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RESEARCH ARTICLE

“EFFECT OF MEDITATION ON MENTAL HEALTH”- A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Meditation is increasingly being practiced as a therapeutic technique. It is a practice where an individual uses mindfulness, focusing on a particular object or thing, feeling or thought to train themselves and increase the self-awareness to achieve calm and a clear mind to attain a stable state. Effects of meditation have generally been positive; it's estimated that 200–500 million people meditate worldwide. Over 14% of Americans have meditated at least once. Meditation also increased lately and the number of people practising has increased rapidly. There have been several articles, researches and books which have been released. Meditation will help the individual change attitude towards life, and provide peace of mind and happiness. It helps to achieve a better understanding of themselves as well as others. This review focuses on studying and understanding the negative and positive effects of meditation on mental health and how meditation helps in reducing anxiety. It focuses on pros and cons of meditation as well. Meditation depends on individuals and each one of them has a different experience. People have experienced both pleasant and unpleasant experiences.

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Introduction:-

Meditation may be an ancient tradition, but it's still practiced in cultures all over the world to create a sense of calm and inner harmony. Although the practice has ties to many different religious teachings, it is less about faith and more about altering consciousness, finding awareness, and achieving peace. The research body into the benefits of meditation is also growing steadily; there are studies showing meditation lowers blood pressure, helps with chronic pain, lowers people's heart rates, and even protects the brain from damage caused by stress. With the growth of Japanese Buddhism from the 7th century onwards, meditative practices were brought to and further developed in Japan. The Japanese monk Dosho learned of Zen during his visit to China in 653 and upon his return opened the first meditation hall in Japan, at Nara.

Effects of meditation on mental health

Effects of practice on psychometrically assessed anxiety levels have also been researched extensively, meditation is becoming more prevalent as a self-management and self-mastery technique, practising meditation helps to gain a

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new perspective on stressful situations, helps in increasing self-awareness, also focuses on present and not future or past to live in the moment. Meditation helps in increasing imagination and creativity as well.

Meditation helps in reducing anxiety

Self-regulatory behavioural strategies are used to treat many anxiety disorders, self-regulatory include meditation, biofeedback and relaxation are some of the techniques to reduce anxiety, these techniques are also used by clinical practitioners for the treatment of anxiety and to cure it at some level.

Researchers have also suggested that these techniques like meditation have helped psychological and physiological components of anxiety in the normal population. Anxiety disorders is one of the most common disorders which is common in people, there are many researchers who support the idea of meditation to reduce anxiety and symptoms of anxiety. Meditation has also now become popular in western countries; The practice of meditation originated in the ancient Vedic times of India and is described in the ancient Vedic texts. Meditation is one of the modalities used in Ayurveda (Science of Life), the comprehensive, natural health care system that originated in the ancient Vedic times of India. The term “meditation” is now loosely used to refer to a large number of diverse techniques. No side effects found for meditation in healthy people,

Although there are also few researchers who are not in favour of the idea of meditation reducing anxiety disorders, there are some researchers who have no proven evidence that it is the treatment for anxiety disorders, on the other there are some researchers who have proven that it does help people with anxiety disorders. Meditation helps in increasing productivity – Meditation calms the individual mind and also helps them increase in concentration, meditating regularly can also help to learn to redirect your attention. It helps in calming your spirit and mind, which is extremely useful for increasing your focus, which further helps enhance one's productivity at work. It is also observed that there is also the improve in test scores because it helps in increasing focus, which enhances productivity as well, there is evidence that meditation is a powerful organisational tool for enhancing employee effectiveness, wellbeing, and job satisfaction; however, experimental studies on the effects of meditation on other organisational factors such as presenteeism and emotional intelligence are limited.

Significance of the study:

This review paper focuses on the effects of meditation on mental health which includes pros and cons of meditation. Meditation is a powerful and natural treatment for people who suffer from depression and anxiety. It is a very popular technique. It focuses on the experiences of people which can be pleasant as well as unpleasant.

Objectives:-

The main objectives of this study are to understand the negative and positive effects of meditation on mental health and how meditation helps in reducing anxiety.

Research Questions:

How meditation can improve your mental health
How meditation can reduce anxiety?

Inclusion and exclusion criteria –

This study reviews the effects of meditation on mental health. This study however does not focus upon other techniques and physical health.

Review of Literature:-

Chen et al. (2012) in their study mentioned about general reviews in existence on health benefits in general of meditation, and however efficacy of meditation for anxiety, has no review focused upon. They searched medical databases in relation to different types of meditation as well as anxiety. The Boutron checklist was used to analyse a report on non-pharmaceutical trials to assess study quality, and for additional information- 90% authors were approached. For meta-analysis Review Manager 5 was used. This review paper suggests efficacy of meditative therapies that are beneficial to reduce anxiety symptoms, which also has important clinical implications for meditative techniques in treating anxiety.

Goyal et al. (2014) examined the efficacy of meditation programs in order to improve stress-related outcomes like anxiety, depression, stress/distress, positive mood, mental health-related quality of life, attention, substance use, eating habits, sleep, pain, and weight in the adult clinical population. This demonstrated that meditation programs can lessen negative aspects of psychological stress.

Sharma (2015) Sharma (2015) researched upon the process of meditation at fundamental level and directed towards shedding light on the underlying mechanism of favourable effects linked with meditation. This study has also focused upon previous articles. In addition, the effect of meditation is also summarised in this research article.

Cebolla et al. (2017) in their study examined the occurrence of unwanted effects among meditation practitioners by keeping in mind the moderating factors like type, frequency, lifetime duration of meditation practices. For data collection, an online survey method was used, wherein a survey was circulated via websites, scientific research portals related to mindfulness and meditation. A total of 342 participants participated and only 87 reported information about unwanted effects. Results indicated that the majority of the population were women practitioners from Spain, married and university education level. This study suggests that unwanted effects are prevalent and transitory and should be further studied. Standardised questionnaires to assess unwanted effects of meditation practices was recommended.

Karimi et al. (2019) examined the impact of meditation on mindfulness, emotional intelligence, job satisfaction and job stress-related presenteeism in Australian worksites. Participants of the study had to try an 'Auto Transcending Meditation Technique' (ATMT) at the worksite. Switching replications experimental design was used in the study which was compared to an intervention group with a control group. In order to compare the mean pre-post intervention differences, quantitative data analysis was used. From the training evaluation and qualitative data collected from focus groups, thematic analysis was completed. As a result of ATMT, participants indicated significant improvements in levels of mindfulness and emotional intelligence. It was also reported that thematic analysis showed that participants felt the meditation training and practice resumed into positive personal changes. Results indicated higher mindfulness lessens the effect of stress in participants' mental and physical health. Results demonstrated that meditation training and practice intensifies mindfulness and emotional intelligence, along with benefits for employees' physical and mental health. The study suggested for workplace meditation to be contemplated in health promoting work settings.

Schlösser et al. (2019) in their study aimed to report the prevalence of experiences related to unpleasant meditation in the international population of regular meditators as well as understanding the connection of these experiences with demographic characteristics. A total of 315 participants reported having unpleasant meditation experiences, which they thought of were due to meditation practice. Unpleasant meditation experiences were less likely to occur in female and religious participants as indicated by Logistic regression models. The study also reported that those with higher levels of repetitive negative thinking and those who took part in meditation retreat were more likely to experience unpleasant meditation.

Conclusion:-

The effects of meditation on mental health are both positive and negative. It depends on person to person. Each individual has a different experience with meditation. People have pleasant and unpleasant experiences related to meditation. Pleasant experience refers to that person feeling calm and finding peace. Unpleasant experience refers to repetitive negative thought and feels more anxious after doing meditation.

The effects of meditation towards increasing productivity, it helps them to be very effective at the workplace, enhance work satisfaction but also increase general happiness and are highly productive as well. It has been found that it has positive effects and also zero effects which means no improvement in the person who is suffering from anxiety.

The positive effects of meditation towards the treatment for anxiety makes the individual calm down, relax them and make them feel their thoughts calmly.

Meditation helps in reducing stress, gives the feeling of calmness and produces a deep state of relaxation. Meditation can control stress and anxiety to a certain extent.

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