

CHAPTER-05

YOGA PRACTICE - SUBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Subjective wellbeing refers to how people evaluate their lives in terms of feelings of wellbeing or the lack of it. Yoga is considered to be one of the effective tools available for human beings to overcome various physical and mental problems. Yoga aims at an integrated and harmonious development of all the potentialities of man, with significant reduction in stress, and consequently, a better wellbeing. A study was carried out among 100 students on the effect of yoga on subjective wellbeing, which was quantified as an index based on the parameters suggested by OECD (2019). The results showed that there exists statistically significant difference between the subjective wellbeing index of students doing yoga for a very long period (more than 10 years), when compared to different categories of less than 10 years. The parameters such as happiness, contentment, relaxation, enjoyment in life, tension, anger etc. showed significant difference between the groups. Reducing anxiety and stress and attaining more peace are important concerns, especially for students who are nowadays losing their health and wellbeing due to factors such as too much of concentration in studies, wrong diet habits, addictions etc.

Keywords: - Yoga – Steps to attain good health, Wellbeing – Happiness, wrong diet habits – Unhealthy food habits.

1. INTRODUCTION

Stress related illness incurs physical, psychological, social and financial costs to the society. Many prevalent diseases are stress related and may be prevented to a great extent through proper intervention strategies that may not require medication. Personal wellbeing has been conceptualized as optimal functioning rather than merely absence of pathology. Research into wellbeing has centered on the term subjective wellbeing, measured by overall satisfaction with life and by satisfaction across various life domains. The degree to which one experiences control over one's response to life events (perceived control) is considered to have a buffering effect for adverse life events and may enhance wellbeing. Yoga, which is considered as an alternate system of medicine, combines physical postures with conscious attention to breathing, internal cleansing, special breath control and the practice called pranayama and meditation. It is reported to be one of the effective tools to overcome various physical and psychological problems. Yoga aims at an integrated and harmonious development of all the potentialities of people, with significant reduction in stress, and accordingly, a feeling of wellbeing. The influence of yoga and meditation on subjective wellbeing of people have been reported.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out using an interview schedule among 100 students, who attended a yoga competition at Thrissur, Kerala during November 2019. Purposive sampling was adopted to include students practicing yoga for a period ranging from less than 2 years to 10 years and above. The interview schedule consisted of 13 subjective wellbeing (SWB) parameters (OECD, 2013) with three-point responses (very much, slightly, not at all) on improvement / reduction in the parameter through practice of yoga, which were scored as 3, 2 and 1 respectively in the analysis. The subjective wellbeing index of each student was worked out as the total score of all the parameters. The data was analyzed as parameter scores, SWB index and percentages. Statistical *t* test was employed in the analysis of data

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Only those yoga categories (number of years of practice), which exhibited a greater number of significant *t* tests among themselves for the parameter scores, and for the SWB index have been considered for interpretation in this paper. More number of significant *t* values was observed when comparing students with more than 10 years of yoga practice with the other lower experience categories. The results of the subjective wellbeing parameters of the students are given in Table 1. With respect to experiencing happiness through the practice of yoga, it may be inferred from Table 1 that the yoga practice categories, namely, up to 2 years, 6 to 8 years and 8 to 10 years show significant difference in happiness score, when compared to >10 years category. More than 10 years category has the maximum mean score of 3, indicating that all these students have experienced very much improvement in happiness through yoga. However, for contentment in life through yoga, up to 2 years of yoga practice only shows significant difference with >10 years category, with a lower mean score of 2.6 (Table 1). Similar to happiness, all the students with >10 years yoga practice report very much improvement in contentment (mean score 3.0) With respect to relaxation, Table 1 reveals that up to 2 years, 2 to 4 years, 6 to 8 years and 8 to 10 years of yoga practice exhibit statistically significant difference in their mean scores with >10 years category. Here also, all the students with >10 years of yoga practice have experienced very much improvement in relaxation. Regarding the feeling of enjoyment in life, > 10 years yoga category shows significant difference in scores of up to 2 years and 4 to 6 years of yoga practice, both of which exhibit a lower mean score of 2.3 and 2.2 respectively (Table 1). Since the score of >10 years category is 2.8, we can infer that the students in this category experience nearly close to very much improvement in life enjoyment. Similarly, enthusiasm has shown the maximum improvement for students practicing yoga for >10 years (mean

score of 3.0), when compared to the three categories starting from 2 years up to 6 years, and also compared to the category of 8 to 10 years of yoga practice, all of which have comparatively lower mean enthusiasm scores than > 10 years. The t test for the above categories with > 10 years is also significant (Table 1). It can be seen from Table 1 that for concentration and memory improvement through yoga, only up to 2 years yoga practice shows statistically significant difference in mean score with >10 years yoga practice. It may be inferred from the mean score of 2.8 of >10 years that this category is contributing to more or less very much improvement in memory and concentration of the students, unlike in the case of the up to 2 years group, which shows a score of only 2.2 and 2.3 respectively for concentration and memory improvement. Considering the subjective wellbeing parameters, namely, tiredness, tension, anger and feeling of loneliness, it may be inferred from Table 1 that, when compared to the scores of different lower yoga practice categories, > 10 years of yoga practice contributes to a reduction in the range of 25 to 37% in the mean score of these parameters. Since these parameters (conditions) indicate problems, which will contribute to less wellbeing for people, any reduction in these conditions would benefit the students physically and psychologically. Further, it is evident from the data that >10 years of yoga practice has contributed to very much reduction in tiredness and loneliness for all the students, since the mean score is 3.0 under this yoga category for these two parameters (Table 1).

Table 1. Subjective wellbeing parameter scores of the students practicing yoga

Subjective wellbeing parameter	Period of yoga practice (years)	Mean score	t value*
Happiness	Up to 2	2.5	1.73 (0.10 probability)
	6- 8	2.3	2..73 (0.05 probability)
	8-10	2.6	1.63 (0.15 probability)
	> 10	3.0	-
Contentment	Up to 2	2.6	1.33 (0.20 probability)
	> 10	3.0	-
Relaxation	Up to 2	2.4	1.70 (0.10 probability)
	2-4	2.6	1.78 (0.10 probability)
	6-8	2.3	2.73 (0.05 probability)
	8-10	2.4	2.44 (0.05 probability)
	>10	3.0	-
Enjoyment in life	Up to 2	2.3	1.66 (0.10 probability)
	4-6	2.2	2.33 (0.05 probability)
	>10	2.8	-
Enthusiasm	Up to 2	2.5	1.50 (0.15 probability)
	2-4	2.7	1.48 (0.15 probability)
	4-6	2.7	1.46 (0.20 probability)

	8-10	2.4	2.40 (0.05 probability)
	> 10	3.0	-
Concentration	Up to 2	2.2	1.94 (0.05 probability)
	> 10	2.8	-
Memory	Up to 2	2.3	1.66 (0.10 probability)
	> 10	2.8	-
Tiredness	Up to 2	2.4	2.74 (0.01 probability)
	2-4	2.3	2.97 (0.01 probability)
	4-6	2.2	2.56 0.05 probability)
	>10	3.0	-
Tension	4-6	2.0	2.08 (0.05 probability)
	> 10	2.6	-
Anger	4-6	1.9	2.18 (0.05 probability)
	>10	2.6	-
Loneliness	2-4	2.3	1.89 (0.10 probability)
	>10	3.0	-

*Statistically significant, when compared to the score of >10 years category

Taking into consideration the mean percentage of students reporting under the up to 2 years to 8 to 10 years yoga categories, except for concentration, memory, worry and anger, for all the other parameters, more than 50% of students have experienced very much improvement or reduction (Table 2). Maximum number of students in the up to 2 years to 8 to 10 years yoga categories have reported slight improvement in concentration, memory, worry and anger (Data not shown). Table 2 also shows that students in the range of 60 to 100% have experienced very much improvement or reduction in all the parameters, which contribute to wellbeing, through practice of yoga for a period of more than 10 years. Table 3 gives the subjective wellbeing (SWB) index of the students. The SWB index of > 10 years yoga group of students is 37, which works out to about 95% of the maximum possible SWB index value for all the 13 parameters considered together. Table 3 also reveals that there exists statistically significant difference in SWB index of > 10 years group with up to 2 years, 2 to 4 years and 4 to 6 years yoga groups, with mean SWB index in the range of 31.3 to 31.9 (80.2% to 81.8% of the maximum possible SWB index value) for these three groups. This implies that if we take all the subjective wellbeing characteristics / parameters together (which is contributing to a feeling of wellbeing for the students), yoga practice for a period of 6 to 10 years is providing more or less. similar condition of wellbeing for the students as that of more than 10 years yoga practice.

Table 2. Students reporting changes in subjective wellbeing through practice of yoga

Parameter	Respondents (%) reporting very much improvement / reduction* through practice of yoga**	Respondents (%) reporting very much improvement / reduction* through > 10 years of yoga practice
Happiness	62.7	100
Contentment	82.5	100
Calmness	61.3	60
Relaxation	55.4	100
Life enjoyment	61.9	80
Enthusiasm	60.5	100
Concentration	39.8	80
Memory	41.0	80
Tiredness	60.8	100
Tension	56.6	60
Worry	34.2	80
Anger	32.7	60
Loneliness	70.3	100

*Reduction applies to the parameters, namely, Tiredness, Tension, Worry, Anger and Loneliness.

**Mean of up to 2 years to 8 to 10 years yoga practice categories.

Table 3. Subjective wellbeing index of the students practicing yoga

Period of yoga practice (years)	Mean subjective wellbeing (SWB) index	t value*
Up to 2	31.3	2.80 (0.01 probability)
> 10	37.0	-
2-4	32.2	3.23 (0.01 probability)
>10	37.0	-
4-6	31.9	3.63 (0.01 probability)
>10	37.0	-

*Statistically significant, when compared to the SWB index of >10 years category.

The study has shown that yoga helps in improvement / reduction in various psychological and physical wellbeing conditions / problems of the students. This will be extremely beneficial for them in their day-to-day life, contributing to improvement in their studies also.

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