

Impact of Yoga Practice on Well-Being among Yoga Practitioners

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ABSTRACT

Mind and body are interdependent, if the mind is disturbed, the effect of it will be seen physically. Stress and strain affects all the body systems and also the root of all systems i.e immune system. So, mind responsibility to protect one's body from all kinds of ailments. Well-being is a state of mind. It is a contented state of being happy and healthy and prosperous. Wellness encourages activities that lead to well-being. Physical wellness is about how our dietary habits and food choices are influencing our well-being. The systematic and regular practice of yoga to regulate the relation between body and mind, strengthening body and mind, improves immunity, which help in building up a sound physical and mental health of yoga practitioners. In the sense the practice of yoga improves energy and positive well-being and decreases anxiety and depression. The objective of present study is to examine the influence of yoga practice on well-being of yoga practitioners. The findings of the study indicated that the well-being of the yoga practitioners are influenced by their marital, employment, duration of yoga practice and health status. For instance, unmarried yoga practitioners report significantly higher levels of anxiety and depression. Yoga practitioners who are not employed report significantly more depression and anxiety and lesser energy than those who are employed. Yoga practitioners who have no health problems report significantly lesser depression and anxiety and enhanced energy and positive well-being. Further, older practitioners report lesser depression and anxiety and increase in the duration of yoga practice has all round benefits for well-being as it results in reduced depression and anxiety and increased energy and positive well-being.

Key words: Yoga, Well-being, Health, medicine

1. INTRODUCTION

The power of the mind to affect the health of the body is illustrated by psychosomatic illness. When a person is subjected to stress or emotional upset, change in the body may manifest as diseases. The terms psycho and soma emphasize the connection between the mind and the body with respect to health.

In one case, stress has caused a change in the flow of blood through the head, and in the other case, blood vessels many have been damaged by the injury. Western medicine is not well equipped to deal with psychosomatic illnesses¹. Although physicians can treat the symptoms, they are not well trained to help with the symptoms; they are not well trained to help with the underlying mental states that cause the illness. On the other hand, Buddhist and Chinese medicine take the position that all sickness, to some degree, brought on by a person states of mind. In western medicine, if a physician cannot find an organic cause for symptoms, the patient may be advised to see a psychologist or given a drug to mask symptoms.

2. UNDERSTANDING YOGA, THE SCIENCE OF THE MIND

Patanjali Maharshi, the profounder of yoga, defines is as "the process of stilling the mind". The objective of stilling of mind is to merge the individual soul (jivatma) with the universal soul (paramatma). According to Patanjali Maharshi, yoga is *Chitta vrtti nirodha* which means stilling the vibrations of the mind. It is the controlling of all thoughts, and initiation into pure awareness. In his Yoga Sutras, Patanjali Maharshi talks more about dealing with the mind, than about practicing certain physical postures of the body. Let us concentrate on a few verses from the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali Maharshi, in order to have the right understanding of the meaning of Yoga.

Yoga is the cessation of mind; then the witness is established in itself; in the other states, there is identification with the modifications of the mind.

-Yoga Sutra

3. YOGA AND HEALTH

Yoga is an ancient science of physical, mental and spiritual development which originated in India more than 7000 years ago. Yoga is the union of the body, mind and spirit - the union of individuality with that of the divine intelligence that orchestrates the universe. When we are in yoga, our emotional, spiritual and psychological quality of life is enhanced because your desires are the desires of nature. Practitioners of yoga - yogis - are dynamic and creative forces for positive change².

In Indian philosophy there are two types of physical illness, and each requires a different approach. The first are the illnesses with a strong physical element, such as contagious diseases and accidental injuries³. These are most effectively dealt with by conventional medicine, through yoga can play a substantial supporting role. Yoga also helps prevent the occurrence of such ailments by improving our general health and making you less accident-prone. With psychosomatic ailments, yoga provides the vital element that modern therapies lack and acts directly on the mental imbalances that underlie them. While Emotion Culturing and Meditation make us aware of the tyranny of thoughts and emotions, Happiness analysis teaches us how to look within ourselves to find peace and satisfaction. At the same time, other yoga practices facilitate the restoration of health at other levels as well. This effectively complements medical techniques, which improve the situation physically but are unable to eradicate the primary cause of the problem.

4. WELL-BEING

Well-being is a state of mind. It is a contented state of being happy and healthy and prosperous⁴. The standard definition of well-being is “a state of being well, healthy and contented.” The first step to physical, mental, social and emotional well-being is to “know oneself completely”. Wellness encourages activities that lead to well-being. Physical wellness is about how our dietary habits and food choices are influencing our well-being. But wellness is much more than just physical:

- It refers to the choices and decisions of achieve a more successful and balanced life.
- It’s embracing a lifestyle that strives toward the highest potential for well-being.

W.H.O reports show that the major diseases that are causing high death rates are chronic in nature resulting from faulty life style. Regulation of stress seems to be the major concern today because of its role in psycho-physiological, immunity disorders and in general adaptation to the life situations. Yoga, with its comprehensive system of dealing with life style and values on the one hand and mind – body regulation on the other hand, may probably the most effective available tool for personal health and effectiveness.

In today’s concept of health and illness, behaviour plays a crucial role on the well-being. Health behaviours are those activities engaged in by people who are basically healthy that have an impact upon their health status (Kasl & Cobb, 1966)⁵. Thus a person’s behaviour determines the risk of getting ill or the likelihood of getting better (Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Good and Kleinman, 1995)⁶. The desire to control one’s life is a very general motive. It plays a central role in several basic theories of personality (Gombrich at.el., 1988)⁷. Because the desire for control is such a general motivation, beliefs about whether one has control over one’s life have attracted much research interest.

5. RELATIONSHIP OF YOGIC LIFESTYLE TO WELL-BEING

Yoga can be viewed as ‘general health enhancing activity’ (Cohen and Penman; 2004)⁸ that can be combined with other lifestyle activities to enhance health and well-being, e.g. diet, exercise, stress management. When yoga

becomes a daily personal practice, it begins to impact on one's lifestyle, with yogic values of simplicity and balance in daily life attaining greater importance.

When yoga becomes the integrating focus of one's life, it can provide a sense of purpose and meet the need for a spiritual dimension, either as a life philosophy in itself or in supporting religious beliefs. The extended yoga community can provide a sense of belonging and social support. The long-term aim of regular yoga practice is modification of the personality structure, to enable spiritual transformation.

6. METHOD

Hypothesis:

1. Gender and age of the yoga practitioners would moderate influence of yoga on well-being of the practitioners
2. Duration of practice of yoga shall influence well-being of yoga practitioners
3. Practice of yoga would influence the well-being of yoga practitioners

Subjects

The study was conducted on yoga practitioners in the city of Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India. The data were collected randomly from 316 yoga practitioners who are practicing in different yoga centers. In this sample, 136 male and 180 female practitioners were included.

Measure

In the present study the Well-being questionnaire were used. The Well-being questionnaire was developed by Bradley (1990)⁹ to provide measures of depression, anxiety, energy and positive well-being of people. The Well-being scale contains 22 questions and provides a broad and comprehensive assessment of well-being on four sub scales, they are anxiety, depression and energy and positive well-being.

Procedure and Data Collection

First, permissions were obtained from the Yoga centers of the Department of Yoga, Andhra University, Chaitanya Yoga Consciousness and various yoga centers located in and around Visakhapatnam. The practitioners at these yoga center's practice yoga for 1 hour 6 days a week. The researcher has explained the purpose of study and also explained about each measure. Subsequently, psychological scale were distributed and collected at a later date. Data was collected over the period of 5 months. Unfilled and missing data forms were not considered for the analysis.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results regarding the influence of gender, age, marital status, employment status and health status on the well-being of the yoga practitioners are presented in the following.

Table 1 shows the influence of gender of the yoga practitioners on the dimensions of well-being experienced by them. It can be noted that there is no significant influence of gender of the yoga practitioners on their well-being. Similar findings were reported in other studies showing that yoga can be affective in bringing down the anxiety levels of both male and female yoga practitioners (Ray¹⁰, Mukhopadhyaya, Purkayastha, Asnani, Tomer, Prashad, Thakur & Selvamurthy, 2001; Woolery¹¹, Myers, Sternlieb & Zeltzer, 2004; (12)David¹², Ian, Dmitry, Davydov, Cristina, Andrew, Leuchter & Michelle, 2007).

Table 1: Gender and Well-being

| Variable | | Males | Females | t-value |
|---------------------|------|-------|---------|---------|
| Depression | Mean | 3.49 | 3.85 | 1.102 |
| | S.D. | 2.76 | 2.99 | |
| Anxiety | Mean | 3.94 | 4.62 | 1.800 |
| | S.D. | 3.39 | 3.28 | |
| Energy | Mean | 9.33 | 8.96 | 1.442 |
| | S.D. | 2.26 | 2.26 | |
| Positive well-being | Mean | 13.16 | 13.74 | 1.476 |
| | S.D. | 3.41 | 3.44 | |

Note: * $p \leq .05$ level; ** $p \leq .01$ level

Table 2 the findings regarding the influence of the marital status of the yoga practitioners on their experience of well-being are presented in table 2. A significant influence of marital status is noted with the unmarried yoga practitioners reporting significantly higher levels of anxiety and depression.

Anxiety. An analysis of the individual items of the anxiety dimension of the well-being scale showed that unmarried persons as compared to the married persons feel afraid for no reason at all (unmarried 0.76 ± 1.03 vs. married 0.51 ± 0.80 , $t = 2.404$; $p \leq .01$), get upset or feel panicky (unmarried 0.95 ± 1.04 vs. married 0.72 ± 0.88 , $t = 2.044$; $p \leq .01$), feel like they are going apart or going to pieces (unmarried 0.48 ± 0.86 vs. married 0.32 ± 0.62 , $t = -1.94$; $p \leq .01$) and cannot feel calm or sit still easily (unmarried 1.93 ± 0.98 vs. married 2.20 ± 0.89 , $t = 2.502$; $p \leq .01$).

Depression. With regard to the depression it is observed that the married people feel more useful and needed (married 2.70 ± 0.55 vs. unmarried 2.46 ± 0.69 , $t = 3.382$; $p \leq .01$), experience lesser crying spells (married 0.51 ± 0.73 vs. unmarried 0.76 ± 0.85 , $t = -2.727$; $p \leq .01$) and feel their life is pretty fell (married 2.37 ± 0.76 vs. unmarried 2.09 ± 1.01 , $t = 2.744$; $p \leq .01$).

Table 2: Marital status and Well-being

| Well-being | | Married | Unmarried | t-value |
|---------------------|------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Depression | Mean | 3.37 | 4.20 | 2.505* |
| | S.D. | 2.74 | 3.05 | |
| Anxiety | Mean | 3.83 | 5.08 | 3.281** |
| | S.D. | 3.04 | 3.63 | |
| Energy | Mean | 9.18 | 9.03 | 0.598 |
| | S.D. | 2.27 | 2.26 | |
| Positive Well-being | Mean | 13.73 | 13.12 | 1.547 |
| | S.D. | 3.11 | 3.86 | |

Note: * $p \leq .05$ level; ** $p \leq .01$ level

Table 3 shows that yoga practitioners who are not employed report significantly more depression and anxiety and lesser energy than those who are employed.

Depression. An analysis of the individual items of the depression dimension of the well-being scale shows that yoga practitioners who are not employed feel they are not useful and needed (Not employed $2.45 \pm .70$ vs. Employed

2.74+.50; $t=4.316$); have more crying spells (Not employed $.76+.83$ vs. Employed $.46+.73$; $t=3.368$) and feel they cannot think quite clearly (Not employed $2.24+.74$ vs. Employed $2.43+.58$; $t=2.499$, $p\leq.05$).

Anxiety. With regard to anxiety it is noted that the yoga practitioners who are not employed feel more nervous and anxious (Not employed $1.13+.90$ vs. Employed $.91+.87$; $t = 2.165$, $p\leq.05$), do not feel calm and cannot sit still easily (Not Employed $1.96+.99$ vs. employed $2.21+.86$; $t = 2.38$, $p\leq.05$) and cannot fall asleep easily and get a good night's rest (Not employed $2.31+.92$ vs. Employed $2.5+.77$; $t = 2.008$, $p\leq.05$)

Table 3: Employment Status and Well-being

| Variable | | Employed | Not Employed | t-value |
|---------------------|------|----------|--------------|---------|
| Depression | Mean | 3.14 | 4.31 | 3.649** |
| | S.D. | 2.65 | 3.03 | |
| Anxiety | Mean | 3.80 | 4.92 | 3.026** |
| | S.D. | 3.32 | 3.27 | |
| Energy | Mean | 9.40 | 8.82 | 2.296* |
| | S.D. | 2.31 | 2.19 | |
| Positive Well-being | Mean | 13.72 | 13.25 | 1.231 |
| | S.D. | 3.07 | 3.79 | |

Note: * $p\leq.05$ level; ** $p\leq.01$ level

Table 4 shows a significant influence of the health status of the yoga practitioners on their well-being. The results show that practitioners who have no health problems report significantly lesser depression and anxiety and enhanced energy and positive well-being. Similar findings were reported in other studies showing that yoga can be affective in bringing down the anxiety and depression levels of the practitioners.

An analysis of the individual items of the various dimensions of well-being was carried out to examine the specific aspects of the dimensions which contributed to this difference. It is noted that the yoga practitioners with no health problems feel significantly less downhearted and blue (No problems 0.74 ± 0.88 vs. Problems 0.97 ± 0.97 , $t = 2.154$; $p\leq.01$); feel less nervous and anxious (No problems 0.94 ± 0.89 vs. Problems 1.15 ± 0.88 , $t = 2.077$; $p\leq.01$) and do not feel that they are falling apart or going to pieces (No problems 0.32 ± 0.67 vs. Problems 0.50 ± 0.82 , $t = 2.029$; $p\leq.01$). Furthermore, these yoga practitioners feel more energetic, active and vigorous (No problems 2.52 ± 0.64 vs. Problems 2.19 ± 0.77 , $t = 4.069$; $p\leq.01$); do not feel dull or sluggish (No problems 0.65 ± 0.82 vs. Problems 0.92 ± 0.93 , $t = 2.588$; $p\leq.01$); are less tired, worn out or exhausted (No problems 0.85 ± 0.80 vs. Problems 1.21 ± 0.94 , $t = 3.601$; $p\leq.01$) and have been waking up feeling fresh and rested (no 2.53 ± 0.78 vs. yes 2.32 ± 0.99 $t = 2.112$; $p\leq.01$). Finally, the yoga practitioners with no health problems are significantly more happy, satisfied or pleased with their personal life (No problems 2.55 ± 0.74 vs. Problems 2.34 ± 0.85 , $t = 2.363$; $p\leq.01$); feel they have lived the kind of life they wanted to (No problems 2.31 ± 0.81 vs. Problems 2.07 ± 0.90 , $t = 2.346$; $p\leq.01$) and have felt eager to tackle their daily tasks or make new decisions (No problems 1.86 ± 0.92 vs. Problems 1.62 ± 1.05 , $t = 2.133$; $p\leq.01$).

Earlier studies have shown that there will be significant improvement in subjective well-being after 4 months of Yoga practice (Damodaran¹³, Malathi, Patil, Shah, Suryavanshi & Marathe, 2002).

Table 4: Health Status and Well-being

| Variable | | No health problems | Health problems | t-value |
|---------------------|------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Depression | Mean | 3.45 | 4.14 | 2.042* |
| | S.D. | 2.86 | 2.91 | |
| Anxiety | Mean | 4.00 | 4.90 | 2.311* |
| | S.D. | 3.16 | 3.57 | |
| Energy | Mean | 9.54 | 8.37 | 4.541* * |
| | S.D. | 2.01 | 2.50 | |
| Positive Well-being | Mean | 13.83 | 12.90 | 2.321* |
| | S.D. | 3.46 | 3.31 | |

Note: * $p \leq .05$ level; ** $p \leq .01$ level

8. INTERACTION INFLUENCES OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON WELL-BEING

This results regarding the interactive influence of yoga practitioners' gender, marital, employment and health status on their well-being. The results are presented in tables 5 to 8. It can be noted that the demographic variables have a significant influence on the dimensions of depression anxiety and positive well-being.

Depression. Table 5 shows that marital and health status interact to significantly influence their depression. Unmarried persons with health problems tend to experience more depression.

Anxiety. The yoga practitioners' gender, marital status and health status interact significantly to influence their anxiety (see table 16). Female unmarried yoga practitioners with health problems tend to experience more anxiety.

Positive well-being. Interactive influences noticed for two dimensions of well-being (see table 8). Female unmarried yoga practitioners with health problems experience lesser positive well-being. Similarly, female unmarried yoga practitioners who have health problems and are not employed lesser positive well-being.

Table 5: Interaction Influence of Demographic variables on Depression dimension of Well-being

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F |
|--------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|-------|
| Gen * MS | 14.397 | 1 | 14.397 | 1.864 |
| Gen * ES | .280 | 1 | .280 | .036 |
| MS * ES | 6.669 | 1 | 6.669 | .863 |
| Gen* MS * ES | .079 | 1 | .079 | .010 |
| Gen* HS | .777 | 1 | .777 | .101 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|---|--------|---------------|
| MS * HS | 31.605 | 1 | 31.605 | 4.091* |
| Gen * MS * HS | 5.640 | 1 | 5.640 | .730 |
| ES * HS | 10.625 | 1 | 10.625 | 1.375 |
| Gen * ES * HS | .261 | 1 | .261 | .034 |
| MS * ES * HS | .238 | 1 | .238 | .031 |
| Gen * MS * ES * HS | 2.010 | 1 | 2.010 | .260 |

Gen=Gender; MS= Marital status; HS= Health Status; ES = Employment Status

Table 6: Interaction Influence of Demographic variables on Anxiety dimension of Well-being

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|---------------|
| Gen * MS | 3.087 | 1 | 3.087 | .299 |
| Gen * ES | 3.130 | 1 | 3.130 | .303 |
| MS * ES | 6.611 | 1 | 6.611 | .641 |
| Gen * MS * ES | .064 | 1 | .064 | .006 |
| Gen* HS | .100 | 1 | .100 | .010 |
| MS * HS | 26.900 | 1 | 26.900 | 2.608 |
| Gen * MS * HS | 49.157 | 1 | 49.157 | 4.766* |
| ES * HS | 22.695 | 1 | 22.695 | 2.200 |
| Gen * ES * HS | 2.127 | 1 | 2.127 | .206 |
| MS * ES * HS | .781 | 1 | .781 | .076 |
| Gen * MS * ES * HS | 2.005 | 1 | 2.005 | .194 |

Gen=Gender; MS= Marital Status; HS= Health Status; ES = Employment Status

Table 7: Interaction Influence of Demographic variables on Energy Dimension of Well-being

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F |
|---------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|-------|
| Gen * MS | 1.135 | 1 | 1.135 | .238 |
| Gen* ES | 2.878 | 1 | 2.878 | .604 |
| MS * ES | 1.092 | 1 | 1.092 | .229 |
| Gen* MS * ES | 6.019 | 1 | 6.019 | 1.263 |
| Gen* HS | 2.045 | 1 | 2.045 | .429 |
| MS * HS | 8.613 | 1 | 8.613 | 1.808 |
| Gen * MS * HS | 4.699 | 1 | 4.699 | .986 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|---|-------|-------|
| ES * HS | 8.317 | 1 | 8.317 | 1.745 |
| Gen * ES * HS | 1.781 | 1 | 1.781 | .374 |
| MS * ES * HS | .022 | 1 | .022 | .005 |
| Gen * MS * ES * HS | 1.454 | 1 | 1.454 | .305 |

Gen=Gender; MS= Marital Status; HS= Health Status; ES = Employment Status

Table 8: Interaction Influence of Demographic variables on Positive Well-being

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|---------------|
| Gen * MS | 32.918 | 1 | 32.918 | 2.931 |
| Gen * ES | 40.548 | 1 | 40.548 | 3.611 |
| MS * ES | 56.828 | 1 | 56.828 | 5.060* |
| Gen * MS * ES | 76.825 | 1 | 76.825 | 6.841* |
| Gen* HS | 29.157 | 1 | 29.157 | 2.596 |
| MS * HS | 16.900 | 1 | 16.900 | 1.505 |
| Gen * MS * HS | 31.331 | 1 | 31.331 | 2.790 |
| ES * HS | 2.451 | 1 | 2.451 | .218 |
| Gen * ES * HS | 8.308 | 1 | 8.308 | .740 |
| MS * ES * HS | 30.764 | 1 | 30.764 | 2.739 |
| Gen * MS * ES * HS | 72.273 | 1 | 72.273 | 6.435* |

Gen=Gender; MS= Marital Status; HS= Health Status; ES = Employment Status

Table 9 explain the relationships between the age of the yoga practitioners, the duration to which they are practicing yoga and the dimensions of well-being have been examined and the results are presented in table 9.

Table 9: Age, Duration Yoga Practice and Well-being

| | Depression | Anxiety | Energy | Positive Well-being |
|-------------------------|------------|---------|--------|---------------------|
| Age | -.180** | -.155** | -.004 | .073 |
| Yoga practice in months | -.177** | -.194** | .170** | .137* |

The table shows that there are significant influences of the age of the yoga practitioners and duration of yoga practice on their well-being. The significant and negative relationships between age and yoga practice indicate that older practitioners report lesser depression and anxiety. Further, increase in the duration of yoga practice has all round benefits for well-being as it results in reduced depression and anxiety and increased energy and positive well-being.

The set of independent variables are significantly correlated with the various dimensions of well-being. The amounts of variance explained by the individual groups are (Depression), (Anxiety), (Energy), (Positive Well-being) and (Total General Well-being).

1. The gender of the yoga practitioners contributes no significance to depression, Energy and Total General Well-being.

2. An analysis of the individual items showed that unmarried persons feel more in case of anxiety, depression and total general well-being, but in case of energy and positive well-being are common among them. In this analysis show married yoga practitioner enjoyed the overall well-being compare with unmarried yoga practitioners.

3. The number of years of education is significantly related with all the dimensions of well-being in the total sample. An analysis of the variables that are making a significant contribution to this variance shows that years of education has a consistent influence on all the dimensions of well-being. It is contributing significantly to the variance of all these dimensions. The direction of the correlations indicated that more number of years of education is associated with lesser depression and anxiety, increased energy, and total general well-being.

4. Analysis the students are more anxious and depressive, and less total general well-being, because their examination and future life settlement. No significance difference in the energy and positive well-being among various professional. In overall well-being the employee/business professional are overcome the anxiety and depression, and improved the energy positive well-being and total general well-being.

5. These findings indicate that male yoga practitioners as compared to their female counterparts' food habits are vegetarians and non- vegetarians significantly no difference depression and anxiety and energy and total general well-being.

6. The health aspect analysis decrease the anxiety and depression levels in healthy people of yoga practitioner and most improvement in energy and total general well-being, and improvement in the positive well-being compare with the ill-health people .

7. No significance difference in the variables of depression, anxiety, positive well-being and total general well-being among the non- medicine users and medicine user's yoga practitioner. The analysis shows that the practice of yoga improves the energy in non- medicine users compare with the medicine user of yoga practitioners. These findings show that Yoga practice brings about positive changes in psychological states of Yoga practitioners but it improves in the longer period.

9. CONCLUSION

Research shows that yoga interventions (particularly those that include asanas, meditation, relaxation, breathing practices, and a yogic diet) can benefit a wide range of emotional and mental illnesses. Yoga can positively influence health in a number of ways. The regular practice of yoga improves the energy and positive well-being, decreases anxiety and depression dimension of well-being.

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