

Original Article

Nutrition and Lifestyle for Long-Term Mental Wellness: An Ayurvedic and Psychological Perspective

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Abstract

A dynamic state of psychological stability, resilience, and good emotional health is known as mental wellness. Modern psychology and Ayurveda, the traditional Indian medical system, acknowledge that dietary choices, lifestyle choices, and behavioral patterns have a big impact on mental health. This essay combines psychological frameworks such as cognitive-behavioral models, stress theories, and positive psychology with the Ayurvedic concepts of Ahara (food), Vihara (lifestyle), and Sattva (mental clarity). The ways that integrative lifestyle and nutrition habits can promote resilience and long-term mental health are highlighted through a comparative lens. By highlighting convergences between these traditions, it explores how integrative practices—ranging from satvik diets, yoga, and ethical living to mindfulness, adaptive cognition, and social support—can foster long-term resilience, clarity, and wellbeing. The paper proposes a holistic framework where Ayurveda's preventive approach complements psychology's evidence-based interventions, offering a comprehensive model for promoting sustainable mental wellness in contemporary society.

Keywords: Nutrition, Lifestyle, Mental wellness, Ayurvedic, Psychological

Introduction

Anxiety, despair, and illnesses linked to stress are among the mental health conditions that are becoming more prevalent globally. Psychology has shed light on the mental and emotional mechanisms that underlie these disorders, but Ayurveda stresses the importance of the body, mind (Sharira-Manas), and spirit (Atma) working together to achieve Swasthya (health).

In contrast to simply pharmaceutical therapies, both sciences emphasize the sustainability of preventive and promotive measures that are based on routine, food, stress management, and behavioral regulation. Combining psychological models with Ayurvedic knowledge provides a comprehensive road map for long-term mental health.

The importance of mental wellness as a fundamental component of general health and wellbeing is becoming more widely acknowledged. The prevalence of mental health conditions including anxiety, depression, and chronic stress is alarmingly increasing in a society that is experiencing fast social, economic, and environmental change. As a result, preventive and comprehensive strategies that go beyond traditional therapy paradigms are gaining popularity. One of the most important—yet frequently overlooked—aspects of preserving and advancing mental wellness is diet and lifestyle. This study intends to investigate these elements from the perspectives of contemporary psychology, which provides evidence-based frameworks for comprehending human behavior, cognition, and emotion, and Ayurveda, India's age-old system of natural medicine.

Ayurveda places a strong emphasis on maintaining balance in the body, mind, and spirit. It suggests that the three doshas—Pitta, Kapha, and Vata—work together to promote health, with proper diet (Ahara), lifestyle (Vihara), and mental discipline serving as a guide. According to Ayurveda, emotional disorders are frequently caused by imbalances in both physiological and environmental causes, and the mind (Manas) is closely linked to physical health. In order to promote sattva—a condition of clarity, tranquility, and emotional stability—

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Ayurvedic classics like the Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita include comprehensive instructions on food choices, daily routines (Dinacharya), seasonal practices (Ritucharya), and mental hygiene. It is believed that sattvic foods—such as fresh fruits, vegetables, nutritious grains, and milk—nurture the body while simultaneously fostering mental clarity and serenity. It is believed that ethical living, yoga, meditation, and adequate sleep are all necessary for mental peace.

This study looks into how lifestyle choices and diet might be sustainable means of fostering mental health from the perspectives of contemporary psychology and Ayurveda. In order to promote emotional equilibrium, mental clarity, and long-term psychological resilience, it looks for overlaps, investigates complementarities, and suggests integrative models. By doing this, the study intends to add to the expanding corpus of research that supports a more preventive, inclusive, and holistic approach to mental health—one that enables people to actively participate in their own well-being by making thoughtful, informed lifestyle decisions.

Objective Of the study:

1. Examine how Ayurvedic concepts of diet (Ahara), lifestyle (Vihara), and mental health (Manas) support psychological stability.
2. Examine current psychological theories and studies on how lifestyle choices and diet affect mental health conditions like stress, anxiety, depression, and cognitive performance.
3. Create a comprehensive framework for mental wellbeing by contrasting and incorporating ideas from psychology and Ayurveda.

The Ayurvedic Framework of Mental Wellness

The Concept of Manas (Mind)

According to Ayurveda, the mind is governed by three gunas:

- Sattva (clarity, harmony): connected to knowledge, optimism, and equilibrium.
- Rajas (activity, restlessness): associated with emotional swings, impatience, and ambition.
- Tamas (inertia, ignorance): associated with depression, disorientation, and sluggishness.

When Sattva is predominant and bolstered by a healthy food and lifestyle, mental wellness is maintained.

Ahara (Diet) and Manas

Nutrition for Mental Wellness: Bridging Ayurveda and Psychology

Ayurvedic Concept	Psychological / Neuroscience Evidence	Benefits for Mental Wellness
Satvik diet (fresh, vegetarian, light foods)	Plant-based diets like the Mediterranean diet lower cognitive decline and depression.	encourages serenity, clarity, and a steady mood
Avoidance of tamasik foods (stale, processed)	Diets heavy in fat and sugar are associated with inflammation and poor mood regulation.	lowers the chance of anxiety and despair

Ayurveda classifies food into:

- Satvik Ahara (fresh, light, pure): Whole grains, fruits, veggies, milk, and ghee → improve focus and serenity.
- Rajasik Ahara (spicy, salty, stimulating): Overuse of stimulants, fried foods, and spices → cause agitation and restlessness.
- Tamasik Ahara (stale, heavy, processed): Alcohol, fast food, and preserved foods → induce lethargy, confusion, depression.

Vihara (Lifestyle) and Mental Wellness

- Dinacharya (daily routine): A balanced work-rest cycle, regular meals, yoga, meditation, and an early rise → maintain a healthy circadian rhythm and foster mental toughness.
- Ratricharya (night routine): Sufficient sleep and relaxing routines before bed → avoid mental irritation and sleeplessness.
- Sadvrutta (ethical conduct): fostering honesty, kindness, and positive conduct → strengthen emotional balance.

Rasayana (Rejuvenation)

Like contemporary adaptogens, herbs like Brahmi, ashwagandha, and sankhapushpi function as medhya rasayanas (nootropic agents), enhancing memory, lowering stress, and boosting cognition.

The Mental Wellness Psychological Framework

Cognitive-Behavioral Perspective

Behaviors, emotions, and cognitive patterns all influence mental wellness. While adaptive thoughts promote resilience, maladaptive ones—such as negative thinking and catastrophizing—fuel anxiety and despair. Emotional control and cognitive reorganization are supported by a balanced diet and lifestyle.

Stress and Coping Theory

The hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis is dysregulated by prolonged stress, which affects immunity and mood. Ayurvedic activities like meditation, pranayama, and communal living (satsanga) are similar to psychological techniques like mindfulness, problem-solving, and social support.

Positive Psychology

Emphasizes thriving, meaning, and strengths over pathology. Ayurvedic emphasis on satvik vichara (good thinking), sadvrutta (ethical living), and seva (service) is reflected in practices such as gratitude, optimism, and compassion.

Ghee, milk, nuts as ojas-building foods	Neurotransmitter equilibrium is aided by diets high in tryptophan and omega-3 fatty acids.	enhances resilience and cognitive function
Rasayana herbs (Brahmi, Ashwagandha)	Clinical research demonstrates anxiolytic and nootropic effects.	Improve cognition and lessen stress

Way of Life for Prolonged Mental Health

Exercise and Yoga

- Ayurveda: Yoga balances doshas, promotes sattva.
- Psychology: Exercise lowers depression and raises endorphins and brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF).
- Sleep
- Ayurveda: Nidra (sleep) is improved by a nightly regimen, warm milk, and meditation before bed.
- Psychology: Sleep hygiene enhances emotional control and memory.
- Meditation & Mindfulness
- Ayurveda: Dhyana fortifies sattva and balances rajas and tamas.
- Psychology: Being mindful improves prefrontal control over the amygdala and decreases ruminating.
- Social and Ethical Conduct
- Ayurveda: Community life and sadvrutta foster harmony.
- Psychology: Social support predicts resilience and acts as a stress buffer.

Integrative Model: Ayurveda Meets Psychology

A comprehensive framework for sustained mental health:

1. Satvik Ahara + balanced psychology of macronutrients (brain-gut axis).
2. Dinacharya + behavioral activation (daily routines with structure).
3. Meditation & Pranayama + treatments based on mindfulness.
4. Sadvrutta (ethical living) + interventions based on positive psychology.
5. Rasayana chikitsa + A nutritional psychiatry based on adaptogens.

Conclusion

The underlying tenet of Ayurveda and psychology is that mental health is largely dependent on lifestyle and nutrition. Psychology emphasizes the social, emotional, and cognitive aspects of resilience, while Ayurveda stresses the balance of gunas through routine, food, and moral behavior. When combined, they provide a synergistic foundation for long-term, preventive, and promotional mental health care. The burden of mental illnesses can be greatly decreased and human happiness can be improved by integrating these sciences into clinical practice, public health, and education.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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