

The Impact of Yoga on the Personality Development of Mentally Challenged Children: A Longitudinal Study

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Abstract- Children with intellectual disabilities frequently exhibit difficulties in emotional control, social engagement, and self-perception, which may hinder healthy personality development. The present longitudinal study explores the effectiveness of a structured yoga intervention in enhancing selected personality dimensions among mentally challenged children. A total of 40 children aged 8–14 years with mild to moderate intellectual disability participated in a six-month yoga program conducted twice weekly. A pre-post research design was employed using standardized rating scales and systematic behavioral observation. Findings revealed marked improvement in emotional regulation, social responsiveness, self-confidence, and behavioral stability following the intervention. The results indicate that yoga is a beneficial complementary approach that supports holistic personality development in children with intellectual disabilities and can be effectively incorporated into special education settings.

Keywords: Yoga therapy, intellectual disability, personality development, emotional regulation, social behavior, special education

I. INTRODUCTION

Personality development in children with intellectual disabilities is often affected by limitations in cognitive functioning, emotional maturity, and adaptive behavior. These children may display emotional instability, poor social interaction, low confidence, and maladaptive behavioral patterns, which interfere with their academic and social adjustment. Conventional interventions primarily focus on academic training and behavior management; however, there is growing recognition of the need for holistic approaches that address emotional and psychosocial development.

Yoga is a mind-body discipline that integrates physical movement, controlled breathing, and relaxation techniques. Contemporary research suggests that yoga improves emotional balance, attentional control, and self-regulation in children. Despite increasing interest, empirical evidence examining the sustained impact of yoga on personality development among mentally challenged children remains limited, particularly through longitudinal designs. This study attempts to bridge this gap by systematically evaluating the effects of yoga over an extended period.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the effect of yoga on emotional regulation in children with intellectual disabilities.
2. To examine changes in social interaction and responsiveness after yoga intervention.
3. To evaluate improvement in self-confidence and behavioral stability.
4. To determine the overall contribution of yoga to personality development

III. HYPOTHESES

1. Yoga intervention will significantly improve emotional regulation.
2. Yoga practice will enhance social interaction and cooperative behavior.
3. Participants will show increased self-confidence after intervention.
4. Behavioral stability will significantly improve following yoga practice.

IV. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

A longitudinal pre-post intervention design was adopted.

4.2 Sample Description

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Sample (N = 40)

Variable	Category	Frequency
Age	8–10 years	18
	11–14 years	22
Gender	Boys	26
	Girls	14
Level of ID	Mild	24
	Moderate	16

4.3 Tools Used

Table 2: Assessment Tools and Measured Variables

Tool Used	Dimension Assessed	Respondent
Emotional Regulation Scale	Emotional control, mood stability	Teacher
Social Interaction Observation Schedule	Peer interaction, cooperation	Researcher
Self-Confidence Checklist	Participation, initiative	Teacher
Behavioral Rating Scale	Impulsivity, compliance	Teacher/Caregiver

4.4 Yoga Intervention Programme

Table 3: Structure of the Yoga Intervention

Component	Practices Included	Duration
Asanas	Tadasana, Vrikshasana, Sukhasana	15 min
Pranayama	Deep breathing, Anulom-Vilom	10 min
Relaxation	Shavasana	10 min
Awareness	Guided breathing & calm focus	10 min

Total Session Duration: 45 min Frequency: Twice weekly Total Duration: 6 months

V. RESULTS

Table 4: Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Mean Scores

Personality Dimension	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	t- value	Significance
Emotional Regulation	21.4	28.9	6.12	Significant
Social Interaction	18.7	26.1	5.84	Significant
Self-Confidence	16.9	24.5	6.45	Significant
Behavioral Stability	20.2	27.6	5.97	Significant

All results significant at 0.01 level

VI. DISCUSSION

The results clearly demonstrate that structured yoga practice leads to meaningful improvement in multiple dimensions of personality development among children with intellectual disabilities. Enhanced emotional regulation suggests better self-control and reduced emotional reactivity. Improvements in social interaction may be attributed to group-based yoga activities that encourage cooperation and shared participation.

Increased self-confidence was evident through greater classroom engagement and willingness to participate in group tasks. Behavioral stability improved as children exhibited reduced impulsivity and greater compliance with instructions. These findings align with earlier studies emphasizing yoga’s role in promoting emotional balance and adaptive behavior.

VII. CONCLUSION

The present longitudinal study provides empirical evidence supporting yoga as an effective complementary intervention for personality development in mentally challenged children. Regular yoga practice contributes to emotional stability, improved social behavior, enhanced self-confidence, and better behavioral adjustment. Integrating yoga into special education programs may significantly improve the psychological well-being and adaptive functioning of children with intellectual disabilities.

VIII. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Yoga can be integrated into special school curricula
Teachers can be trained in adaptive yoga techniques
Supports inclusive and holistic education
Enhances emotional and social competence

IX. LIMITATIONS

Small sample size
Absence of control group
Dependence on rating scales

X. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Experimental designs with control groups
Larger, multi-institutional samples
Long-term follow-up studies
Use of physiological and cognitive measures