

A Study on Improvement in Feelings of Yoga Practitioners

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Abstract

The objective of the study was to analyze the improvement in feelings of yoga practitioners, and the influence of the characteristics of the respondents on the improvement achieved. Data was collected through an online questionnaire from a randomly selected sample of 500 yoga practitioners from India. The questionnaire contained the 12 item feeling inventory proposed by Gauvin and Rejeski (1993), the characteristics of the respondents such as sex, age, education, marital status, and whether they had any existing psychological problems before the start of yoga practice. The total score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice was worked out as the sum of scores of the items. The data was analyzed as proportion and through t test. The results of the study establish the effect of yoga in improving positive feelings and reducing negative feelings of the practitioners. Statistically significant difference in the total score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice was observed with respect to the following characteristics of the respondents, namely, age, education, and whether the respondents were having any psychological problems before they started yoga practice or not. Sex and marital status of the respondents did not significantly influence the improvement in feelings through yoga practice.

Keywords: Yoga practice; Feelings; Improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Feelings indicate the perception of events within the body in relation to emotions. Feelings usually refer to the conscious subjective experience of emotions. The effect of yoga on psychological health

parameters and in reducing mental stress, anxiety etc. have been reported (*Madhava Chandran et al, 2021¹; Vijayaraghavan et al, 2020²; Madhava Chandran et al, 2020³*). Taking into consideration such reported work on yoga, as well as the positive responses obtained from yoga practitioners regarding their psychological state, this study has attempted to analyze the improvement in feelings of people who practice yoga. This has been done under the expectation that good feelings could contribute to a better psychological state and mental health for people.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out by Satyananda Yoga Research Centre, Kozhikode, Kerala, India in

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association with WEDO (NGO), Kozhikode through an online questionnaire from a sample of 500 yoga practitioners from India selected through simple random sampling. The questionnaire contained the 12 item feeling inventory proposed by Gauvin and Rejeski (1993)⁴ with 5 point responses scored from 1 to 5, the characteristics of the respondents such as sex, age, education, marital status, and whether they were having any psychological problems

before the start of yoga practice. The total score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice was worked out as the sum of scores of the items. The data was analyzed as proportion and statistically.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the level of improvement in various feelings of people who practice yoga

Table 1: Level of improvement in feelings through yoga practice

Feeling	Respondents (%)					Total (%)
	Improvement in the feeling through yoga practice					
	Very strongly improved	Strongly improved	Moderately improved	Slightly improved	Not at all improved	
Refreshed	30	32	22	14	2	100
Calmness	18	40	26	10	6	100
Enthusiasm	6	36	40	12	6	100
Relaxation	18	40	26	14	2	100
Energetic	20	40	26	12	2	100
Happiness	12	44	28	14	2	100
Revived	14	34	28	18	6	100
Peacefulness	16	34	36	12	2	100
Cheerful / Upbeat	20	30	36	12	2	
Tired	18	34	22	20	6	100
Worn out	18	38	30	12	2	100
Fatigued	12	40	22	16	10	100

Considering all the feelings together, details of respondents reporting improvement through yoga practice is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Respondents reporting improvement in feelings through yoga practice

Level of improvement in feelings through yoga practice	Respondents (%) [*] reporting improvement
Very strongly improved	16.8
Strongly improved	36.8
Moderately improved	28.6
Slightly improved	13.8
Not at all improved	4.0
Total (%)	100

^{*}Mean proportion considering all the feelings together

Table 3 gives the score of respondents for improvement in feelings through yoga practice.

Table 3: Score of respondents for improvement in feelings through yoga practice

Feeling	Mean score for improvement in the feeling through yoga practice	Score as % of maximum possible score for improvement in the feeling [*]
Refreshed	3.74	75.0
Calmness	3.54	70.8
Enthusiasm	3.24	64.8
Relaxation	3.58	71.6
Energetic	3.64	72.8
Happiness	3.50	70.0
Revived	3.32	66.4
Peaceful	3.50	70.0
Cheerful / Upbeat	3.54	70.8
Tired	3.38	67.6
Worn out	3.58	71.6
Fatigued	3.28	65.6

^{*} The maximum possible score for improvement in feelings is 5

Statistical significance of the influence of existing psychological problems on the total score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Statistical significance of the influence of existing psychological problems on the total score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice

Mean total score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice		t stat	Significance
Respondents without psychological problems before start of yoga	Respondents with psychological problems before start of yoga		
42.4	36.3	1.40	p < 0.20

Table 5 gives data on age wise statistical significance of the total score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice.

Table 5: Statistical significance of age of the respondents on the total score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice

Mean total score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice		t stat	Significance
Age of respondents			
> 60	< 60	-2.9	p < 0.01
35.7	44.6		

Table 6 shows the statistical significance of the influence of education of the respondents on the total score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice.

Table 6: Statistical significance of education of the respondents on the total score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice

Mean total score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice		t stat	Significance
Education level			
PG and above	Degree	- 1.74	p < 0.10
38.9	44.7		

DISCUSSION

Maximum proportion of yoga practitioners have experienced either moderate or strong improvement in all the feelings (positive and negative feelings) through the practice of yoga in this study (Table 1). The table shows that a good proportion report strong improvement in various feelings also through yoga practice. Further, it may be inferred from Table 1 that the total proportion of yoga practitioners reporting only slight improvement

and no improvement together is in the range of 14% to 26% only for different feelings.

The maximum proportion of yoga practitioners (36.8%) are reporting strong improvement in various feelings through yoga practice, followed by 28.6% achieving moderate improvement, and very strong improvement for 16.8% practitioners (Table 2). Further, it is noteworthy that 13.8% only are reporting slight improvement, while a very low proportion (4%) report no improvement in feelings through the practice of yoga.

From the data presented in Table 3, it may be inferred that yoga practitioners have been able to achieve improvement in nine positive feelings (Sl. No. 1 to 9 in Table 3) in the range of 64.8% to 75% of the maximum possible level of improvement in these feelings through yoga practice (which has been considered in this study). Similarly, with respect to the three negative feelings, namely, feeling Tired, Worn out and Fatigued (Sl. No. 10 to 12 in Table 3) also, respondents have been able to achieve improvement in the range of 65.6% to 71.6% of the maximum possible level of improvement in these feelings through yoga practice.

All these results establish the effect of yoga in improving positive feelings and reducing negative feelings of yoga practitioners. Lakshmi Narasimhan et al (2011)⁵ have reported an increase in Positive Affect and Other Positive Affect of integrated yogic practices by 13 to 17% (P<0.001), while the Negative Affect and Other Negative Affect reduced by 47 to 48% (P<0.001).

Statistically significant difference exists in the mean total score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice between respondents who report psychological problems before starting yoga practice and those who did not have such a problem (Table 4). The mean total score of the former category is 36.3, compared to 42.4 for the latter category. This result implies that those who were having psychological problems could not achieve that much of improvement in feelings through yoga practice as that of people who did not have the problem. This could be probably due to the existence of hormonal problems in people who had mental health issues, which could have led to less realization of the improvement in feelings under yoga practice. However, literature to support similar results are not available.

Statistically significant difference is observed in the mean total score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice between respondents aged more than 60 and less than 60 years (Table 5). The latter category gets a higher mean score than the

former, indicating that comparatively younger yoga practitioners have achieved better improvement in feelings.

The mean total score of yoga practitioners with Degree qualification is higher (44.7) than those who have PG and above qualification, with statistically significant difference in their scores (Table 6). This means that more educated yoga practitioners have achieved comparatively less improvement in feelings than those, who are less educated. The younger age of the degree holders could also be one of the reasons for this trend.

Statistically significant difference was not observed in the score for improvement in feelings through yoga practice based on sex and marital status of the respondents. The mean score of males is found to be 42.1 and 41.6 for females. Married people have a score of 41.4, while it 41.5 for unmarried people.

CONCLUSION

Maximum number of yoga practitioners have experienced strong improvement in various feelings through yoga practice, followed by moderate improvement, and then, very strong improvement. It is also noteworthy that the respondents reporting slight improvement and low improvement is comparatively very less. Yoga practitioners have been able to achieve improvement in nine positive feelings in the range of 64.8% to 75% of the maximum possible level of improvement in these feelings through yoga practice. With respect to the remaining three negative feelings also, respondents have been able to achieve improvement in the range of 65.6% to 71.6% of the maximum possible level of improvement through yoga practice. These results establish the effect of yoga in improving positive feelings and reducing negative feelings of the practitioners.

The statistically significant result of the study indicates that those who were having psychological problems before start of yoga practice could not achieve that much of improvement in feelings through yoga practice, when compared to people who did not have the problem. Respondents aged

less than 60 years have got comparatively higher improvement in feelings through yoga practice than those aged more than 60, with statistically significant difference in their scores. The results also indicate that more educated yoga practitioners have achieved comparatively less improvement in feelings than those who are less educated. However, sex and marital status of the respondents were not found to significantly influence the improvement in feelings through yoga practice, since the improvement score of males and females and that of married and unmarried people did not differ much.

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