

Abstract

This study explores the effects of an integrative holistic session on anxiety and depression symptoms among adult participants. The session combined evidence-based practices including breathwork, EFT (tapping), Carnatic chanting, Reiki, and a therapeutic sound bath. A total of 22 participants were recruited; however, only 17 completed both pre- and post-assessments using the GAD-7 and Beck Depression Inventory. Paired t-tests revealed statistically significant reductions in both anxiety and depression scores following the session. Thematic analysis of open-ended responses also highlighted increased emotional clarity, physical relaxation, and reduced mental distress. While the intervention was brief and findings are limited by sample size and lack of follow-up, results suggest that integrating holistic practices can be a powerful complementary tool in therapeutic settings. This study adds to growing research on mind-body approaches and supports further exploration into combining spiritual and somatic modalities within clinical frameworks to enhance emotional well-being.

Keywords: Holistic therapy, Reiki, Sound Healing, Anxiety, Depression, Complementary Practices, Integrative Mental Health

The Integration of Energy Work, Mindfulness, and Somatic Embodiment Techniques into Traditional Therapy: Exploring the Impact on Anxiety and Depression in Adults

Introduction

Anxiety and depression are among the most pervasive mental health disorders, affecting millions of adults worldwide and significantly impairing daily functioning and overall well-being (Cork, Elliott, & Trombley, 2023). While traditional treatments such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and pharmacological interventions are widely used, these methods are not universally effective. Many individuals continue to experience residual symptoms despite treatment, leading to increased interest in alternative and complementary approaches to mental health care (Guo, Long, Qin, & Fan, 2024).

In response to this growing demand, holistic and integrative practices, including energy work, mindfulness techniques, and somatic embodiment approaches have gained attention as potential adjuncts to traditional therapy (Malviya, Meredith, Zupan, & Kerley, 2022). Techniques such as Reiki, Pranic Healing, sound healing, meditation, breathwork, Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), and chanting have long been used in various cultural and spiritual traditions to promote emotional balance and stress reduction. Despite their increasing popularity, limited research has explored how these

modalities function together to support mental health outcomes (Seetharaman, Avhad, & Rane, 2024).

Although existing studies have examined the benefits of some integrative practices such as mindfulness meditation, sound healing, and Reiki, research on their combined effects remains scarce. Studies indicate that mindfulness-based practices can reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression (Cork et al., 2023), while energy healing techniques like Reiki have demonstrated potential in reducing stress and promoting relaxation (Guo et al., 2024). However, little is known about how combining these methods into a single therapeutic experience may enhance mental health outcomes.

Additionally, factors such as program duration, practitioner expertise, and individual receptivity to these practices may influence their effectiveness, yet these variables remain underexplored (Malviya et al., 2022). Research on holistic mental health interventions often focuses on single modalities, failing to capture the interactive effects of combined treatments. This gap in research presents a need to evaluate the effectiveness of an integrative approach that incorporates multiple modalities within one session. Understanding how these practices function together may offer valuable insights for clinicians, mental health professionals, and individuals seeking holistic strategies for anxiety and depression management.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of integrating energy work, mindfulness practices, and somatic embodiment techniques into traditional therapy for adults experiencing anxiety and depression. Specifically, this research seeks to determine whether a combined session incorporating Reiki, yoga, sound healing, meditation, breathwork, EFT, and chanting can lead to measurable reductions in anxiety and depression symptoms. This study also aims to explore participants' subjective

experiences with these modalities and assess potential factors that may influence their effectiveness.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does a combined session of energy work, mindfulness, and somatic embodiment techniques impact symptoms of anxiety and depression in adults?
2. What are participants' subjective experiences with these integrative practices, and how do they perceive their effectiveness?

This research is valuable because it addresses a growing need for integrative mental health approaches. Traditional therapy models, while effective for many, often do not incorporate holistic elements that engage the body, energy systems, and mindfulness together (Malviya et al., 2022). By examining how these practices work collectively, this study contributes to the expanding field of complementary and integrative mental health interventions.

The findings of this study have the potential to:

- Provide empirical support for using Reiki, Yoga, sound healing, meditation, breathwork, EFT, and chanting as complementary approaches for anxiety and depression.
- Inform mental health professionals about ways to integrate these modalities into therapeutic settings.
- Offer individuals experiencing anxiety and depression additional self-care tools that may enhance their emotional resilience and well-being.

Additionally, this study acknowledges the cultural and spiritual significance of these practices. Many of these techniques have roots in Eastern, Indigenous, and holistic traditions, and this research aims to approach them with respect and acknowledgment of their origins. By doing so, this study contributes to a more inclusive conversation about mental health interventions that honor diverse healing traditions.

Incorporating energy work, mindfulness practices, and somatic embodiment techniques into mental health treatment offers a promising avenue for enhancing traditional therapy approaches. However, research on how these modalities function together remains limited. This study seeks to fill that gap by evaluating their combined impact on anxiety and depression symptoms while exploring participants' experiences and potential influencing factors. The findings will contribute to a broader understanding of integrative mental health care and may pave the way for more holistic, accessible, and culturally inclusive therapeutic models.

Review of Literature

Mindfulness Practices and Meditation

Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) have been widely studied for their effectiveness in reducing anxiety and depression. Cork, Elliott, & Trombley (2023) conducted an integrative literature review on mindfulness meditation, concluding that an eight-week practice significantly reduces anxiety symptoms. This supports the growing use of mindfulness in primary care and psychotherapy as a cost-effective, holistic intervention. Research also suggests that meditation can lead to physiological changes in brain activity. Kim & Choi (2023) examined brainwave synchronization in response to singing bowls and found that exposure to their resonance promotes alpha brainwave activity, which is associated with deep relaxation and

reduced stress. These findings suggest that incorporating sound healing into mindfulness practices may enhance emotional regulation.

Chanting has also been explored as a therapeutic tool for mental health. Mohanty, Satpathy, Chopra, & Mahato (2024) analyzed EEG signals before and after Mahā Mantra chanting, finding a significant increase in alpha rhythms, which indicate mental clarity and relaxation. Their results provide a physiological basis for integrating chanting into mental health interventions. Research on yoga and meditation interventions further supports these findings. Lemay, Hoolahan, & Buchanan (2019) implemented a six-week yoga and meditation program for college students and observed significant reductions in stress and anxiety, particularly among students in high-pressure academic environments. Collectively, these studies indicate that mindfulness, chanting, and sound healing can be valuable complementary techniques for emotional well-being.

Energy Work: Reiki and Pranic Healing

Energy healing modalities, such as Reiki and Pranic Healing, are increasingly recognized as complementary treatments for anxiety and depression. Guo, Long, Qin, & Fan (2024) conducted a meta-analysis of 13 studies on Reiki's effectiveness in reducing anxiety. Their findings indicate that Reiki significantly lowers anxiety across various populations, including surgical patients, individuals with chronic illnesses, and the general public. The study also noted that Reiki's benefits are most pronounced when practiced consistently over multiple sessions.

Pranic Healing has similarly been studied as a complementary therapy for depression. Rajagopal, Jois, Majgi, Kumar, & Shashidhar (2018) conducted a randomized controlled trial (RCT) comparing Pranic Healing combined with medication versus medication alone. Their results showed that participants receiving Pranic Healing experienced greater reductions in depressive symptoms, suggesting that energy healing can enhance traditional psychiatric

treatments. Further research on integrating energy work with psychotherapy has been conducted through Psychotherapeutic Reiki (PR). Webster, Holden, Ray, Price, & Hastings (2020) examined PR's effects on anxiety in a single-case experimental study, finding that three out of four participants reported anxiety reduction after 6-10 weeks of Reiki-infused counseling. These studies suggest that Reiki and Pranic Healing can support emotional regulation and relaxation when integrated into mental health interventions.

Somatic Embodiment Techniques

Somatic embodiment techniques engage the body to facilitate emotional regulation and release. One well-researched method is Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), also known as tapping. Boath, Good, Tsaroucha, Stewart, Pitch, & Boughey (2017) studied EFT's effects on anxiety and communication skills in social work students, finding significant decreases in anxiety and improvements in confidence. Their results suggest that EFT can be particularly beneficial in high-stress environments.

The integration of yoga into psychotherapy has also been explored. Caplan, Portillo, & Seely (2013) examined yoga-based practices, including breathwork, movement, and meditation, in clinical settings and found that yoga fosters self-awareness and relaxation, making it an effective adjunct therapy for anxiety, depression, and trauma-related disorders. Similarly, Lalande, Bambling, King, & Lowe (2011) reviewed research on breathwork as a treatment for anxiety and depression, concluding that conscious, rhythmic breathing promotes emotional stability by activating the parasympathetic nervous system.

Chanting and breathwork have also been studied in systematic reviews. Malviya, Meredith, Zupan, & Kerley (2022) analyzed 15 randomized controlled trials on breath-based practices and chanting for mental health, finding that these techniques aid in stress reduction,

emotional regulation, and nervous system balance. These findings reinforce the potential for integrating somatic practices with traditional therapy.

Integrative Approaches to Mental Health Treatment

Research suggests that combining mindfulness, energy work, and somatic embodiment techniques may create a synergistic effect, improving mental health outcomes. Seetharaman, Avhad, & Rane (2024) conducted a literature review on singing bowls and sound therapy, concluding that sound vibrations facilitate deep relaxation and emotional processing. Their research supports the therapeutic potential of sound-based interventions as a complement to traditional therapy.

Similar findings emerge in studies examining indigenous and shamanic healing traditions. Carriger & Suor (2022) explored Siberian Sakha shamanic practices, which involve drumming, chanting, and trance states to facilitate emotional healing. Their study highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity when incorporating ancestral healing traditions into modern therapeutic settings.

The integration of multiple holistic modalities in clinical environments has been further examined in studies on preoperative anxiety. Topdemir & Saritas (2021) studied the effects of Reiki on surgical patients and found that those who received Reiki the night before surgery maintained stable anxiety levels, while the control group experienced increased preoperative anxiety. This suggests that incorporating multiple holistic techniques into therapy may promote emotional resilience and relaxation.

Further research supports multimodal treatment approaches that combine breathwork, sound healing, and energy work with conventional mental health care. Saeed, Cunningham, & Bloch (2019) reviewed studies on yoga, meditation, and exercise as mental health interventions,

concluding that these practices are particularly effective for individuals with mild to moderate anxiety and depression. Their findings emphasize the potential benefits of integrating physical and mindfulness-based techniques into therapy.

Breathwork interventions align with these findings. Lalande et al. (2011) reviewed case studies and found that breathwork helps individuals regulate emotions by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which plays a crucial role in stress reduction. These studies support the idea that a combination of mindfulness, energy healing, and somatic practices can offer a more comprehensive approach to mental health treatment.

While research on holistic interventions shows promise, limitations exist in the current literature. Many studies have small sample sizes, rely on self-reported data, or lack long-term follow-up. Additionally, there is limited research on how these modalities work together rather than individually. Standardized protocols for integrating these techniques into clinical settings remain underdeveloped. Future studies should address these gaps by conducting larger trials, developing consistent treatment frameworks, and exploring the long-term effects of holistic practices.

The integration of Reiki, meditation, yoga, breathwork, EFT, sound healing, and chanting continues to be explored as a potential adjunct to traditional mental health care, offering individuals alternative pathways for emotional healing. Addressing these research gaps will help determine the most effective ways to incorporate holistic modalities into therapeutic practice.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest design to examine the impact of integrating energy work, mindfulness practices, and somatic embodiment techniques on anxiety and depression levels in adults. The intervention consisted of a single 90-minute session combining yoga, breathwork, chanting, Reiki, and a sound bath. Quantitative data were collected before the session and again 7–10 days later using the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) and Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) scales, both of which are validated tools for assessing symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Participants also provided qualitative feedback immediately following the session through an open-ended questionnaire to capture subjective reflections on the intervention. This mixed-methods approach allowed for both numerical and experiential insights.

Participants

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Eligible participants were adults between the ages of 18 and 65 who self-reported mild to moderate symptoms of anxiety or depression and were physically able to participate in yoga and energy healing modalities. Individuals with severe psychiatric conditions, active substance use, or a history of negative experiences with energy healing were excluded to ensure safety and consistency.

Recruitment and Sample

A total of 22 female participants were recruited for the study, all identifying as women, with only 17 Participants completing the post-test portion. The oldest participant was in her late 50s, and all participants met the inclusion criteria. Recruitment was conducted through studio

collaborations and social media outreach. The intervention was offered free of charge, and participants who completed the follow-up assessment were entered into a drawing for a \$50 gift card.

Procedure

All sessions were conducted at Female Fight Club NYC in the Bronx. The studio set up was designed to foster relaxation. The following structure was used for each session:

Pre-Session (30 Minutes)

- **Informed Consent:** Participants reviewed and signed a consent form outlining procedures and risks.
- **Baseline Measures:** Participants completed the GAD-7 and BDI to assess initial anxiety and depression symptoms.
- **Preparation:** Participants settled into the space and had time to ask questions.

Intervention Session (90 Minutes)

Yoga, Breathwork, and EFT Tapping (20 Minutes)

- Gentle, grounding yoga movements
- Breathwork (e.g., box breathing) to regulate the nervous system
- Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) tapping for emotional release

Chanting – Carnatic Singing (10 Minutes)

- Traditional South Indian vocal practice used to support nervous system regulation through vibration and resonance

Short Break (5–10 Minutes)

- Participants were encouraged to hydrate and transition to the next segment

Reiki and Sound Bath (60 Minutes)

- Reiki energy healing delivered with light or no touch
- Sound bath using gongs, singing bowls, Koshi Bells, and chimes.

Closing Chanting & Integration (5–10 Minutes)

- Three OM's and a moment for self-reflection to close the session

Post-Session (10–15 Minutes)

Participants completed an open-ended questionnaire reflecting on their experience.

Prompts included:

- “How would you describe your experience during the session?”
- “What aspects of the session, if any, did you find beneficial?”
- “Have you noticed any emotional, mental, or physical effects after the session?”

Follow-Up (7–10 Days Post-Session)

Participants were emailed the GAD-7 and BDI to complete a follow-up assessment of anxiety and depression levels. The email also included one open ended question.

Instruments

Quantitative Measures

- GAD-7 (Spitzer et al., 2006): A 7-item self-report measure of generalized anxiety symptoms
- BDI (Beck et al., 1996): A 21-item self-report measure of depression symptoms

Qualitative Measures

A brief, three-question open-ended form used to gather immediate reflections on the intervention experience. A one question open-ended form was used to gather post-intervention reflections.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel. A paired-sample t-test was conducted to evaluate pre- and post-session differences in GAD-7 and BDI scores. Statistical significance was used to determine whether the intervention had a measurable impact on anxiety and depression symptoms.

Qualitative Analysis

Participant responses were analyzed through thematic analysis with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process.

- Responses were reviewed line-by-line and coded inductively to identify recurring ideas and experiences.
- Themes were then categorized into larger patterns, such as emotional release, mental clarity, and physical relaxation.
- Coding was structured and reviewed to enhance reliability.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to APA (2020) ethical guidelines and was approved by the Institutional Review Board. Key safeguards included:

- Informed consent with the option to withdraw at any time;
- Anonymized data, stored securely;

- Emphasis on participant well-being during the session, with breaks and options to skip any exercise.

The facilitator is certified in multiple holistic modalities including Reiki and sound healing, though not in trauma-sensitive yoga. The yoga portion consisted of gentle poses accessible to most participants and was framed as optional.

Limitations

- Small sample size (17) reduces generalizability; future studies should recruit larger samples.
- Lack of a control group limits causal conclusions about intervention effectiveness.
- Self-report bias may influence outcome data due to participants' subjective perceptions or desire to please the facilitator.
- Single-session format limits understanding of long-term impact.

Future research should consider randomized controlled trials, longitudinal follow-ups, and more diverse participant samples to enhance validity and generalizability.

Results and Discussion

Overview of Findings

This study aimed to evaluate the short-term effects of a single holistic group session, integrating yoga, breath work, tapping (EFT), Carnatic chanting, Reiki, and sound healing, on symptoms of anxiety and depression among adult women. Out of 22 participants, 17 completed both pre- and post-session GAD-7 and Beck Depression Inventory scales, along with qualitative feedback immediately after the session and one week later. Quantitative analysis revealed statistically significant reductions in both anxiety and depression symptoms post-intervention. Thematic analysis of open-ended responses further supported the session's emotional and

physiological benefits, highlighting participants' feelings of relaxation, release, and increased clarity.

Quantitative Analysis: GAD-7 and Beck Depression Inventory

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate whether there were significant differences between pre- and post-session scores on the GAD-7 and Beck Depression Inventory.

GAD-7 Anxiety Scores

The mean GAD-7 score prior to the session was 10.75 ($SD \approx 5.50$), and the mean post-session score was 5.5, showing a mean reduction of 5.25 points. This difference was statistically significant, $t(15) = 3.82$, $p = .0017$, suggesting a notable decrease in self-reported anxiety levels following the session.

Beck Depression Inventory Scores

The mean Beck Depression Inventory score before the session was 14.13 ($SD \approx 7.30$), compared to 8.31 post-session. The difference of 5.81 points was also statistically significant, $t(15) = 3.19$, $p = .0061$, indicating a reduction in depressive symptoms post-intervention.

These results align with existing research demonstrating the efficacy of integrative mental health approaches. For example, Cork et al. (2023) found that mindfulness practices can reduce anxiety after eight weeks of use. This study shows that even a single session integrating multiple techniques can offer meaningful short-term benefits.

Thematic Analysis of Immediate Post-Session Responses

Thematic analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process. Codes were first generated from repeated patterns across responses. These codes were grouped into themes and reviewed to ensure internal coherence. The following themes emerged:

Theme 1: Deep Relaxation and Emotional Safety

Most participants described the session as “relaxing,” “calming,” or “peaceful,” with several noting that it felt different from previous yoga or meditation experiences. Words such as “safe,” “emotional,” “grateful,” and “grounded” appeared frequently, suggesting that the multi-modality approach created a safe and soothing environment for emotional exploration.

“I felt very safe and at peace with myself.”

“The session was extremely explicit and easy to follow... I felt peaceful and in tune with my own self.”

This theme is consistent with findings from Lemay et al. (2019), who reported reduced anxiety and increased mindfulness following integrated yoga and meditation interventions.

Theme 2: Physical and Emotional Release

Participants noted significant somatic responses, such as crying, sighing, or experiencing physical shifts. Several mentioned emotional release during tapping or sound healing.

“I cried for a few and my chest heaviness that I had this morning left once Laura touched me during Reiki.”

“The energetic tapping! Whoa, I didn't know I would cry. It was a great release.”

This echoes Boath et al.'s (2017) findings that Emotional Freedom Techniques can be effective for emotional regulation. The physical dimension of energy work like Reiki has also been shown to promote somatic release (Guo et al., 2024).

Theme 3: Multi-Modality Resonance

Many participants highlighted specific techniques they found especially helpful, including tapping, chanting, and sound healing. Importantly, many noted that the integration of multiple techniques amplified the session's effect.

“All of it—from tapping to music—all of it.”

“The chanting was new for me and I enjoyed it.”

“The breath work and sound bath felt very relaxing.”

Participants appreciated the exposure to new modalities such as Carnatic chanting. These findings support Malviya et al. (2022), who emphasized the power of breathwork and chanting in balancing the nervous system and promoting emotional clarity.

Theme 4: Immediate Benefits

Participants commonly reported a state of emotional calm and mental clarity immediately after the session. A few also described physical sensations such as lightness in the head, muscle relaxation, or fatigue.

“I feel like my head weighs nothing! During the sound baths, I felt an energy pull from the top of my head.”

“I felt tired and some physical pain because it was a long time to lie down on the floor.”

This aligns with studies by Seetharaman et al. (2024), showing that sound healing can facilitate both deep rest and emotional processing.

Thematic Analysis of One-Week Follow-Up Responses

One week after the session, participants responded to the question: “Since the session, have you noticed any changes in your emotional, mental, or physical well-being?”

Four main themes were identified:

Theme 1: Increased Presence and Emotional Regulation

Several participants reported feeling calmer and more intentional in their daily activities. They described being more able to slow down, reflect, and manage emotional responses.

“I am noticing that I am taking my time with things. I don’t feel that I am pushing against a clock.”

“I’ve been feeling more calm and able to navigate my emotions.”

These findings are consistent with the effects of mindfulness and somatic embodiment techniques (Lalande et al., 2011; Caplan et al., 2013).

Theme 2: Improved Sleep and Mood

Some participants noted better sleep and reduced anxiety during the week following the session.

“I slept way better, less anxious, my mind was more clear to make decisions.”

“I felt relaxed and slept better than usual.”

This reinforces the work of Saeed et al. (2019), who found that yoga and meditation can improve sleep and reduce fatigue among those with anxiety or depression.

Theme 3: Emotional Resilience and Self-Reflection

Participants described moments of emotional clarity, acceptance, or courage to face difficult situations. Some acknowledged internal shifts in their ability to cope or make mindful choices.

“I had to close a door that was no longer serving me... I noticed that my reaction towards it has been more towards acceptance and surrender.”

“I want to continue fostering the peace and calm I felt during last Sunday’s session into the harder times I endure.”

These narratives align with research by Webster et al. (2020), which found that Reiki and other energy therapies can promote personal empowerment and emotional healing.

Theme 4: Mixed and Diminishing Effects

A few participants reported no noticeable changes, or a return to baseline levels of anxiety and stress after several days.

“I have not noticed a difference in my emotional, mental or physical well-being.”

“I feel back to my anxious/depressed state now that it has been over a week since the reiki and healing event.”

This may suggest that sustained engagement with these modalities is needed for long-term benefits, echoing findings from Guo et al. (2024), which emphasized the importance of multiple Reiki sessions for sustained results.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study provide evidence that integrating somatic, mindfulness, and energy healing practices in a single session may offer immediate and short-term relief from anxiety and depressive symptoms. For mental health professionals, these results point toward

the value of incorporating holistic practices like breathwork, sound healing, and energy work as complementary tools.

Given the reported physical, emotional, and spiritual benefits, these interventions could be especially useful in group or community settings where individuals may be seeking less clinical but still effective mental wellness experiences.

Limitations

As previously mentioned, this study has several limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small ($n=17$), and all participants identified as women, which limits generalizability. Additionally, participants self-selected into the study and may have had positive expectations about the session's impact. The intervention was also conducted only once, and data were collected within a short follow-up window of 7-8 days. Longer-term effects remain unknown.

The results of this study support the hypothesis that a single holistic session can significantly reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression while promoting emotional release and personal reflection. Through a combination of yoga, breathwork, tapping, chanting, sound healing, and Reiki, participants reported both quantitative and qualitative improvements in their well-being.

These findings align with previous research on the individual components of the intervention and offer compelling evidence for the value of integrative mental health care. Continued research with larger, more diverse samples and longitudinal follow-up is recommended to further explore these promising outcomes.

Conclusion

This mixed-methods study explored the impact of a single-session integrative healing experience on adult participants' anxiety and depression symptoms. The intervention, conducted at a studio in Riverdale, The Bronx, combined breathwork, gentle yoga, Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), Carnatic chanting, Reiki, and sound healing to offer a culturally inclusive and body-centered alternative to traditional therapy. The goal was to examine whether combining these holistic modalities could produce measurable improvements in participants' mental health, while also capturing their immediate and short-term reflections on the experience.

Seventeen participants completed both the pre- and post-session assessments (GAD-7 and Beck Depression Inventory), enabling a statistical analysis of symptom changes. Results revealed statistically significant reductions in both anxiety and depression levels one week after the session. For anxiety, the mean pre-session GAD-7 score was 10.75, which decreased to 5.5 post-session ($t(16) = 3.82, p = 0.0017$). For depression, the mean Beck score decreased from 14.13 to 8.31 ($t(16) = 3.19, p = 0.0061$). These results suggest that even a single session of integrative practices may offer short-term benefits in reducing psychological distress, particularly for adults experiencing mild to moderate symptoms.

Thematic analysis of open-ended responses collected immediately after the session and one week later supported the quantitative findings. Participants described the session as calming, emotionally releasing, and grounding. Many expressed a sense of emotional clarity and gratitude, with some reporting tears, energetic shifts, or a reduction in physical tension. A week later, several individuals noted sustained feelings of calmness, better sleep, improved emotional processing, and increased presence in their daily lives. Others acknowledged a return to baseline symptoms, highlighting the temporary nature of relief in some cases and supporting the need for ongoing or repeated practice.

These findings align with existing literature supporting the use of integrative techniques in mental health care. For example, Cork et al. (2023) emphasized the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation in reducing anxiety when practiced over several weeks. Kim and Choi (2023) demonstrated that sound healing can promote alpha brainwave activity, which contributes to relaxation and mental clarity. Similarly, Guo et al. (2024) found that Reiki significantly reduced anxiety across multiple populations. This study contributes to that body of knowledge by demonstrating that combining these modalities can create a cumulative or synergistic effect.

Participants also expressed appreciation for the diversity of practices included. This supports the integrative framework suggested by Malviya et al. (2022), who found that chanting, breathwork, and sound-based therapies are more effective when practiced together. The emotional impact of EFT, described as “releasing” or “unexpected,” reinforces prior findings by Boath et al. (2017) on EFT’s role in emotional regulation. The inclusion of Carnatic chanting, a practice unfamiliar to most participants, was met with openness and curiosity, which suggests that culturally specific healing traditions can be respectfully and effectively introduced in therapeutic spaces, provided that proper context and care are given.

Clinical and Educational Relevance

From a clinical perspective, this study highlights the potential of integrative modalities to complement traditional counseling. These practices can serve as accessible, non-pharmacological tools to help clients regulate emotions, process difficult experiences, and reconnect with their bodies. Practitioners working with clients who are trauma survivors, neurodivergent, or from various cultural backgrounds may find that these embodied and ritual-based approaches enhance engagement, particularly when clients are hesitant to begin talk therapy.

Furthermore, offering sessions like the one in this study can promote community healing and reduce stigma around mental health. Because the event was framed as a wellness session rather than clinical therapy, it may have felt more approachable for those new to self-care or uncertain about mental health services. Mental health professionals can incorporate elements of this structure into group sessions or referrals to wellness programs, especially for clients who may benefit from somatic or nonverbal modalities.

Limitations

Despite its promising results, this study had several limitations. First, the sample size was small ($n = 17$) and may not be representative of broader populations. Second, the session was offered only once, and while some effects lasted beyond the initial experience, others faded by the one-week mark. Longitudinal studies are needed to assess whether continued participation in these modalities produces sustained benefits.

Third, while demographic data was informally collected during the session (the majority of participants were women aged 25–46, with one in her late 50s), no formal demographic breakdown or control variables were used. This limits the ability to generalize findings across age, gender, or cultural backgrounds. Finally, although the facilitator is certified in several holistic practices, they are not certified in trauma-sensitive yoga, which is relevant when considering accessibility and safety for trauma survivors.

The qualitative analysis also carries the inherent limitation of subjectivity in coding and interpretation, though efforts were made to identify recurring themes and maintain fidelity to participants' language.

Future Directions

Future research should explore the long-term effectiveness of integrative sessions offered at regular intervals. Comparing different combinations of modalities may also help isolate which practices are most impactful when combined. Incorporating demographic data and exploring how participants' cultural or spiritual identities influence their receptivity to holistic practices would add valuable nuance. Additionally, examining these practices within clinical settings, alongside traditional therapy, could support more systemic integration of holistic care in mental health treatment plans.

Researchers may also consider developing a standardized protocol that integrates the breathwork, chanting, energy work, and sound healing used in this study. This would allow for replication, improved training for practitioners, and greater credibility among clinicians unfamiliar with these methods.

In conclusion, this study provides preliminary evidence that a single session combining mindfulness, energy healing, and somatic embodiment techniques can significantly reduce anxiety and depression symptoms in adults. While the intervention is not meant to replace therapy, it shows strong potential as a complementary tool in a counselor's toolkit. By honoring the cultural origins of these practices and respecting their spiritual roots, practitioners can create inclusive healing spaces that address mind, body, and spirit.

The findings emphasize the value of integrative care in mental health treatment and invite further exploration into how traditional therapeutic models can be expanded to support diverse healing needs. In a time when stress and disconnection are widespread, returning to practices that ground, soothe, and connect us may be more essential than ever.

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Note: ChatGPT was used to support grammar review and organization during the writing process.

Appendix A

Description and Cultural Roots of Healing Modalities

This study integrated six complementary healing techniques, but referenced 7. Below is a description of each modality, including its origin and primary therapeutic purpose.

1. Reiki

Reiki is a Japanese form of energy healing developed by Mikao Usui in the early 20th century. It involves the laying on of hands or near-body touch to balance the body's energy and promote physical, emotional, and spiritual healing. Reiki is rooted in Buddhist traditions and emphasizes universal life force energy (ki).

2. Pranic Healing

Pranic Healing, developed by Master Choa Kok Sui, is a no-touch energy healing system originating from the Philippines. Drawing on ancient Indian and Chinese energy practices, it uses prana (life energy) to cleanse and energize the body's chakras and energy field to accelerate healing.

3. Sound Healing

Sound healing uses therapeutic sounds, such as crystal bowls, tuning forks, gongs, and drums, to regulate the nervous system and induce deep relaxation. This practice can be traced back to ancient Egypt, Greece, and Indigenous cultures worldwide, where sound was used in ritual and ceremony for healing and spiritual alignment.

4. Carnatic Chanting

Carnatic chanting stems from South Indian classical music traditions, particularly rooted in devotional Hindu practices. The repetition of specific scales and syllables is believed to stimulate the vagus nerve, calm the mind, and deepen meditative states.

5. Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT / Tapping)

EFT is a form of psychological acupressure developed by Gary Craig in the 1990s. Drawing on ancient Chinese meridian theory, it involves tapping on specific points of the body while vocalizing affirmations to reduce emotional distress and regulate the nervous system.

6. Breathwork

Breathwork encompasses various controlled breathing techniques rooted in yogic (pranayama), Taoist, and Indigenous practices. These techniques are used to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, reduce anxiety, and promote emotional release.

7. Yoga (Restorative & Gentle Flow)

Yoga originated in ancient India and combines physical postures (asanas), breathing (pranayama), and meditation to promote holistic well-being. In this session, participants engaged in gentle, restorative sequences aimed at calming the body and improving mind-body awareness.

Appendix B

Post-Test Open-Ended Question

Seven to eight days following the session, participants were asked the following:

“Since the session, have you noticed any changes in your emotional, mental, or physical well-being? Please describe any shifts you’ve observed over the past week.”

This question was designed to evaluate any lingering or cumulative effects of the intervention.

Appendix C

Observations of Emotional Release

The facilitator observed several instances of emotional release during the session, most notably during the EFT tapping segment. Participants exhibited signs such as:

- Crying or tearing up
- Audible sighs or vocal release
- Facial expressions of emotional softening
- Deep exhalations and physical trembling

These reactions were most concentrated during the tapping portion, particularly while participants repeated self-affirming phrases or touched acupressure points associated with emotional regulation. Similar, though less frequent, responses were noted during Reiki and sound bath components, suggesting a progressive softening of emotional tension over the course of the session.

Appendix D

Thematic Analysis Process

Thematic analysis in this study followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework. These steps were used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the open-ended responses collected immediately after the intervention and one week later.

1. Familiarization with the Data

The researcher read and re-read all participant responses to gain an in-depth understanding of the data. Initial thoughts and emotional tones were noted to begin identifying potential patterns.

2. Generating Initial Codes

Descriptive codes were assigned to words, phrases, or sentences that captured meaningful content. Examples included "relaxation," "emotional release," "sleep improvement," and "return to baseline."

3. Searching for Themes

Codes were grouped into broader categories that shared common ideas or emotional undertones. For example, "relaxation," "grounding," and "peaceful" were grouped under the theme "Deep Relaxation and Emotional Safety."

4. Reviewing Themes

Themes were refined by checking them against the full dataset. This step ensured that each theme accurately captured patterns within the responses and did not overlap excessively with others.

5. Defining and Naming Themes

Each theme was clearly defined and named based on its central organizing concept. The thematic structure was reviewed to ensure clarity, coherence, and distinctiveness among themes.

6. Writing the Report

Illustrative quotes from participants were selected for each theme to give voice to their experiences. These were integrated into the discussion to contextualize quantitative findings and enhance understanding of the intervention's emotional and psychological impact.