

Impact of Modernization and Stress management

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Abstract

The impact of modernization can be observed by the erratic changes in the environment, worldwide. The term which is conventionally used to describe these changes is 'Global Warming'. Infact this issue has become a very debatable issue in every country. Governments worldwide have acknowledged the need to take corrective measures as the effects of Global Warming can be observed in not only the erratic weather conditions and natural calamities occurring all around us but also the increasing level of stress related diseases on every individual.

This study focuses on stress related diseases the remedies that we as concerned individuals need to observe and follow. The paper highlights possible solutions that can be adopted by every person to ensure less influence of global warming on each one of us.

Key words : Global warming, Environment, Stress, Stress related diseases.

Introduction

Several studies have established the fact that a wide range of issues relating to health and livelihood are caused by the effect of Climate Change. Infact, changes to the environment and health of every living being is associated to Climate Change (Mc. Michael et.al. 2008). The focus world-wide, is on the increasing severity of stress related diseases, which is also becoming a burning issue, due to Global Warming . The term Global Warming has been described as the increase of Earth's average surface temperature due to the effect of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels or from deforestation, which trap heat that would otherwise escape from Earth. The negative effects include heat stress, mental health issues, air pollution, and extreme weather events. Climate related vulnerability at the workplace leads to stressful work conditions leading to a decline in employee productivity, loss of man-hours, lethargy and stress related ailments like high / low blood pressure etc.

According to the 4th Assessment Report (AR4 2007), report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Changes (IPCC), "warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures; widespread melting of snow and ice and rising global average sea level". The AR4 further specifies that hot days, hot nights and heat waves have become and will become more frequent over most land areas. Human beings are exposed to climate change directly through changing weather patterns (e.g. heat waves and extreme events such as floods) and indirectly through changes in water, air, food quality and quantity, ecosystem, agriculture, livelihood and infrastructure.

Based on the various literature and studies involving the effect of Global Warming and Climate Change on the Environment as a whole and increase in stress related diseases among individuals in particular, this study tries to understand and substantiate the effect of the ecological imbalance affecting the health of individuals and their behavior, leading to stress and stress related disease.

Significance of the study

Individuals are observant of the sudden climatic changes affecting our health. A city like Mysuru, which was considered to be a 'Pensioners Paradise', a city of palaces and greenery with naturally cool and pleasant climate, seems to have lost its sheen. The gadget called 'Air Conditioner' was very alien to the city; however of late every office finds it mandatory to install an Air Conditioner as it has become a necessity. Secondly, we also are observant of the early advent of summer, winter and the extremities of the climatic conditions. Similarly the cases of stress related illness like cardio-vascular diseases, early ageing, and in turn increase in the number of hospitals justifies the effects of global warming on all of us. This study tries to highlight the cause for these illnesses which are all stress related and suggest means and remedies to handle and decrease such effects.

Objectives of the study

Various studies on the subject suggest that individual factors such as physical fitness and health play a fundamental role in heat tolerance. With majority of the people preferring modern gadgets to do their daily chores and the magnitude of physical activity at offices, shows the tendency for individuals to get afflicted with medical conditions like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, skin disorders, liver disorder, kidney failure, pregnancy related issues and lung problems. Additional factors affecting heat tolerance include substance abuse like intake of alcohol, caffeine and nicotine.

Keeping in view the effects of stress on our daily activities, the objective of this study is to find out the causes of stress and suggest ways of coping with stress induced by climatic changes and also suggesting methods of addressing the important concern of stress in individuals.

Literature Review

This study follows the secondary research methodology to identify and assess the effect of stress on individuals due to climate changes. This can be justified by the following literature, related to the study being put forth and arriving at a conclusion.

The psychological wellbeing of an individual can greatly be affected due to Climate change and can influence his/her work productivity as well. The degree of affect on all living beings could be related to the kind of weather and climatic changes in the environment. This includes different levels of stress, mental disorders through depression, insomnia, irritability, substance abuse. Janet K Swim et.al, (2011), in their study on human behavioral contribution to climate change, state that individuals are facing rapid changes in the global climate and these changes are attributable to human behavior, further Dietz, Thomas & Rosa (1994) states that the current level of human consumptions, in combination with growing population are having a significant negative impact on the natural environment and are contributing to climate change. Similarly a research article titled 'Effects of heat stress on working populations when facing climate change', authored by Lundgren Kalev Kuklane et.al (2013), reviews various related articles on effects of heat stress on working individuals and the main factors found to exacerbate heat stress in the current and future workplace are the urban 'heat island effect', physical work, individual differences and the developing country context where technological fixes are often not applicable. The study further states that increasing temperature reduces work productivity.

A research article titled 'An overview of Climate change', by Jill Tatarski (1996) highlights the effect of climate change on human community, the article states that an increase in global temperature cause many disruptions in human life around the world, further global warming have caused the rise in global temperature, the risk of huge natural disasters the spread of diseases, and the death of about 150000 people annually according to the WHO. A study on 'Human Health Perspective on Climate Change (2010)', states that human health is being affected globally and all sector of society. The study states that environmental consequences of climate change that have been observed and anticipated, such as sea-level rise, changes in precipitation resulting in flooding and drought, heat waves, storms and degraded air quality will affect human health both directly and indirectly.

Suggestions

Stress is undoubtedly the most dangerous of all diseases and a silent killer. An individual never knows when he gets affected by stress. It is only when an individual get affected by stress related diseases that he/she realizes the implications of the matter. Though we are all aware that global warming is one of the main reasons for the advent of new killer diseases, it is not possible to change the effects of global warming instantaneously. However, we can try to bring down its negative effects through small actions and through changing our behavior, in relation to our day to day activities and measures for decreasing global warming. The study proposes the following activities that could help us overcome stress and prevent further damage to our health:

1. Trees and plants are our best friends and inseparable. They give us the most valuable Oxygen for us to breathe and live. Therefore, we should ensure that our home and office should be surrounded with flora and fauna. To make our surrounding look beautiful, flower and decorative pots and greenery can be arranged. The presence of plants and flowers creates tranquility and a pleasant work environment.
2. The Indian system of reducing stress and enhancing our metabolism is the famous YOGA. Simple Yogic exercises need to be included in our daily routine not only at the workplace but also for those at home. Infact it

- can be made a compulsory routine which would give the individual a break from the normal work hours.
3. A relaxed walk in a park or even on the terrace of one's home could be an effective remedy for reducing stress.
 4. Good ventilation, lighting and also pleasant colour of the wall paint also plays a major role in reducing stress.
 5. Taking a break from the routine and going out with family and friends on picnic, including sports or pursuing a hobby are all stress busters.
 6. The HR managers of companies should ensure that the breaks in between work schedules should include activities that break the work monotony.
 7. Soft music (where possible to implement) can be played as a background score to induce a better work atmosphere.
 8. Social activities like visiting an old age home or spending time with orphans can help in breaking our usual focus on monotonous daily chores. It can also assist in making us more humane and improve our overall well being.
 9. Adopting a pet can also positively affect our lives. They help in distressing our lives to a great extent.
 10. Music is undeniably one of the best stress busters. In fact there are several studies which has proven that stress related diseases can be cured through music. Indian classical music has done wonders in this endeavor. Similarly, surrounding ourselves with friends who are positive thinkers, watching programmes which would tickle our funny bone should also be included in the list.

The British had always referred to India as a land of mystery and miracles. The ancient system of Yoga and meditation are simple, tranquil and composed method of ensuring a healthy mind and body. Yoga is now recognized the world over and we also celebrate the World Yoga Day.

Yogic exercises have proved that stress and stress related diseases can be easily cured. Practice of Yoga is the best method for relieving stress and avoiding stress related diseases. Some yogic exercises and mudras could be practiced anywhere and at a time convenient to us. By practicing some easy mudras, which we could adopt in our daily routine, at our place of work, could help us handle stress and stress related diseases. The following three Mudras and the acupressure technique can help reduce stress.

Exhibit 1 shows the Dhyana Mudra, bring the tip of the thumb and the index finger in contact with each other. Focus on your breathing pattern. This Mudra is also used during meditation by resting the arm on the knee. The Dhyana Mudra can be practiced at any time and at one's convenience. This mudra helps to increase concentration in the individual. Practicing this mudra can help the individual stay free from depression and is helpful for all mind related problems.

Exhibit 2, demonstrates the Prithvi Mudra. Bring the tip of the thumb in contact with the tip of the ring finger. Focus on your breathing pattern. This Mudra helps the individual relieve stress and attain peace of mind. This Mudra helps to keep the body active.

The Hridaya Mudra, as seen in Exhibit 3, helps to regulate breathing and is good for those with respiration related problems like asthma. For this mudra, bring the tip of the thumb, the tip of the index finger and the tip of the ring finger together. Focus on the breathing pattern.

Environment pollution leads to global warming and that effects the health of every living creature. When we are affected with stress, it also manifests in our breathing pattern.

Exhibit 4 demonstrate an acupressure technique for relieving Headache, which is a symptom of stress. If the cause of the headache is due to stress, this action will help in reducing the headache.

Gently but firmly, press the area of the hand between the thumb and the index finger, as seen in Exhibit 4 in rhythmic pressure.

Conclusion

As enlightened individuals, we need to be cautious about our well-being. One major step in this direction is to ensure that we surround ourselves with nature. We need to grow more plants and trees, use water economically and judiciously, save on electricity and other natural resources. Through this study, we can identify the effects of ecological imbalance on all living creatures. The effect of global warming on individuals can be observed by the increasing number of stress related diseases, increase in crime rate and related issues. Following simple steps could take us in the right direction and help us

prevent ourselves from these diseases, which, when ignored in its initial stages can impair our lives forever. Though modernization has brought with it several positive changes, however, just as in the two sides of a coin, it have also brought several negative aspects. We as enlightened individuals, need to take care of ourselves, our family members and our environment, thus ensuring that we minimize our expenses on huge and increasing medical bills and also well-being. We need to make up our minds to ensure a safer and better planet earth in the years to come.

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Exhibit 1. Dhyan Mudra

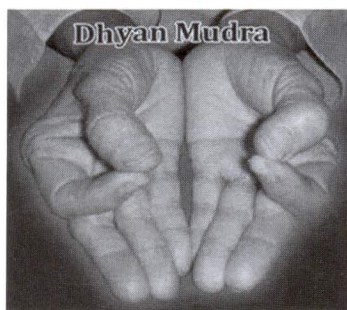


Exhibit 2. Prithvi Mudra



Exhibit 3. Hridayi Mudra

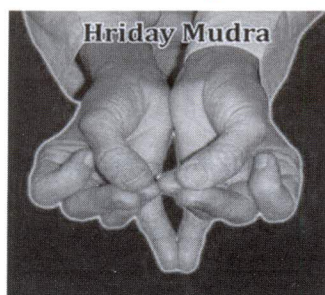


Exhibit 4. Acupressure for relieving stress

