



A Study on Mental Well-Being and Self-Esteem among Yoga Practitioners

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ABSTRACT

Yoga is an ancient Indian practice that has gained increasing popularity around the globe. Yoga entails a combination of physical postures, breathing exercises, meditation and ethical principles that is used to improve both mental and physical well-being. Mental well-being refers to a condition of psychological well-being, whereas self-esteem refers to an individual's perception of themselves. Self-esteem has a substantial impact on psychological health. Low self-esteem is associated with negative emotional states like anxiety and depression. Standardized scales were used to measure self-esteem and mental well-being. A total sample of 44 yoga practitioners in the age 18 to 25 were collected. The results found out that there was no significant relationship between mental well-being and self-esteem among yoga practitioners. Past studies suggest that yoga practise can alleviate various symptoms of stress, anxiety and can contribute to overall well-being. Additionally, engaging in yoga can promote positive self-image, increase self-awareness and enhance self-esteem.

Keywords: Yoga, Self Esteem, Mental Well-Being

Introduction

In India, yoga has a long and illustrious history and is profoundly ingrained in its culture. Yoga is a spiritual, mental and physical discipline that originated in India some 5000 years ago. Yoga involves various techniques for meditation, concentration and body postures. In India, yoga is a way of life, not just a form of exercise or physical activity. It is a philosophy that teaches individuals how to live in harmony with themselves and the environment. In India, people of all ages and origins, from monks and sages to commoners, have practised yoga for centuries. Yoga has strong ties to Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism and is profoundly rooted in Indian spirituality. It is believed that ancient sages and yogis created yoga to attain spiritual enlightenment and freedom from the cycle of birth and mortality.

One of the benefits of regular yoga practise is an increase in self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to a person's perception of their own value and confidence in their own abilities and qualities. Yoga improves self-esteem in numerous ways. First, it improves physical strength and flexibility, leading to a greater sense of body mastery. As individuals gain confidence in their physical abilities, they may also gain confidence in other aspects of life.

In addition, yoga can aid in the reduction of tension and anxiety, which are common causes of low self-esteem. Individuals can learn to calm their minds and reduce negative self-talk through breathing exercises and meditation, resulting in a more positive self-image. Additionally, frequent yoga practise can lead to enhanced self-awareness and self-acceptance. Individuals can learn to be more present in the moment and to observe their thoughts and emotions without judgement through the practise of mindfulness. This can facilitate the development of a more positive relationship with oneself, resulting in enhanced self-esteem and mental health.

Yoga improves anxiety and depression (Arora & Bhattacharjee, 2008; Javanbakht, Hejazi, Ghasemi, 2009) and also increases quality of life (Oken et al., 2006; Michalsen et al., 2005). Yoga has also been found to increase strength, flexibility, balance, respiratory functions, better physical fitness and neuromuscular coordination (Abel, Lylo and Williamns, 2013; Raub, 2015)

Self Esteem

Self Esteem is defined as “an evaluation of oneself followed by an emotional reaction towards oneself (Wang & Ollendick, 2001). According to Rosenberg and Pearlin (1978), high self-esteem refers to “a person’s favourable or unfavourable attitude towards the self”. The author adds that high self-esteem refers to the feeling that one is good enough.

According to Alesi et al. (2012) self-esteem is regarded as a “personal psychological characteristic relating to self-judgment based on one’s values about humans”.

Murph, Stosny and Morrel (2005) states that self-esteem is a global barometer of self-evaluation which involves cognitive appraisals about general self-worth and affective experiences of the self and that are linked to these appraisals.

According to Avison and McAlpine (1992) high global self-esteem is directly associated with positive self-evaluation, accepting attitude towards oneself and is also found to be a protective factor against stress, various mental health issues and disorders such as depression whereas lower global self-esteem leads an individual towards self-doubt and self-rejection (Baumeister et al., 2003), develop stress symptoms and move an individual towards ill health (Birndorf, 2003) According to Rosenberg (1965), global self-esteem is defined "as the overall positive or negative attitude towards the self".

A study was done by Dogan et al. (2013) to understand the role of self-esteem, psychological well-being, emotional self-efficacy and affect balance on happiness. A total of 340 university students from Turkey participated in this research study. The data were collected using the tools such as Oxford Happiness Questionnaire-Short Form, Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale, Flourishing Scale, Emotional Self-efficacy Scale, and Positive-Negative Events Scale to measure the variables. The results showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between psychological well-being, emotional self-efficacy and affect balance. Furthermore, Psychological well-being, Emotional self-efficacy and affect balance have positive effects on self-esteem and happiness. It can be seen that self-esteem is positively correlated with happiness.

Research on yoga suggests that practicing yoga is linked to improved psychological well-being and positive self-esteem (Shapiro and Cline, 2004; Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 2010; Sethi et al., 2013). Researchers also suggest that practicing yoga improves subjective feeling of energy and positive affect (Impett et al., 2006; Oken et al., 2006). Woodyard (2011) states that practicing yoga improved health and psychological well-being. According to Brown and Mankowski (1993) high self-esteem reflects personal well-being, happiness and adjustment. The researcher further adds on the benefits and states that higher self-esteem means an individual is satisfied with their life, have lesser interpersonal problems and are less prone to psychological problems.

Mental Well Being

The World Health Organisation (2004) has defined positive mental health as a state "which allows individuals to realize their abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully and make a contribution to community". Another important aspect of it entails mutually satisfying and enduring relationships (WHO, 2001). There are two perspectives that cover both affect and psychological functioning. The hedonic perspective of mental well-being refers to subjective experience of happiness and life satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2001) whereas eudaimonic perspective refers to psychological functioning and self-realization. According to Huppert (2004) positive mental health acknowledged as having important consequences for health and social outcomes (Linley & Joseph, 2004).

A study was done to analyse the effect of structured Yoga intervention on the mental wellbeing of Medical students. A total of 82 MBBS students of 3rd semester aged 18-23 participated in the research programme. The samples were administered with the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28). The results suggested that short-period of Yoga intervention was found to be beneficial in improving the mental well-being of MBBS students (Bansal et al., 2013).

A study was done to analyse the effect of short term Iyengar Yoga programs in enhancing the mental health and wellbeing for physically inactive older adults. A sample of 38 older adults age ranging above 55 are considered and they were engaged with twice a week Yoga training. The result found that there is a significant positive impact on the muscle strength, active range of motion, physical well-being and aspects of mental well-being (Vogler et al. 2011).

Method

Sample

Measures

- **Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale:** The questionnaire was developed by Rosenberg (1965), to assess the level of self-esteem in an individual. The scale comprises a total number of 10 items, which are established on a rate of 1-4 point Likert scale, which covers the response dimensions of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Agree.
- **Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale:** The WEMWBS was proposed by Kammann and Flett (1983), the scale consists of a total number of 14 items, each item is rated in a 1-5 point Likert scale containing the dimensions of ,none of the above, rarely, some of the time, often and all of the time.

Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaires were filled through Google forms. Each participant was thanked for their cooperation. Standardised psychological tests were administered to the participants.

Analysis of Data

Results

Table 1
N, Mean, Standard Deviation

	Self Esteem	Mental Well Being
N	44	44
Mean	15.4	50.6
Standard deviation	1.99	7.08

Table 2
Correlation between Self-esteem and Mental Well Being

	Self Esteem	Mental Well Being
Self Esteem	—	
Mental Well Being	0.040	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion of Results

The results found out that there is no significant relationship between mental well-being and self-esteem among Yoga practitioners. However the positive correlation was found at ($r=0.40$) between self-esteem and well-being. This suggests that there was no statistical relationship between mental well-being and self-esteem but there was a moderate positive correlation between the two stated variables. This indicates that among individuals who practise yoga, those with higher levels of self-esteem tend to have higher levels of mental well-being and vice-versa. However, as with any study, the findings are limited to the specific sample studied and may not be generalisable to the broader population.

Though pattern of result is inconsistent with previous studies, Edwards et al. (2004) studied the relationship between sports including different forms of regular exercise such as, hockey and health club activities (team and individual sports involving relatively more aerobic and resistance exercise, respectively), and several components of psychological well-being and physical self-perception. A comparative study on 60 university hockey players, 27 health club members and 111 non-exercising pupils. The findings concluded that both hockey players and health club members were psychologically well and had more enhanced positive self-perception of themselves as compared to non-exercising students of the university. Moreover, another study was done to evaluate the impact of changes in physical self-concept induced by exercise participation in self-esteem and mental well-being. The study was conducted in Seoul, Korea on 189 university students. The data was collected through a survey measuring physical self-concept, self-esteem, and mental well-being before and after of six-week exercise course. The results showed that physical self-concept is regulated by participating in exercise and in addition to this, participation in exercise directly and positively influences mental well-being; however, it indirectly influences the changes in mental well-being through enhancement of self-esteem (Kim & Ahn, 2021). In addition to this, Papaioannou et al. (2013) did an investigation on 6796 athletes from France, Greece, Norway, Spain and England. In mentioned five different countries, 'moderate-to-vigorous-physical-activity' (MVPA) corresponded, positively to self-esteem and vitality. Additionally, positive association was found between MVPA and mental well-being. Moreover, self-esteem and wellbeing and were positively related to each other in athletes.

Conclusion

Yoga is an ancient Indian mind-body practise that has acquired worldwide popularity as a form of physical exercise and stress relief. Yoga may have a positive effect on mental health, notably in terms of reducing symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression, according to research. In addition, yoga has been associated with enhanced self-esteem, self-awareness, and well-being. The study aimed to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and mental well-being among yoga practitioners Standardized scales were used to collect the data A total sample of 44 yoga practitioners was collected for the study in the age 18-25 years. The results found no significant relationship between mental well-being and self-esteem. However the positive correlation was found at ($r=0.40$) between self-esteem and well-being. The results indicated a moderate positive correlation between self-esteem and mental well-being among yoga practitioners. While, there was no significant relationships between the two variables, the findings suggest that individuals who practise yoga and have higher levels of self-esteem, also have higher levels of mental well-being and vice versa. The findings are consistent with previous research that has highlighted the potential benefits of yoga practise for mental health and self-esteem. Yoga encourages individuals to connect

with their bodies and breath, which can promote feelings of relaxation and reduce tension and anxiety. In addition, the physical postures and movements of yoga can help individuals feel more at ease and confident in their bodies, which can contribute to an enhanced self-image and self-esteem. Incorporating yoga into one's lifestyle may have a positive effect on mental health and self-esteem, according to the findings of this study. While additional research is necessary to better understand the relationship between these variables, the results emphasise the potential benefits of promoting yoga as a holistic approach to mental health maintenance. In addition, the study highlights the significance of addressing mental and physical health as interdependent aspects of overall wellbeing.

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