

General Health, Depression and Anxiety among Students Practicing Yoga and Not Practicing Yoga

Dr. Geetha A.

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Maharani Women's Arts, Commerce and Management College,
Seshadri Road, Bengaluru-560001, Karnataka, India.
Email : geetha3hmt@yahoo.co.in

Abstract: *The aim was to study the general health, depression and anxiety among students practicing yoga and not practicing yoga. The study was conducted on female students aged between 18-21 years pursuing their under graduation course in government college. The sample was selected from 3 different government colleges in Bangalore. A between group design with purposive sampling was opted for the study. One group of female college students who were involved in practicing yoga regularly at least for past one year, through regular coaching centres, under supervision or practicing on their own were considered for the study and the other group of individuals were those students who were not into practicing yoga and also not involved in any regular physical activities. The sample was administered general health questionnaire, depression and anxiety scale. The results were analysed by computing t test to identify the difference between the two groups on general health, level of depression and anxiety. As reviews have indicated any physical activity and specifically yoga will have positive impact both physically and psychologically. This study confirmed the same indicating that yoga has positive impact on health. Hence it is important that yoga has to be made compulsory option for college students as it influences positively on the individual. The results will be discussed in detail also in reference with other studies and the study will also emphasise the implications of yoga and specifically for college students.*

Key Words: *Anxiety, Depression, General Health, Students and Yoga.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Yoga incorporates exercise, static poses, breathing, relaxation, and meditation (Jacobs, 1996). The purpose of yoga is to centre the person's mind, body, and spirit. Specific hypothesized benefits include improving muscular and cardiovascular endurance, boosting the immune system, enhancing circulation, increasing muscular and cognitive flexibility, and relaxation. Yoga is often used as complementary therapy for medical disorders such as asthma, arthritis, HIV/AIDS, cancer, and coronary artery disease. Research supports positive benefits of practicing yoga. A study compared yoga, relaxation (i.e., progressive muscle relaxation), and visualization in a group of healthy adults (Wood, 1993). Participants practiced for six, 25- to 30-minute sessions over a two-week period. Following intervention, the yoga group reported increased mental and physical energy, alertness, and positive mood. These benefits were significantly greater than the other two groups. The relaxation group was more tired and sluggish compared with yoga, and the visualization group reported more sluggishness and less contentment compared to those performing yoga. Additionally, yoga has been integrated into cardiac rehabilitation programs (Ornish et al., 1998) too. These and many other studies indicate that there is positive impact of yoga on both physical and psychological aspects of individual. In this background to understand in more detail the influence of yoga on general health, depression and anxiety the present study was under taken.

2. METHODOLOGY:

The aim was to study the general health, depression and anxiety among students practicing yoga and not practicing yoga. The study was conducted on female students aged between 18-21 years pursuing their under graduation course in government college. The sample was selected from 3 different government colleges in Bangalore. A between group design with purposive sampling was opted for the study. One group of female college students who were involved in practicing yoga regularly at least for past one year, through regular coaching centres, under supervision or practicing on their own were considered for the study and the other group of individuals were those students who were not into practicing yoga and also not involved in any regular physical activities. The sample was administered general health questionnaire, depression and anxiety scale, and the results analysed using appropriate statistical measures.

2.1 TOOLS:

General Health Questionnaire (GHQ – 30 item version; Goldberg, 1972):

The Psychometric properties of GHQ are adequate with test-retest reliability found to be 0.77, and split half reliability at 0.92. The sensitivity and specificity of the GHQ-30 was 91.4% and 87% respectively (Goldberg & Williams, 1988). A cut-off score of six was used in the study (Range= zero to 30)

The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) (Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Mock, & Erbaugh, 1961, 1988):

The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) is a 21-item self-report rating inventory that measures characteristic attitudes and symptoms of depression (Beck, et al., 1961). The BDI has been developed in different forms, including several computerized forms, a card form (May, Urquhart, Tarran, 1969, cited in Groth-Marnat, 1990), the 13-item short form and the more recent BDI-11 by Beck, Steer & Brown, 1996. The BDI takes approximately 10 minutes to complete, although clients require a fifth – sixth grade reading level to adequately understand the questions (Groth-Marnat, 1990). Internal consistency for the BDI ranges from .73 to .92 with a mean of .86. (Beck, Steer, & Garbin, 1988). Similar reliabilities have been found for the 13-item short form (Groth-Marnat, 1990). The BDI demonstrates high internal consistency, with alpha coefficients of .86 and .81 for psychiatric and non-psychiatric populations respectively (Beck et al., 1988).

Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) (Beck, Epstein, Brown, Steer, 1988):

This scale is a self-report measure of anxiety, consisting of 21 items. Internal consistency for the BAI = (Cronbach’s $\alpha=0.92$). Test-retest reliability (1 week) for the BAI = 0.75 (Beck, Epstein, Brown, & Steer, 1988). The BAI was moderately correlated with the revised Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (.51), and mildly correlated with the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (.25) (Beck et al., 1988).

3. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS:

The results were analysed by computing t test to identify the difference between the two groups on general health, depression and anxiety scale between students practicing yoga and students not practicing yoga.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Table 1: Showing mean, SD and t ratio on GHQ for two group of students:

Groups	Mean	Standard Deviation	t ratio
Yoga practicing students	4.30	2.58	4.82**
Students not practicing yoga	7.98	2.70	
**P< 0.01 Level			

On GHQ the scores of yoga practicing students is significantly less than the student’s not practicing yoga. The scores indicate that the yoga practicing students have significantly higher general health when compared to student’s not practicing yoga.

Table 2: Showing the mean, SD and t ratio on depression and anxiety for two groups of students:

AREAS	Yoga practicing students		Students not practicing yoga		t ratio
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Depression	11.19	4.21	25.50	5.19	12.36**
Anxiety	19.94	4.25	39.13	4.39	17.94**
**P>0.01 Level					

On depression and anxiety the scores of yoga practicing students is significantly less than the student’s not practicing yoga. The scores indicate that the yoga practicing students have significantly less depression and anxiety when compared to student’s not practicing yoga.

Many studies have also shown that sports, games and yoga have positive impact on both physical and psychological aspects of the individuals. Yoga when compared to other has the best results. As the study indicates student’s regularly practicing yoga have significantly less depression and anxiety and better general health. In this background and also in comparison with the present study results it can be generalized that yoga as part of sports events should be incorporated as a compulsory event for the students to improve and maintain their mental health.

4. CONCLUSIONS:

On general health, anxiety and depression yoga practicing students has fared significantly better than student's not practicing yoga.

5. IMPLICATIONS:

In comparison with the present study results it can be generalized that yoga as part of sports events should be incorporated as a compulsory event for the students to improve and maintain their mental health.

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