helps in reduce depression and increase mental peace.)
- d. **Meditation:** Savitadhyana and Transcendental meditation²⁶. (Savitadhyana is one of the best dhayna for every person it helps in healing mood, and keeps stay away from stress, depression, anxiety, Transcendental meditation is a form of silent mantra meditation, it developed by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. It helps in relaxing the mind, increase awareness,relieve stress and access to higher states of consciousness²⁷.

Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal response to specific situations or events. However, excessive fear or anxiety may be indicative of an anxiety disorder (American Psychiatric Association). Most mobile addicts are people with low self-esteem and are prone to develop friction in their social relations. They feel the urge to be constantly connected and in contact with others and if they are deprived of their cell phones, regardless of the reason they become anxious and irritable¹¹.

Important Yogic exercises found effective in controlling anxiety are:-²⁴

- a. **Asanas:** Makarasana, Setu-Bandha, Marjariasana, Tadasana, Gomukhasana and utthita hasta padanghusthasana: Increase both physical and mental stability hence reduces stress and anxiety.
- b. **Pranayama:** Nadishodhana, Bhramari pranayama, Sheetal pranayama, Sheetkari pranayama: These calm the mind and lessen stress.
- c. **Hasta Mudra:** jnana mudra, Dhyana mudra, Sankh mudra, Ganesha mudra and Prana mudra²⁵. (Helps in calms the mind, increase mental peace.)
- d. **Meditation:-** Deep breathing meditation, Om chanting and Mantra meditation. (These help calm the mind and reduce anxiety.)

This review paper has discussed various harmful mental effects of excessive use of mobile phones and social networking sites such as depression, headache, stress and anxiety etc and here is given yogic practices of each complication to eliminate the effects of addiction but is researcher has a humble request to practice it under the guidance of an expert.

CONCLUSION

Mobile phone and social networking sites usage has become common in each individual's life. Its heavy and prolonged use often leads to an addiction. Available study shows that adolescents themselves feel addicted to their Smartphones and overuse of social networking sites has also leads to an addiction. Excessive and prolonged use of mobile phones and social networking sites manifest in the form of deleterious health effects such as depression, increased stress, mood swings, anxiety, insomnia, duration and quality of sleep and that overuse of mobile phone also reduces concentration in study.

Yoga is a way of life; it is characterized by balance, health, harmony and bliss. Including yoga in daily life is the best way to reduce these complications. Yoga and Meditation have proved to be natural and effective ways to mitigate addiction. Yoga has come to acquire a global acceptance for therapeutic use to mitigate technology related health issues. Yoga helps to achieve harmony between mind, body and soul. It drives away negativity and promotes healthy and happy life styles.

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This paper discusses various harmful effects of excessive and prolonged usage of mobile devices and social networking sites along with proven effect of Yogic Aasanas, Meditation and Pranayama in eliminating these effects and management of mental health.

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Conflict of Interest

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