

A Comparative Study on Mental Health and Psychological Well-being of Yoga and Meditation Practitioners

Anu Dandona

AIBAS, Assistant Professor, Amity University, Lucknow
E-mail: anu.dandona@gmail.com

Abstract—Mental health refers to the overall well-being of an individual. It is about the balance of the social, physical, spiritual and emotional aspects of life. Our Mental Health is characterized by our personal growth, sense of purpose, self-acceptance, and positive relationship with other people. Yoga-meditation is the latest technique to ensure a healthy mind. The practice of yoga discards waste thought leads to harmony between mind, intellect and desires. The experience of this peaceful state brings a natural power of concentration. This study was planned to investigate mental health and psychological well-being of yoga and meditation practitioners. A sample of 100 practitioners (50 from each group) was selected for the present study. Jagdish & Srivastava (1983) Mental Health Inventory and Bhogle & Jaiprakash (1995) psychological well-being questionnaire were administered on them. The findings of the study reveal that people practicing meditation were having better mental health as compared to yoga practitioners. Moreover, no statistically significant difference was found in psychological well-being of yoga and meditation practitioners.

Keywords: Yoga, Meditation, Mental Health, Psychological Well-being

1. INTRODUCTION

The conceptual background of yoga has its origin in ancient Indian philosophy. There are various types of yoga techniques used by the practitioners for ultimate experience of profound states of consciousness. In twentieth century, yoga is applied in therapeutic intervention and proved beneficial also for the practitioners. The physical exercises (*asanas*) may increase patient's physical flexibility, coordination, and strength, while the breathing practices and meditation may calm and focus the mind to develop greater awareness and diminish anxiety (Kirkwood G, *et. al*, 2005), and thus result in higher quality of life. Other beneficial effects might involve a reduction of distress, blood

pressure, and improvements in resilience, mood, and metabolic regulation (Yang K., 2007).

In current scenario, the researches on yoga are not only conducted on adults. The researchers are more interested to measure the benefits of yoga on school children, adolescents, pregnant women and old age people. It is extended even on people at workplace, athletes and people experiencing stress and anxiety.

There have been studies examining the potential benefits of yoga for cancer survivors, with the majority of research focusing on alleviating symptoms of radiation or chemotherapy, such as fatigue. A recent review concluded that yoga improves quality of life and psychosocial outcomes including depression in cancer survivors, but evidence is limited for supporting improvements in fatigue or sleep (Culos-Reed SN, *et. al*, 2012 & Sadjja J, Mills PJ, 2013).

2. BENEFITS OF YOGA ON MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

- Yoga helps to slow down the frustration level, anger, regret and fear or irrelevant desire in an individual.
- Yoga has been effectively used in the management of stress. It has been observed that after practices of yoga decreases verbal aggressiveness compared to physical exercise (Deshpande S, *et.al*, 2008)
- Yoga is also useful against physical stress like cold exposure (Selvamurthy W, *et.al*, 2005) and stress due to diseases like epilepsy (Usha Panjwani, *et. al*, 1995).
- Yoga has been found useful for mental disorders like depression (Shannon M, *et. al*, 2009).
- Yoga helps to enhance physical and mental fitness and have some additional reduction in disease severity through number of indirect pathways.

- Twenty minutes of hatha yoga improves brain functioning to a greater degree than twenty minutes of aerobic exercise.

3. EFFECT OF MEDITATION ON MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Nowadays, meditation is usually done for relaxation and stress reduction. It has been practiced from thousands of years. It is originally meant to help deepen understanding of the sacred and mystical forces of life. With the help of meditation we can focus our attention and eliminate unwanted thoughts, which keep on disturbing our mind and causing anxiety and stress. It enhances physical and emotional well-being of the person.

These days, meditation is being used in almost all the areas. It has made its way into the corporate environment and is used to reduce stress at workplace. Workshops on meditation are being conducted at workplace to reduce workplace stress in employees. This skill of meditation can be easily learned and can be done anywhere to reduce stress. Companies like IBM Corp., Medtronic Inc., Surface Logix Inc., and Shuster Laboratories Inc. are offering meditation programs on-site to their employees to help them reduce stress.

If meditation is practiced regularly, mental health problems will never be an issue. Mental health as well as psychological wellbeing is enhanced with the help of meditation. Many researchers have scientifically proved that meditation is the safest practice as compared to complementary and alternative medicine. These days, many doctors started promoting the benefits of meditation to cure stress related problems. There are many methods of meditation, which are used to treat mental health problems. Yoga is also combined with several meditation techniques, "moving meditation", such as tai chi, it proves beneficial for those who practice. During our time of deliberation and reflection, we slowly start experiencing a heightened awareness of our ability to focus our attention. With enough practice, practitioners may also experience those time in meditation where thought seems to stop. Buddhists call this state "Samadhi" which means an altered state of consciousness, marked by both deep relaxation and heightened alertness.

Objectives

There are two main objectives studied in this paper:

1. To compare the mental health of yoga and meditation practitioners.
2. To compare the psychological wellbeing of yoga and meditation practitioners.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were framed for the purpose of present study:

1. There will be no significant difference on mental health of yoga and meditation practitioners.
2. There will be no significant difference on psychological wellbeing of yoga and meditation practitioners.

4. METHOD

4.1 Sample

Total sample comprised of 100 practitioners, 50 yoga practitioners and 50 meditation practitioners were included in the sample. The data was collected from different centres of Lucknow.

4.2 Tools Used

- a) **The personal data sheet** was prepared to collect the information regarding gender, age, Yoga Practitioner/Meditation practitioner etc.
- b) **Mental Health Inventory** developed by Dr. Jagdish & Dr. A.K. Srivastav (1983) consist of 56 items based on six dimensions—viz. positive self-evaluation, perception of reality, integration of personality, Autonomy, group oriented attitude, and environmental competence. Has four response categories i.e. always, often, rarely and never while the split-half reliability coefficient of the inventory was 0.73 and construct validity was 0.54, which confirm the standardization of the inventory.
- c) **Psychological well-being questionnaire** developed by Bhogale and Prakash (1995) was used to measure Psychological well-being among yoga and meditation practitioners. There are 28 sentences in this scale. All at the sentence had a two option "yes" or "no" belong two option can choose one option and marked by symbol (✓). In positive sentence 1 point for yes and 0 point for no. and in negative sentence 1 point for no and 0 point for yes. The test – retest reliability coefficient is 0.72 and internal consistency coefficient is 0.84. The author has reported satisfactory validity of the questionnaire.

5. PROCEDURE

Prior to the administration of the above-mentioned tools, rapport was established with participants. The researcher informed all the participants that the information obtained from them will be used only for research purpose and will be kept confidential. After those tools were administered on the participants and participants were thanked for their co-operation.

6. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The collected data were classified and tabulated in accordance with the objectives to arrive at the meaningful and relevant inferences by using arithmetic mean, standard deviation and t-test.

7. RESULT AND INTERPRETATION

To examine the significance of difference between yoga practitioners and meditation practitioners on their mental health and psychological wellbeing, obtained data was treated with the help of Mean, SD, and t-test statistical techniques. The outcomes of the analysis are presented in the tables (table 1 and 2).

Table 1: Mean, SDs and 't' values for mental health of yoga and meditation practitioners

Mental Health	Practitioners	N	Mean	SD	t
POSITIVE SELF EVALUATION	Yoga	50	29.00	3.26	1.86
	Meditation	50	30.28	2.44	
PERCEPTION OF REALITY	Yoga	50	25.77	5.49	3.84**
	Meditation	50	29.74	2.66	
INTEGRATION OF PERSONALITY	Yoga	50	28.02	3.38	2.81**
	Meditation	50	30.05	2.58	
AUTONOMY	Yoga	50	25.00	5.26	2.66**
	Meditation	50	27.62	2.48	
GROUP ORIENTED ATTITUDES	Yoga	50	26.37	2.67	3.08**
	Meditation	50	28.45	2.96	
ENVIRONMENTAL MASTERY	Yoga	50	30.54	2.34	3.57**
	Meditation	50	28.02	3.43	

Table 2: Comparison of yoga and meditation practitioners on psychological wellbeing

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING	N	Mean	SD	t
Yoga Practitioners	50	21.48	2.41	1.23
Meditation Practitioners	50	22.20	2.43	

It is evident from Table-1 that yoga and meditation practitioners differs significantly from each other on perception of reality (t=3.849, p<0.01), integration of personality (t=2.818, p<0.01), Autonomy (t=2.669, p<0.01), Group Oriented Attitudes (t=3.088, p<0.01) and environmental mastery (t=3.578, p<0.01). Mean values show that meditation practitioners are having more perception of reality (M= 29.74), integration of personality (M= 30.05), Autonomy (M= 27.62) and Group Oriented Attitudes (M= 28.45) as compared to yoga practitioners (M₁= 25.77, M₂= 28.02, M₃=25.00, M₄=26.374). Besides it, yoga practitioners scored high on environmental mastery (M= 30.54) as compared to meditation practitioners (M=28.02). However, there was no statistically significant difference found on positive self-evaluation of yoga and meditation practitioners.

The comparison of scores of yoga and meditation practitioners on psychological wellbeing is performed in the table 2, which shows that there is non-significant difference between yoga and meditation practitioners on psychological wellbeing (t=1.23).

8. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the mental health (positive self evaluation, perception of reality, integration of personality, Autonomy, Group Oriented Attitudes and environmental mastery) and psychological wellbeing among yoga and meditation practitioners.

When practitioners' group differences were investigated on above sample, it was found that meditation practitioners scored significantly higher on perception of reality, integration of personality, Autonomy, Group Oriented Attitudes as compared to yoga practitioners whereas yoga practitioners scored high on environmental mastery as compared to meditation practitioners (table 1). Moreover, no statistically significant difference was found in psychological well-being of yoga and meditation practitioners (table 2).

Research over the past few decades supports the effective use of mindfulness-based interventions in psychotherapy (Baer, 2010; Hick & Chan, 2010; Hoffman et al., 2010). The literature suggests that mindfulness training leads to a reduction in distressing symptoms and an improvement in mental health and functioning (Baer, 2010; Hick & Chan, 2010). However, experts in the field agree that there is still a need for more rigorous research evaluating the efficacy of the successful use of mindfulness as a clinical intervention, and understanding how it works (Christopher, 2007; Dimidjian & Linehan, 2003; Lau & Yu, 2009; Shapiro & Carlson, 2009; Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Several researchers have attempted to conceptualize mindfulness by identifying what people do when they practice mindfulness, including the quality with which it is done. For example, mindfulness involves awareness or noticing, describing, and participating, which are all done in the present moment with a quality of non-judgment and acceptance (Dimidjian & Linehan, 2003). Hofmann and colleagues (2010) describe the stance of mindfulness as “a mental state characterized by nonjudgmental awareness of the present moment experience” (p. 169) while encouraging openness, curiosity, and acceptance. This concept of mindfulness as a mental state is reflected in the work of Bishop and colleagues (2004) who explain that contemporary psychology approaches mindfulness in terms of increasing awareness of and responding skilfully to mental processes that cause emotional distress and maladaptive behaviour. In this way mindfulness is a meta cognitive skill that teaches people to maintain an attitude of curiosity and a stance of acceptance as they relate to their thoughts, which then expands to how they relate to all their experiences, including thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations.

9. CONCLUSION

The objective of the study was to compare the mental health and psychological wellbeing of yoga and meditation practitioners. The findings of the study states that people practicing meditation are having higher perception of reality, integration of personality, Autonomy, Group Oriented Attitudes as compared to yoga practitioners whereas yoga practitioners scored high on environmental mastery as compared to meditation practitioners.

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