

A study on the effect of yoga practices on the level of anxiety among college students

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Abstract:

The present study was intended to determine whether the intensity of yoga practice in minutes and the duration of yoga experience in months would relate with the level of anxiety and health among college students. Methods: Fifty participants with ages between 18 and 25 years (group mean age \pm S.D., 22 ± 2.80) who were studying in a college in north of India, were included in this study. Participants were assessed for level of anxiety using Spielberger's State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). Pearson correlation analyses were performed using PASW (SPSS version 18.0) to determine how would be correlated with the daily yoga practice and duration of the yoga experience of the participants. Results: Yoga practice in months was found negatively correlated with the level of anxiety ($p < 0.05$). Conclusions: The results suggest that the duration of yoga practice in months decreases the level of anxiety.

Keywords: Asana, Pranayama, Anxiety level;

Introduction:

Anxiety has unfavourable effects on the body that may progress into chronic conditions if left untreated. For example, anxiety has been connected to coronary heart disease.¹ Decreased quality of life,² and suicidal behaviour³. Anxiety disorders are subdivided into panic disorder, obsessive – compulsive disorder, posttraumatic disorder, social anxiety disorder, phobias, and generalized anxiety disorder.⁴ Although the clinical presentation of anxiety disorders ranges from chest pain and tachycardia to insomnia, all of these disorders enter on an intense, unwarranted fear for a defined period of time.⁵ and affect approximately 18% of Americans in any given year.

Yoga is defined as a practice consisting of three components: gentle stretching; exercises for breath control; and meditation as a mind-body intervention⁶. It is a technique which involves physical postures,

controlled breathing (Pranayama), and deep relaxation. These yogic techniques seem to have specific influence on one's psychological state and the research on the psycho physiological benefits of yoga and meditation on adults has demonstrated improvements in emotional self-regulation with consequent reductions in depression, stress, anxiety levels and posttraumatic disorder as well as improvements in mood, quality of life, and well-being.

There are a number of studies that look at the effects of yoga on anxiety levels in non-clinical samples. A study compared the effects of swimming, fencing, body conditioning, and yoga classes and found that only the yoga treatment group recorded a significant short term reduction in state anxiety⁷. Another study reported that yoga reduced anxiety but only among male students⁸. However, a study of elderly people, found that yoga participants fared

worse than those in an aerobic exercise group and no better than the other treatment regimens on anxiety measures^{9, 10}. One of the study shows that Academic Anxiety can be reduced through Yoga.¹¹

Materials and Methods:

Participants:In the present study, fifty participants with group mean age \pm S.D., 22 \pm 2.6 participated.They were studying at University of Patanjali, Haridwar in a north side of India. The inclusion criteria were: (i) normal health, (ii) minimum 10 years of education. The exclusion criteria were: (i) incomplete or incorrectly filled in questionnaires, and (ii) those who were using stimulants or intoxicating substances. The details of the questionnaires were described to the participants. The study was permitted by the management committee of the institution.

Design:

The study used a single group, cross-sectional design. Participants were assessed in single session.

Assessment:

Participant’s rating of their anxiety level was assessed using Spielberger’s State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI).

Data analysis:

Pearson correlation analyses were performed using PASW (SPSS version 18.0) to determine how the intensity of yoga practice in day and duration of yoga practice in months would predict anxiety of the participants.

Results:

The duration of yoga practice in months showed negative correlation with self rated anxiety ($p < 0.05$).

Table

		Yoga_exp_months	STAI_yoga
Yoga_exp_months	Pearson Correlation	1	-.002
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.989
	N	50	50
STAI_yoga	Pearson Correlation	-.002	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.989	
	N	50	50

Conclusion:

The findings of this study reveal that the students who experienced yoga module showed a significant reduction in their anxiety level. The results are in tune with the earlier studies, which found that meditation, practiced over long periods, produces definite changes in perception, attention, and cognition. A study conducted on college going student shows a reduction in anxiety level as effect of Yogic relaxation technique Yoga Nidra¹¹. For example, following a short yoga intervention, students

reported improvements in perceived stress and depressive symptoms (Simard AA et al 2009). The institutions in the developed countries offer various counseling and stress management programs to students to cope up with the situations. Among many North American medical schools, several have established policies and programs to provide treatment services and wellness programs addressing students’ mental health issues. (Roberts LW, et al 2001).

The result suggests that duration of yoga practice in months can minimize the level of

anxiety. The yoga practice can be used as a tool for positive youth development. It can be concluded that inclusion of yogic intervention in the anxiety level of the college going student's and ultimately benefit all aspects of their academic careers.

If these suggestions are implemented, the overall anxiety of the students can be reduced, which helps them to be more successful as students and as a human being to the nature and nation.

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