

## The Impact of Meditation on Mental Health among College Students: Gender Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Psychological well-being is a crucial element of one's total physical and mental state. Mental health refers to psychological and emotional well-being in which individuals can utilise their learning capacities, engage in constructive and productive activities within society, and successfully handle the typical challenges of daily life. Stress has become an integral part of human life in this modern era. Stress is considered to be any condition that perturbs the body's homeostasis. Today, males and females are constantly under stress due to the need to balance home and workplace. **Objective:** Meditation seeks to achieve the whole and balanced growth of human potential. By establishing a solid scientific foundation for meditation, we intended to compare males and females to evaluate its impact on mental well-being. **Method:** Twenty-five male and twenty-five female participants were selected for the Meditational Group, and twenty-five males and twenty-five female participants were selected for the Non-Meditational Group. They were divided into two groups: the meditational group and the non-meditational group. A sample of 100 college-going students (aged 17–25 years) was selected purposefully from Bhagalpur city. Data were collected using the Pramod Kumar Mental Health Checklist, which is used to measure mental health. paired t-test is used for data analysis. Selected individuals from meditational group were subjected to 90 minutes of yoga classes once or twice a week for a month. **Result:** The results suggest a statistically significant difference (t-value 2.13 and significance level 0.05) in mental health between male students in the meditational group and female students in the meditational group. There is a significant disparity (t-value 2.08 and sig-level 0.05) in mental health between male students in the non-meditation group and female students in the non-meditation group. **Conclusion:** The results suggest a considerable disparity in mental health between male and female students in both groups – meditational and non-meditational group. Female adolescents had better mental health than their counterparts.

**Keywords:** Stress, Mental health, Meditation, Male and Female

Meditation has been practised from the beginning of human civilization, with its origins deeply rooted in ancient Vedic mythology. The practice started during the Vedic era and is also utilised in Ayurveda, the ancient Indian healthcare system. Meditation is employed as a means to enhance physical, psychological, emotional, and mental well-being. Additionally, it is utilised as a strategy to manage severe and distressing

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illnesses. Currently, meditation is widely practiced worldwide, and its popularity has significantly increased over the past 2-3 decades due to the escalating levels of work-related stress and the deterioration of work-life balance. Meditation involves directing your attention to a single point and maintaining a state of relaxation for an extended period of time. My research's findings are helpful in identifying a variety of mental health-related factors. Meditation decelerates respiration, lowers blood pressure, induces muscular relaxation, and alleviates anxiety, among other benefits.

The ultimate objective of any meditation practice is to redirect our consciousness towards a more optimistic state by completely altering one's mental condition. Meditation involves directing one's focus within and concentrating on the inner essence of oneself. Meditation facilitates the cessation of mental activity, resulting in increased tranquility, serenity, and concentration of the mind. Essentially, meditation revitalises one's consciousness. Currently, the global population is increasingly recognising the significance of meditation due to its diverse range of impacts, encompassing both psychological and physiological aspects. The many impacts of meditation are rather wide. Meditation has always been believed to have positive spiritual outcomes.

Meditative approaches can be classified based on their focus on awareness, concentration, and automatic self-transcendence. Commonly used methods, like transcendental meditation, rely on the use of a mantra to achieve a state of easy concentration, when directed attention is not present. Three to five Additional widely-used techniques, such as mindfulness-based stress reduction, prioritise cultivating a state of being fully present and aware, or training in mindfulness. There is still uncertainty regarding the meaning of these differences and how they affect the effects of psychosocial stress.

Meditation is a cognitive exercise where a person cultivates their mental faculties or induces a state of awareness to achieve certain advantages or as a goal in its own right. It is the most effective means of achieving tranquility and alleviating tension. College students are dynamic and driven by a spirit of competition. Due to the evolving circumstances, people's lifestyles have undergone changes and they are now seeking areas that are suited for their needs. The predominant challenges encountered by contemporary college students are around matters of drug usage, criminality, violence, sexuality, and poverty. These issues also diminish their self-confidence and they yearn for personal growth and development. Furthermore, these issues result in diminished focus and heightened levels of stress. Meditation has consistently been seen as a serene method for alleviating stress and enhancing one's morale. Meditation enhances the neuronal networks in the brain that govern focus and foster empathy. Developing greater mindfulness aids young individuals in managing and controlling their mental well-being.

Mental health encompasses more than the simple absence of cognitive diseases. As stated in its constitution, the World Health Organisation's definition of health emphasises the importance of mental well-being. According to the WHO, health is the absence of sickness or infirmity and a complete physical, mental, and social well-being condition.

Mental health notions encompass several aspects, such as personal happiness, belief in one's own abilities, independence, proficiency, reliance on previous generations, and acknowledgement of the capacity to achieve intellectual and emotional potential. Well-being is a condition in which individuals acknowledge their capabilities, effectively manage the

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daily pressures of life, engage in creative and rewarding employment, and contribute to society and the communities they belong to.

Mental diseases have a significant impact on individuals, their families, and the community, causing both disability and financial burden. Mental illnesses are being increasingly acknowledged as a substantial addition to the overall burden of global health, particularly in low-income countries (LICs). Additionally, they frequently occur with both communicable and non-communicable diseases. Mental health is not given much importance in most low-income countries (LICs), and there is a widespread lack of access to mental health care. Approximately 90% of individuals with mental problems in low- and middle-income nations lack access to primary mental health treatment. Approximately 6% of the population in India is afflicted with a mental condition.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Oman, D., Shapiro, S. L., Thoresen, C. E., Plante, T. G., & Flinders, T. (2008). Meditation Lowers Stress and Supports Forgiveness Among College Students: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal of American College Health*. After conducting an initial evaluation, the researchers divided college freshmen into three groups: mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR; n = 15), Easwaran's Eight-Point Programme (EPP; n = 14), or a wait-list control group (n = 15), using a random allocation approach. The authors collected data on self-report outcome measures before the intervention, immediately after the intervention, and 8 weeks after the intervention. The researchers did not find any significant differences between the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and the Emotional Processing Programme (EPP) after treatment or between the post-test and the 8-week follow-up ( $p > .10$ ). The treatment group (n = 29) shown significant improvements in stress ( $p < .05$ , Cohen's  $d = -.45$ ), forgiveness ( $p < .05$ ,  $d = .34$ ), and rumination ( $p < .10$ ,  $d = -.34$ ) compared to the control group. Research indicates that the implementation of meditation-based stress-management techniques effectively decreases stress levels and improves the ability to forgive in college students. These programmes need more examination as possible instruments for promoting health among college populations.

Rizer, C. A., Fagan, M. H., Kilmon, C., & Rath, L. (2016). The role of perceived stress and health beliefs on college students' intentions to practice mindfulness meditation. *American Journal of Health Education*. Rizer's study aims to comprehend the motivations behind individuals' involvement in mindfulness-based activities and explore its potential for facilitating effective health promotion. This study examined the influence of health attitudes and perceived stress on the intention to engage in mindfulness meditation among undergraduate college students. An investigation was carried out among undergraduate college students to assess their levels of stress, attitudes towards health, and intentions to engage in mindfulness meditation. The study found a favourable correlation between the intention to practice mindfulness meditation and the perceived advantages of such practice. The perception of stress was found to be associated with both the intensity of a stress-related symptom and the vulnerability to it. The individual expressed a desire to participate in mindfulness training using three distinct forms. Strongly correlated with the intention to engage in mindfulness meditation.

Deckro, G. R., Ballinger, K. M., Hoyt, M., Wilcher, M., Dusek, J., Myers, P., ... & Benson, H. (2002). The evaluation of a mind/body intervention to reduce psychological distress and perceived stress in college students. *Journal of American College Health*. In a study conducted by Decker and his team, it was discovered that 90% of college students who

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participated in a 6-week mind/body intervention programme, consisting of six 90-minute group training sessions that emphasised the relaxation response (RR) and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), experienced a noteworthy decrease in psychological distress and anxiety when compared to the control group.

Rosenzweig and his colleagues employed mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) to assist in alleviating total mood disturbance (TMD). Their study revealed that second-year medical students exhibited significantly lower TMD scores compared to the control group. Additionally, the students demonstrated improved scores on the subscales measuring bewilderment, confusion, fatigue, inertia, tension-anxiety, and vigor-activity. This study also determined that meditation, especially Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), can be an effective approach in decreasing stress levels among college students.

Caldwell, K., Harrison, M., Adams, M., Quin, R. H., & Greeson, J. (2010). Developing mindfulness in college students through movement-based courses: effects on self-regulatory self-efficacy, mood, stress, and sleep quality. *Journal of American College Health*. College students might experience various advantages from engaging in different sorts of mindfulness activities. Caldwell and his colleagues conducted a study on a group of 166 college students who were engaged in 15-week sessions that included Gyrokinesis, Pilates, and Taiji quan. The Pilates and Gyrokinesis sessions convened biweekly for a duration of 75 minutes, or thrice weekly for a duration of 50 minutes. The Taiji quan lesson took place twice a week, with each session lasting 50 minutes. The researchers discovered a substantial increase in total mindfulness scores at the conclusion of the semester compared to the measurements obtained at the beginning and middle of the semester.

Both mindfulness ratings and sleep quality improved. Oman and colleagues conducted a study to examine the impact of meditation on stress and forgiveness in college students. They discovered that after participating in an eight-week intervention consisting of 90-minute sessions, students in the treatment group showed reduced levels of stress and rumination, as well as increased levels of forgiveness.

### ***Objectives of the study***

The following objectives for the current study:

1. To examine the psychological well-being of male and female college students.
2. To assess the impact of meditation on mental well-being of college students.

### ***Hypotheses of the study:***

The study was formulated using the following hypothesis:

1. There is no statistically significant difference in mean on mental health scores between male and female college students in the meditational group.
2. There is no statistically significant difference in mean on mental health scores between male and female college students in the non-meditational group.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **1. Variables Under the study:**

#### **A. Independent variables:**

- Area of Group - Meditational Group and Non – Meditational group
- Gender - Male and Female

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### B. Dependent variables:

- Mental Health

### *Sample*

The study utilised the purposive sampling method to choose the sample. The sample comprised 100 college students from various colleges in Bhagalpur. College students, both male and female, divided into a meditational group and a non-meditational group equally. The age range of the respondents were between the 17 to 25 years.

### *Measuring Tool*

Pramod Kumar designed and standardised the Hindi version of the 'Mental Health Check List' which was utilised for the study. The content comprises 11 elements that are displayed in a manner with 4 points for rating. The reliability of the check-list was assessed using the test-retest and split-half reliability methods. The dependability index is 0.81 and 0.83, respectively. The content validity of the mental health checklist was ensured by selecting just those symptoms that received unanimous agreement from the judges about their relevance to the study of mental health.

### *Procedure of data collection*

All disciplines were comfortably accommodated in a classroom configuration. Subsequently, a Hindi version of a mental health checklist of 11 items and accompanying instructions was delivered to both male and female subjects. A group of fifty individuals, consisting of both males and females, who regularly practise meditation (Group - 1: Meditational group), were contacted and subjected to the aforementioned psychological tests. Meanwhile, 25 males and 25 females who did not regularly practise Yoga (Group - 2: Non-Meditational group) were chosen randomly from one of the colleges in Bhagalpur City. The data acquired from the aforementioned scale underwent statistical analysis. Initially, the mean and standard deviation were calculated. The paired t-test was utilised to determine the disparity between the two groups of students.

## RESULTS

The collected data has been examined utilising statistical methodologies. The following findings are presented based on the research purpose and the subsequent analysis of the data:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no statistically significant difference in mean on mental health scores between male and female college students in the meditational group.

*Table -1 Gender wise comparison on mental health score between mediational group*

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Sig-Level
Male (Meditational group)	25	25.60	1.96	48	1.7390	0.0901	0.05
Female (Meditational group)	25	24.20	3.02				

Table 1 presents a gender-based comparison of mental health between male and female college students in two groups: a meditational group for males and a meditational group for females. The table includes the computed mean, standard deviation, degree of freedom, 't' value, and level of significance.

Based on the Mental Health Checklist, the computed values for male students in the meditational group are a mean of 25.60 and a standard deviation of 1.96. The computed

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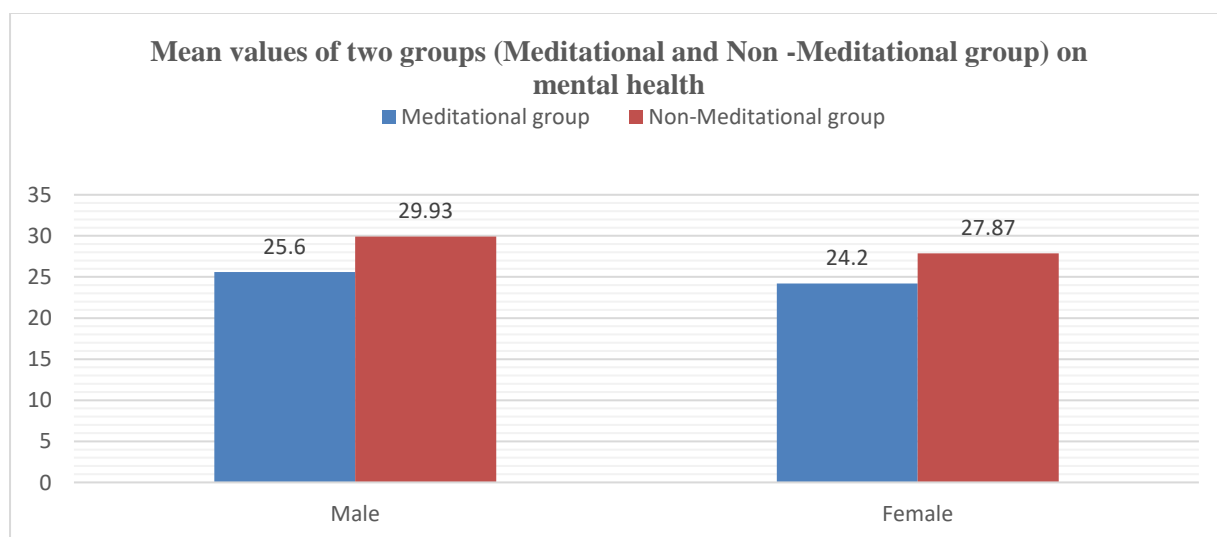
findings for the meditational group of female students are a mean of 24.20 and a standard deviation of 3.02. The computed t-value is 1.7390, indicating statistical significance at the 0.05 level. The results suggest a considerable disparity in mental health between male and female students in the meditational group. Therefore, the initial premise that there is no substantial disparity in mental health between males and females is refuted.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no statistically significant difference in mean on mental health scores between male and female college students in the non-meditational group.

**Table- 2 Gender wise comparison of Mental Health between Non meditational group**

Non-Meditational group	SEX	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	P- value	Sig- Level
	Male	25	29.93	3.61	48	1.7004	.048614	0.05
	Female	25	27.87	4.04				

Table 2 presents a comparison of mental health between male and female college students who are not involved in meditation. The table includes the mean, standard deviation, degree of freedom, t-value, and level of significance. Based on the Mental Health Checklist, the computed findings for male students in the non-meditational group are a mean of 29.93 and a standard deviation of 3.61. The computed findings for the group of female students who did not meditate are as follows: the mean is 27.87 and the standard deviation is 4.04. The computed 't' value is 1.7004, indicating statistical significance at a significance level of 0.05. The results suggest a substantial difference in mental health between male and female students in the non-meditation group. Therefore, the hypothesis 2 that There is no statistically significant difference in mean on mental health scores between male and female college students in the non-meditational group is rejected.



**Fig: 1 Graphical representation showing the comparison of mean score of meditational and non-meditational group on mental health.**

## CONCLUSION

The results suggest a considerable disparity in mental health between male and female students in the meditational group as well as in the non-meditation group. The mental health of male and female college students in the meditational group showed a substantial difference in mean scores. Female students had superior mental well-being compared to

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their peers. A substantial difference in mean scores for mental health was seen between male and female college students in the non-meditational group. Female students had better mental well-being in comparison to their peers. The results of my research are advantageous in discerning many aspects of mental well-being.

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### Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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