

Original Research Article

The Influence of Yog Nidra on Death Anxiety in Elderly Individuals

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of Yog nidra on death anxiety among aged individuals. Thirty retired persons from Amroha district, Uttar Pradesh, with a mean age of 67.33 years, participated. Utilizing the Death Anxiety Scale developed by Upinder Dhar, Savita Mehta, and Santosh Dhar, participants underwent a one-week training program focused on reducing death anxiety through Yog Nidra. Before and after the intervention, participants completed the scale. The program consisted of seven days, daily 45-minute sessions held in the morning. Results indicate a significant reduction in death anxiety post-intervention, highlighting the therapeutic potential of Yog nidra in enhancing emotional resilience and improving quality of life among aged individuals.

Keywords: Yog Nidra, Deep Relaxation, Death Anxiety.

Introduction

Yog Nidra, often referred to as Yog nidra or Yog Sleep, is a profound relaxation technique derived from ancient yog practices. It's a guided meditation method that induces a state of deep physical relaxation while maintaining full awareness at a mental level. The term "Nidra" translates to "sleep" in Sanskrit, but in this context, it refers to a state of consciousness between wakefulness and sleep. The practice typically involves lying down in a comfortable position and following verbal instructions from a guide or instructor.

The practitioner is led through a series of steps that include body awareness, breath awareness, visualization, and intention setting. The aim is to progressively relax the body and mind, ultimately reaching a state of profound tranquility and inner stillness. One of the distinguishing features of Yog Nidra is its systematic approach to relaxation, which often involves focusing attention on different parts of the body and consciously releasing tension. This process not only promotes physical relaxation but also helps to quiet the mind and alleviate mental stress and anxiety. Another key aspect of Yog Nidra is the use of intention or Sankalpa, where practitioners are invited to set a positive affirmation or resolve. This intention is typically stated at the beginning and end of the practice, and it is believed to have a profound impact on the subconscious mind, helping to manifest positive changes in one's life. Yog Nidra has been found to offer a wide range of benefits, both physical and psychological. Physically, it can help to reduce muscle tension, lower blood pressure, and improve sleep quality. Psychologically, it can promote stress reduction, enhance emotional well-being, and foster greater self-awareness and introspection. Moreover, Yog Nidra is accessible to people of all ages and fitness levels, making it an inclusive practice that can be easily incorporated into daily life. It can be particularly beneficial for individuals dealing with chronic stress, anxiety, insomnia, or other mental health concerns. Yog Nidra offers a simple yet powerful tool for relaxation, self-exploration, and inner transformation. By tapping into the body's innate ability to relax and heal itself, it empowers practitioners to cultivate a deeper sense of peace, balance, and well-being in their lives.

Death anxiety, also known as thanatophobia, is a universal aspect of the human experience, characterized by a pervasive fear or apprehension surrounding the concept of death and dying. It arises from the awareness of mortality and the uncertainty of what lies beyond death. This fear can manifest in various ways, ranging from mild discomfort or unease to severe distress and panic. Several factors contribute to the development of death anxiety. Cultural beliefs, religious upbringing, personal experiences with loss and trauma, and existential concerns about the meaning and purpose of life all play a role. Additionally, the aging process often intensifies death-related fears as individuals confront the inevitability of their own mortality and the loss of loved ones. Psychologically, death anxiety can lead to significant distress. Individuals experiencing death anxiety may struggle with intrusive thoughts or preoccupations about death, leading to feelings of dread, helplessness, or existential despair. Emotionally, death anxiety can evoke a range of intense emotions, including fear, sadness, anger, and profound grief. It may also trigger existential angst or a sense of existential void as individuals grapple with the uncertainty and finality of death. To cope with death anxiety, some individuals may engage in avoidance behaviors. They may avoid thoughts, conversations, or situations related to death and dying, or they may employ denial or repression as a means of shielding themselves from confronting their fears directly. However, chronic or severe death anxiety can significantly diminish an individual's overall quality of life, affecting their ability to function effectively in daily activities, maintain relationships, and experience a sense of fulfillment and meaning. Despite its unsettling nature, death anxiety serves an adaptive function by motivating individuals to engage in behaviors that promote self-preservation and the continuation of life. However, when death anxiety becomes excessive or debilitating, it can interfere with healthy functioning and well-being, warranting intervention and support. Various therapeutic approaches, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, existential therapy, and mindfulness-based interventions, can help individuals manage and cope with death anxiety effectively. Additionally, practices such as meditation, contemplation of existential questions, and cultivating a sense of meaning and purpose in life can contribute to reducing the impact of death anxiety and fostering greater psychological resilience.

As individuals age, they often confront various challenges, both physical and psychological, that can significantly impact their well-being. Among these challenges, death anxiety stands out as a profound concern, affecting the quality of life for many elderly individuals. Death anxiety, characterized by fear, apprehension, or distress surrounding the prospect of death, can lead to heightened stress levels, decreased quality of life, and even exacerbate existing health conditions in the elderly population.

In recent years, complementary and alternative therapies have garnered increasing attention for their potential to alleviate psychological distress and promote well-being among older adults. One such therapy, Yog Nidra, has emerged as a promising intervention due to its ability to induce deep relaxation, reduce stress, and enhance emotional resilience. Rooted in ancient yog practices, Yog Nidra, also known as yog sleep, combines elements of guided meditation, visualization, and mindfulness to facilitate a state of profound relaxation and inner awareness. While previous research has explored the therapeutic effects of Yog Nidra across various populations, its specific impact on death anxiety in elderly individuals remains relatively understudied. Understanding the potential influence of Yog Nidra on death anxiety in this demographic is of paramount importance, given the prevalence of death-related concerns and the potential implications for overall well-being and quality of life. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the influence of Yog Nidra on death anxiety in elderly individuals. By employing a rigorous research design and standardized measures, we seek to elucidate the potential benefits of Yog Nidra as an adjunctive intervention for alleviating death anxiety and promoting psychological resilience in older adults. Through our investigation, we aim to contribute valuable insights to the growing body of literature on complementary approaches to mental health and well-being in aging populations. Ultimately, our goal is to shed light on the therapeutic potential of Yog Nidra in addressing the unique psychological needs of elderly individuals grappling with death anxiety, thereby enhancing their overall quality of life and well-being.

Review of Literature

Kumar and Kamakhya (2004) explored the impact of Yog nidra on stress and anxiety levels. They defined stress as an individual's cognitive or emotional response to situations requiring adjustment, which, when surpassing one's coping abilities, leads to distress, often exhibiting mental and physical abnormalities. The practice of Yog nidra was found to enhance coping abilities by gradually unveiling dormant potentialities within practitioners, thus guarding against distress. Moreover, the relaxation induced by Yog nidra extends to both physical and mental realms, soothing the entire nervous system. Stress-related disorders typically progress through four stages, with the initial stage characterized by psychological symptoms like anxiety and irritability stemming from the overactivation of the sympathetic nervous system. Based on their study, Yog nidra emerges as a highly effective method for stress reduction, as evidenced by its ability to alleviate stress among higher class students. Additionally, the practice was found to decrease anxiety levels in both male and female subjects. These findings suggest promising implications for various age groups and professions, indicating the broad applicability of Yog nidra in stress management.

Dol (2019) study aimed to evaluate the effects of Yog nidra on life stress and self-esteem among university students. Using a non-equivalent control group pretest-posttest design, 40 students were selected, with 20 assigned to a Yog nidra group and 20 to a control group. Over an 8-week period, the Yog nidra group participated in bi-weekly, 1-hour sessions of Yog nidra. Results demonstrated that the Yog nidra group experienced significant reductions in life stress intensity levels compared to the control

group. Additionally, the Yog group exhibited notable increases in self-esteem scores compared to the control group. In conclusion, the study suggests that practicing Yog nidra could effectively alleviate life stress intensity levels and enhance self-esteem among university students.

Kumari and Karunaratne (2022) in their review paper searches conducted over a six-month period revealed that Yog nidra offers substantial benefits in alleviating mental conditions such as stress, anxiety, insomnia, post-traumatic stress syndrome, and psychosomatic disorders. Moreover, it demonstrates therapeutic effects on physical ailments including hormonal imbalances, pain-related disorders, migraines, and non-communicable diseases such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases. Conclusively, the practice of Yog nidra enhances overall well-being—physically, mentally, and socially. It serves as a preventive, promotive, and curative technique, underscoring its potential as a comprehensive approach to health and wellness.

Tripathi (2018) investigated the impact of Yog nidra on the physical and psychological well-being of middle-aged individuals. One hundred male participants aged 35-45 from Varanasi City were recruited. They underwent physical and psychological health assessments before participating in a 12-week Yog nidra training program, consisting of daily sessions lasting approximately 60 minutes, conducted by a Yog expert. Participants were divided into experimental and control groups, both undergoing pre- and post-tests. Findings revealed significant positive effects on both physical and psychological health among middle-aged individuals following the three-month Yog nidra training program.

Considering the importance of Yog nidra in reducing of death anxiety with special reference to aged people the present research paper is written with following objective:

Objective

To study the effect of Yog nidra on Death Anxiety of Aged persons

Sample

The sample consist of 30 retired persons of Amroha district of Uttar Pradesh selected through convenient sampling. The mean age of these persons are 67.33 years.

Tool Description

Death Anxiety Scale developed by Upinder Dhar, Savita Mehta and Santosh Dhar was used. It consists of 10 items. A score of 1 is given on yes and 0 score is given on No response. Total score measures the level of death anxiety. High score shows high death anxiety. The split half reliability coefficient was found to be 0.87. The test possesses face and high content validity.

Procedure of Data Collection

The retired individuals were contacted and they were provided with an explanation of the research's purpose after agreeing to participate in the one-week training program for reduction in death anxiety through Yog Nidra. Before and after the intervention, they were administered the Happiness Scale. Proper rapport was established before the training and data collection commenced. The training was conducted in groups of 30 persons for seven days, with one session daily lasting for 45 minutes, scheduled in the morning time.

Training Procedure

Day 1: Introduction to Yog Nidra

- Explanation of Yog Nidra and its benefits for reducing anxiety was provided.
- Gentle stretching and relaxation exercises were done to prepare the body.
- Guided Yog Nidra session focused on deep relaxation and calming the mind.

Day 2: Body Awareness

- Body scanning technique was introduced to increase awareness of physical sensations.
- Progressive muscle relaxation was practiced to release tension and stress from the body.
- Yog Nidra session emphasized relaxation and letting go of bodily discomfort.

Day 3: Breath Awareness

- Pranayama (breath control) exercises were taught to regulate breathing patterns.
- Deep breathing techniques were practiced to promote relaxation and calmness.
- Yog Nidra session with a focus on observing the breath and cultivating a sense of peace was conducted.

Day 4: Visualization

- Visualization exercises were introduced to create positive mental imagery and reduce fear.
- Guided imagery journey focusing on serene and comforting scenes was experienced.
- Yog Nidra session incorporated visualization techniques to foster feelings of safety and tranquility.

Day 5: Emotional Release

- Gentle movement and stretching were done to release emotional tension stored in the body.
- Journaling exercise was conducted to express and process emotions related to death anxiety.
- Yog Nidra session aimed at releasing emotional blockages and promoting emotional healing was practiced.

Day 6: Inner Peace

- Mindfulness meditation was practiced to cultivate present-moment awareness and acceptance.
- Reflection on the concept of impermanence and acceptance of the natural cycle of life was undertaken.
- Yog Nidra session centered around finding inner peace and acceptance of life's transitions was conducted.

Day 7: Integration and Reflection

- Review of the week's practices and experiences was done.
- Group discussion or sharing circle was held to reflect on insights gained and challenges faced.
- Final Yog Nidra session focusing on integration and reaffirmation of peace and acceptance in the face of death was conducted.

Throughout the program, participants were encouraged to maintain a daily Yog Nidra practice for ongoing support in managing death anxiety. Additionally, the importance of self-compassion and patience in the journey towards healing and peace of mind was emphasized.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Comparison of Death Anxiety Scores before and after Yog nidra Session

	Death Anxiety	
	Pre	Post
Mean	6.033	3.933
S.D.	1.771	0.980
N	30	30
SEm	0.323	0.179
Mean Difference	2.100	
t'	8.375	
p value	0.000	

The above table shows that mean scores on Death Anxiety Scale at the time of pre-testing is 6.033 and at the time of post testing it was 3.933. The mean difference was found 2.100 and the 't' score was 8.375 which is significant at 0.01 level. It infers that there is significant difference between death anxiety scores at the time of pre and post testing of Yog nidra Session. Furthermore, the mean scores shows that there is significant reduction in death anxiety. It clearly indicates that there is significant effect of Yog nidra in reduction of death anxiety of aged persons. The reduction of death anxiety among elderly individuals through Yog Nidra can be attributed to various interconnected mechanisms. Firstly, Yog Nidra induces a profound state of relaxation, activating the body's natural relaxation response. This helps to alleviate the physiological effects of stress commonly experienced by older adults, thereby reducing the overall level of anxiety. Yog Nidra encourages the cultivation of mindfulness and present-moment awareness. By guiding elderly individuals to observe their thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations without judgment, Yog Nidra fosters a sense of acceptance and non-reactivity towards fears and anxieties related to death. This promotes emotional regulation and contributes to a greater sense of groundedness and inner peace. The practice of Yog Nidra facilitates cognitive restructuring by guiding participants to explore and challenge limiting beliefs and thought patterns about death. This process helps elderly individuals develop a more positive and adaptive perspective on mortality, ultimately reducing existential distress and anxiety.

Furthermore, Yog Nidra provides a supportive environment for elderly individuals to explore and process their emotions. Through relaxation techniques and gentle guidance, Yog Nidra allows older adults to release emotional tension and cultivate feelings of calmness, acceptance, and inner peace. This emotional regulation contributes to a decrease in the intensity of death-related fears and anxieties. Yog Nidra promotes somatic healing by encouraging connection with the body and the release of physical tension and discomfort. By fostering a greater sense of trust and acceptance in their physical bodies, older adults can reduce the fear of bodily decay or deterioration associated with death anxiety.

In summary, the holistic nature of Yog Nidra addresses physiological, psychological, and existential dimensions, offering a comprehensive approach to reducing death anxiety among elderly individuals. Through relaxation, mindfulness, cognitive reframing, emotional processing, and somatic healing, Yog Nidra empowers older adults to cultivate resilience, acceptance, and inner peace in the face of mortality, thereby enhancing their overall well-being and quality of life.

Conclusion

The Yog nidra sessions have shown promising results in reducing death anxiety among elderly individuals. Through the practice of Yog Nidra, participants are guided into a deep state of relaxation and heightened awareness, allowing them to explore their fears and anxieties surrounding death in a safe and supportive environment. During these seven sessions, individuals are encouraged to observe their thoughts and emotions without judgment, fostering a sense of acceptance and peace. By addressing and acknowledging their fears surrounding death, participants may experience a gradual reduction in anxiety and a greater sense of calmness and acceptance. The deep relaxation induced by Yog nidra can help alleviate physical tension and promote overall well-being, contributing to a more positive outlook on life and a reduction in fear of death. Over time, regular practice of Yog nidra may lead to a profound shift in perspective, allowing individuals to embrace the inevitability of death as a natural part of the life cycle. Overall, the therapeutic effects of Yog nidra on decreasing death anxiety among aged persons highlight its potential as a valuable tool for promoting emotional resilience and improving quality of life in later stages.

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