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# CHONAPRAY: A HOLISTIC PATHWAY TO RELAXATION, HEALING AND INNER RENEWAL

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## Abstract

*Chonapray is a newly created holistic therapeutic framework that incorporates three evidence-supported components chocolate (CHO), napping (NAP), and prayer (PRAY) – to facilitate the overall aspects of mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. Each element contributes individually to the promotion of both reduced stress and cognitive-emotional restoration: dark chocolate contains both flavonoids and phenylethylamine to help with mood and cognition, brain functioning; napping is beneficial for consolidation of memory, recovery of energy, and restoration of the brain; and prayer or mindful spirituality stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system to facilitate emotional homeostasis, inner tranquility, and resilience in coping with stress and anxiety. The current study assessed the conceptual underpinning of Chonapray through a literature review and a cross-sectional survey with 82 participants based in Pakistan, most of whom were students aged 15-25 years, a vulnerable group with significant academic and social stressors. The survey results indicated that 63.4 % of participants endorsed the use of prayer or spirituality as their primary means of managing their stress, while 30.5 % chose rest. Moreover, 44.2% and 42.9% stated they eat milk and dark chocolate, respectively, as comfort foods for emotional regulation. Stressors that were often identified included academic performance, financial difficulties, relationship conflicts, and past traumatic events. More evidence in the literature supports that dark chocolate improves cognitive performance and memory; napping reduces fatigue and improves alertness; and prayer reduces cortisol and improves emotional regulation. Combining this literature enhances the Chonapray model as a simple yet holistic self-care model that can address contemporary psychological and emotional challenges, especially among youth and disproportionately emotionally vulnerable populations.*

**Keywords:** Chocolate, Chonapray, Emotional wellness, Mental health, Napping, Stress management

## INTRODUCTION

The acute response to stress is embodied in the ‘fight or flight reaction’, inducing a state of anxiety. When stress is long-continued, depression may develop insidiously under the cloak of continuing anxiety symptoms (1). Depression is a major human blight. Globally, it is responsible for more ‘years lost’ to disability than any other condition. This is largely because so many people suffer from it, some 350 million, according to the World Health Organization and the fact that it lasts for many years. (When ranked by disability and death combined, depression comes ninth behind prolific killers such as heart disease, stroke and HIV.) Yet depression is widely undiagnosed and untreated because of stigma, lack of effective therapies and inadequate mental health resources. Almost half of the world’s population lives in a country with only two psychiatrists per 100,000 people (2). Stress is inevitable. To be entirely without stress is to be dead! However, not all stress is unpleasant. When we discuss stress today, we are usually referring to distress, but we can all relate to pleasant situations or occurrences that have caused us stress: weddings, births, promotions, receiving awards, reuniting with old friends, and countless others. Any change, positive or negative, requires a response from our bodies to adapt and bring us back to our relatively peaceful state (3, 4). Stress impairs decision-making and increases midwifery errors, resulting in increased mortality and morbidity in pregnant women and infants (5). Also, stress reduces the quality of patient care (6) and the ability of employees to be skilled and committed (7). Occupational stress is a common, serious and costly health problem in the work environment (8). Young people face a variety of daily challenges, including physical, cognitive, psychological, and social (9).



“Chonapray”, a word that sparks curiosity and raises countless questions, is rooted in three essential elements “CHO” represents Chocolate, known for its soothing effect on the mind and body. “NAP” signifies rest, which rejuvenates and restores energy. Finally, the most significant part “, PRAY”, embodies spiritual peace, bringing calmness both internally and externally. Together, these elements create a holistic approach to relax the mind, body and soul.

The foundation of this approach is supported by historical references and previously published studies that emphasize the profound impact of chocolate consumption, adequate rest and spiritual practices on mental and physical health. A study was performed in which researchers conducted a four-week study to examine the effects of dark chocolate on fatigue, cognitive function and brain activity in middle-aged adults. Participants were divided into an experimental group which consumed five pieces of dark chocolate daily, and a control group that maintained their regular diet. Before and after the study, all participants underwent MRI scans and completed health questionnaires. Findings revealed that individuals who ingested dark chocolate had lower mental fatigue, enhanced memory, higher executive function and increased grey matter volume (10). These findings indicate that dark chocolate may be a natural and enjoyable way to support mental and physical health. Similarly, resting or napping is also important for relaxation. As stated by "Napping can restore your thinking skills and make you just as clear-headed and alert as you were first thing in the morning (11) Hunstein also stated, "In the mind of the person engaging in the prayer or spiritual practice, anxiety, anger, hostility, and depression have decreased," and thus allows them to have a more profound state of relaxation and emotional stability (12). So, to investigate if this pathway was effective, a survey-based study was completed with success.

Today, holistic and complementary methods are increasingly gaining a foothold in almost every area of health science. They can address the mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of health. Mindfulness, breathwork, energy healing, and spiritual prayer have all been shown to be effective options for stress-related concerns, mood disorders, and spiritual health (13). Chonapray is an integrative healing process of conscious prayer-"pray" + awareness-from soul-"chona". Chonapray provides a practice of purposeful relaxation and energetic realignment, although the term itself is new, and a significant amount of meaning and context is established within the practice itself. The principles would not be new to those who respect meditative prayer, energy medicine, and contemplative spirituality (14).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study utilized a mixed, survey-based research design to examine psychological and behavioral responses to stress, anxiety, and depression, and coping strategies associated with the Chonapray model (chocolate (CHO), napping (NAP) and prayer (PRAY)) for possible beneficial effect on mental and emotional health. It investigated if the Chonapray component used separately or together would impact mental health and emotional well-being. Similarly to a quantitative study, the mixed-method approach included both quantitative examination of survey-based data, while considering qualitative data suggested in open-ended survey responses to determine a more comprehensive picture regarding coping behaviors.

### PARTICIPANTS

A brief sample of 82 participants from Pakistan were included in the study. Most were in the age range of 15 - 25 years (87.8%), a demographic at high risk of experiencing academic and emotional distress. Of participants, 62.2% were female and 37.8% were male. In terms of occupations, the response set included students (87.8%), employed person (7.3%), self-employed (2%), stay-at-home (1%), and unemployed (1%). Participation was voluntary and anonymous no personally identifiable information (PII) was requested from participants, and all provided verbal informed consent.

### INSTRUMENT

Data were gathered via a structured online survey developed using Google Forms. The online survey had four main sections:



1. Demographic Information (age, gender, occupation).
2. Perception and Frequency of Emotional Distress (e.g. stress, anxiety and depression levels).
3. Sources of Stress (academic stress, finances, relationships, past trauma).
4. Coping Mechanisms (use of chocolate, napping, prayer, or other strategies such as emotional support and self-care).

A five-point Likert scale was used to assess participants' levels of agreement with statements about stress management, emotional wellness, and effectiveness of the Chonapray components (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree, to 5 = Strongly Agree). In addition, there were open-ended questions that encouraged participants to describe their own experience of stress and coping, which types of chocolate they consumed (milk/dark), and any reflections on the emotional or spiritual context of prayer and rest. This resulted in more thorough qualitative data, complementing the quantitative findings.

## PROCEDURE

The survey link was shared digitally via social media platforms and messaging services (i.e., WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook) to facilitate easy access and to reach a diverse population from a geographical distribution perspective. The survey was open for a period of two weeks to allow participants plenty of time to complete it.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participation in the investigation was entirely voluntary; all participants offered either verbal or written informed consent. Also, because of this and to protect the confidentiality of participants, no identifiable data were collected. All responses were kept securely and used only for academic purposes, in accordance with the ethical protocols governing research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to evaluate the potential ramifications of applying Chonapray, a survey of a sample of 82 respondents was conducted in Pakistan. The majorities of respondents identified as students and were aged from 15 to 25 years old. Out of the total respondents, 62.2% were female and 37.8% were male. The primary survey question aimed to explore how people manage their emotional distress for example depression, anxiety, or stress. Based on their responses, 37.8% of respondents rated depression as a normal feeling, while 23.2% rated depression as a feeling that needs medical or professional help (only if the depression was severe) and 19.5% thought it could simply be coped with using lifestyle changes and coping mechanisms. The survey also revealed that 31.7% of respondents felt they had very occasionally had experiences of depression or anxiety, 22% sometimes, 20.7% rarely, 18.3% frequently, and 7.3% stated they always felt depression or anxiety.

The survey also addressed common sources of emotional distress. Academic pressure was reported as the leading factor, with 31.7% of participants selecting this option. The next most significant causes included traumatic experience (24.4%), family and relationship issues (13.4%), financial issues (8.5%), and workplace issues (7.3%). In addition to identifying sources of emotional distress, participants also were asked about ways to cope with this distress. The most common coping behavior, for 63.4% of participants, was a spiritual/prayer practice to manage their stress and anxiety. Common responses that followed included talking to friends or family (36.6% of the sample), resting or sleeping (30.5%), and more uncommon responses included physical activity or exercise (13.4%), eating comfort food or chocolate (9.8%), listening to music or watching shows (20.7%), practicing meditation (7.3%), and reading or engaging in self-care (3.7%).

As a key component of Chonapray, we must also address the emotional connection with chocolate. While 44.2% of respondents said that milk chocolate helped reduce stress and depression, 42.9% preferred dark chocolate. When asked what other support may help them relieve stress, 40.2% had more time that could be dedicated to self-care. Other types of support included emotional support from friends and family members (24.4%). Others mentioned striving for a better work-life balance, and (9.8%) of respondents recognized the importance of professional help.



In summary, the results of the survey indicate that emotional regulation for this population relies predominantly on religious practice, rest, and support from others. The considerable use of chocolate as a comfort tool also contributes to its proposed role in the Chonapray model. The importance of chocolate suggests that Chonapray is a reasonable fit with the natural inclinations and coping mechanisms of humans, especially young people, and reflects a culturally appropriate and accessible mechanism for overarching stress regulation.

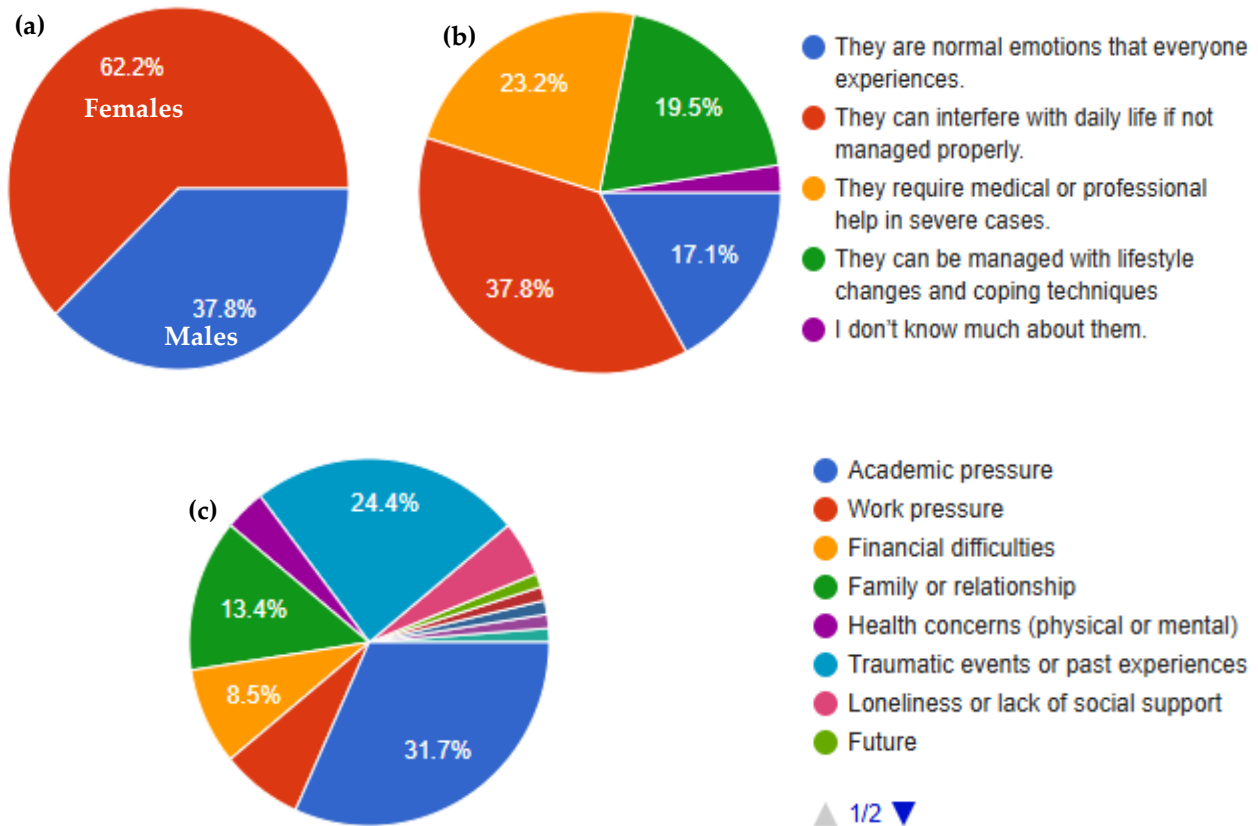


Fig. 1. Gender distribution; b. What are stress, anxiety and depression; c. Reasons of stress anxiety and depression

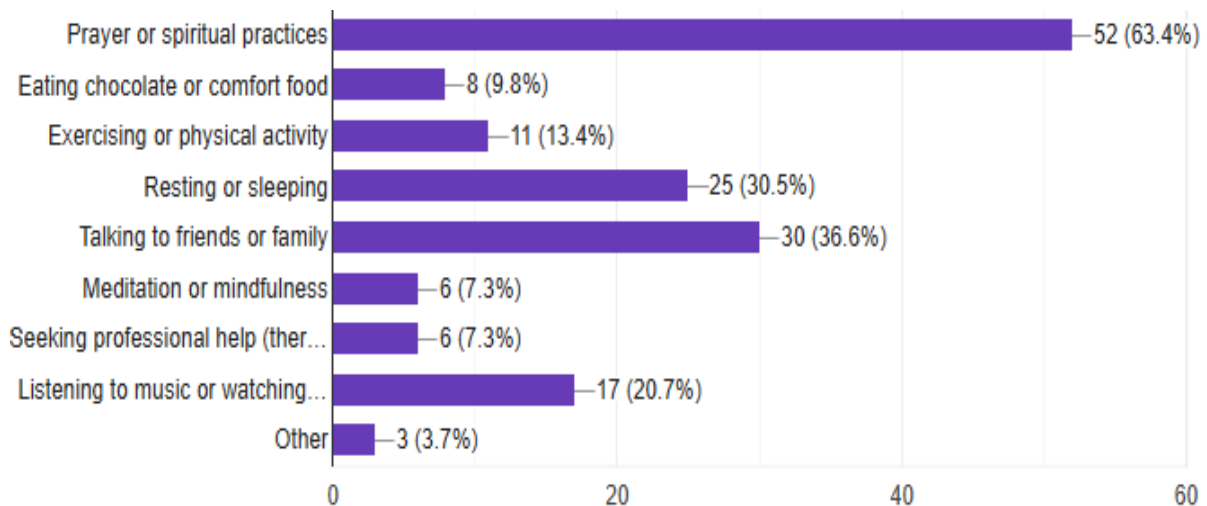


Fig. 2. Primary methods of relieving stress and depression

## REDUCTION OF STRESS AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Mindful breathwork and silent prayer, the two core practices of Chonapray, activate the parasympathetic nervous system, thereby reducing the levels of cortisol and heart rate variability (15). Controlled breathing has been known to help calm the stress reaction and improve emotional resilience. In fact, spiritual prayer and meditative silence have been associated with decreased symptoms of both anxiety and depression and of PTSD (13). Because of this it can also be said that Chonapray may intensify the effects by the intentionality and mindfulness and spiritual focus that accompany the activity to make it



psychologically cathartic and calming. The impact of stress is dependent upon the psychology of coping. Emotion regulation is related to the flexible management of emotional arousal and emotional expression in line with environmental demands (16). Emotion regulation is how individuals regulate and control their emotions. It could be cognitive reappraisal, expressive suppression, or mindfulness. Flexible emotion regulation is important to allow individuals to adaptively respond to emotional stimuli and associated contexts, which promotes good psychological health (17).

## **ENERGY ALIGNMENT AND HOLISTIC HEALING**

In reality, Chonapray is very similar to energy healing modalities such as Reiki and Therapeutic Touch, which are specifically aimed at rebalancing disturbance or interruptions in the body's energy field (18). While a scientific assessment of subtle energy is not quite as apparent, patient reported outcomes and qualitative data demonstrate improvements in areas of vitality, emotional release, and cognition (19). Consequently, it may offer energy visualization and intentional prayer which will foster somatic awareness to support energetic detoxification and a renewed internal coherence.

## **SPIRITUAL CONNECTION AND INNER PEACE**

There is a close relationship between spirituality and peace; the more expansive the definition of peace, the more it is related to circulation of spirituality. In this essay we distinguish three levels or stages of peace: weak peace, strong peace, and holistic peace; and between inner and outer dimensions of spirituality in the non-materialistic space (20). Chonapray is indeed a non-dogmatic space for people to perform some spiritual exploration about higher selves or divinity presence. Altogether, this will be found helpful for spiritual practice promote hope within, resilience in life, and purpose on life (21). Levin (2001) stated, who pray spiritually, feel better emotionally and spiritually than those do not; thus, providing direct-support of Chonapray.

## **SLEEP, COGNITION, AND LIFESTYLE BENEFITS**

Sleep is vital to health and well-being, influencing all aspects of physical, cognitive, and emotional functioning (22). Good sleep is necessary for optimal health. Sleep duration and quality have been associated with various physiological functions and health outcomes related to both physical and mental health (23). Regular use of mindfulness and contemplative practices has been shown to enhance the quality of sleep, and increase memory and cognitive flexibility (24). If Chonapray was emphasized for use in evening routines, it would most likely help in relaxation because of its influence on disengaging the mind from overactivity or agitated cognition, and lend itself to optimal sleep and cognitive rest. Further, based on evaluations of published studies, sleep and cognitive function are optimized by the practice of yoga utilizing physiological change, and structural changes, change in metabolism, neurochemistry and improved functional brain network connectivity within key brain areas (25).

## **CONCLUSION**

Chonapray is developing a holistic technique and practice that is informed by spiritual prayer, meditative silence, energy alignment, and conscious breathing. Similar to other established healing modalities, Chonapray may offer practitioners the option for deep relaxation, emotional equilibrium, social/community enhancement, physical well-being, spiritual nourishment, and self-renewal.

While research on Chonapray itself has yet to be completed, the framework of Chonapray is supported by existing research literature in the fields of mind-body medicine, prayer therapy, and energy healing. Future research should explore Chonapray with clinical trials, ethnographic surveys, and qualitative analyses to formally establish and enhance this integrative modality within the field of therapy.

### **Conflict of interest:**

There is no conflict of interest in this study.



## Authors' contribution:

HTK Conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, data curation, original draft preparation; GHR Supervision, review, editing and final approval of the manuscript; SS Assisted in data collection, literature review and manuscript formatting.

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