

From Tradition to Transformation Ancient Wisdom for Modern Minds: A Systematic Review of Impact of Ayurveda, Yoga, and Meditation on Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

The increasing prevalence of mental health concerns necessitates innovative and integrative approaches to care. This systematic review explores the impact of ancient practices- Ayurveda, Yoga, and Meditation- on mental health, bridging the gap between traditional wisdom and contemporary therapeutic models. The review explores the impact of traditional practices such as Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation on mental health, emphasizing their relevance in contemporary therapeutic contexts. The review synthesizes findings from numerous studies that investigate how these ancient practices contribute to mental well-being, particularly for individuals experiencing stress, anxiety, and depression. The literature indicates that yoga therapy, which integrates physical postures (asanas), breath control (pranayama), and meditation (dhyana), has been effective in managing common mental health disorders. For instance, a systematic review highlighted significant outcomes related to the management of anxiety and depression through therapeutic yoga interventions. Furthermore, meditation practices have demonstrated substantial benefits in enhancing emotional regulation and reducing perceived stress levels. Mechanisms underlying these practices, including their effects on physiological parameters such as heart rate variability and cortisol levels, which are critical indicators of stress response have also been examined. Additionally, specific techniques like Bhramari pranayama have been shown to alleviate stress and promote relaxation by influencing brain activity associated with emotional regulation. The findings underscore the potential of integrating these traditional practices into modern mental health care frameworks to enhance therapeutic outcomes and promote holistic well-being. By bridging ancient wisdom with contemporary mental health practices, we can foster a more inclusive approach to mental health care that respects cultural heritage while addressing modern challenges.

Keywords: *Ayurveda, Yoga, Meditation, Integrative Approaches, Traditional Practices, Therapeutic Models, Stress Management, Anxiety, Depression*

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The increasing prevalence of mental health disorders globally has prompted a resurgence of interest in ancient practices that promote psychological well-being. Ayurveda is India's one of the oldest systems of medicine, with roots tracing back over 5,000 years, and is recognized as a comprehensive approach to health that emphasizes balance in the body, mind, and spirit through natural remedies and lifestyle practices (AYUSH Directorate, 2025; Britannica, 2024; Hindu American Foundation, 2023). Among these, Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation stand out as holistic approaches rooted in centuries-old traditions that emphasize the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit (Chiluveri et al., 2023). These practices offer comprehensive frameworks for understanding mental health, addressing not only the symptoms but also the underlying causes of psychological distress (Kumar & Gupta, 2024). Ayurveda, an ancient Indian system of medicine, provides profound insights into mental health through its unique conceptualization of the mind-body connection (Sharma & Nair, 2023). Central to this system is the recognition of mental disorders as manifestations of imbalances within the body's doshas, which can be addressed through dietary modifications, lifestyle changes, and herbal remedies (Kumar et al., 2023). Similarly, yoga and meditation practices have been shown to enhance emotional regulation and resilience, contributing to improved mental health outcomes (Patel & Desai, 2024). In recent years, scientific research has increasingly validated the efficacy of these ancient practices in managing various mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and stress-related disorders (Rao & Singh, 2023). These practices emphasize the importance of lifestyle modifications, stress management techniques, and natural remedies that can enhance psychological resilience and improve overall mental health outcomes (ResearchGate, 2024; Zuno General Insurance, 2023). Clinical trials have demonstrated significant improvements in mood and overall psychological well-being among participants engaged in Ayurvedic therapies and mindfulness practices (Gupta et al., 2024). Research indicates that regular yoga practice can lead to improvements in mood, anxiety reduction, and increased resilience against psychological distress (American Psychiatric Association, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Sharma & Singh (2024) explored Ayurveda's perspective on mental health, emphasizing concepts like Manas Doshas (Rajas and Tamas), Sattvavajaya (mind pacification), and Ojas (mental immunity). The review highlights the therapeutic roles of Rasayana (rejuvenation), Panchakarma, psychotropic herbs, and Ayurvedic formulations such as Manas Mitra Vatakam and Smriti Sagara Rasa in managing anxiety and depression. It also discusses lifestyle modifications, recent advances in the neuropsychopharmacology of Ayurvedic herbs, and their integration with modern psychiatry.
2. Verma & Joshi (2024) provide a scientific evaluation of mental health through Ayurveda, analyzing traditional assessment methods within modern frameworks. Ayurveda views mental health as a balance of Sarira, Indriya, Sattva, and Atma. The study explores diagnostic tools like Manasika Prakriti Nadi Pariksha, Prajnaparadha, Ashta Vibhrama, and Sattva Pariksha from classical texts. These methods aid in diagnosing and predicting mental health conditions, emphasizing Ayurveda's holistic approach to well-being by integrating physical, mental, sensory, and spiritual health.
3. Kumar, S., & Gupta, R. (2024) conducted research on Effect of yoga on mental health A Comprehensive Study with Reference to India This comprehensive study reviews various research findings regarding the effects of yoga on mental health,

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particularly within the Indian context, asserting that regular practice can significantly enhance mental well-being and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression.

4. Sharma, M., & Singh, A. (2024). Bridging Indian tradition and contemporary mental health. This study explores ancient Indian psychological practices, including Yoga and Ayurveda, and their relevance to modern mental health care. By examining primary sources such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, and Ayurvedic texts, alongside contemporary scholarly interpretations, the research delves into practices like Yoga, Ayurveda, and Pranayama.
5. Kumar, S., & Das, A. (2024). A systematic review of traditional healing practices in India. This systematic review discusses various traditional healing practices across cultures, including those in India, that address mental illness. It evaluates the effectiveness of these practices and their integration into modern mental health care systems, emphasising the role of cultural context in treatment efficacy.
6. Kshirsagar & Hongal (2024) explore stress management through ancient Indian scriptures, highlighting their relevance in today's fast-paced, technology-driven world. The study emphasizes how modern advancements contribute to stress and lifestyle diseases, while ancient wisdom offers holistic solutions. Key strategies include stress analysis, identifying root causes, and elimination techniques from scriptures. It advocates for a balanced mind, detachment, and even-mindedness, alongside the role of yoga, meditation, and healthy habits in stress reduction.
7. Gupta, R. (2024) discusses the potential for integrating Ayurveda with modern Western medicine to enhance patient care. While Ayurveda offers cost-effective healthcare, its integration with modern medicine faces challenges like limited scientific research, standardization issues, and regulatory barriers. A well-integrated approach could enhance patient care by combining the best of both systems, creating a more effective and comprehensive healthcare model.
8. Bansiya, M. (2023) Effect of Yoga on Mental Health Yoga, deeply rooted in Indian traditions, has gained global recognition for its mental health benefits. This research focuses on India, the birthplace of yoga, reviewing literature and case studies to analyse its effects on mental health. Findings highlight yoga's positive impact, emphasizing its integration into mental health interventions. By incorporating yoga into therapy, a more comprehensive and culturally relevant approach to mental wellness can be achieved.
9. Samudrudu & Negalur (2023) discuss the role of Ayurveda in mental health (Manasika Swasthya), emphasizing the significance of a *prasanna manas* (harmonious mind) in maintaining well-being. They highlight how *rajasika* and *tamasika* doshas contribute to mental illnesses like *unmada*, *atatwabhinivesha* etc Ayurvedic interventions include *Satwajaya Chikitsa*, *Dharma*, *Artha*, and *Kama*, alongside preventive measures such as *Achara Rasayana*, *Sadvritta*, *Medhya Rasayana*, and disciplined daily routines to ensure mental and emotional balance.
10. Samudrudu & Negalur.V(2023) Ayurveda, the ancient life science, emphasizes mental health (Manasika Swasthya) through the concept of *prasanna manas* (a peaceful mind), essential for overall well-being. Mental distress leads to illness due to *rajasika* and *tamasika doshas*. Many diseases, including *unmada*, *apasmara*, and *atatwabhinivesha*, have psychosomatic origins. To prevent such disorders, Ayurveda prescribes *achara rasayana*, *sadvritta*, *medhya rasayana*, and a balanced diet, along with *dinacharya*, *ritucharya*, and *ratricharya*.
11. Gaiswinkler, L., & Unterrainer, H.-F. (2023). conducted research on Effect of yoga involvement on mental health in times of crisis. This systematic review evaluates the

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- impact of yoga practice on psychological well-being during crises, finding that engagement in yoga is associated with increased spiritual well-being and reduced psychological distress. The review calls for more randomized controlled trials to better understand yoga's mechanisms in enhancing mental health.
12. Patel & Desai (2023) explored the role of Ayurveda in managing psychotic disorders, particularly schizophrenia. The review highlights Ayurvedic treatments for Unmada (psychosis) and presents evidence from clinical trials showing significant symptom improvement compared to conventional treatments. Despite advancements in modern psychosis treatment, many patients experience relapses and medication non-adherence. Ayurveda offers alternative therapeutic approaches, but systematic evidence remains limited.
 13. Goswami (2023) studied the effects of pranayama and yoga on mental health, emotional intelligence, and resilience in adolescents. The study, involving 1,200 participants (600 yoga practitioners and 600 non-practitioners), found significant reductions in anxiety and depression levels among those who practiced yoga. Results from the Emotional Intelligence Test revealed notable differences between yoga practitioners and non-practitioners on emotional resilience and overall mental health.
 14. Pérez, Y. (2022) Effectiveness of Mantra-Based Meditation on Mental Health: Meditation is defined as a form of cognitive training that aims to improve attentional and emotional self-regulation. This systematic review aims to evaluate the available scientific evidence on the effectiveness and safety of mantra-based meditation techniques (MBM), in comparison to passive or active controls, or other active treatment, for the management of mental health symptoms. MBM appears to produce small-to-moderate significant reductions in mental health.
 15. Sharma & Gupta (2022) explored the effects of pranayama on perceived stress, well-being, and quality of life among healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study highlighted significant psychological improvements, reinforcing prior research on the mental health benefits of pranayama and meditation. While numerous studies support pranayama's positive effects, this study uniquely focuses on healthcare professionals, emphasizing its role in stress reduction and overall well-being.
 16. Khalsa, S.B.S., & Cope, S. (2020). Exploring the role of mindfulness and meditation in mental health. Exploring the Role of Mindfulness and Meditation in Mental Health This review investigates how mindfulness and meditation—practices rooted in ancient traditions improved mental health outcomes such as reduced anxiety and depression levels. It discusses the scientific basis for these practices and their application within modern therapeutic frameworks for enhancing emotional well-being.
 17. Singh & Rao (2020) explored Ayurveda's holistic perspective on mental health, emphasizing the interconnection of mind, body, and soul for overall well-being. Ayurveda, as detailed in the Atharva Veda and classical texts by Charak, Susrut, and Vagbhatt, describes mental disorders ranging from mild emotional disturbances to severe psychoses. The three gunas, tridosha, and panchabhuta influence an individual's Prakriti, which determines mental health. Ayurveda recommends treatments and Yoga to maintain mental balance and treat psychological ailments.
 18. Harvard Health Publishing (2020) discusses the mental health benefits of regular yoga practice, highlighting its ability to reduce anxiety and depression, while enhancing cognitive function and emotional resilience. Yoga fosters brain plasticity by promoting the growth of new connections, particularly in areas crucial for

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memory, attention, and learning. MRI studies show that regular yoga practitioners have a thicker cerebral cortex and hippocampus compared to non-practitioners, areas linked to cognitive functions.

19. Sathe & Rajandekar (2020) investigated the immediate effects of Bhramari pranayama on hypertensive patients, focusing on blood pressure, heart rate, and oxygen saturation. Examined 40 hypertensive participants, divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group practiced Bhramari pranayama for 5 minutes, resulting in a significant reduction in systolic blood pressure due to parasympathetic activation. Findings suggest that regular practice of Bhramari pranayama may help in stress management and reducing cardiovascular risks in hypertensive individuals.
20. Chittaranjan, A., & Sinha, R. (2019) conducted a systematic review on the effect of meditation on psychological well-being, revealing that meditation significantly enhances emotional regulation, reduces stress, and improves overall life satisfaction. The study found a notable increase in psychological well-being scores among students. Regression analysis highlighted that six well-being parameters, including calmness, relaxation, tension, and worry, accounted improved well-being scores, underscoring the positive impact of meditation.
21. Phull (2019) highlights Ayurveda's comprehensive approach to mental health, which was well-documented centuries ago in texts like Charaka Samhita. Ayurveda recognizes the interconnection of body, mind, senses, and soul, emphasizing the role of manas in both psychotic and somatic disorders such as grahni, ardhavbhedaka, and chhardi. Preventive measures like Sadvritta, Achara Rasayana etc along with Ayurvedic medicines, are advocated for mental well-being. Notably, Ayurveda acknowledged mental health long before its recognition in modern medicine.
22. Gaël Chételat (2018) explored how meditation practice could promote mental health and well-being in aging individuals, particularly by mitigating psycho-affective issues like stress, depression, anxiety, and neuroticism, which are linked to cognitive decline and an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease. While studies are limited, initial findings suggest that meditation positively impacts cognition, particularly attention and memory, and improves brain structure and function, notably in the frontal, limbic, and insula regions.
23. Samal, J., & Dehury, R. K. (2018) conducted a systematic review to explore the utilization, preferences, perceptions, and characteristics of individuals using AYUSH systems of medicine in India. The review of 13 articles revealed that the use of these systems is influenced by factors like geography, social groups (e.g., tribal populations), and medical practitioners. Many individuals preferred AYUSH due to dissatisfaction with allopathic medicine, cost- effectiveness, accessibility, fewer side effects, and positive subjective experiences.
24. Shankar, D., & Patwardhan, B. (2017) AYUSH plays a vital role in realizing the Prime Minister's vision of a "New India" by integrating traditional healthcare into modern infrastructure. The National Health Policy 2017 promotes AYUSH as part of a pluralistic system, emphasizing scientific validation and evidence-based medicine. Quality education and training ensure skilled professionals.
25. Rudra, et. al. (2017) analyzed the utilization patterns of AYUSH healthcare in India using data from the 2014 National Sample Survey. Their study revealed that 6.9% of patients seeking outpatient care utilized AYUSH services, with no significant rural-urban differences. These findings highlight the socioeconomic and demographic

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- factors influencing AYUSH usage and emphasize the need for policy measures particularly in addressing chronic and rural healthcare needs.
26. Srinivasan, R., & Sugumar, V. R. (2017) explored the spread and perceptions of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) systems in India using data from the National Sample Survey Organization. Users expressed satisfaction with the effectiveness of AYUSH medicines, suggesting that these systems hold potential for wider acceptance if challenges related to awareness, access, and infrastructure are addressed. This research underscores the need for public health initiatives to bridge the gap between the availability and adoption of traditional medical practices in India.
 27. Mukherjee, P. K. et al. (2016) reviewed the evolution of Ayurveda from its traditional roots to its integration into modern healthcare practices. The study emphasizes the historical significance of Ayurveda, originating from the Rigveda and Atharvaveda, and highlights its application in treating various diseases through classical formulations such as arka, churna, and bhasma. The authors stress the need for scientific validation, including quality control, standardization, chemo-profiling, and metabolite fingerprinting, to ensure the safety, efficacy, and consistency of Ayurvedic medicines.
 28. Kumar, S. & Nathini, N (2014) Preventive and Therapeutic measures of ayurveda for mental health care. Mental illness occurs due to multiple causes; the major ones are heredity, organic conditions, and social and environmental factors, and these factors influence mental health from the very beginning of life, from conception to old age. Swasthavritta, an important subject of Ayurveda, advocates various healthy lifestyles and codes of conduct like Satvika Ahara- Vihara, Sadvritta, Dharaniya Vega, Achara Rasayana, Yoga, including Meditation, etc., for the prevention of mental illness and to achieve good mental health.
 29. Kralj, M., & Kralj, J. (2014) Conducted research on Effect of meditation on cognitive functions in context of aging and neurodegenerative diseases. This review examines the positive effects of various meditation techniques on cognitive functions such as attention, memory, and cognitive flexibility, particularly in older adults and those with neurodegenerative diseases. The findings suggest that meditation can serve as a non-pharmacological intervention to prevent cognitive decline. Meditation can be a potentially suitable non-pharmacological intervention aimed at the prevention of cognitive decline in the elderly.
 30. Avasthi, A., Kate, N. & Grover, S. (2013) Indian psychiatry largely follows Western concepts, often overlooking religion, family, and Eastern philosophy in mental health. Given India's diverse cultures, commonalities like Hinduism, the traditional family system, and ancient medicine play a crucial role in mental well-being. The article highlights the need to integrate these Indian concepts into modern psychiatry, creating a more culturally relevant approach. Incorporating traditional methods alongside contemporary practices can enhance mental health care, making it more effective and holistic for India's population.
 31. Patel, J., & Desai, N. (2023) conducted research on Role of Ayurveda in the management of psychotic disorders. This review evaluates various Ayurvedic treatments for psychotic disorders, including schizophrenia. It presents evidence from clinical trials demonstrating significant improvements in symptoms using Ayurvedic formulations compared to conventional treatments. Ayurveda explains psychotic disorders as "*Unmada*" and describes various treatment protocols.

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Although these therapies and methods have been in practice for several years, systematic evidence has not been generated for the same.

32. Amber, W. & Goldsmith, C. W. (2012) A review analyzed yoga's effects on anxiety and stress, reflecting growing interest in non-pharmacologic therapies. Among 35 trials, 25 reported significant symptom reduction. However, many studies had limitations, including small sample sizes, lack of randomization, and absence of control groups. Only 14 studies examined biochemical or physiological stress markers, yielding inconsistent results. While yoga shows promise in stress and anxiety relief, the authors emphasize the need for well- designed research to confirm its effectiveness. More rigorous trials are required before yoga can be recommended as a definitive treatment option for stress management in clinical practice.

Purpose of the Research

This research seeks to systematically explore and synthesize existing literature on the effects of Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation on mental health outcomes in contemporary contexts. By bridging the gap between ancient traditions and modern psychological practices, this study evaluates the contributions of these time-tested methodologies to mental well-being, particularly in stress management, anxiety reduction, and emotional resilience. One primary objective is to investigate the mechanisms by which these practices influence mental health. For instance, previous studies have demonstrated that yoga enhances neurotransmitter activity and promotes neuroplasticity, while meditation induces structural and functional changes in the brain that support emotional regulation (Doraiswamy et al., 2013; Sharma & Sharma, 2024). This research aims to explore scientific basis of the physiological and psychological processes behind mental health improvements. Another goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of these practices in addressing specific mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety disorders, and stress-related issues. By systematically reviewing clinical trials and observational studies, the research will assess evidence on outcomes like mood enhancement, stress reduction, and improved quality of life among practitioners (Goyal et al., 2014; Sharma & Sharma, 2024). Lastly, the study emphasizes the cultural relevance and accessibility of Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation for diverse populations. It explores how community-based programs can extend the benefits of these practices to underserved groups, offering a culturally sensitive and holistic alternative to traditional mental health services (UNODC, 2019). This research aims to inform interdisciplinary mental health strategies that merge ancient wisdom with modern therapeutic approaches.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this systematic review follows a structured and evidence-based approach, adhering to PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure clarity and transparency. A comprehensive literature search will be conducted using databases such as PubMed, Scopus, PsycINFO, MEDLINE, and Google Scholar. The search will include peer-reviewed articles published in English between 2004 and 2024, using relevant keywords and MeSH terms such as "Ayurveda and mental health," "Yoga and anxiety," "Meditation and emotional regulation," and "Mindfulness and psychological well-being." Inclusion criteria will consist of empirical studies involving human participants that examine the effects of Ayurveda, yoga, or meditation on mental health outcomes such as stress, depression, anxiety, resilience, and mood. Studies focusing solely on physical health, non-empirical papers, non-English publications, and those not involving human subjects will be excluded. A thematic analysis will synthesize both quantitative and qualitative results, focusing on core mental health

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domains. Finally, the findings will be discussed in relation to existing literature, highlighting the psychological and neurobiological mechanisms underlying these interventions, their cultural relevance, and the potential for integrating these traditional practices into modern mental health care systems.

RESULTS

This systematic review explores the impact of Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation on mental health, highlighting their benefits for anxiety, depression, and stress-related disorders. Regular yoga and meditation practices significantly reduce symptoms, promoting relaxation and emotional well-being. Yoga lowers cortisol levels, easing stress through physical postures, breathing techniques, and mindfulness. Mindfulness meditation enhances emotional regulation, resilience, and mood stability. The review emphasizes stress management benefits, showing that individuals practicing yoga or meditation report lower perceived stress and improved coping. Ayurveda's holistic approach, incorporating diet, lifestyle changes, and herbal remedies, supports both physical and mental well-being. Certain populations benefit significantly, including individuals with chronic illnesses, healthcare professionals, and corporate employees facing high stress. Structured programs help reduce anxiety, depression, and pain perception while improving overall well-being. Research suggests that yoga and meditation induce neurobiological changes, enhancing emotional regulation and reducing stress reactivity. The review highlights the importance of integrating these ancient practices into modern mental health care. As mental health concerns rise globally, incorporating Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation into treatment plans can complement conventional therapies, improving patient outcomes. This study supports a holistic approach to mental wellness, bridging traditional and contemporary healthcare strategies.

Implication

Integrating Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation into modern mental health care offers profound benefits for managing anxiety, depression, and stress-related disorders. Ayurveda's holistic approach connects mind and body, advocating for treatment that addresses both psychological and physical health. By incorporating dietary adjustments and herbal remedies like Brahmi, Ayurvedic practices enhance cognitive function and reduce anxiety, promoting overall wellness and personalized treatment plans. Yoga, with its focus on mindfulness and breath control through pranayama and dhyana, serves as a powerful tool for stress management and emotional regulation. Research shows that yoga increases gamma aminobutyric acid (GABA), a neurotransmitter linked to improved mood and reduced anxiety. Additionally, yoga fosters self-awareness and self-compassion, which are crucial for mental health recovery. Yoga and meditation also enhance resilience against daily stressors by reducing heart rate, lowering blood pressure, and decreasing stress hormones. These physiological benefits improve physical health, creating an environment conducive to mental clarity and emotional stability. Scientific literature supports yoga's efficacy in reducing symptoms of mental health disorders, making it a valuable addition to conventional therapies. Community support in group classes enhances mental health, providing emotional support and encouraging commitment to wellness routines, fostering a holistic approach to recovery.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this systematic review underscores the significant potential of integrating Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation into contemporary mental health care. The findings indicate

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that these practices can effectively reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress-related disorders, enhancing overall mental well-being. By adopting a holistic approach that considers both physical and psychological aspects of health, Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation offer valuable complementary strategies to traditional therapeutic interventions. The review emphasizes the importance of personalized treatment plans that incorporate Ayurvedic principles alongside yoga and meditation techniques. These practices promote relaxation, emotional resilience, self-awareness, and mindfulness, empowering individuals to actively engage in their mental health journeys. Furthermore, evidence supporting the neurobiological benefits of these interventions provides a compelling rationale for their inclusion in standard mental health treatment protocols. As mental health challenges escalate globally, integrating these ancient practices into modern healthcare systems presents a timely opportunity to enhance treatment outcomes. This review advocates for further research to explore the long-term effects of these practices across diverse populations. By bridging the gap between ancient wisdom and modern science, we can create a comprehensive framework for mental health care that addresses the complex interplay between mind and body. Ultimately, this review serves as a call to action for mental health professionals to embrace holistic approaches that incorporate these time-honored practices, fostering a more inclusive and effective mental health care landscape that promotes resilience and well-being for individuals facing mental health challenges

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Conflict of Interest

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