

## PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING THROUGH YOGIC EXERCISES

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**How to cite this article:** Tripathi, R.C., & Bano, S., (September, 2015). Psychological wellbeing through yogic exercises. Journal of Physical Education Research, Volume 2, Issue III, 62-67.

**Received:** May 22, 2015

**Accepted:** September 20, 2015

### ABSTRACT

*The present study was designed to assess the effect of yogic exercises on the psychological wellbeing of college students. A self-made psychological wellbeing scale was used to examine the participant's psychological wellbeing, by using pre and post test design. In order to examine effects of yogic exercises on psychological wellbeing, a training program was introduced by yoga expert. Results found beneficial effects of yogic exercises on the psychological wellbeing of college students.*

**Keywords:** *Yogic exercises, psychological wellbeing, students, beneficial effects.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the age of competition and unlimited desires, people are facing different kinds of health problems with new dimensions, expression and manifestations. Medical sciences are trying to tackle and cure the problems but unable to ensure complete health and wellbeing. Yoga provides the key to holistic development as physical, psychological and spiritual, widely use in India as the technique of relief from stress and for improvement in physical and psychological health (Srivastava, 1999) and wellbeing (Tripathi & Bano, 2014). Individuals oriented spiritually through practicing yoga which manifest in behavior and attitude, ultimately caused to maintain peace and harmony within individual and in the larger society. It can say that yoga is a philosophy of life as well as a science of relaxation.

Psychological wellbeing is a multi-dimensional concept. The feeling of happiness and satisfaction subjectively experienced by individuals has been termed as psychological wellbeing (Okun & Stock, 1987; Diener & Suh, 1997).

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According to Diener and Suh (1997), psychological wellbeing consists of three interrelated components: life satisfaction, pleasant affect, and unpleasant affect. Affect refers to pleasant and unpleasant moods and emotions, whereas life satisfaction refers to a cognitive sense of satisfaction with life (Diener & Suh, 1997). Ryff (1989) in his study identified the aspects that constitute wellbeing: autonomy; environmental mastery; positive relationships with others; purpose in life; realization of potential and self-acceptance. More research has placed different emphases on what wellbeing is: ability to fulfill goals (Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project, 2008); happiness (Pollard & Lee, 2003) and life satisfaction (Diener & Sub, 1997; Seligman, 2002). Shin and Johnson (1978) defined wellbeing in terms of a person's quality of life. The World Health Organization (WHO) defined quality of life as: an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment (World Health Organization, 1997). Thus, the psychological wellbeing is more a question of our attitude and approach to life situations. In other words, a person high in psychological wellbeing not only carries higher levels of life satisfaction, self-esteem, positive feelings and attitudes, but also manages tensions, negative thoughts, ideas and feeling and makes life meaningful and purposeful. This affective reaction of satisfaction is not necessarily related to material gain or the objective conditions of life (Lawton, 1983).

Yoga integrates the mind and body focusing on balance, posture, deep breathing, stretching and relaxation (Tripathi & Bano, 2014). The body and the mind are in a state of constant interaction. The science of yoga does not dictate where the body ends and the mind begins, but approaches both as a single, integrated entity. The word "Yoga" means union of human being and universal energy. The definition of yoga is 'to yoke or join together' (Taylor, 2003). It was originally developed in India over 5,000 years ago. It is one of the few spiritual traditions that have maintained an unbroken development throughout history. The integral yoga deals with all aspects of the nature from body to soul and all possible healing methods from food to meditation (Frawley, 2008). The different paths for developing the mind are based on the fact that the mind has three aspects: knowing (intellect), feeling (emotion) and willing (action). However, this does not mean that these aspects are exclusive to each other. There is no insistence that all individuals must follow one path or another. Yoga encourages to follow the path that most appeals to the heart. It is important to allow cross-currents from other systems to intermingle. Raja yoga covers the entire range of yogic practices from asana and pranayama to the many forms of meditation.

Studies (Sangeetha & Sudhakar, 2011; Singh & Tripathi, 2013; Tripathi & Bano, 2014) have shown that the practice of yoga has a definite role in the promotion of positive health, including mental health, characterized by improved cardio-respiratory efficiency, autonomic responses to stressors, sleep, muscular endurance, and ‘higher’ brain functions. The practice of yoga reduces psychophysiological signs of stress. Yoga has sound scientific basis and an ideal tool for improving positive physical and mental health and wellbeing of people regardless of their age. In the age of anxiety and stress, there is increasing interest in the study of psychological wellbeing as people wish to live in harmony and peace.

Yogic science believes in a holistic approach to health and wellbeing of which the body, mind and spirit are integral and interdependent parts. Yoga claims to endow perfect physical, mental and social wellbeing even under stressful conditions (Tripathi & Singh, 2013). The yogic exercises enhance resilience and improve mind-body awareness, which can help people adjust their behaviours based on the feelings they are experiencing in their bodies (Tripathi & Singh, 2014). Yogic exercises cater to the needs of each individual according to his or her specific needs and physical condition. They involve vertical, horizontal, and cyclical movements, which provide energy to the system by directing the blood supply to the areas of the body which need it most. In yoga, each cell is observed, attended to, and provided with a fresh supply of blood, allowing it to function smoothly (Malathi, Damodaran, Shah, Patil, & Maratha, 2000). Regular practice of the stretches, twists, bends, and inversions (the basic movements of yoga poses) restores strength and stamina to the body. Poses together with the control of breath, rectify physiological, and psychological disorders (Malathi, *et al.*, 2000). It alters stress responses and a person’s attitude towards stress along with improving self-confidence, increasing one’s sense of wellbeing, creating a feeling of relaxation and calmness (Tripathi & Singh, 2013). Yoga however realigns and rejuvenates the body inside and out. Yogic exercises frees the mind from the negative feelings caused by the fast pace of modern life and enhance wellbeing of people.

## **2. METHODS AND MATERIALS**

### **2.1 Subjects**

The study was carried out with 100 male participants aged 20-25 years. They were selected from a college located in rural area near by Varanasi City. The participants were divided into two groups (control N=50, and experimental N=50) to examine the effects of yogic exercises on the psychological wellbeing.

## 2.2 Tool

**2.2.1 Psychological Wellbeing Scale:** The psychological wellbeing scale was developed by the investigators. It consists of 20 items including positive affect (e.g., feelings of optimism, cheerfulness, and relaxation), satisfying interpersonal relationships and positive functioning (e.g., energy, clear thinking, self-acceptance, competence, autonomy). The subjects were asked individually to rate their answers on the 5-point scale. The reliability of the scale was 0.72 established by test and retest method. Higher scores indicated better psychological wellbeing and less scores showed lower level of psychological wellbeing.

## 2.3 Procedure

In the beginning both groups were exposed to pre test on selected variable. Training program was introduced to experimental group only. The training program was scheduled for 12 weeks (5 days in a week). Yogic exercises were introduced to the participants approximately over 1 hour and 30 minutes in the morning. All the participants were encouraged to attend the session regularly. The yogic exercises were taught by the experts. The training program consisted different steps such as- warming up (5 minutes), suryanamaskar (15 minutes), asanas (20 minutes), parmayam (15 minutes), om chanting (05 minutes), shavasana (20 minutes), and talk method (10 minutes). After completion of 12 weeks training program post test was administered on both groups.

## 2.4 Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics as well as paired sample t test, by using SPSS v.16 software.

## 3. RESULTS

**Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and significance of difference between control and experimental groups on psychological wellbeing**

Groups	Pre-Test		Post-Test		t value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Control	54.86	5.73	56.38	6.79	1.42
Experimental	53.26	6.04	74.36	6.01	15.10*

p<0.05\*

Tabulated  $t_{0.05} = 2.02$

Table 1 presents mean, standard deviation and significance of difference between control and experimental groups on the psychological wellbeing measure. With respect to pre-test, insignificant difference (1.42) between control and experimental groups was found. Whereas significant difference (15.10  $p < 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of control and experimental groups of post-test was evident. Further suggesting that training program has beneficial effects on the psychological wellbeing of college students.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

The findings of the present study reported significant difference between the mean scores of pre-test and post-test of experimental group. In the light of the findings it could be stated that, there is beneficial effects of yogic exercises on the psychological wellbeing of college students. This finding is also supported by other relevant studies (Malathi & Damodaran, 1999; Rizzolo, 2008; Singh & Tripathi, 2013; Tripathi & Bano, 2013, 2014) that the practice of yoga has a definite role in the promotion of positive health, including mental health, characterized by improved cardio-respiratory efficiency, autonomic responses to stressors, sleep, muscular endurance, and 'higher' brain functions. The practice of yoga reduces psycho-physiological signs of stress. Yoga has sound scientific basis and an ideal tool for improving positive physical and mental health of people regardless of their age. Therefore, the finding of this study has several implications to aware and motivates people for maintaining their health and wellbeing by practicing yogic exercises regularly.

#### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

In the present study, it was proposed that yogic exercises would have beneficial effects on the psychological wellbeing. The findings provide the evidence that support this. Overall, it was concluded that yogic training program has beneficial effects on the psychological wellbeing.

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