



Stress and Anxiety: The Effects of Rajyoga Meditation: A Review

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Abstract : In developing countries, the problems of stress and anxiety have become an important public health issue that is impacting the population of all ages, socio-economic groups, and professions. The study has shown that stressors experienced across the genders in the Indian socio-cultural context are unique and determined by specific social roles, expectations, as well as structural inequalities. This critical review paper explores stress and anxiety through the lens of psychology along with examining the effectiveness of Rajyoga meditation as a holistic approach in promoting mental health. Empirical evidences showed the differentiated responses of stress and anxiety, where some experienced higher prevalence rate of anxiety disorders, psychological distress and stress-related somatic symptoms, whereas others have high rates of externalizing stress responses including substance use and risk-taking behaviors, which is statistically proven.

Index Terms - Stress, anxiety, socio-economic, Indian socio-cultural context, Rajyoga Meditation, gender stressed experiences, psychological distress, emotional stability, self-realisation, gender-based policies

I. INTRODUCTION

The silent epidemic of stress related and anxiety disorders is now considered in emerging economies, due to the rapid socio-economic changes, urbanization, academic stress, job insecurity, and new family arrangements. Anxiety and stress-related cases are some of the most common mental health disorders that contribute to the disease burden (Sood et al. 2024). With the aid of Rajyoga Meditation, the achievement of mental awareness, self-realisation, and inner peace can be noted. This form of meditation is considered to be simple, non-physical form, which does not consider breath control or various postures. Although stress is a common experience, the levels of stress, its origins, coping and the consequences differ significantly in men and women. For instance, the issue of gender difference in stress and anxiety in the Indian socio-cultural context is even more pronounced as there are strong patriarchal traditions and inequality in resource distribution (Singh et al. 2022).

Across various social groups, women often experience cumulative stress that is caused by housework, caring, work-related discrimination, and reproductive health issues. On the contrary, men are likely to be stressed because of financial obligations, expectations of performance, and social expectations that negatively discourage the expression of emotions (Spoelma & Fletcher, 2024). The aim of the study is to systematically review Indian studies covering stress and anxiety and to assess the significance of Rajyoga meditation as a supportive approach for handling psychological distress.

1.1 Conceptual Understanding of Stress and Anxiety:

Stress can be broadly described as both a psychological and physiological reaction to those demands which are perceived to surpass the resources of a person to cope. On the other hand, anxiety is continuous feelings of fear, apprehension or worry which could be a result of the presence or absence of identified stressors (Meurs et al. 2022).

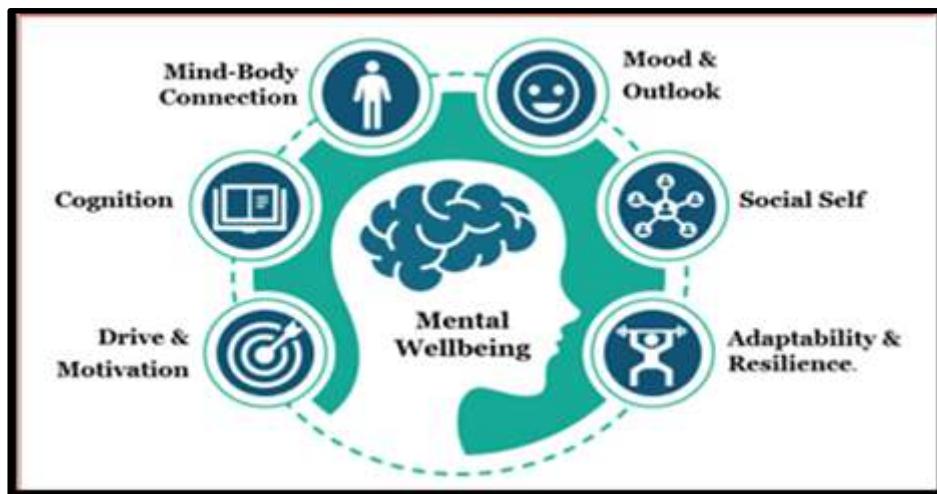


Figure 1: Various elements linked with mental wellbeing
(Source: PIB, 2025)

1.2 Definition of Stress, Anxiety and Rajyoga Meditation

- As a psychological and physiological reaction, stress can be described as a condition that arises when individuals feel that they have been overwhelmed by the demands put to them (Ovsianikova et al. 2024).
- Anxiety can be described to be a continuous emotional condition in which there is unreasonable worry, fear, and apprehension and a heightened alertness to the extent of being disproportionate (Meurs et al. 2022).
- Rajyoga Meditation is a state of mental and spiritual discipline in which the conscious effort of a person to relate the mind with the Supreme Soul using positive and concentrated thoughts. This is with the intention to attain self-realisation, inner peace, spiritual empowerment without the usage of any form of physical postures, mantras or breathe control.

1.3 Prevalence of psychological distress across diverse populations in Indian socio-cultural context:

The estimates indicate that in 2017, 197.3 million Indian citizens were diagnosed with mental disorders (Sagar et al. 2020). Within urban India, the majority of women have reported moderate to severe levels of anxiety symptoms, based on the study in Karnataka, Shivamogga (Mallya, Koppad & Kumar, 2024). Based on the 2023 National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report 'Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India', 171,418 suicides were reported (PIB, 2025).

1.4 Rajyoga Meditation and its Benefits in Reducing Stress and Anxiety:

Rajyoga Meditation is necessarily used in alleviating stress and anxiety through an improved sense of mental peace, emotional stability and spiritual strength. Being the practice focused on the mind, it is the method that allows people to control their minds and build internal stability without the necessity of using physical efforts (Turaga Satyanarayana, 2025). The application of such a method helps to reduce psychological stimulation, decrease impatience and aids in dealing with work-related stress as well as personal stress. On the other hand, it can also alleviate anxiety and enhance emotional regulation and self-confidence.

II. SOCIO-CULTURAL DETERMINANTS OF STRESS, ANXIETY AND USAGE OF RAJYOGA MEDITATION

2.1 Potential of Rajyoga meditation in managing academic stress among adolescents

In the Indian subcontinent, the studies on adolescents show that girls experience a higher extent of academic stress in adolescence as opposed to the male counterparts (Rentala et al. 2019). The symptoms of anxiety in adolescent girls are stated to be nearly 1.5 times more in comparison to those in boys, especially in connection with body image, school grades, and parental requirements (Singh et al. 2024). For instance, 3.5% of the school-going adolescent girls had been screened positive for major depression; severe severity in India and with 28.6% each of the boards of 10th and 12th standard, the notions of depression were from either of the board classes (Singh et al. 2024). Relating to this, it is mentioned by Chandel (2024) that Rajyoga Meditation helps to curb academic stress, as it is helpful for soothing the mind and decreasing some of the negative thinking habits including fear of failure and performance anxiety. For instance, through self-awareness and thinking positively, students know how to separate themselves out of the intense pressure and be able to look at what they are studying with clarity and confidence.

2.2 Management of Marital and Caregiving Stress through Rajyoga Meditation

Surveys on time use indicate that women spend around 7.2 hours daily doing the household chores, as compared to the male counterparts who spend around 2.8 hours (Economic times, 2023). Chronic role overload can be considered as one of the primary causes of stress among these social group, which results in emotional fatigue and anxiety (Singh et al. 2024).

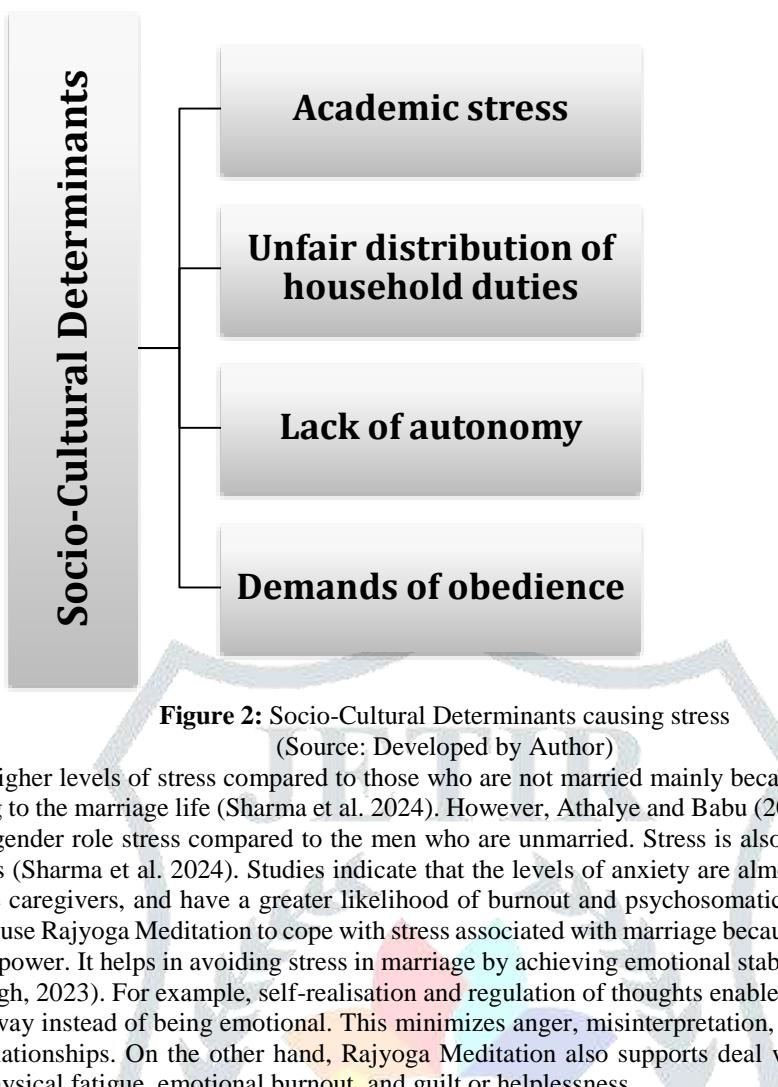


Figure 2: Socio-Cultural Determinants causing stress
(Source: Developed by Author)

Married women have higher levels of stress compared to those who are not married mainly because of problems in the family and the pressure of adapting to the marriage life (Sharma et al. 2024). However, Athalye and Babu (2023) highlighted that married men have experienced less gender role stress compared to the men who are unmarried. Stress is also increased when caring about the elderly family members (Sharma et al. 2024). Studies indicate that the levels of anxiety are almost 40% to 48% higher in women caregivers than in male caregivers, and have a greater likelihood of burnout and psychosomatic disorders (Grumeth et al. 2025). Due to this, women can use Rajyoga Meditation to cope with stress associated with marriage because it improves emotional stability, mindfulness, and inner power. It helps in avoiding stress in marriage by achieving emotional stability and effective communication (Kaur, Alabama & Singh, 2023). For example, self-realisation and regulation of thoughts enable people to learn how to respond to conflicts in a thinking way instead of being emotional. This minimizes anger, misinterpretation, and interpersonal stress, resulting into greener marital relationships. On the other hand, Rajyoga Meditation also supports deal with stress that is associated with motherhood, such as physical fatigue, emotional burnout, and guilt or helplessness.

III. ROLE OF RAJYOGA MEDITATION IN COPING WITH OCCUPATIONAL STRESS:

3.1 Professional stressors

Employees in formal jobs complain of increased stress levels caused by gender discrimination, salary disparities, poor career growth and conflict between work and family (Bhonsle, Soni & Nambiyar, 2025). Around 27% percent of women claim to feel stressed out as opposed to 21% percent of the men in the corporate lifestyle (Mahalakshmi & Sivasubramanian, 2024). On the other hand, the working women reported significantly higher stress levels than non-working women, which shows a direct relationship between work-life stress against household work (Mahalakshmi & Sivasubramanian, 2024). According to Siddiqui et al. (2023), high rate of emotional exhaustion among professionals are reported in healthcare across various departments. Rajyoga Meditation aids to relieve stress at work through relaxing the mind and increasing emotional regulation. Through self-awareness and positive thinking, people find it easier to manage deadlines, work pressure and interpersonal conflict (Kumari & Sahu, 2025). Thus, this minimizes mental fatigue, irritation and burnout as well as enhances concentration, efficiency and decision making at their respective workplaces.

3.2 Economic Stress and Financial Insecurity:

1. Both sexes are impacted by economic stress, though in different forms, where the feeling of being overwhelmed seems to be highly common for both (Maslach & Leiter, 2022). The reasons that men experience stress include being the primary breadwinners and women include stress that has to do with financial dependence and loss of control of resources (Spoelma & Fletcher, 2024).
2. Görres et al. (2025) determined that unemployed men have high levels of stress and low levels of anxiety as against the women who are unemployed, where there are high levels of generalized anxiety and depressive symptoms.

The Rajyoga Meditation encourages in dealing with the financial stress as it augments the mind and mitigates thought based on fear. Rajyoga Meditation teaches the individual to become free of emotional attachment to material concerns and to feel secure from within. Such an aspect helps in increasing oneself to make the individual look at the financial problem with comprehension, patience, and level-headedness.

3.3 Health-Related Stress and Anxiety:

Patients, specifically the females living with chronic illnesses like diabetes indicate higher levels of depression and anxiety of 20.3% and 17.3% compared to their male counterparts with the same illness (Tripathi et al. 2026). On the other side, men tend to put off medical attention and they end up getting stressed due to untreated diseases (Damaske, 2022). By concentrating on the inner self as a calm soul and developing a good conscience, one will have less worry, emotional strain, and psychological strain with regard to their health issues (Jha et al. 2025). Thus, Rajyoga Meditation can be used to alleviate illness related psychological stress by eliminating nervous and fearful thoughts.

IV. COPING MECHANISMS IN PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS MANAGEMENT

Coping mechanisms can be described as the psychological, emotional and behavioral strategies that individuals use to cope with stress and anxiety.

4.1 Avoidance-based coping styles

Developing countries reflect a distinct gendered pattern in the maladaptive coping mechanisms. Men are much more prone to avoidance based coping styles such as use of substances and lack of sympathy (Ovsyanik, Nesterova & Sidyacheva, 2022). The surveys of male college students of 46.2% from Bangalore showed that they used alcohol or tobacco to overcome stress on the perceived stress scale (Karki, 2024). On the other hand, women tobacco users during Covid-19 pandemic were due to stress and anxiety associated with food, housing and financial insecurity (Bassi et al. 2022). Although the men tend to have lower anxiety levels compared to the women, longitudinal studies indicate that depending on maladaptive coping mechanisms (Görres et al. 2025).

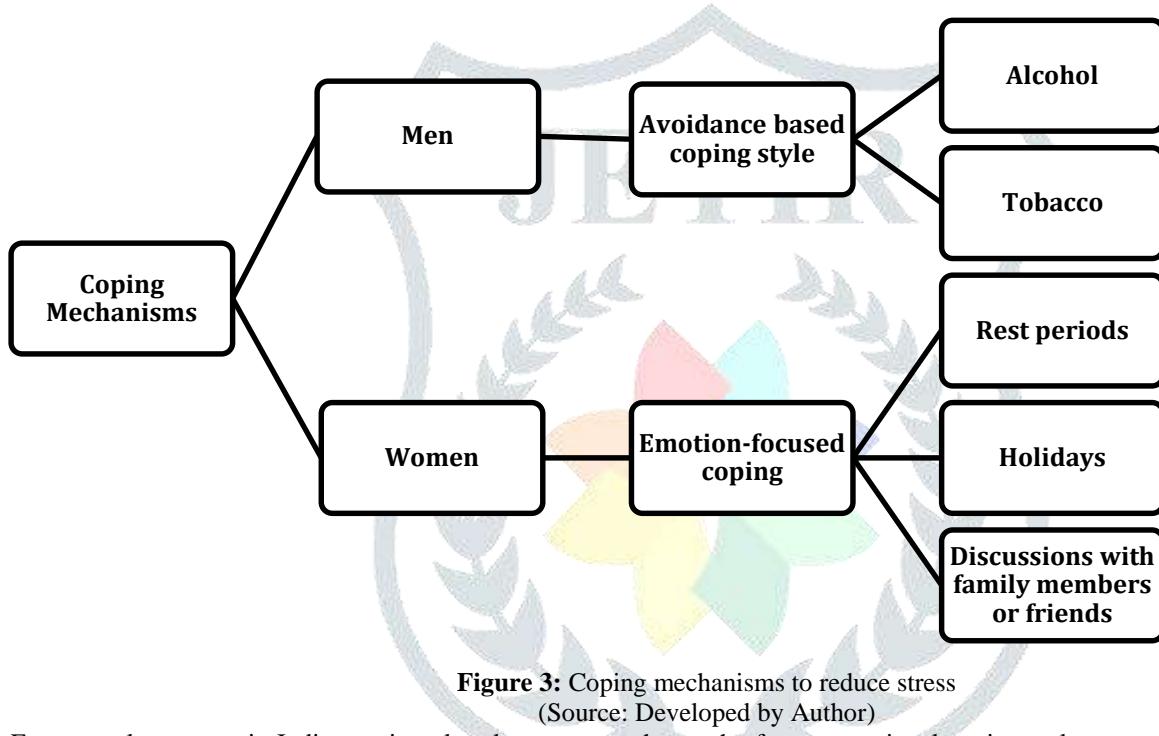


Figure 3: Coping mechanisms to reduce stress

(Source: Developed by Author)

For example, women in Indian socio-cultural context are those who favour emotional coping styles, as opposed to men who are mainly problem-sharing or avoidance-problem solving due to restrictive emotionality in the latter (Carvalho, 2024). Significant amounts of data on women surveys conducted in urban and semi-urban areas represent women deploying emotion-focused methods like expressing their emotions, seeking social backing, and cognitive reframing (Schnell et al. 2022). On the contrary, women taking their own life is 1/4th times in comparison to men (Carvalho, 2024). Rajyoga Meditation is also an adaptive variant of avoidance-based coping of conscious mental detachment. Rather than denying or suppressing, people tend to place temporary social distance between themselves and thoughts and ruminations that cause stress to regain emotional balance (Nagesh & Mehta, 2023). Due to such, it enables the mind to rest and get back to the demanding situations with a clearer, more controllable and coping ability, unlike the maladaptive avoidance behaviors.

4.2 Emotion-focused coping

Emotion-focused coping is also strongly linked to anxiety in women even with increased help seeking behavior. According to Ikpeama (2024), working women in urban areas indicate that more than 71.5% of Nigerian women use rest periods and holidays as stress management strategies to improve their mental wellbeing. Discussions with family members or friends, as the form of social support had been noted by 64.6% of the same sample, to cope with stress (Ikpeama, 2024). On the other hand, emotional expression is not necessarily effective in managing stress especially in work settings where the issues of women are downplayed or ignored (Akanji et al., 2024). Emotion-focused coping is related closely to Rajyoga Meditation as it helps people to control their emotional reactions to stress instead of directly changing the stressor. For instance, Rajyoga Meditation can contribute to emotional stability, inner peace and psychological resilience by calming the mind and restructuring the negative thoughts (Nagesh & Mehta, 2023). These aspects are of high importance and provides benefit in cases when the stressors cannot be eliminated in a short period of time, or when stressors cannot be managed immediately.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING COPING MECHANISMS FOR STRESS AND ANXIETY:

These gaps are proposed to be addressed using the following recommendations that can result in effective stress and anxiety management across the diverse population within the Indian socio-cultural context:

1. Gender-responsive screening and counseling services at primary healthcare level should be the priority of the National Mental Health Programme, since its initiation in 1982 (Directorate General Of Health Services, 2025). Gender-responsible screening and counseling services are directly related to Rajyoga Meditation because they acknowledge the presence of gender-specific stressors and emotional needs. On the other hand, they are also used support the use of emotion-coping and inner strength of each of the respective genders, especially the psychosocially vulnerable groups. In addition, Rajyoga Meditation enhances the efficacy of counseling through the provision of adaptive coping and emotional management that are detected in the process of gender-responsive screening.
2. Mental health services provided under the National Health Mission need to be associated with maternal, adolescent, and occupational health programs (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2017). The complementary, preventive, and culturally acceptable intervention that can enhance mental health services, with the help of Rajyoga Meditation, is to incorporate it into the existing care systems.

VI. CONCLUSION

Thus, the review presented Rajyoga meditation as the effective solution for solving stress and anxiety related issues across genders in Indian socio cultural context. As noted in the study, men, though with lower anxiety reports, can experience significant stress associated with economic sadness and social pressure. These aspects have been noted to lead to emotional repression and adaptive maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as through NMHP community mental health. Thus, Rajyoga is a non-pharmacological and low-cost practice and can be included in primary healthcare, community mental health programmes, educational institutions, and workplace wellness programmes.

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