Efficacy of Yoga Practice among Teenagers with Autism Spectrum Disorder


Introduction

Few studies have demonstrated improvement on behaviors of children with ASD, following yoga sessions (Kenny, 2002; Koenig et al., 2012; Rosenblatt et al., 2011). None of these studies address the benefits of yoga practice on social behaviors of teenagers with ASD.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by social impairments and restricted or repetitive activities, interests and behaviors. (APA, 2013)

As the prevalence of ASD increases, new avenues of intervention are explored, such as yoga therapy.

Method

• Participants: 12 students with ASD (12 to 15 years old)
• Yoga: 9 sessions of 30 min/once a week
• Observation of the behaviors: Two sessions in class per week (20 min before/after yoga classes). The behaviors were coded based on an observation grid.

Two categories of behaviors were coded during the observations in class:

Social behaviors:

- The student is paying attention to the task that is given by the teacher. i.e.: writing a sentence

Non-social behaviors:

- The student is not paying attention to the task that is given by the teacher. i.e.: doing mouth sounds

Results

Increase of the frequency of social behaviors before the yoga sessions (M=41,08) compared to after the yoga sessions (M=53,58), t(11) = -3,81, p < 0.05. Decrease of the frequency of non-social behaviors after the yoga sessions (M=9,42) compared to the pre-session data (M=21,67), t(11) = 3,66, p < 0.05.

References


Conclusions

• Yoga is a useful practice for children with ASD as demonstrated by (kenny, 2002; Koenig et al., 2012; Rosenblatt et al., 2011).

• This study shows that yoga as a benefic effect on social behaviors of teenagers with ASD as their attention to the task increases after attending a yoga class.

• These findings are relevant as ASD is characterized by impairments on social behavior (APA, 2013). Also, these results demonstrate that yoga practice could be a new avenue in class by helping students with ASD maintaining their attention to the task.