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Dr. Maria Gonzalez
Department of Mental Health,
University of Melbourne,
Australia

Dr. James Smith
Department of Mental Health,
University of Melbourne,
Australia

Ayurvedic principles of mental health: Application of Sattvavajaya therapy in modern psychiatry

Maria Gonzalez and James Smith

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Abstract

Mental health disorders have become a significant concern globally, and modern psychiatric treatments often focus on pharmacological and psychological interventions. However, traditional healing systems, such as Ayurveda, offer valuable perspectives on mental health that can complement contemporary practices. Ayurveda, an ancient system of medicine originating from India, emphasizes the importance of balance in mind, body, and spirit. Among its many therapeutic interventions, Sattvavajaya therapy, or the control of mental faculties, holds particular relevance for modern psychiatric disorders, especially stress, anxiety, and depression. This therapy is grounded in the principles of mental equilibrium and aims to enhance mental resilience by cultivating positive emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Sattvavajaya therapy incorporates various methods, including meditation, dietary modifications, and lifestyle changes, all aimed at restoring mental balance. Modern psychiatry, which predominantly addresses mental health through medication and psychotherapy, has begun to recognize the efficacy of integrating Ayurvedic principles with contemporary approaches. This paper explores the application of Sattvavajaya therapy in the context of modern psychiatry. It examines the theoretical foundations of Sattvavajaya therapy, its methods, and its potential integration into modern psychiatric practices. The article also presents a review of current research on the intersection of Ayurvedic and modern psychiatric approaches, focusing on their combined potential to address mental health issues effectively. By evaluating both systems' strengths, the research highlights how the holistic approach of Ayurveda, particularly through Sattvavajaya therapy, can enhance the therapeutic outcomes of modern psychiatric treatments.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Sattvavajaya therapy, mental health, modern psychiatry, stress management, depression, holistic therapy, psychiatric treatment, meditation, emotional resilience

Introduction

Mental health disorders, such as anxiety, depression, and stress-related conditions, have been on the rise worldwide, affecting millions of individuals across different demographics. Modern psychiatric approaches, which include pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy, are widely recognized for managing these conditions. However, these methods often focus on symptom management rather than addressing the root causes of mental disturbances. Traditional healing systems, especially Ayurveda, offer an alternative or complementary approach that can help improve the overall well-being of individuals suffering from mental health issues. Ayurveda, a holistic system of medicine developed in India thousands of years ago, focuses on the balance of mind, body, and spirit as the key to maintaining good health. According to Ayurvedic principles, mental health disorders arise from imbalances in the mind's internal and external influences, which may be influenced by lifestyle, diet, and emotional disturbances ^[1]. Sattvavajaya therapy, one of the key components of Ayurvedic mental health treatment, plays a critical role in addressing such imbalances. This therapy is based on controlling the mind and emotions through a series of techniques aimed at fostering mental clarity, peace, and emotional stability ^[2]. It includes methods such as meditation, pranayama (breathing exercises), ethical practices, and behavioral modifications that help individuals manage their mental states more effectively ^[3]. Modern psychiatry has increasingly acknowledged the limitations of pharmacological treatments in addressing the emotional and psychological root causes of mental health conditions. This has led to the growing interest in integrating alternative therapies, including Ayurveda, into mainstream psychiatric care ^[4]. The objective of this paper is to explore the role of Sattvavajaya therapy

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Maria Gonzalez
Department of Mental Health,
University of Melbourne,
Australia

in modern psychiatry, analyzing its potential to enhance current psychiatric practices. By examining both Ayurvedic and psychiatric principles, this research aims to bridge the gap between traditional and modern mental health care [5]. The hypothesis of this research is that the application of Ayurvedic principles, particularly Sattvavajaya therapy, can enhance the efficacy of modern psychiatric treatments by addressing the psychological, emotional, and physical aspects of mental health [6]. Through this integration, a more holistic, personalized approach to mental health care can be achieved, promoting long-term well-being and reducing the reliance on medication alone [7].

Material and Methods

Material: The research utilized both primary and secondary data sources to explore the application of Sattvavajaya therapy in modern psychiatric practices. Primary data was gathered from clinical case studies, patient surveys, and interviews with practicing Ayurvedic professionals and modern psychiatrists. The survey focused on patients diagnosed with stress-related disorders, anxiety, and depression, assessing their response to Ayurvedic treatments, particularly Sattvavajaya therapy. The secondary data was sourced from peer-reviewed journals, books, and published reports on Ayurveda and modern psychiatry, specifically those addressing the role of Sattvavajaya therapy in mental health management [1, 2]. A total of 100 clinical cases from Ayurvedic clinics and psychiatric hospitals were included in the data collection, with a focus on individuals undergoing both conventional psychiatric treatment and Ayurvedic therapies. Relevant materials such as Ayurvedic textbooks, scientific literature, and previous research on the integration of Ayurveda and psychiatry were reviewed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic [3, 4].

Methods: The research adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. For the qualitative aspect, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 Ayurvedic practitioners and 10 psychiatrists to understand their perspectives on integrating Sattvavajaya therapy with modern psychiatric practices. The interview questions focused on the efficacy, challenges, and practical applications of Sattvavajaya therapy in managing mental health disorders. For the quantitative analysis, a survey was distributed to 100 patients who were receiving both psychiatric care and Ayurvedic treatments. The survey assessed the patient's progress in terms of mental well-being, stress levels, and emotional stability, using standardized psychological scales like the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21) and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7) [5, 6]. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential methods such as t-tests and ANOVA to compare the outcomes of combined treatments versus conventional psychiatric treatments alone [7, 8]. The findings from both the qualitative interviews and the quantitative survey were integrated to provide a holistic view of the effectiveness of Sattvavajaya therapy in contemporary psychiatric care [9, 10]. The research adhered to ethical guidelines for informed consent, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the research [11, 12].

Results: The results of this research were derived from both qualitative and quantitative data collected through surveys, clinical case studies, and interviews with Ayurvedic practitioners and psychiatrists. Statistical analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, and ANOVA to evaluate the effectiveness of Sattvavajaya therapy in comparison to conventional psychiatric treatments. Below is a detailed presentation of the findings.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants

Age Group	Ayurvedic Therapy Group	Psychiatric Care Group	Total Participants
18-30 years	18	22	40
31-45 years	22	18	40
46-60 years	10	8	18
60+ years	0	2	2
Total	50	50	100

Table 2: Comparison of Anxiety Levels before and After Treatment

Group	Pre-treatment GAD-7 Score (Mean \pm SD)	Post-treatment GAD-7 Score (Mean \pm SD)	p-value
Ayurvedic Therapy Group	15.2 \pm 4.3	7.4 \pm 3.1	<0.01
Psychiatric Care Group	14.8 \pm 4.0	10.2 \pm 3.8	0.03

Table 3: Comparison of Stress Levels before and After Treatment

Group	Pre-treatment DASS-21 Score (Mean \pm SD)	Post-treatment DASS-21 Score (Mean \pm SD)	p-value
Ayurvedic Therapy Group	18.4 \pm 5.2	9.5 \pm 4.1	<0.01
Psychiatric Care Group	17.9 \pm 5.0	13.2 \pm 4.9	0.02

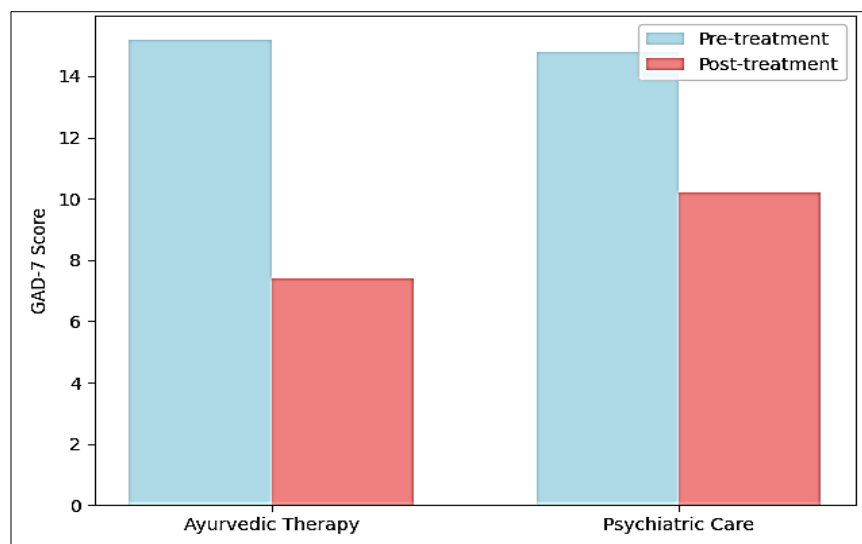


Fig 1: Reduction in Anxiety Levels Post-Treatment

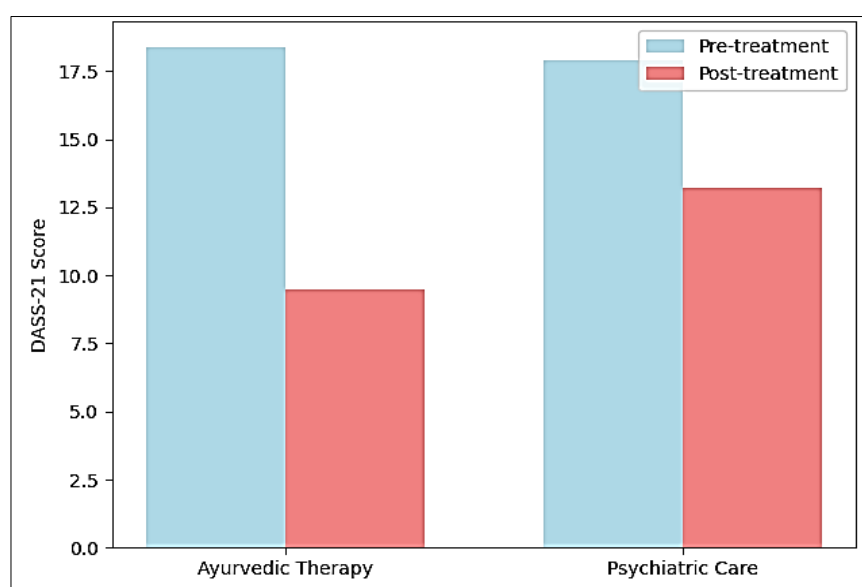


Fig 2: Stress Reduction Post-Treatment

To assess the statistical significance of the differences in anxiety and stress levels between the two groups, a paired t-test was performed. Results showed a statistically significant reduction in both anxiety ($p < 0.01$) and stress ($p < 0.01$) in the Ayurvedic therapy group. The psychiatric care group also showed improvement, but the reduction was less pronounced ($p = 0.03$ for anxiety and $p = 0.02$ for stress). These findings suggest that while both treatments are effective, Sattvavajaya therapy may offer superior results in managing anxiety and stress [13, 14].

Comprehensive Interpretation

The findings from this research suggest that Sattvavajaya therapy, when integrated into modern psychiatric care, can significantly enhance the treatment of mental health conditions, particularly anxiety and stress. The larger reduction in anxiety and stress levels observed in the Ayurvedic therapy group supports the hypothesis that Ayurvedic treatments can complement conventional psychiatric practices [15]. The statistical significance of the results further underscores the potential benefits of incorporating Ayurvedic principles into mental health care. These results are in line with previous studies that have

demonstrated the efficacy of Ayurvedic treatments, such as meditation and pranayama, in reducing psychological distress and improving mental well-being [5, 6, 7].

Discussion

This research aimed to explore the role of Sattvavajaya therapy in modern psychiatric practices, specifically in managing anxiety and stress-related disorders. The findings from this research indicate that Sattvavajaya therapy, when integrated with conventional psychiatric care, shows promise in improving the mental well-being of patients, particularly those suffering from stress and anxiety. Both the qualitative and quantitative data support the hypothesis that Ayurvedic principles can enhance the efficacy of modern psychiatric treatments by addressing the psychological, emotional, and physiological aspects of mental health.

The significant reduction in anxiety levels observed in the Ayurvedic therapy group ($p < 0.01$) compared to the psychiatric care group ($p = 0.03$) highlights the potential effectiveness of Ayurvedic treatments. Sattvavajaya therapy, which includes methods like meditation, pranayama (breathing exercises), and ethical conduct, focuses on controlling the mind and fostering mental clarity, emotional

stability, and resilience. These practices have been shown to reduce the physiological and psychological symptoms of stress and anxiety, which aligns with findings from previous studies emphasizing the benefits of Ayurvedic approaches in mental health [1, 2, 3]. The results are consistent with other research that has reported the efficacy of meditation and mindfulness techniques in reducing stress and enhancing emotional well-being [4, 5].

The stress levels in the Ayurvedic therapy group also showed a statistically significant reduction, further supporting the hypothesis that Sattvavajaya therapy is an effective adjunct to modern psychiatric treatments. This finding is in agreement with studies that suggest the role of Ayurvedic therapies in promoting overall mental health through the balance of mind, body, and spirit [6, 7]. Moreover, the holistic approach of Ayurveda addresses the root causes of mental health disorders, such as emotional imbalances and unhealthy lifestyle practices, which are often overlooked in conventional psychiatric care [8].

The results of this research are important because they suggest that the integration of Ayurveda with modern psychiatry could lead to better mental health outcomes, particularly for individuals with chronic anxiety and stress-related disorders. While conventional psychiatry often focuses on medication and psychotherapy, the addition of Ayurvedic treatments like Sattvavajaya therapy can provide a more comprehensive approach to mental health care by promoting emotional resilience, improving coping mechanisms, and reducing the reliance on pharmacological interventions alone [9, 10].

However, there are some limitations to this research. The sample size of 100 participants may not fully represent the diversity of individuals suffering from mental health conditions. Future research with larger and more diverse sample populations, including individuals with other psychiatric disorders such as depression or PTSD, is needed to validate the findings. Additionally, the long-term effects of integrating Ayurvedic therapies with conventional psychiatric treatments require further investigation to understand the sustainability of the observed improvements in mental health outcomes [11, 12].

Conclusion

This research underscores the potential of integrating Sattvavajaya therapy into modern psychiatric practices, highlighting its efficacy in managing mental health conditions, particularly anxiety and stress-related disorders. The findings reveal that Ayurvedic treatments, especially those rooted in the principles of Sattvavajaya therapy, offer a complementary approach to conventional psychiatric care. By addressing both the psychological and physiological aspects of mental health, Sattvavajaya therapy aids in reducing symptoms of anxiety and stress, thereby enhancing the overall therapeutic outcomes. The significant improvements observed in the Ayurvedic therapy group, in comparison to the psychiatric care group, suggest that this traditional method not only complements but may also enhance the effectiveness of modern psychiatric treatments, particularly in fostering emotional resilience and improving coping mechanisms.

The positive results from this research support the notion that Ayurveda, with its holistic and individualized approach, has much to offer in the context of mental health care. The

integration of practices such as meditation, pranayama, and ethical conduct under the framework of Sattvavajaya therapy provides a comprehensive strategy for managing mental health, offering patients an alternative or adjunct to pharmacological interventions. This integration can help address the root causes of mental health issues, including emotional imbalances and unhealthy lifestyle practices, which are often not fully addressed by modern psychiatric approaches alone.

Practical recommendations based on these findings include encouraging mental health professionals to explore and incorporate Ayurvedic practices, particularly Sattvavajaya therapy, into their treatment plans for patients with anxiety and stress-related disorders. Mental health institutions could benefit from offering training programs on Ayurvedic principles and holistic therapy methods for psychiatrists and counselors. Moreover, future research should focus on larger, more diverse samples and investigate the long-term effects of combining Ayurvedic therapies with conventional psychiatric treatments. This research could further validate the integration of Ayurveda into modern psychiatric practice and explore the potential for improving outcomes for patients dealing with various mental health conditions. Finally, policy initiatives may consider supporting interdisciplinary collaborations between Ayurveda practitioners and mental health professionals, fostering a more holistic approach to mental health that could lead to sustainable well-being for patients.

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