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IMPACT OF SATTVIC MINDFUL EATING ON STRESS, ANXIETY, AND DEPRESSION AMONG COLLEGE-GOING STUDENTS AND YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

Background: In today's fast-paced and technology-driven world, college students and youth often experience elevated levels of psychological distress, including stress, anxiety, and depression. Mindful eating combined with a Sattvic diet a natural, balanced, and plant-based dietary approach rooted in Indian tradition offers a non-pharmacological method to support mental well-being. **Aim:** To study the impact of Sattvic Mindful Eating on stress, anxiety, and depression among college-going students and youth. **Method:** A total of 100 participants were selected through stratified random sampling from an initial pool of 149 individuals identified using the snowball sampling technique. They were divided into two equal groups (experimental and control) with balanced gender representation. The experimental group received a prescribed Sattvic diet with mindful eating instructions, while the control group received no intervention. **Outcome Measure**: The Depression Anxiety Stress Scales–21 (DASS-21) was administered to both groups before and after the intervention to assess levels of stress, anxiety and depression. **Results:** Statistical analysis using the unpaired t-test showed significant reductions in the experimental group's mean scores: stress decreased by 23.42%, anxiety by 21.68%, and depression by 23.68%. The calculated t-values for all three variables were higher than the critical value at the 5% significance level, confirming that the null hypothesis could be rejected. The control group, in contrast, showed a slight increase in stress, anxiety, and depression levels. **Conclusion:** Sattvic Mindful Eating significantly reduced stress, anxiety, and depression among youth. It appears to be an effective, natural, and holistic approach to improve mental health, particularly in college-going populations.

KEYWORDS: Sattvic Diet, Mindful Eating, Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Youth Mental Health, College Students.

INTRODUCTION

Sattva Guna is associated with balance, peace, equanimity and cleanliness. Therefore, a sattvic person is more likely to be truthful, dutiful, disciplined and a spiritual being (Wolf, 1999; Srivastava, 2012). Sattvic Ahar (food) is excellent for those individuals who wish to live a quiet, peaceful and meditative life. Sattvic Ahar includes sprouted whole grains, fresh fruits, land and sea vegetables, pure fruit juices, nut and seed milk and cheese, legumes, nuts, seeds, sprouted seeds, honey and herbal teas. **(**Bhasarkar *et al.*, 2021)

Sattvic diet ordinarily indulge in the consumption of pure and fresh vegetarian food including, fruits and nuts, and refrain from too rich or spicy food (Korada, 2010). Sattvic means pure essence. This is the purest diet for a consciously spiritual and healthy life. It nourishes the body and mind and maintains it in a peaceful state. According to Ayurveda, this is the best diet for physical strength, a good mind, good health and longevity. And it calms and purifies the mind, enabling it to function at its maximum potential.

Sattvic food is home cooked meal for instance has higher sattvic value than bought food because it is cooked with loving energy and not with the energy of profit expectations. The sattvic food should not be overcooked and should be prepared with care and in a good mood. Sattvic food should be simple, light and supply all the nutrients to the body increasing physical vitality which balances body and mind and generates equanimity and spiritual tendencies. A higher percentage of sattvic guna, being more calm and harmonious, with more tendency to meditate and live a spiritual life. To stimulate sattva, we should bring awareness to the intake of food, not overindulging in the pleasure of the senses therefore keeping the body and mind balanced and pure (Vagh, 2019).

The concept of **Mindfulness** and eating together makes **Mindful Eating**. It is an essential part of life. (Framson *et al*., 2009) defined mindful eating as "non-judgmental awareness of physical and emotional sensations while eating or in a food - related environment." It means being aware in the present moment when one is eating; directing attention to the senses, including physical and emotional sensations. There are no rules to be followed, it just involves focusing on the process of eating, and not on what is being eaten with full consciousness of touch, odour, taste and sensations and also feelings of the food being eaten (Khan *et al.,* 2014).

Mindful Eating" although a seemingly unremarkable topic for many, food and eating are a major part of every human being's life. Mindfulness in its most basic form is the practice of paying attention to the activity at hand. By experts it has been described as, "bringing one's complete attention to the present experience on a moment to moment basis" (Marlatt & Kristeller, 1999)

Stress is the process of adjusting to dealing with circumstances that disrupt or threaten to disrupt a person's physical or psychological functioning. Stress involves a relationship between people and their environment- more specifically between stressors and stress reactions. Stress is a big problem in our society. Stressors are events and situations to which people must react. Stress reactions are the physical, psychological and behavioural responses. A stress reaction begins with the same autonomic nervous system arousal that occurs during emotion. (Rana&Kumar 2016).

Anxiety is a mood state characterized by marked negative affect bodily symptoms of tension and apprehension about the future. Anxiety is an emotional state, unpleasant in nature, associated with uneasiness, discomfort and concern or fear about some defined or undefined future threat **(**Bhasarkar *et al*., 2021). Anxiety refers to feelings of apprehension, dread or uneasiness. Anxiety is a physiological state characterized by cognitive, emotional, and behavioural, somatic, components. (Rana & Kumar 2016). Anxiety is something that it seems like almost everyone is dealing within the current age. The social pressures of staying informed, working on yourself and the increased demands in your carrier can all contribute to feeling of anxiety. **(**Bhasarkar *et al*., 2021)

Depression is the state of despondency marked by feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness, it is one of the most widespread emotional problems and is undoubtedly has many causes. Depression covers a variety of negative moods and behaviour changes. Some are normal mood fluctuations and others meet the definition of clinical problems. The mood change may be temporary or long lasting. It may range from a relatively minor feeling of melancholy to a deeply negative view of the world and an inability to function effectively. Many people use the word "depression" to explain these kinds of feelings, but depression is much more than just sadness. Some depressed people don't feel sad at all – they may feel lifeless, empty, and apathetic, or men in particular causes of Depression (Rana & Kumar 2016).

AIM

The Impact of Sattvic Mindful Eating on Stress, Anxiety and Depression amongst College Going Students and Youth.

OBJECTIVES

From the above research problem following objectives were constructed:

1. To find out demographic status of respondents
2. To study the impact of sattvic Mindful Eating on stress level of College Students and Youths
3. To study the impact of sattvic Mindful Eating on Anxiety level of College Students and Youths
4. To study the impact of sattvic Mindful Eating on Depression level of College Students and Youths.

HYPOTHESIS

1. There will be no significant impact of sattvic Mindful Eating on the level of stress amongst College going Students and Youths
2. There will be no significant impact of sattvic Mindful Eating on the level of anxiety amongst College going Students and Youths.
3. There will be no significant impact of sattvic Mindful Eating on the level of depression amongst College going Students and Youths.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In today's fast-paced world, college students and youth often experience high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. While a little stress has contributed to the evolution of species and the human race, its absence is associated with physical and psychological well-being. However, high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression can lead to distorted personalities, increased sucides rates and a restless society.

To address these challenges, the Sattvic Mindful Eating Technique—rooted in ancient Ayurvedic principles—offers a holistic approach to nutrition and mental well-being.

This study explores how incorporating mindful eating practices with a Sattvic diet can significantly reduce psychological stressors and enhance overall mental health in young adults. The aim is to determine whether a small change in food and feeding habits can transform the **vicious circle of hurry and instability into a virtuous circle of peace and stability in their lives**.

LIMITATIONS

1. The present research assesses the level of stress, anxiety, depression with the help of DASS 21 Scale
2. The present study deals with only college students and youths those who are studying in colleges and

universities other levels of age groups could not be covered.

3. Data gathered for such studies often relies on self-reported information from participants, which can be subject to various biases. Participants may respond in ways they believe are socially acceptable, rather than truthfully reflecting their actual behaviours

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following research works were instrumental in guiding this investigation. These papers were thoroughly reviewed and contributed significantly to the selection and development of the research topic.

Metin *et al.*, (2024) studied the relationship between emotional eating, mindful eating, and depression in young adults. The methods employed in this study allowed the researchers to quantitatively measure and analyze the associations between these variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to show the correlations between the variables. Regression analysis was performed to predict eating behaviours and mindful eating. The results of the research indicated a positive association between emotional eating and depression in young adults. Mindful eating was found to have a negative correlation with depression, suggesting that being attentive during meals may be linked to lower levels of depression.

Yogesh (2023) investigated the impact of three distinct diets, Sattvic, Tamasic, and Rajasic on human well-being. The study points out that Sattvic food purifies both the mind and body, leading to clear thinking, positive attitudes, intelligence, and wisdom. Rajasic foods may cause agitation, while Tamasic food causes procrastination, lethargy, mental and physical imbalance, and an inclination towards sensual pleasures and physical endeavours. This research indicates that Sattvic food significantly reduces stress and anxiety, leading to mental clarity and overall health, while Rajasic and Tamasic foods negatively impact mental and physical wellness. It emphasizes adopting a Sattvic diet for improved well-being and a healthier lifestyle.

Sharma *et al.*, (2023) investigated the link between anxiety and Sattvic food as a potential pathway, focusing on dietary habits. Researchers analyzed data from various sources and found that consuming whole, Sattvic foods supports hormonal balance, reducing the risk of anxiety and depression. Avoiding unhealthy eating practices is crucial for overall well-being. The study also highlights adverse effects such as eczema, chronic fatigue syndrome, and joint disorders resulting from improper nutrition, processed foods, and unhealthy cooking methods.

Shaw *et al.*,(2022) examined the relationship between self-compassion, mindful eating behaviour, eating attitudes, and wellbeing among emerging adults. Using online surveys and questionnaires, data were collected from 349 college students. The study found that mindful eating behaviour and self-compassion were inversely correlated with eating attitudes, while positively correlated with wellbeing. Promoting self-compassion and mindful eating can enhance overall wellbeing among university students.

Bhasarkar *et al.*, (2021) explored the impact of Sattvic Ahar (food) on anxiety. Sattvic Ahar, characterized by easy digestibility, immunity-building properties, and harmony between physical and mental health, promotes a peaceful state of mind. In contrast, Rajasic Ahar can agitate the mind and disrupt equilibrium. The study emphasizes that adhering to proper eating habits and consuming Sattvic foods contributes to overall well-being. By choosing wisely, we can attain better mental health and efficiently address day-to-day challenges.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study includes the following topics:

- Study area
- Research design and study subjects
- Size of sample and sampling procedure
- Duration of study
- Data collection method
- Compilation of data and tool used
- Statistical Analysis

Study Area

The study area comprises participants from college students in two cities, Akola, Nagpur.

Research Design and Subjects

For collection of samples Snowball sampling method which is a non-probability sampling method is used. In this sampling method [acquaintances] the nearest friends and contacts of the researcher were contacted. The Subject selected were male and female college going youths 18-30 year.

Size of Sample and Sample Procedure

Total of 149 participants were included in the study. From the overall population of 149 students, a sample of 100 students was selected using **stratified random sampling**. The experimental group consisted of 50 students (25 boys and 25 girls), while the control group also included 50 students (25 boys and 25 girls), ensuring equal gender representation in both groups.

Duration of Study

The present study was undertaken during 1st Dec 2023–8th March 2024.

Data Collection Method

Data was collected through an online mode using the DASS-21 questionnaires. The questionnaires were provided by the researcher to all 100 members of both the experimental and control groups during pre-test and

post-test phases. On the experimental group, educational sessions on mindful eating were provided by the researcher over a period of 3 weeks, during which minute details of sattvic mindful eating were explained**.**

Compilation of data and tool used

The method used in the present study to collect data was a Standardized self report structured questionnaire. The questionnaire had 29 question which were divided into 2 parts.

A. Demographic Data

This section collects basic information about the participants:

- Age
- Gender
- Educational Qualification

B. Mental Health Assessment: DASS-21

To assess the mental health status of the participants, the **Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21)** was used.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis using the unpaired t-test was conducted to compare pre and post intervention scores of stress, anxiety, and depression between control and experimental groups. Mean, standard deviation, degrees of freedom, and t-critical values at 5% significance were calculated to determine effectiveness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the present experimental study, a total of 100 student participants were selected from Nagpur and Akola cities. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher and administered via Google Forms. The form was circulated online, and responses were voluntarily submitted by the participants.

The demographic information collected included variables such as age, gender, education level, and place of residence. This data was analysed to ensure comparability between the experimental and control groups, thereby minimizing the potential influence of demographic factors on the study outcomes.

Table No. 1: Distribution of Subjects based on Demographic Data.

	Experimental Group (N)	Control Group (N)
Male	25	25
Female	25	25
Total	50	50

Since only college-going students were selected as respondents, the entire population falls within the age group of 18 to 30.

Table No. 2: Distribution Of Subjects Based On stress-Levels (DASS-21 Test).

Levels	Range	Experimental		Control	
		Pre test	post test	Pre test	post test
Normal	0-14	20	33	16	12
Mild	15-18	13	10	15	10
Moderate	19-25	11	6	12	18
Severe	26-33	5	1	6	5
Extremely severe	34+	1	0	1	5

It was observed that in the experimental group, where Mindful Eating techniques were applied, the number of participants in the normal stress range (0-14) increased from 20 in the pre-test to 33 in the post-test. There was a decrease in the mild stress level from 13 to 10, a decrease in moderate stress level from11 to 6, a decrease in severe stress level from 5 to 1 in number of participants and in extremely severe stress level, a decrease is observed from 1 to 0 in number of participants in pre-test and post-test respectively. In the control group, where no treatment was given, in the normal stress level a decrease is observed from 16 to 12, the number of participants in the mild stress level also decreased from 15 to 10 in the number of pre-test and post-test participants respectively. However, the number of participants increased in the moderate stress level from 12 to 18, in severe stress levels the number of participants decreased from 6 to 5 and in extremely severe stress level there is a increase from 1 to 5 in number of participants in pre-test and post-test the post-test respectively.

Table No 3 Distribution of Subjects Based On Anxiety-Levels (DASS-21 Test).

Levels	Range	Experimental		Control	
		Pre test	post test	Pre test	post test
Normal	0-7	5	6	2	1
Mild	8-9	6	10	5	5
Moderate	10-14	8	13	10	5
Severe	15-19	12	12	12	15
Extremely severe	20+	19	9	21	24

It is observed that in the experimental group where Sattvic Mindful Eating techniques were applied, the number of participants in the normal anxiety range (0-7) increased from 5 in the pre-test to 6 in the post-test. There is a increase in the mild anxiety range from 6 to 10, and a increase in the moderate anxiety level from 8 to 13. In severe anxiety level the number in pre test and post test in experimental group remained the same but in extremely severe level, there is a steep fall in number of participants from 19 to 9 is observed in the pre-test and post-test respectively. In the control group, where no treatment was given, the number of participants in the normal level of anxiety range decreased from 2 to 1. Additionally, the number in the mild anxiety level remained the same i.e. 5. In the moderate anxiety level, the number decreased from 10 to 5 in pre test and post test respectively. Whereas, in the severe anxiety level the number of participants increased from 12 to 15 and in extremely severe anxiety level, the number increased from 21 to 24 in pre test and post test respectively.

Table No. 4: Distribution Of Subjects Based On Depression-Levels (DASS-21Test).

Levels	Range	Experimental		Control	
		Pre test	post test	Pre test	post test
Normal	0-9	8	14	5	4
Mild	10-13	8	12	8	3
Moderate	14-20	19	18	20	21
Severe	21-27	8	6	10	6
Extremely severe	28+	7	0	7	16

It is observed that in the experimental group where Sattvic Mindful Eating techniques were applied, the number of participants in the normal depression range (0-9) increased from 8 in the pre-test to 14 in the post-test. There was a increase in the mild range from 8 in the pre-test to 12 in the post-test and a slight reduction in the number of participants in moderate depression level from 19 to 18 is observed. In severe depression level also, there is slight decrease from 8 to 6 in number of participants in pre & post-test is observed. But in extremely severe depression level, there is a steep decrease in number of participants from 7 to 0 is observed in pre & post-tests respectively. In the control group, where no treatment was given, the number in the normal level of depression range decreased from 5 in the pre-test to 4 in the post-test. Additionally, the number in the mild depression level decreased from 8 in the pre-test to 3 in the post-test. In the moderate depression level, the number increased slightly from 20 in the pre-test to 21 in the post-test. Whereas, in the severe depression level the number is decreased from 10 in the pre-test to 6 in the post-test, respectively. But in extremely severe depression level, there is a steep rise from 7 to 16 in number of participants in pre & post-test is observed.

Table No: 5 Pre-test-post-test Experimental Group (DASS-21).

		Pre-test Experimental	post-test Experimental		
Sr. No.	Variable	Mean $\pm$ S.D	Mean $\pm$ S.D	t score	% reduction
1	Stress	17.08 $\pm$ 6.46	13.08 $\pm$ 5.4	3.35	23.42%
2	Anxiety	17.18 $\pm$ 8.28	13.46 $\pm$ 6.02	2.54	21.68%
3	Depression	17.40 $\pm$ 8.60	13.28 $\pm$ 6.60	2.64	23.68%

The study observed that pre-treatment mean values for stress, anxiety, and depression were significantly higher than post-treatment values. The Sattvic Mindful Eating Technique reduced stress, anxiety, and depression by 23.42%, 21.68%, and 23.68%, respectively. The computed t-values were:
Stress: t (3.35) > t (critical 1.98)
Anxiety: t (2.54) > t (critical 1.98)
Depression: t (2.64) > t (critical 1.98)

Since the t-values exceeded the critical value at the 5% significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, confirming that Sattvic Mindful Eating has a positive effect on reducing stress, anxiety, and depression.

Table No. 6: Pre-test post-test Control Group (DASS-21).

		Pre-test Control	post-test Control		
Sr. No.	**Variable**	**Mean ± S.D**	**Mean ± S.D**	**t score**	**% Increase**
1	Stress	18.52 ± 6.86	21.76 ± 7.74	2.26	17.49 %
2	Anxiety	19.32 ± 7.24	21.24 ± 7.90	1.20	9.9 %
3	Depression	19.64 ± 7.88	23.40 ± 9.52	2.08	19.14 %

It shows that in control group the values of Stress, Anxiety Depression increased by 17.49%, 9.9% and 19.14% respectively during the experiment

The present study revealed a statistically significant reduction in stress, anxiety, and depression levels among participants following the Sattvic Mindful Eating intervention. In the experimental group, stress decreased by 23.42%, anxiety by 21.68%, and depression by 23.68%. The computed t-values (Stress: 3.35, Anxiety: 2.54, Depression: 2.64) exceeded the critical t-value of 1.98 at the 5% level of significance, confirming the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Detailed analysis from Tables 2 to 6 shows that in the experimental group, the number of participants with normal to moderate stress levels increased from 44 (pre-test) to 49 (post-test), while those in the severe to extremely severe category decreased from 6 to 1. For anxiety, participants in the normal to moderate range increased from 19 to 29, while severe to extremely severe cases declined from 31 to 21. Similarly, in terms of depression, normal to moderate levels increased from 35 in the pre-test to 44 in the post-test, while severe to extremely severe cases decreased from 15 to 6.

This shift clearly indicates that improved quality of mindful eating taught through Sattvic principles during the intervention contributed to reductions in psychological distress. The findings emphasize that the Sattvic Mindful Eating technique not only reduced overall stress, anxiety, and depression scores but also positively shifted participants away from high-risk psychological categories.

In contrast, the control group, which did not receive any dietary or mindful eating intervention, showed increases in distress levels: stress increased by 17.49%, anxiety by 9.9%, and depression by 19.14%. This contrast underscores the role of proactive, lifestyle-based interventions in mental health management, particularly for young adults and college students facing academic and personal pressures.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to assess the effectiveness of Sattvic Mindful Eating in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression among college-going students and youth. The findings revealed a statistically significant reduction in psychological distress in the experimental group, suggesting that this natural, holistic dietary approach can serve as a valuable, non-pharmacological strategy for promoting mental well-being among young adults.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Behavioural Interventions
Future research should explore eating behaviour to identify triggers for mindless eating and design targeted strategies to encourage mindful and conscious eating habits.

2. Nutritional Evaluation
Investigate the specific nutritional benefits of Sattvic Mindful Eating, including its impact on nutrient intake, food quality, and overall dietary balance.

3. Educational Integration
Implement mindful eating programs in schools and colleges to promote healthier lifestyle choices and reduce stress among students through early preventive education.

4. Workplace Wellness Programs
Encourage organizations to incorporate Sattvic Mindful Eating into employee wellness initiatives to support mental clarity, emotional balance, and overall well-being.

5. Non-Pharmacological Mental Health Strategy
Promote Sattvic Mindful Eating as a natural, holistic method for reducing stress, anxiety, and depression, especially among youth and students.

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