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**Stress, mental health and impact of spiritual practices: Results from case control study**

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**D**ue to academic stress and fear of failure in examination, every day 6.23 Indian students commit suicide; raising concerns on the wellbeing of young people. Previous studies have found significant anxiety, distress, depression, worn outs and severe impact of psychological factors on the performances of student. There is accumulating evidence that spirituality are important correlates of mental health in adult populations. The associations between spirituality and mental health in adolescent populations had been evaluated in the present study. This study used convenience sampling to recruit adolescents (N=133), aged 13 to 17, with and without spiritual involvement from three coaching centres in Rajasthan, India. Adolescents involved in practice with Advaita group were studied as cases compared with children without spiritual practices as control. In teaching the universal philosophy of Oneness (Advaita), children were led to understand Hindu culture. In Advaita Group, topics such as peer pressure, relationships, higher education and choice of career are addressed through discussion, debate and interactive workshops and the principles enshrined within Hinduism. A validated short-form of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21) and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) were self-administered in both groups. Adolescents from Vedanta group reported less stress, anxiety and depression compared to control ( $p=0.000$ ). Primary caregivers reported similar results. They reported more satisfaction with the behaviors of adolescents. Control group were more impaired on different SDQ scales and were more emotionally affected than Vedanta group. Belief and practicing spiritual practices described in Vedanta philosophy is positively associated with well-being and distress; including parental satisfaction with their behavior and performance. Study design was one of the major limitations of the study but and several implications and promising directions for further research on religion and health/well-being are identified.

**Biography**

Neha Sharma is the Director of Warwick Research Services, UK and is also Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the International Research Initiative in India, China, Europe and Africa. She has over 90 research articles and has been invited to speak at numerous national and international conferences. She has received many honors and awards including Young Scientist Award and Scientific Excellence Award. She has an international reputation in the field of the health and social care developing resources and practice for better health care.

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