

A STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF GENDER AND YOGA ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING OF MIDDLE AGE ADULTS

Jyoti Chauhan and*

Sanjay Kumar**

Abstract

This present research paper is an attempt to find out the effect of gender and yoga on psychological well-being of middle age adults. For this purpose, the sample was consisted of 150 male and female subjects of age range 30 - 40 years, who were randomly selected from yoga centers, walking parks and offices. These subjects were further consisted of three groups of yoga practitioner (yoga practitioner, 505Ss; morning walkers, 50Ss and late wakers, 50Ss). Each group of yoga practitioners was further consisted of two gender groups; they were Male 25Ss and females, 25Ss. In this way a 3x2 factorial design was employed with 25Ss in each cell. The psychological well-being of subjects was measured by PGI General Well-being scale constructed by Dr. Santosh K. Verma and Amita Verma. Obtained data were analyzed by mean, SD and ANOVA. The results indicate that yoga was found to be significantly influencing psychological well being of adult subjects and gender was not found to be effective on psychological well being of adult subjects significantly.

Key words: -Psychological well-being, Gender and Yoga

* **M.Phil Scholar, Department of Psychology A.P.S. University, Rewa (M.P) India**

** **Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology Ch. Charan Sing University Meerut (UP)
India**

INTRODUCTION

The word well being was first used as early as 16th century and become a very popular word of psychology in the 21st century. It was taken from Aristotle's Eudemonia consisted of *eu* and *daimonm* meaning good and spirit respectively. The literal meaning of well-being is related to happiness, full of life, vitality, energy, interest, and prosperity as well as harmonious satisfaction of one's desires and goals (Checala, 1975). Initially the concept of well being was conceptualized as balance between positive and negative affect, resulting in happiness as key indicator of well being (Bradburn's, 1969). In the later observations psychological wellbeing was defined in terms of cognitive component, life satisfaction and positive functioning (Ryff and Keyes, 1995). The cognitive processes such as aspiration, social comparison and adaptation level were suggested to be related to psychological well being that emphasizes life satisfaction and conscious evaluative judgments about one's satisfaction with life as a whole (Levi, 1987; Adams *et al.*, 1997; Diener, 1984). In holistic approach to health body, mind and spirit were considered as integral and interdependent parts of well being (Goldberg and Hillier, 1979). In later literature it was defined as the state of individual's life situation with subjective perception of doing well in life, being happy, healthy or prosperous and mode of moral or physical welfare with feelings of happiness and satisfaction as subjective experience by individuals (Okun and Stock, 1987). A few other terms like subjective well-being, quality of life, and mental health, and developed person have also been used as synonyms of psychological well being (PWB), which is not related to material gain or the objective conditions of life, i.e., one may be dissatisfied with his life in spite of having plenty of wealth and family riches (Maslow, 1967).

Psychological well-being was also suggested as a dynamic state characterized by reasonable amount of harmony between individual's abilities, needs and expectations and environmental demands and opportunities (Diener *et al.*, 1999). The general wellbeing also has characteristic of motivation to carry out activities on behavioural level with good physical health and also influence quality of life. Keyes and colleagues (2002) differentiated between subjective well-being and psychological well-being, where one is a balance of positive and negative affect and satisfaction whereas later is how commitment to existential challenges is perceived. Moreover, Keyes and Haidt (2003) stated that the level of well being also indicates how the individual is

being involved in communal activities, such as volunteering and voting and how one feels responsible to others.

Theoretically, The World Health Organization (WHO) found the meaning of well being as 'healthy mind in a healthy body, in a healthy environment (Shri, 2007). It is also considered as a multidimensional term and observed to be synonymous with positive health, contentment, satisfaction, happiness, feeling of being achieved desired goals of life, living in a good environment, being of worth for the world, being able to cope with life, enjoying life etc. (Singh and Shyam, 2007). In multidimensional terms Pender (1982) conceptualized wellness to have 5 dimensions, i.e., self responsibility, nutritional awareness, physical fitness, stress management and sensitivity to the effects of environment and sensitivity to the effects of environment on wellness. Cloninger (2008) stated that authentic well-being involves positive emotions, mature character traits, like self-directedness, cooperativeness, and self transcendence, life satisfaction and character strengths and virtues, such as hope, compassion and courage in addition self awareness was pointed as the key to authentic.

Other factor like cheerfulness, optimism, playfulness, self-control, quality of life, a sense of detachment and freedom from frustration, anxiety and loneliness have been accepted as indicators of psychological wellbeing by certain researches (Sharma, (2014; Sinha and Verma, 1992; Moore and Keyes, 2003). It was also suggested to be related to individual development, self-actualization, attempting to grow up (Waterman, 1993). Sociologists use the word 'wellbeing' mostly in the sense of good living conditions; ecologist and biologist in term of living standard and politicians and social reformers refers to preconceptions of what a good living environment is like, such as good standard of living and social equality (Veenhoven, 2004). It was also focused on cultural differences (Diener *et al.*, 1998), individual differences (Sheldon *et al.*, 2004), change in psychological well-being through life span (Blanchflower and Oswald 2008)

Gender and Psychological Well-being

When gender difference is observed in terms of health and wellbeing, the socio-biological researches has established that men are biologically poor in combating so many psycho-

biological diseases as compared to women who have comparatively higher immunity. In this reference the empirical observations also revealed that women have better psychological well being, healthier lifestyle and behaviour patterns and more health-promoting behaviours than men do (Kandrack, *et al.*, 1991; Rossi, 1992; Courtenay, 1998; Mechanic and Cleary, 1980; Brown and McCreedy, 1986; Ratneret at al., 1994). The gender difference was suggested to be part of social conditions due to gender stereotypes in different societies, may result in difference in feeling of well being in male and females too (Mills *et al.*, 2003).

Gropel (2001) found that women scored higher than men in emotional wellbeing as well as in life satisfaction. In contrast to it, Rootman, Kirsten and Wissing (2003) concluded that men scored higher than women and explained that difference with the socially disadvantaged position historically held by women. Whereas, Sharma (2014) studied the effects of Gender on Psychological well being and Quality of life and he found no significant effect on PWB or QOL both (Sharma, 2014). Similarly, Harris, Heller, and Braddock (1988) concluded that Gender did not appear to moderate the relationship between psychological health and its determinants (Stephens *et al.*, 1999), So the empirical observations vary over researches and residency. .

Yoga and Psychological Well-Being

Yoga is an ancient Indian Science and a way of life, which includes the practice of specific postures, regulated breathing, and meditation (Taimini, 1861; Swami Chinmayananda, 1984). It is both, the goal as well as the means to achieve a state of perfect harmony. It is a discipline aimed at training the consciousness for a state of perfect spiritual insight and tranquility that is achieved through the three paths of actions and knowledge and devotion. It is a system of exercises practiced to promote control of the body and mind. The benefits of yoga includes, improving health, curing diseases and deformities, developing mental faculties, in addition emotional development, social development, spiritual development and the ultimate aim of yoga is self realization and self development (Yoga Org, 2014). In the literature of Indian scripture, the detail description of yoga is explained in *Mandukya Upanishad* (Swami, 1984).

The continued practice of yoga leads to a sense of peace and well-being and also a feeling of being with ones environment. It makes the body strong and flexible and improves the

functioning of the respiratory, circulatory, digestive, and hormonal systems. Yoga brings about emotional stability and clarity of mind. The ultimate aim of yoga is self realization and self development (Yoga Org, 2014).

Yoga and wellbeing may be associated with psychologically as well as cognitively. The practices of Yoga may sometimes be desirable to stimulate the mind positively (Taimini, 1961; Swami, 1984). Hence a combination of 'awakening' and 'calming' practices may be better suited to reach a balanced, relaxed state, following meditation on a meaningful syllable, 'OM' which was accompanied by decrease in cutaneous blood flow suggesting an increase in sympathetic vasomotor tone (Telles, Nagarathna, and Nagendra, 1998). In contrast to meditation, the metabolic rate increased both during a sitting (Rai, Ram, Kant Madan, and Sharma, 1994) and a standing yoga posture (Rai and Ram, 1993).

The application of yoga as a therapeutic intervention began as early as in the twentieth century. After the place to place *Yogik* Camps by different religious baba's like Ramdev has let the people understand and feel the advantages of related to health. The observations also indicated that the yogic *asanas* may increase patient's/in normal people physical flexibility, coordination, and strength, while the breathing practices and meditation may calm and focus the mind to develop greater awareness and diminish anxiety, and increase quality of life and having psychological well-being and life satisfaction as well (Setterlind, *et al.*, 2000).

The empirical observations like Moliver (2013) found that yoga had a significantly positive effect on all aspects of SWB. Bussing, *et al.* (2012) conducted a study to see the effect of yoga on mental and physical health and found beneficial effects of yoga for pain associated disability and mental health. Deshpande, Nagendra and Nagarathna (2009) conducted a study to a randomized control trail of the effect of yoga on Gunas (personality) and self esteem and shown the influence of yoga on gunas and self esteem in comparison to physical exercise. In the same vein, Kamakhya (2004) reported the effect of days meditation practice brought a significant positive change in the subjective well being of students (Malathie, *et al.*, 2000). The result revealed a significant improvement in 9 of the 11 factors of subjective well-being in healthy volunteer at the end of 4 months of yoga practice. Burris, *et al.* (2009) found that health

promotion practitioners should adopt strategies that strengthen the *personality* characteristics and values associated with university student's psychological health.

METHODOLOGY

Research Problem

To study the effect of gender and yoga on psychological wellbeing of middle age adults

Hypothesis

The study was guided by the null hypothesis that there will be no significant effect of yoga and gender on psychological well-being of middle age adults.

Sample

The sample for the study was consisted of 150 middle age adults of age 35 ± 5 years, who were randomly taken from randomly selected Yoga centres, morning walking Park and offices of Meerut city. These subjects were consisted of three groups of yoga practitioners, who were varied at three levels, i.e., yoga practitioners (50Ss), morning walkers (50Ss) and late wakers (50Ss). Each group of yoga practitioners was further consisted of two groups of gender; they were male (75Ss) and female (75Ss). In this way a 2x3 experimental factorial research design was employed in the research. All these subjects were educated graduates, working in government and private sectors and belonging to medium economic status.

Tool

Following tool were used for the measurement of variables under study.

1. Case Record Sheet: It was used to get general information about subjects, like name, age, gender, occupation, type of family and so on.
2. General Well-being Scale developed by Verma & Verma (1971). The scale includes 20 items based on some parameters. The scale had high reliability and validity.

Procedure and Statistics

The data was collected individually from each subject after random selection from different places. The obtained data was statistically analyzed by mean SD, and ANOVA.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The obtained data was systematically tabulated and organized and statistically analysed by Mean and ANOVA. The obtained results are presented in Table-1 and Table-2.

Table-1 Showing Mean Psychological Wellbeing Score and F-scores of Gender and Yoga groups of Middle Age Adults.

Variables	Levels	Mean Values	F- Score (df)
Yoga	Yoga Practitioner	16.80	5.47*
	Morning Walkers	15.90	(df-2)
	Later Wakers	13.98	
Gender	Male	15.24	1.25
	Female	15.88	(df-2)

Yoga and Psychological Well-being

The study of Table-1 indicated that the obtained F-value for psychological well being scores of yoga group was showing a significant effect of yoga on psychological well being of adult subjects at .05 level of significance [$F(144, 1) = 5.47$ $p < .05$]. This means that yoga was found to be significantly influencing psychological wellbeing in middle age adult subjects. The Table-1 is also showing the mean psychological wellbeing score indicated that the yoga practitioners ($M=16.80$) were showing significantly higher psychological well being than morning walkers ($M=15.90$) and late wakes ($M=13.98$), who have shown lowest psychological mean scores. This indicated that three Yoga group differ significantly in psychological wellbeing of middle age adults.

The obtained results are quite interesting and showing the existing trends of the positive effect of yoga on positive variables of human behaviour and cognition. Various empirical researches also validate the results that Yoga has a significantly positive effect on all aspects of subjective wellbeing. In particular the longer the engagement in Yoga, the higher level of positivity, vitality, and overall sense of transcendence can be obtained with the lowest rates of anxiety, sadness and irritability (Moliver, *et al.*, 2013). The findings show that yoga is associated with beneficial effect on quality of life, curing diseases like cancer, as well as helpful in social

functioning, emotional wellbeing and overall mood (Moadel and Shah, *et al.* 2007). The reason may be related to the fact that the practice of yoga increases physiological stability in brain waves, hormonal functioning and stabilize cardio-respirations and autonomic activity of individuals. It increase significant amount of oxygen in the body, increase metabolic rate, and endorphins are released in the brain to develop positive feelings and happiness and consequently good psycho-physical health, good level of life satisfaction and well being in person (Wales, Benson, and Wilson, 1971). Also though it needs sufficient amount of practice but minimum amount of yoga and meditation but on regular basis can play a very constructive role in having good health and psychological wellbeing in life of any person (Jadhav, and Havalappanavar, 2009).

Gender Psychological and Well-being

A look at Table-1 is showing the F-scores for gender groups in relation to psychological well being indicated that gender was not found to be significantly effective on psychological well being at .05 level of significance [$F(150, 2) = 1.25; p < .05$]. This means that gender did not influence psychological well-being significantly in middle age adults. The Table-1 is also showing the mean psychological well-being scores indicated that the groups of female ($M=15.24$) and male ($M=15.88$) subjects has more or less similar score on psychological well being also revealed that the groups of male and female middle age adults do not differ significantly in psychological well being.

Although, the review of literature shows mixed results in reference to causal relationship between gender and psychological well being, but few empirical researches indicated that gender has no effect on psychological well being (Sharma, 2014), whereas few others concluded that male has higher psychological well being and other few found that females have better psychological well being (Croese, *et al.*, 1992; Hasida Ben-Zur, 2003; Bhupinder and Udainiya (2009). The difference among gender groups may discussed in reference to nature of construction of social groups, cultural influence as well as nature of population from where the sample would have been taken in various researches. But now days these factors are secondary in reference to population of metro cities as well, as population belonging to NCR. Because people irrespective of gender, cast and creed are getting equal opportunities to have proper food,

education, means of amusements, sports and outing. Thus secondary variables related to psychological wellbeing are common. As for as equal psychological wellbeing among male female is concerned, the psycho-biological effects of yoga and meditation are common on body without natural discrimination. Thus, no significant difference between male and female was observed on psychological well being. In addition all the subjects of the present research were yoga practisers so they were sharing common effects on psychological well being and other parameters as well (Ali, 2010).

CONCLUSION

So, from the above results and discussion it can be concluded that is significantly influential to enhance psychological well being in adult subjects. This, yoga is an effective technique for modern man to attain high psychological well being and happiness which was also validated by various empirical researches. Further, the gender was not found to be significantly effective on psychological well being of adult subjects.

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