



Original Article

Brahma Kumaris Raja Yoga Meditation as a Tool for Stress Reduction: A Review of Evidence

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Manuscript ID:

Abstract

JRD -2025(I)-170922

ISSN: 2230-9578

Volume 17

Issue 9(III)

Pp 135-137

Sept. 2025

Submitted: 12 Aug. 2025

Revised: 22 Aug. 2025

Accepted: 20 Sept. 2025

Published: 30 Sept. 2025

Stress has become one of the most significant health challenges of the 21st century, affecting physical, psychological, and social wellbeing. Meditation practices have been increasingly explored as low-cost, non-invasive interventions for stress management. This review critically examines the evidence on Brahma Kumaris Rajyoga Meditation as a tool for stress reduction. Findings suggest consistent improvements in both psychological (reduced perceived stress, anxiety, and depression) and physiological indicators (lower blood pressure, heart rate, improved autonomic balance). However, methodological limitations such as small sample sizes, lack of randomized controlled trials and reliance on self-report measures necessitate cautious interpretation. Future research directions are suggested for building robust scientific evidence.

keywords:

Brahma Kumaris, Raja yoga, Raja Yoga Meditation, stress, anxiety, autonomic, physiological and mental health. Both cross-sectional and interventional studies were included. Studies that specifically examined stress outcomes or related variables (e.g., anxiety, depression, physiological stress responses) were reviewed.

Introduction

Stress is a multidimensional construct that manifests through physiological responses (e.g., elevated cortisol, autonomic imbalance), psychological distress (anxiety, depression), and reduced quality of life. Chronic stress has been linked to cardiovascular disease, immunological dysfunction, and poor mental health outcomes. Meditation practices are increasingly investigated as strategies for stress management. Brahma Kumaris Raja yoga Meditation, also known as 'Sahaja Rajyoga,' is a spiritual meditation practice rooted in self-awareness, soul consciousness, and the cultivation of virtues such as peace, purity, and compassion. Unlike some meditation forms that emphasize breath or mantra, Raja yoga involves open-eyed meditation with reflective concentration on the self as a soul in connection with the Supreme Being. This unique approach has gained global attention, particularly for its application in stress reduction. This paper reviews empirical evidence on Brahma Kumaris Raj yoga Meditation as a tool for stress reduction, synthesizing findings across physiological, psychological, and clinical domains

Theoretical Background

Brahma Kumaris Raj yoga Meditation may reduce stress through several mechanisms:
Cognitive Reappraisal: Encourages positive reframing of stressful events.



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How to cite this article:

N.K.Raja. (2025). Brahma Kumaris Raja Yoga Meditation as a Tool for Stress Reduction: A Review of Evidence. *Journal of Research & Development*, 17(9(III), 135-137





Autonomic Regulation: Balances sympathetic and parasympathetic responses, lowering physiological stress arousal.

Emotion Regulation: Enhances emotional resilience, reduces reactivity.

Spiritual Anchoring: Focus on soul identity and higher power may buffer stress perception.

- Community Support: Group meditation and collective practice may provide social buffering against stress.

4. Empirical Findings

4.1 Physiological Outcomes

Autonomic Function: A case-control study of 50 long-term Raja yoga meditators reported significantly lower heart rate, systolic and diastolic blood pressure, and enhanced parasympathetic activity compared to non-meditators (Sharma et al., 2016). Practice Duration: A study with 100 participants compared short-term (6 months–5 years) vs long-term (>5 years) Rajyoga practitioners. Long-term meditators demonstrated greater reductions in physiological stress markers, suggesting cumulative benefits (Kumar et al., 2013).

4.2 Psychological Outcomes

COVID-19 Context: During the pandemic, Raja yoga practitioners reported lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression compared to non-practitioners (Nair et al., 2020).

Special Populations: In spinal cord injury patients, a one-month Raja yoga intervention led to significant reductions in perceived stress and anxiety, alongside improved quality of life (Sharma et al., 2021).

- Premenstrual Stress: Female participants practicing Raja yoga showed reductions in premenstrual stress, anxiety, and depression after an eight-week intervention (Patel et al., 2019).

4.3 Clinical Applications

Addiction Recovery: In opioid use disorder patients, a 15-session Raja yoga program improved quality of life across multiple domains, indirectly linked to stress reduction (Arora & Singh, 2023).

Cancer Care: Raja yoga has been integrated in some cancer rehabilitation programs, where patients reported improved emotional regulation and reduced distress.

5. Critical Appraisal

Strengths of the evidence include:

Studies covering diverse populations (healthy volunteers, chronic illness, addiction recovery, women's health).

Use of both psychological and physiological measures.

Limitations include:

Small sample sizes and limited generalizability.

Predominance of cross-sectional designs, limiting causal inference.

Variability in meditation protocols and duration across studies.

Heavy reliance on self-report measures with limited biomarker validation.

6. Gaps and Challenges

Lack of high-quality randomized controlled trials with large sample sizes.

Few studies using objective biomarkers (e.g., cortisol, HRV, neuroimaging).

Insufficient exploration of dose-response relationship (duration, intensity of practice).

Limited long-term follow-up to test sustainability of benefits.

Cultural and contextual factors in stress perception and meditation practice remain underexplored.

7. Future Directions

Future research on Brahma Kumaris Raj yoga Meditation for stress reduction should focus on:

1. Rigorous RCTs with standardized intervention protocols.
2. Incorporation of biomarkers (cortisol, HRV, immune markers).
3. Longitudinal studies examining long-term effects and adherence.
4. Mechanistic studies exploring neurobiological correlates (EEG, fMRI).
5. Application in occupational stress management, education, and public health.
6. Cross-cultural studies to establish global applicability.

Conclusion

Current evidence suggests that Brahma Kumaris Raja yoga Meditation is a promising tool for stress reduction, demonstrating benefits in both psychological and physiological domains. While results are encouraging, the evidence base is still emerging and requires more rigorous, large-scale, and mechanistic studies. As stress continues to be a global health challenge, Brahma Kumaris Raj yoga Meditation holds potential as a complementary and holistic approach to stress management in both clinical and non-clinical settings.

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Journal of Research and Development

Peer Reviewed International, Open Access Journal.

ISSN : 2230-9578 | Website: <https://jrdrv.org> Volume-17, Issue-9(III) | Sept. - 2025

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