

The Role of Yoganidra in the Management of Stress among University Going Students

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Abstract: Stress among university going students has become a major psychological and public health concern due to academic workload, social adjustment difficulties, competitive environments, emotional instability, and uncertainty regarding future careers. Persistent stress negatively affects mental health, emotional well-being, academic performance, sleep quality, and overall quality of life among students. Therefore, there is growing interest in safe, cost-effective, and non-pharmacological approaches for stress management. Yoga Nidra, commonly referred to as "yogic sleep", is a guided relaxation and meditation technique that induces deep physical, mental, and emotional relaxation while maintaining conscious awareness. The present narrative review aims to explore the role of Yoga Nidra in the management of stress among university-going students. Relevant literature for the present narrative review was collected from peer-reviewed scientific databases and indexing platforms including PubMed, Web of Science, Google Scholar, Research Gate, and Mendeley and other scientific databases, focusing on Yoga Nidra and student mental health. The review discusses the origin and philosophical background of Yoga Nidra, its neurophysiological mechanisms, and scientific evidence regarding its therapeutic effects on stress and psychological well-being. The reviewed studies consistently reported that Yoga Nidra significantly reduces stress, anxiety, worry, and depressive symptoms among students. Research findings also demonstrated improvements in mindfulness, emotional intelligence, sleep quality, self-esteem, and general well-being following regular Yoga Nidra practice. Neurophysiological evidence suggests that Yoga Nidra activates parasympathetic dominance, reduces sympathetic over activity, modulates stress hormones, and promotes psychophysiological balance. The review concludes that Yoga Nidra is an effective mind-body intervention for stress management among university students and may serve as a valuable complementary approach for improving mental and emotional health.

Keywords: Yoga Nidra, Stress, University Students, Psychological Well-being, Anxiety, Mental Health, Relaxation Therapy

1. Introduction

Stress has emerged as a major public health concern among university-going students due to increasing academic demands, social expectations, financial pressures, future uncertainty, and rapid lifestyle transitions. University students frequently experience psychological stress that adversely affects emotional well-being, academic performance, concentration, interpersonal relationships, and overall quality of life [1]. The transition to university life requires substantial psychological, emotional, and social adjustment, making students particularly vulnerable to stress-related mental health problems.

Previous literature suggests that failure to cope effectively with academic and interpersonal stressors may predispose students to anxiety, depressive symptoms, sleep disturbances, emotional instability, reduced self-esteem, and burnout [2]. Chronic stress among students has also been associated with impaired coping abilities, poor academic achievement, social withdrawal, and increased psychological distress. In severe cases, prolonged psychological stress may contribute to suicidal ideation and self-harming tendencies among university students.

A study conducted among medical students in Poland reported that chronic stress and anxiety negatively affected mental health and showed a significant association with suicidal thinking among students. The study says that students exposed to persistent academic and emotional stressors were more vulnerable to mental exhaustion, hopelessness, and

suicidal ideation. Similarly, global mental health literature indicates that university students represent a high-risk population for stress-related mental health disorders and suicide-related behaviours due to academic burden and emotional instability.

In recent years, there has been growing scientific interest in safe, cost-effective, and non-pharmacological interventions for stress management among students. Mind-body interventions such as yoga, meditation, mindfulness-based practices, and relaxation techniques have received increasing attention because of their beneficial effects on mental and emotional health [3]. Mindfulness-based interventions have also been reported to improve resilience to stress and psychological well-being among university students [4].

Yoga Nidra, commonly referred to as "yogic sleep", is a systematic guided meditation technique that induces a state between wakefulness and sleep while maintaining conscious awareness. The practice aims to produce deep physical, mental, and emotional relaxation through stages of body awareness, breath awareness, emotional integration, visualization, and conscious relaxation [5]. Unlike ordinary sleep, Yoga Nidra allows practitioners to remain aware while achieving profound psychophysiological relaxation.

Scientific evidence suggests that Yoga Nidra activates parasympathetic dominance, reduces sympathetic nervous system over activity, and modulates stress-related neuropsychological responses. Neurophysiological studies indicate that Yoga Nidra promotes alpha and theta brain wave activity associated with relaxation, emotional regulation, and

meditative awareness [6]. Additionally, Yoga Nidra may reduce cortisol secretion, improve autonomic balance, enhance sleep quality, decrease anxiety, and improve psychological resilience [7].

Several studies have investigated the effectiveness of Yoga Nidra among student populations. Kim (2019) [8] reported that regular Yoga Nidra practice significantly reduced life stress and improved self-esteem among university students. Similarly, studies conducted among nursing students and adolescents demonstrated beneficial effects of Yoga Nidra in reducing stress and improving psychological well-being [9]. Recent systematic review and meta-analysis evidence further supports the therapeutic potential of Yoga Nidra for reducing stress, anxiety, and depression across diverse populations [10].

Therefore, considering the increasing burden of stress, anxiety, and suicide-related psychological risk among university-going students, along with the growing scientific evidence supporting mind-body interventions, the present narrative review aims to explore the role of Yoga Nidra in the management of stress among university-going students.

2. The Origin of Yoga Nidra

Yoga Nidra, commonly translated as "yogic sleep" or "psychic sleep", is a traditional yogic relaxation and meditation practice that aims to induce profound physical, mental, and emotional relaxation while maintaining inner awareness [11,12]. The term is derived from two Sanskrit words: yoga meaning "union" and nidra meaning "sleep." Unlike ordinary sleep, Yoga Nidra refers to a conscious state of deep relaxation in which awareness is retained while the practitioner moves between wakefulness and sleep-like states [13].

The philosophical roots of Yoga Nidra are traced to ancient Indian spiritual and yogic traditions, including the Upanishads, Tantric literature, the Mahabharata, and classical Hatha Yoga texts. Swami Satyananda Saraswati described Yoga Nidra as a state in which awareness becomes detached from ordinary mental activity, allowing the practitioner to experience profound relaxation and expanded consciousness [13].

One of the earliest references associated with the concept of Yoga Nidra appears in Yoga Taravali of Adi Shankaracharya (eighth century CE). The text explains that when sensory impressions and mental fluctuations become quiet, a state of deep inner stillness emerges, which is referred to as Yoga Nidra (Shankaracharya, n.d.). The text further describes this state as transcending the ordinary conditions of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, corresponding to a higher state of consciousness known as turiya (Shankaracharya, n.d.).

Important descriptions related to Yoga Nidra are also found in the ancient Tantric text Vijnana Bhairava Tantra, which outlines various meditation practices. In this text, a meditative condition between wakefulness and sleep is described as a state in which higher awareness may manifest when external sensory perception gradually diminishes [14].

References to Yoga Nidra are additionally present in Hindu epic and philosophical literature. In the Mahabharata, Lord Vishnu is described as entering Yoga Nidra during cosmic dissolution, symbolizing a transcendental state of consciousness (Vyasa, n.d.). Similarly, the Bhagavad Gita discusses mastery over sleep and consciousness through spiritual awareness, emphasizing higher states of self-realization [15].

The Mandukya Upanishad also contributes significantly to the philosophical understanding of Yoga Nidra through its explanation of the four states of consciousness: waking (jagrat), dreaming (svapna), deep sleep (sushupti), and the transcendental fourth state (turiya) [16]. Yoga Nidra is often associated with this higher state of awareness in which consciousness remains active despite deep relaxation.

Traditional Hatha Yoga literature further emphasizes the importance of Shavasana (corpse pose), the posture commonly used during Yoga Nidra practice. Texts such as the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Gheranda Samhita, and Hatha Ratnavali describe Shavasana as a posture capable of removing fatigue, calming mental agitation, and inducing deep relaxation [17,18,19].

Modern Yoga Nidra practices are largely derived from the teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati, who systematized the technique in the twentieth century. Contemporary Yoga Nidra integrates elements of Pratyahar (withdrawal of senses), guided awareness, breath observation, visualization, and sankalpa (positive resolution). Scientific studies suggest that Yoga Nidra may reduce sympathetic nervous system activity, improve emotional regulation, and promote psychological well-being [7,13].

Unlike ordinary relaxation or meditation practices performed in a seated posture, Yoga Nidra is generally practiced in a supine position while maintaining a state of conscious awareness. The practice is considered a systematic method of inducing complete physical, mental, and emotional relaxation while preserving inner consciousness [13].

3. Eight Steps of Yoga Nidra

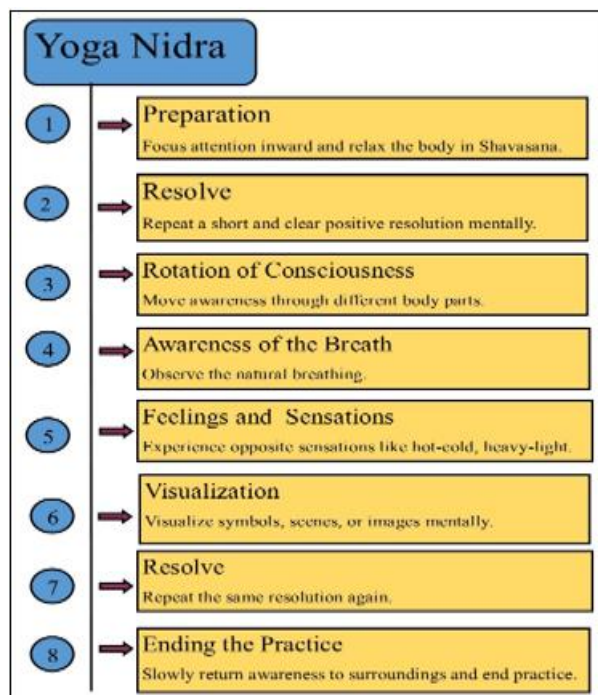


Figure 1: Eight steps of Yoga Nidra

Studies on Yoga Nidra and Stress Management in Students and their Mechanisms

Stress among university and college-going students has emerged as a major psychological concern due to academic workload, competitive environments, social adjustment difficulties, and future career uncertainty. Several scientific studies have investigated the effectiveness of Yoga Nidra as a non-pharmacological intervention for stress reduction and well-being among students. The explored mechanisms can be summarized as follows-

Table 1: Neurophysiological and Psychophysiological Mechanisms of Yoga Nidra

Neurophysiological Mechanism	Scientific Explanation	Research Evidence
Autonomic Nervous System Regulation	Yoga Nidra activates the parasympathetic nervous system and decreases sympathetic over activity, producing deep relaxation and reduced physiological stress responses.	Studies reported reductions in heart rate, blood pressure, and stress-related autonomic activity following Yoga Nidra practice. [12]
Reduction of Stress Hormones	Yoga Nidra may decrease cortisol and stress hormone secretion, thereby reducing psychological stress and emotional tension.	Clinical findings suggest improved stress adaptation and reduced cortisol-related responses after relaxation-based yogic interventions. [7]
Brain Wave Modulation	Yoga Nidra shifts brain activity from beta waves toward alpha and theta waves associated with relaxation and meditative awareness.	EEG studies demonstrated increased alpha activity during Yoga Nidra and meditative relaxation states. [6]
Pratyahar and Sensory Withdrawal	Yoga Nidra facilitates withdrawal of sensory awareness (Pratyahar), reducing excessive external stimulation and mental agitation.	Yogic sensory withdrawal techniques are associated with enhanced relaxation and emotional control. [24]
Limbic System Regulation	Yoga Nidra may modulate emotional centers such as the amygdala and hippocampus, improving emotional stability and reducing anxiety.	Neuropsychological studies indicate improved emotional regulation following meditation-based practices. [25]
Improvement in Sleep Physiology	Yoga Nidra induces a restorative state resembling deep sleep while maintaining awareness, improving sleep quality and fatigue recovery.	Research demonstrated improvements in sleep quality and psychological well-being among participants practicing Yoga Nidra. [26]
Cognitive and Psychological Enhancement	Regular practice may improve concentration, memory, self-awareness, and mental clarity through deep relaxation and mindfulness.	Studies among students reported reduced stress and improved self-esteem after Yoga Nidra intervention. [8]
Mind-Body Integration	Yoga Nidra promotes synchronization between mental awareness and physiological relaxation, producing psychophysiological balance.	Scientific reviews suggest Yoga Nidra contributes to holistic mental and physical well-being. [12]

A study conducted at the Yoga Clinic of Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya examined the effect of Yoga Nidra on stress and anxiety among college students. The intervention was practiced for 30 minutes over a period of six months among postgraduate yoga students. The findings demonstrated a significant reduction in stress levels among both male and female participants following Yoga Nidra practice, suggesting its effectiveness in stress management among students [20].

Similarly, another investigation on college-going students evaluated the effects of Yoga Nidra on stress, anxiety, and general well-being. The study reported that Yoga Nidra

significantly reduced stress levels and improved general well-being among participants, although anxiety reduction was not statistically significant [21]. These findings support the psychophysiological relaxation effects of Yoga Nidra.

Research on nursing students also demonstrated the beneficial effects of Yoga Nidra in stress reduction. An experimental study conducted among nursing students in Hyderabad compared stress levels before and after Yoga Nidra intervention. The findings revealed significant reductions in both morning and evening stress levels among students practicing Yoga Nidra compared with the control group [9]. The study concluded that Yoga Nidra is an effective

relaxation technique for managing academic stress among nursing students.

Miller, Fletcher, and Kabat-Zinn (2013) [22] investigated the effects of iRest Yoga Nidra practice among college students through an eight-week intervention program. The study found statistically significant reductions in perceived stress, worry, and depressive symptoms, along with improvements in mindfulness-based skills following Yoga Nidra practice. These findings indicate that Yoga Nidra may positively influence emotional regulation and mental health among university students.

A clinical study conducted at Sir Sundar Lal Hospital, BHU, Varanasi evaluated the short-term effect of Yoga Nidra on patients suffering from stress syndrome. Twenty patients were divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group practiced Yoga Nidra for 30 minutes daily for seven days, while the control group received herbal medication. DASS Scale was used to assess stress and anxiety levels. The findings showed significant reduction in stress and anxiety in both groups; however, the improvement was greater in the Yoga Nidra group, indicating its effectiveness in stress management [5].

Emotional intelligence and psychological functioning among university students have also been studied in relation to Yoga Nidra practice. A controlled study involving university students in Madhya Pradesh demonstrated significant improvements in emotional sensitivity, emotional maturity, emotional competency, and overall emotional quotient following three weeks of Yoga Nidra practice [23]. Enhanced

emotional intelligence may contribute to better stress coping abilities and academic adjustment.

Recent systematic review and meta-analysis evidence has further strengthened the scientific basis of Yoga Nidra for mental health management [10]. analysed 73 studies involving 5201 participants and reported moderate-to-large beneficial effects of Yoga Nidra on stress, anxiety, and depression. The review suggested that Yoga Nidra may serve as a promising holistic intervention for psychological well-being, although further high-quality research is required.

Review literature additionally suggests that Yoga Nidra promotes relaxation through autonomic nervous system regulation, reduction in sympathetic over activity, modulation of stress hormones, and improvement in sleep quality (Kumar et al., 2022) [12]. During Yoga Nidra practice, brain wave activity shifts toward alpha and theta states associated with deep relaxation and meditative awareness (Parker et al., 2013) [6]. These neurophysiological changes may contribute to reduced stress and enhanced emotional stability among students.

Overall, the available literature suggests that Yoga Nidra is an effective mind-body intervention for reducing stress and improving psychological well-being among university and college-going students. The practice may contribute to emotional balance, improved mindfulness, enhanced sleep quality, and better stress coping mechanisms, thereby supporting academic and mental health outcomes.

Table 2: Studies on the Effects of Yoga Nidra Among Students

Study Title	Author(s) & Year (Ref. No.)	Study Population	Study Design	Duration	Major Findings
Yoga Nidra and its Impact on Students' Well-Being	Kumar (2004) [21]	40 college-going students (Yoga group) and 12 controls from P.G. Yoga classes, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya	Experimental study with control group	6 months (30 min/day)	Yoga Nidra significantly reduced stress levels and improved general well-being among students. No statistically significant change was observed in anxiety levels.
A Study on the Impact on Stress and Anxiety through Yoga Nidra	Kumar (2008) [13]	80 college-going students in the experimental group and 30 students in the control group from P.G. Yoga classes, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya	Experimental study with control group	6 months (30 min/day)	Yoga Nidra significantly reduced stress levels among both male and female students and significantly reduced anxiety levels compared to the control group.
Effects of a Yoga Nidra on the Life Stress and Self-Esteem in University Students	Dol (2019) [8]	40 university students (20 Yoga Nidra group, 20 control group)	Non-equivalent control group pretest-posttest design	8 weeks (1-hour sessions twice weekly)	Yoga Nidra significantly reduced life stress intensity levels and significantly increased self-esteem scores compared to the control group.
Effect of Yoga Nidra on Stress among Nursing Students in Selected Colleges of Nursing	Michael (2017) [9]	80 nursing students (40 experimental group, 40 control group)	Experimental design with interrupted repeated measures	Not specified	Significant reduction in morning and evening stress levels among nursing students following Yoga Nidra intervention.
iRest Yoga-Nidra on the College Campus: Changes in Stress, Depression, Worry, and Mindfulness	Miller et al. (2013) [22]	66 college students (18-56 years)	Pretest-posttest intervention study	8 weeks	Significant reductions in perceived stress, worry, and depression along with improvements in mindfulness-based skills.

Yoga Nidra Practice Enhances Emotional Intelligence in University Students	Ganpat (2020) [23]	60 university students (30 Yoga Nidra group, 30 control group) pursuing Master's and Ph.D. courses	Randomized controlled study	3 weeks	Significant improvements in emotional sensitivity, emotional maturity, emotional competency, and overall emotional quotient following Yoga Nidra practice.
Effectiveness of a Short Yoga Nidra Meditation on Stress, Sleep, and Well-Being in a Large and Diverse Sample	Moszeik, von Oertzen, & Renner (2022) [7]	771 participants (341 meditation group, 430 waitlist controls)	Experimental online study with waitlist control group	30 days of 11-minute daily Yoga Nidra meditation with 6-week follow-up	Significant reductions in stress, improved sleep quality, enhanced well-being, and increased mindfulness. Benefits remained stable at follow-up.
Effects of Yoga Nidra on Stress, Anxiety, and Depression: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis	Ghai, Odyniec, & Ghai (2026) [10]	5201 participants from 73 studies	Systematic review and meta-analysis	Not applicable	Yoga Nidra demonstrated significant beneficial effects on stress, anxiety, and depression, with moderate-to-large effect sizes across studies.

4. Discussion

The present review highlights the significant role of Yoga Nidra in reducing stress and improving psychological well-being among university and college-going students. Academic pressure, examination anxiety, social adjustment difficulties, and uncertainty regarding future careers are major contributors to stress among students. The reviewed studies consistently indicate that Yoga Nidra serves as an effective non-pharmacological intervention for stress management and emotional regulation.

Several experimental and intervention-based studies demonstrated significant reductions in stress levels following Yoga Nidra practice. Dol, K. S. (2019) [8] reported that regular Yoga Nidra practice significantly reduced stress among college students, while another study by Kumar, K. (2004) [21] observed improvements in stress and general well-being among participants. Similarly, Michael, C. (2017) [9] found reduced morning and evening stress levels among nursing students following Yoga Nidra intervention. These findings suggest that Yoga Nidra may positively influence psychological adaptation and stress coping mechanisms among students.

The reviewed literature further indicates that Yoga Nidra contributes to improvements in emotional and cognitive functioning. Ganpat, T. S. (2020) [23] observed reductions in perceived stress, worry, and depression, along with enhanced mindfulness among college students practicing iRest Yoga Nidra. Likewise, Miller, J. J. et al. (2013) [22] demonstrated improvements in emotional intelligence, including emotional sensitivity, maturity, and competency among university students. Improved emotional regulation and mindfulness may enhance academic adjustment, interpersonal relationships, and psychological resilience.

The beneficial effects of Yoga Nidra may be explained through several neurophysiological mechanisms. Previous studies suggest that Yoga Nidra activates the parasympathetic nervous system and reduces sympathetic over activity, thereby inducing deep relaxation and reducing physiological stress responses. During Yoga Nidra practice, brain wave activity shifts from beta waves toward alpha and theta states associated with relaxation and meditative awareness. In

addition, Yoga Nidra may reduce cortisol secretion, improve sleep quality, and promote psychophysiological balance.

The findings of the systematic review and meta-analysis conducted by Ghai et al. (2025) [10] further support the therapeutic potential of Yoga Nidra in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. However, despite promising findings, several methodological limitations were observed in the available literature, including small sample sizes, short intervention duration, lack of standardized protocols, and limited long-term follow-up studies. Therefore, further high-quality randomized controlled trials with larger sample populations are needed to establish the clinical effectiveness of Yoga Nidra more conclusively.

5. Conclusion

Based on the reviewed literature, Yoga Nidra appears to be an effective mind-body relaxation technique for reducing stress and improving psychological well-being among university and college-going students. Scientific evidence suggests that Yoga Nidra promotes deep physical, mental, and emotional relaxation through autonomic nervous system regulation, neurophysiological relaxation, hormonal modulation, and enhancement of mindfulness and emotional stability.

The reviewed studies demonstrated that Yoga Nidra may significantly reduce stress, worry, anxiety, and depressive symptoms while improving emotional intelligence, sleep quality, mindfulness, and general well-being among students. As a simple, cost-effective, and non-pharmacological intervention, Yoga Nidra may serve as a valuable complementary approach for stress management in educational settings.

Further research using standardized methodologies and larger student populations is recommended to better understand the long-term effects and therapeutic mechanisms of Yoga Nidra on mental health and academic performance among university students.

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