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ROLE OF YOGA ON DEPRESSION AMONG PRISONERS- A NARRATIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Depressive symptoms are common mental disorders around worldwide. The prevalence of depression among prisoners is much greater than in general population. Reviews was searched and with regard to prevalence of depression among prisoners and role of Yoga to act on it.

A literature search was conducted with the following search terms, key-words and phrases – ‘Depression’, ‘Prisoners’, ‘Prevalence’, ‘Yoga’. The search was performed in the following databases - PubMed, Medline, Medline plus and Google Scholar.

Considerable controvert exists regarding the causes of increased prevalence rate of depression among prisoners. There is a relevant gaps existing in relevant aspects, encouraging the future researchers to do studies in different aspects to evaluate the impact of each variable in risk of developing depression. From this review we analyze that there are various factors which influence the prevalence rate of depression and that is managed by practicing regular sessions of Yoga.

Research literature supports the necessity for early identification of depression and encourage the prisoners to prisoners to practice yoga to a have sound health. It is of supreme importance that guidelines specific to the Indian medicine Yoga plays a vital role in improving the mental health of an individual.

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INTRODUCTION

Depressive symptoms are common mental disorders around worldwide. The prevalence of depression is much higher irrespective of all age groups especially females, oldage person, singles and separated person. The contributing factors resulting in loss of freedom and opportunities are lack of social support, interpersonal relationship, employment, and social roles⁴. Moreover, the prison environment characterized by overcrowding, stereotype regimen, lack of recreational activities, and high level of uncertainty could lead to depression than in general population.⁵

Prison is a place where the inmates or the prisoners are compelled to stay for many years and sometimes for lifelong to punish them for their mistakes such as committed grave crimes (murder, sexual assaults, robbery).¹ It is not a pleasant place to live because no matter how well disciplined, it separates the prisoners from their families, friends, and the society. There are many other reasons like overcrowding, lack of privacy, insecurity about future, enforced solitude, facing various types of violence, lack of meaningful activity, inadequate mental health services and fear of the negative opinion of family and

society that cause mild to severe mental health problems among prisoners. Alienation from the family and society is the most prominent cause for the damages or negative impacts in the mental wellbeing of prisoners.² All these factors have got a significant impact on the psychological, emotional and physical states of the prisoners, resulting in high levels of depression, anxiety, stress, anger, fear, frustration and physical problems such as sleep problems, digestive disorders which are all common for prisoners.³

The traditional system of yoga is being used widely for improving various physical and mental illness. There are a few studies that have been done to find the efficacy of Yoga in the treatment of mental disturbances especially for depression.⁶

Yoga and its various techniques are useful in minimizing the psychological distress like depression of the individuals especially the prisoners. Thus, there is a high need for staying fit and healthy during their stay in prison. Practice of Yoga techniques such as Asanas, Pranayama, relaxation, meditation, relaxation, and concentration are a powerful tool to keep prisoners healthy and to have good psycho- physical condition. Pranayama has been reported to be beneficial in treating a range of depression, studies report that the practice of

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pranayama develops a steady mind, strong will power and sound judgment, and also claim that sustained yoga practice extends life and enhances perception.⁷

Research literature was reviewed with regard to prevalence of depression among prisoners. A literature search was conducted with the following search terms, key-words and phrases – ‘depression’, ‘prisoners’, ‘prevalence’, ‘Yoga’. The search was performed in the following databases - PubMed, Medline, Medline plus and Google Scholar.

This review commences with an overview of prevalence of depression and the effect of yoga on it. Next, the evolution of the risk of the prisoners to have depression. The review subsequently focusses on the prevalence of depression among prisoners and the effect of yoga.

Prevalence of Depression Among Prisoners

Depression is a common mental problem that makes a person feels alone. Stress plays an important role in the development of depression for prisoners. Prison is one of the most stressful environment that causes depressive events in a person's life which affects the thinking and behavior of the prisoners and cause severe depression.⁴ Ministry of Justice and Family Welfare estimated that around 49% of women and 23% of male prisoners have depression and anxiety.⁸ The factors that cause depression in prisoners due to illegal activities restricted and prolonged stay, missing of loved ones, living with violent behavior. Several meta-analysis reviewed that the increased risk of depression level was higher when compared to general population. Bureau of statistics in 2017 has estimated that 23.9% of prisoners have major depressive disorders.⁹

Research studies showed that Prisoners are having a high rate of mental health problems that are many times higher than the general population and high levels are often recorded as personal distress, aggression, antisocial behavior and drug and alcohol abuse among prisoners.¹⁰ The World Mental Health Survey was conducted among 17 countries which showed an average of 1 in 20 people were reported having an episode of depression.¹¹ World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that depression is the leading cause of the person to have disability and it becomes the fourth leading cause to the global burden of disease. By 2020 it will be second leading problem.¹² Studies have shown that the suicidal rates of prisoners are 10 times higher when compared to general population. Studies show that prisoners are very much vulnerable to develop mental health problem.^{8,35} According to Times of India (2014), in Tamil Nadu one prisoner dies every 4 days due to prolonged stay in Prison.

A systematic review was conducted in India, among 23,000 prisoners which aimed to examine the serious mental disorders showed that 10% had major depression, and 65% had a personality disorder. In women, 4.0% had psychotic illnesses, 12% had major depression, and 42% of them had a personality disorder.¹³

A retrospective study on prevalence of mental disorders and substance use disorders in which 12.7% of resident prisoners had a lifetime history of major depressive episode and 9.1% had a current major depressive episode. This is twice the rate that is seen in the general population.¹⁴

A systematic review was done on serious mental disorder among prison populations in western countries. Showed that 3.7% of men (90%) had psychotic illnesses, 10% (9--11) major depression, and 65% of them had a personality disorder, 47% had antisocial personality disorder. 4.0% of women had psychotic illnesses, 12% had major depression, and 42% had personality disorder, including 21% with antisocial personality disorder.¹³

A cross sectional study on psychiatric morbidity among 118 prisoners in central jail, Rajasthan and the study resulted that prevalence of psychiatric disorders was 33%. Psychotic, depressive, and anxiety disorders were seen in 6.7%, 16.1%, and 8.5% prisoners respectively. 58.8% had history of drug abuse/dependence prior to imprisonment.¹⁵

A cross sectional on Prevalence of Depression and assessment of its severity among 328 prisoners in central prison, Rajahmundry, India showed that around 129 (39.3%) of them had mild depression, 80 (24.4%) had moderate depression, 55 (16.7%) had severe depression and 64(19.6%) had extreme depression.¹⁶

A descriptive study was done on Prevalence of mental disorders among Prisoners in Durban, South Africa, among 193 prisoners result showed that the commonest disorder being substance and alcohol use disorders was 42%. 23.3% of prisoners were diagnosed with bipolar disorder, depressive and anxiety disorders. 46.1% were diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder.¹⁷

Variables Associated with Depression Among Prisoners

Socio-Demographic Variables

Among the various studies conducted on prevalence of depression among prisoners, the association between the demographic variables of prisoners and depression shows the socio-demographic variables such as age, sex, religion, marital status, family history of psychiatric illness, history of medical illness, educational status, type of offenses, duration of stay in prison, detention status, and use of substances were studied by most researchers and it is reviewed here. A cross sectional study has shown that the age group less than 25-35 years had higher rate of prevalence. A meta-analysis found that gender is a significant predictor of depression in which males had high risk of depression.^{11, 12, 13} Certain studies showed marital status as a correlate of depression among prisoners. A study reported a higher prevalence of prevalence of depression among divorced and separated¹⁸, whereas a study reported a higher prevalence among those are single¹⁸. A study reported that increased duration of stay in prison are more likely to have depression¹⁸ in contrast to another researcher reported a lesser duration of stay significantly lower prevalence of depression. Certain studies have revealed that individuals with increase use of substances are at higher risk of depression.¹⁹ A researcher had conducted a cross sectional review on prevalence of depression in which the person who committed crime due to violence and sexual offense are at the higher risk of depression. In regards to the detention of the prisoners convicted prisoners are under huge stress that makes them to have depressive symptoms when compared to under trial prisoners.²⁰

Effect of Yoga on Depression

Depressive symptoms are common mental disorders that have a good effect on individuals health and quality of life and satisfaction with medical care the prevalence of depression and depressive symptoms was higher among general people in developing countries than in developed countries.⁷ Yoga is one of the alternatives medicine, which is non-invasive, safe, as well as cost-effective.²⁴ It is well known and proved medically and scientifically that the hormones are balanced and regulated through yogic practices. The yoga practices maintains the physical mental and emotional activities of an individual When there is a stability and control of mind and physical activities. A person who commit a crime is less likely to compare someone who has no control over their mind, body and emotions. "A crime is a short cut to satisfy a craving, a short cut which goes beyond normal and legal means. A person with weak mind lacks balance and a sense of proportion and has no approach to the problem of delinquency and mistake can be truly effective, unless the basic weakness of mind is intervened and that can be balanced by means of regular practise of Yoga."²⁵

Several studies reported that the practice of pranayama develops a steady mind, strong will power and sound judgment, and also claim that sustained yoga practice extends life and enhances perception.²¹

An experimental study on Effect of SudarshanKriya on male prisoners with non psychotic psychiatric disorders result showed that practicing Yoga helps in improving the psychotic symptoms and improving health of an individual.⁶⁵ Another study has been conducted to identify the effect of yoga and meditations on stress management among female prisoners in Delhi. Findings showed from the analysis that Yoga and meditation has positive impact on improved mood, reduced stress, lesser psychological distress, improved ability to override impulse for female prisoners.²²

An experimental study on the effect of integrated yogic practice among prisoners in California on reducing depression among 450 inmates 312 persons had experienced good effect of Yoga on reducing depression.²³

Summary of Review and Need for Future Research

From this review it is evident that studies from international authors are many, relatively less when compared to Indian studies on the prevalence of depression among prisoners and the effect of Yoga on it. Especially very few studies were done in South India regarding this topic. This review shows that, the prevalence of depression among the prisoners are higher in prison population (10% of men and 30% of women) when compared to general population (10.4 percent of women were found to have depression, compared with 5.5 percent of men) Based on this review, no clear pattern emerges with regard to the association between socio-demographic variables depression among prisoners. This review also emphasizes the influence of duration of stay in prison and the level of depression. This review highlights the effect of Yoga on reducing the level of depression among prisoners. The prevalence of depression is the most common illness of the prisoners. Several considerable debates exists regarding the identification of causes for the prevalence of depression and the effect of Yoga on depression among prisoners., gaps are still

remain in same aspects of association of demographic variables, encouraging further studies in specific subgroups of prisoners and to evaluate the effect of each variable on the risk for developing depression. From this review we infer, that there are various factors which influence the prisoners to have increased prevalence of depression. Rather than a single factor, there are several factors associated with depression among prisoners.

Research literature supports the necessity for early identification of depression rate among prisoners in order to reduce the suicidal risk and initiation of appropriate intervention It is of greatest importance that guidelines specific to the Indian context are developed for the screening and monitoring of prisoners in order to early identification of psychiatric illness with reference to substance uses and physical health in general. Appropriate screening for physical illness, promotion of physical well-being and physical activity among prisoners with mental disorders is likely to contribute to a better overall outcome. The fact that Depression is widely prevalent among individuals who confined prison, and studies in this part of the country are very less which amplifies the importance of further research on this topic.

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