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## Research Article

### EFFECT OF HANDS ON REIKI ON PERCEIVED STRESS AMONG SOFTWARE PROFESSIONALS IN BANGALORE

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#### ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine the efficacy of Hands on Reiki on Perceived Stress among software professionals. 60 software professionals from a software firm situated at Bangalore who met the inclusion exclusion criteria were taken up for the study. Sample was divided into two groups experimental and control group (30 in each group). Hands on reiki healing was done for each participant in the experimental group for 5 minutes daily over 21 days. Pre and post assessment was done for the experimental group. The control group was not given any intervention program however; the control group was assessed at two time intervals- pre and post assessment. The obtained data was analysed using descriptive statistics and t-test to assess statistically significant difference within the group and between the groups before and after assessment. The results of the study reveal that there is significant reduction in symptoms of perceived stress for the experimental group. There was no significant change in the stress levels of the control group from pre to post assessment.

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## INTRODUCTION

Stress at the workplace is a common scenario. However, perceived stress at the workplace has gained a lot of importance in recent years. It is often described as the outcome variable measuring the experienced level of stress as a function of objective stressful events, coping processes and personality factors (Augustine *et al*, 2011). **Stress at the work place** is of great interest to psychologists, as most people spend a third of their adult lives at work. Managing stress for employees requires herculean efforts by the HR department in the software industry in Bangalore. Over time various stress management programs have been tried and tested and the effects are seldom long lasting as the programs may not cater to the specific requirements of the employees as the workforce is always heterogeneous in India. In recent times there has been a huge shift of the type of stress management programs being used in software companies. Owing credit to massive research being done on the efficacy of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), incorporation of CAM has paved its way into successful stress management techniques. Ranging from meditation to Ayurveda software companies are using a wide spectrum of CAM for its workforce. Reiki is also a CAM, it is a traditional Japanese healing modality categorized as energy medicine or biofield therapy by the National Centre for Complementary and Alternative medicine (NCCAM). Reiki practitioners help their patients to heal by placing their hands

slightly above or lightly touching the patient's body at specific points. By doing this the Reiki practitioner is channelling life force energy through his/her body into the body of the patient. This allows the body's natural healing energy to flow freely thereby facilitating healing (Barnett *et al*, 2014). There is a lot of scientific evidence for the healing ability of touch. As Hands on Reiki uses touch as a medium to heal, it is similar to touch therapy and tactile touch intervention. The efficacy of touch therapy is well explored; therefore, scope for investigating the efficacy of Hands on Reiki could add value to the domain of touch and heal modalities.

Review of literature has revealed that, the efficacy of Reiki has most often been used for memory loss, anxiety, depression, pain management and also in growing frequency with terminally ill patients suffering from cancer and AIDS. People suffering from a vast array of mental disorders are resorting to CAM interventions (Unützer, J.2000). An increasing proportion of the software industry personnel are falling ill to stress related problems, the need for effective interventions in workplace health promotion as to maintain the working capacity of the workforce is vital. Hence more research on effective interventions is essential (Buchberger, B.2011). Although research involving Reiki as an energy healing therapy has not been extensive, the present study is being conducted to test whether Hands on Reiki can reduce Perceived Stress of Software professionals.

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## Objectives

To study the efficacy of Hands on Reiki in reducing perceived stress among software engineers.

## Hypotheses

Distance Reiki has no significant effect in reducing perceived stress of software engineers.

## Research Design

Experimental design was adopted in this study.

## Method

### Participants / Sampling

The data for the study was collected in Bangalore from IT companies for software professionals with complaints of high stress. The sample of engineers was taken from Bangalore only based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The sample size was sixty, thirty participants each was randomly assigned to the experimental group the control group.

### Inclusion Criteria

- Male and Female engineers.
- Age 23 to 33 years.
- Ability to comprehend and write in English.
- Minimum of 12 months' work experience in an organisation.
- Minimum educational qualification- Bachelor of Engineering/Bachelor of Technology/ BCA/ BSC Computer science
- Employed in the IT industry.

### Exclusion Criteria

- Presence of any chronic physical ailment or psychiatric disorder.
- Previous exposure to any behavioural intervention within the past 12 months.

## MATERIALS/TOOLS OF THE STUDY

1. Socio-demographic Data Sheet: This form contained information such as name, age, sex, education, marital status and family type, nature of work and years of experience and any significant physical illness.
2. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, *et al.*, 1983): Developed by Cohen, *et al.*, (1983), is a global scale and identifies the factors influencing or influenced by stress appraisal. It is a 14 -item scale which measures the degree to which situations in one's life is appraised as stressful during the past month. There are seven negative and seven positive questions for which the subjects were required to choose from a scale of 5 alternatives 'never' 'almost never' 'sometimes' 'fairly often' 'very often' relating to their feeling of being stressed on a 0-4 scale. The 7 positive items were reverse scored and added up to the 7 negative items to get the total score. Higher scores indicate greater stress. PSS scores are obtained by reversing the scores on the 7 positive items (e.g. 0=4, 1=3, 2=2) and then summing across all 14 items. Items 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 13 are the positively stated items. Co-efficient alpha reliability for PSS is 0.84 with a test retest correlation of 0.85.

## Statistical tools

Individual variables were coded for computer analysis and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The obtained data was analysed using descriptive statistics (Mean, SD, and percentage) and paired t-test to assess statistically significant difference within the group and between the group before and after assessment.

## Procedure

The investigator conducted a pre assessment of perceived stress on all participants. This was followed by the intervention was done by the investigator at the software firm campus. The intervention was carried out in a hall used for training programs and addressing group meetings. The investigator who is trained in reiki, gave hands on reiki to all participants. The hands on reiki intervention was for 5 minutes daily for 21 days wherein the reiki healing was administered to the participants by placing both palms one inch above the head. This was done during work hours only. Each participant was permitted to choose their preferred time slots for healing. All participants strictly followed their healing time schedules during the tenure of the intervention program. The subjects were given Hands on reiki healing on swivel chairs (seated with spine erect and arms rested). The group was again assessed after 21 days (post assessment).

The Control Group was not given any intervention however orientation to the study and their importance as a control group was communicated to those who provided their consent to be a part of the control group. Both the tools were administered on the group. The group was again assessed after 21 days (post assessment).

## RESULTS

Background information: The age range for the experimental group was 23 to 33. This group had 12 male participants and 18 female participants. As far as education background is concerned 76% were undergraduates and the remaining were postgraduates in software technology. This group had equal 13 married and 17unmarried participants. Majority hailed from nuclear families only 10 %belonged to non-nuclear families. The control group had participants ranging from the age of 23 to 31. 76% of this group were males and the remaining were females. Majority of the participants were undergraduates the rest were post graduates in software technology. Only 2 % of the participants were married, 98% were single. Majority hailed from nuclear families only 30% were from non-nuclear families.

Both groups suffered from stressors pertaining to organisations, work, work/family conflicts, psychological and physiological consequences to stress. Both groups has similar beliefs about CAM. The 93% of participants of the experimental group believed that they were made of energy, this group was aware of energy medicine like Reiki, Light therapy, Qi Gong, Healing touch, Prayer etc. They strongly believed that these CAM modalities can help a person reduce his/her stress. 72% of this group agreed that shifts / changes of one's aura/energy field can affect one's health. They also were aware of the concept of chakras and acknowledged the existence of the same. Majority of the participants from this group were willing to get healed with Reiki despite scientific evidence indicating the efficacy of

the same. They also believed in the healing effects of prayer, yoga, change in thoughts can influence life, divine intervention for self-healing and distance healing. This group also felt they were spiritual and not religious by nature. The sample was aware about the benefits of various CAM modalities. On the contrary the sample did not have accurate and in-depth knowledge of Reiki and its healing potential.

The results have been obtained after the collected data was scored and put to statistical analysis in order to test the formulated hypothesis of the study.

**Table No.1** indicates the t-test results showing the effect of Hands on Reiki on Perceived Stress

Groups Compared	N	M	S.D	t	Significance
Experimental and Control Groups before intervention					
E.G	30	30.07	6.81	1.83	0.592
C.G	30	28.23	7.15		
Experimental group					
Before	30	30.07	6.81	4.85	0.001
After	30	23.23	6.02		
Control group					
Before	30	28.23	7.15	1.84	0.076
After	30	26.47	5.51		
Experimental and Control Groups after intervention					
E.G	30	23.23	6.02	3.233	0.16
C.G	30	26.47	5.51		

Table 1 show that the Experimental group has obtained a mean of 30.07 and S.D of 6.81 before intervention and mean of 23.23 and S.D of 6.02 after intervention. The Control group has obtained a mean of 28.23 and S.D of 7.15 before intervention and mean of 26.47 and S.D of 5.51 after intervention. The obtained t-value 1.83 comparing the mean values of the experimental and control group before intervention is not significant at 0.05 level.

While comparing the mean value of the Experimental Group, before and after intervention, a t-value of 4.85 was obtained, which is significant at 0.001 level. Comparison between the mean values of the Control Group, before and after intervention gives 1.84 as the t-value, which is not significant at 0.05 level. The obtained t-value 3.233, comparing the mean values of Experimental group and control group after intervention is significant at 0.01 levels. Since the experimental group has consistently scored a significant lower mean than the control group, the alternate hypothesis “Hands on Reiki has a significant effect on Perceived stress among software professionals” is accepted.

## DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to check the efficacy of Hands on Reiki on perceived stress of software professionals. Before the intervention both groups had similar scores on perceived stress. Special notification was given to participants asking them to refrain from initiating any stress combating technique during the 21-day intervention period. This was done to ensure that there would be not extraneous variable which would interfere with the study thereby maintaining likelihood that significant differences could exist post treatment which could be attributed to the Hands on reiki intervention.

t tests demonstrated significant group differences on perceived stress between both groups, on completion of the 21 day hands

on reiki intervention period. These findings are in consensus with the study of Shore AG (2004) who explored the long term effects of energetic healing on symptoms of psychological healing and self-perceived stress. In this study participants were healed by hands on reiki, distance reiki and placebo reiki separately. Results showed that Hands on Reiki too had a significant effect on reducing stress in comparison with the control group.

The findings are further supported by results from a pilot study by Cuneo CL *et al* (2011). The effect of Reiki on work related stress of nurses was analysed. Perceived stress scale was used as a tool for pre and post assessment. It was concluded that practising Reiki more often by nurses can reduce perceived stress levels.

The results of this study are in congruence with the study done by Baldwin A.L *et al* (2008), where in the effect of Reiki was tested on the heart rate homeostasis in noise stressed laboratory rats. Mean heart rates and blood pressure were determined before Reiki/sham Reiki, during Reiki/sham Reiki, and during the noise in each case. Reiki intervention, but not sham Reiki, significantly reduced heart rate compared to initial values. With Reiki, there was a high correlation between change in heart rate and initial heartrate, suggesting a homeostatic effect. Reiki significantly reduced the rise in heart rate produced by exposure of the rats to loud noise. Neither Reiki nor sham Reiki significantly affected blood pressure. It was concluded that Reiki is effective in modulating HR in stressed and unstressed rats, supporting its use as a stress-reducer in humans.

The positive results of the current study can be attributed to the healing ability of touch. There is a lot of scientific evidence for the healing ability of touch on stress indicators like anxiety, glucose metabolism, blood pressure and heart rate. As Hands on Reiki uses touch as a medium to heal, it is similar to touch therapy and tactile touch intervention. The efficacy of touch therapy further accentuates to the efficacy of Hands on Reiki as well (Henricson. M *et al* 2008).

Most CAM modalities are quoted to be efficient based on the concept of the patient’s belief (Astin, J.A.1998). Despite both groups having similar beliefs about Reiki, only the experimental group had a significant change in perceived stress after the Reiki intervention. The results of the current study could be due to the sample’s belief in the healing power of Reiki.

The current findings conflict results of a study by Witte, D *et al* (2001) where in the study examined deficiencies in existing Reiki research by objectively measuring the effect of Reiki on physical and mental relaxation. It was concluded that there were no pre-test post-test differences on mental relaxation compared to other therapies. There was significant effect only for physical relaxation.

The present results support findings of Wardell and Engebretson (2004). In their study the effect of Reiki on biological markers of stress and anxiety was analysed. Results concluded that Reiki has a significant effect in reducing anxiety and decreasing systolic blood pressure thereby indicating a significant reduction in stress.

The current findings and supportive studies mentioned indicate that Hands on Reiki can significantly reduce perceived stress. Recent research on various other energy healing modalities has shown similar results were in stress has significantly reduced. Studies on the efficacy of Hands on Reiki are sparse, hence the new findings of this study contributes to the field of CAM interventions on psychological illness.

## CONCLUSIONS

Stress is traditionally with psychiatric counselling and medication. Previous studies have found that Reiki is a promising complementary and alternative medicine for combating stress. The current study reveals that Hands on Reiki reduces perceived stress as compared with controls. The benefit of Hands on Reiki is proven to be effective with five minutes healing daily over a brief period of twenty-one days for software professionals. The results of this study demonstrate that Hands on Reiki can be used as an effective treatment to handle stress.

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