

Effectiveness of Yoga on Certain Personality Traits – A Pilot Study

Dr.B.Tamilselvi*, Dr.S.Thangarajathi**

*Associate Professor, Department Of Education, Karpagam University, Coimbatore. E-Mail: g_tamilselvi@yahoo.co.in

**Assistant Professor, Department Of Educational Technology, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore

Abstract

Context: Personality is best understood in terms of internal and external influences. In the Western perspective, the various personality theories fall into five major perspectives - the Psychoanalytic perspective which defines personality in terms of the dynamics that underlie behaviour, the Trait perspective which defines personality in terms of behaviors, the Humanistic perspective which pays attention to the growth potential of people, the Social cognitive perspective which emphasizes the ways in which personalities are influenced by environment and the Evolutionary perspective which asserts that the patterns of behavior seen in a species is a product of evolution. In the Indian perspective, the essence of human personality is the Self. Self-realization is the goal of human life according to Indian psychology. Yoga tends to improve personality. **Aim:** The aim of this study is to find out the effects of Yoga on certain personality traits. **Objectives:** The objective of the study is to find out whether there is any significant difference in the personality trait scale's scores between pre and post yoga practice. **Subjects:** The subjects of this study are common people.

Method: Since the major objective of the present study is the effectiveness of Yoga on certain personality traits of common people, it requires adopting the Experimental Research method. The sample consisted of 30 common people both men and women who were selected by using Random Sampling Technique. A Personality Trait Scale that consisted of 48 questions on different personality traits was selected. Statistical analysis used in this study are Mean and 't' test. **Results:** The personality scores were found to be elevated after Yoga program indicating the fact that Yoga is found to be effective in increasing the personality thereby developing it. **Conclusion:** This pilot study concludes and proves the fact that Yoga definitely improves the personality of an individual. **Recommendations:** Yoga can be considered as the most effective therapy for many physiological and psychological ailments. When people follow a small practice of Yoga regularly, they are sure to get the following benefits.

1. Physiological Benefits.
2. Psychological Benefits.
3. Spiritual Benefits.

Developing the above implications with the help of continuous practice of Yoga the best citizens can be chiselled out for our country.

Key Words: Personality, Trait, Mean scores, Yogasana, Pranayama and Meditation.

Introduction:

In modern times, psychology has adopted an integrated perspective towards understanding consciousness, behavior, and social interaction. This perspective is commonly referred to as the bio-psycho-social approach. The basic tenet of the bio-psycho-social model is that any given behavior or mental process affect and are affected by dynamically interrelated biological, psychological, and social factors. The psychological aspect refers to the role that cognition and emotions play in any given psychological phenomenon. The biological aspect refers to the role of biological factors in psychological phenomena. The socio-cultural aspect refers to the role that social and cultural environments play in a given psychological phenomenon. When the psychological characteristics of an individual get affected it will definitely affect the mental health as well as the physical health which finally will influence their personality development. So it becomes necessary to study the personality traits of individual and remedial measures to protect their personality. This study deals with the effects of yoga on certain personality traits of common people.

Statement of the problem:

Every individual has to play three different roles each at home, work place and at society. They need to face numerous problems while playing these three roles. So they are flooded with extreme stress, anxiety and tension which finally affect their personality. The reasons for one's stress can be channelised in four ways, life at home, life in society, life at the work place, and personal life. At home, people face many problems due to misunderstanding with the elders and other family members. In the society they need to bring out their recognition by holding up their status financially and socially. At

their work place they are flooded with problems such as work pressure, lack of job satisfaction, insufficient salary package, misunderstanding with their higher officials, etc. Personally also they need to face problems physiologically and psychologically suffering from diseases, stress, anger, tension, depression, anxiety and even medications for these illness will affect their personality. All these problems have a direct influence on the personality development of the individual and work efficiency of people. Sometimes, the pressures, which bear down upon them threaten destruction or serious injury to their personality and then they judge themselves helpless. In such cases they turn towards negative activities in the society and found themselves as criminals thereby destructing not only their lives but also their family and finally the society they belong. So to tone up their personality development, yogic science – yoga and meditation has been tried as a technology, which will help in improving their psychological characteristics.

Yoga is a science of the mind and soul. Yoga links the body with mind, mind with athma and finally athma with paramathma, the universe. It is the treasure of our yogis and rishis. Yoga and meditation is suitable for all people from young age to old age, from family men to sadhus. Rather the most of it are for social well being and mental peace in the normal life of man. So every individual has to know of it, has to practice it and make his generations to follow him, so as to have a balanced, awakened mind for achieving excellence and to have a total happy life.

Yoga – meaning:

Yoga means "union" in sanskrit, the language of ancient india where yoga originated. It refers to traditional physical and mental disciplines originated in india; to the goal achieved by those disciplines; and to one of the six orthodox (astika)

schools of hindu philosophy. Yoga has five principal meanings: 1) yoga as a disciplined method for attaining a goal; 2) yoga as technique of controlling the body and the mind; 3) yoga as a name of one of the schools or systems of philosophy (darsana); 4) yoga in connection with other words, such as hatha, mantra, and laya, referring to traditions specialising in particular techniques of yoga; 5) yoga as the goal of yoga practice (knut a.jacobsen (ed), 2005). A combination of yogasana, pranayama and meditation work wonders for those that intend on cleansing both physical and subtle body.

Yoga – techniques:

(i) Yogasana

Yogasana is a body posture, it is a sanskrit word used to describe a position of the body. Patanjali, the founder of ashtanga yoga defines asana as "steady and comfortable posture". A yogasana is a posture in harmony with one's inner consciousness. It aims at the attainment of a sustained and comfortable sitting posture to facilitate meditation. Asanas also help in balancing and harmonizing the basic structure of the human body, which is why they have a range of therapeutic uses too.

Traditionally many asanas are practiced in hatha yoga, primarily to achieve better physical and mental health. Asanas have deep impact on the entire body and mind complex. It affects different systems in the body like muscular, respiratory, circulation, digestive, excretory, reproductive, endocrine, nervous system.

(ii) Pranayama:

Pranayama is derived from two sanskrit words - prana (life force) and ayama (control). Therefore, in its broadest description, pranayama would mean the control of the flow of life force. 'Prana' is an energy or life force that is universal in nature - it is omnipresent. A portion of that

prana is also present in the human body. It flows at a superficial level to maintain the body and its organs. The goal of pranayama is to increase the quantum of this life force (prana) so that it can reach out to 'hidden' recesses of the brain. This helps in expanding the human faculties and retarding degeneration. Patanjali in his text of yoga sutras mentioned pranayama as means of attaining higher states of awareness; he mentions the holding of breath as important practice of reaching samadhi.

(iii) Meditation:

The word meditation is derived from two latin words: meditari (to think, to dwell upon, and to exercise the mind) and mederi (to heal). Its sanskrit derivation 'medha' means wisdom. In his sutras "sage patanjali" has explained 8 limbs of yoga (ashtanga yoga). Those are: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, and dhyana samadhi. The initial four stages are the basic stages which help the person to attain "sthira" (stability of mind) which is the prior necessity for practicing the further stages of meditation. According to him meditation (dhyana) means - "full concentration of the mind focused on one of those experiences" in simple terms, the spontaneous concentration of the mind on the object is meditation. Definitions or descriptions of meditation usually include focus on some object of concentration, such as the breath, a word, an object, or thought. In the classical eight-limbed path of yoga, meditation is a part of the second four limbs which are known as the inner limbs. These four limbs in order are: sense-withdrawal, concentration, meditation and the last is samadhi or absorption - not an easily translatable concept, but basically an ecstatic state of oneness.

Benefits of yoga:

Yoga's primary emphasis is upon general well-being. Although yoga has been

shown to be beneficial in a variety of conditions, it is not considered a therapy for specific illnesses. Rather, yoga employs a broad holistic approach that focuses on teaching people a new lifestyle, way of thinking, and way of being in the world. In the process, however, it is also found to bring a myriad of healing effects. By attending to practices for improving, regaining or retaining general good health, a person is likely to find that some of his more specific difficulties tend to disappear. Many of the healing effects of yoga are clinically verified. However, one of the most important benefits of yoga is its application in relieving stress, fatigue, invigoration and vitality and its anti-aging properties and its application for relaxation therapy. Yoga can be considered as the most effective therapy for many physiological and psychological ailments.

Aim of the study:

The main aim of this study is to find out the effects of yoga on certain personality characters of the common public by taking the people behind the scenes for a better understanding of just how their personalities have developed by using their own experiences with yoga as a laboratory.

Objective of the study:

The objective of the study is to find out whether there is any significant difference in the personality trait scale's scores between pre and post yoga practice.

Hypothesis:

The hypothesis framed is a positive hypothesis that "there is a significant difference in the personality trait scale's scores between pre and post-yoga practice".

Review of literature:

A study published in the international journal of neuroscience compared 25 meditators of sahaja yoga to a group of 25 comparison subjects who did not practice

meditation on a range of trait personality measures. The long-term meditators scored significantly lower in personality features of anxiety, neuroticism, psychoticism, and depression and scored higher in emotion recognition and expression. This suggests that long-term meditation practice leads to higher psycho-emotional stability and better emotional skills (aftanas I, golosheykin s., 2005). Results of another study on students revealed significant increase in grip strength, dexterity, confidence, self-sufficiency, mental health, creativity, concentration, memory and intellectual abilities of students who practiced yoga. The results suggest that regular practice of yoga techniques had a beneficial effect on the development of personality on the physical, mental, emotional and intellectual levels of students of the experimental groups compared to the control groups. Yoga techniques may prove to be an effective means for producing positive personality growth in adolescent students (meena venkatesh). A bilingual mindfulness meditation - based stress reduction program in an inner- city sitting showed reduction in compliance medical and psychologic symptom and improvement in self-esteem of english and spanish speaking patients who completed the 8-week stress reduction and relaxation program at the community health center in meriden, conn (roth b., and creaser t.,1997).

Research method:

1. Method:

Since the major objective of the present study is the effectiveness of yoga on certain personality traits of common people, it requires adopting the experimental research method.

2. Sample:

The sample consisted of 30 common people both men and women who were

selected by using random sampling technique.

3. Tool:

A personality trait scale that consisted of 48 questions on the following personality traits was selected.

1. Self confidence.
2. Persistence.
3. Cooperativeness.
4. Emotional stability.
5. Emotional control.
6. Sense of responsibility.
7. Courtesy.
8. Sociability.
9. Leadership.
10. Initiative.
11. Attitude towards life and
12. Attitude towards self.

Each trait consisted of 4 questions out of which 2 were positive items and 2 were negative items. It also has a personal proforma sheet.

4. Yoga techniques:

In India, several yoga centers have bloomed out in the recent years like that of after-rain mushrooms. Some of the successful yoga centres are “isha yoga centre” at the foot of vellingiri hills by sathguru jaggy vasudev, “mana vala kalai” by vethathiri maharishi, “vazhum kalai” by ravishankar, “integral yoga centre” by swami satchithananda, osho’s meditation practices, aum yoga therapy, etc. Among these mana vala kalai of vethathiri maharishi consisted of the following simple techniques of yoga and meditation and so this technique has been selected for the study.

1. Simplified physical exercises.

2. Simplified kundalini yoga (sky) meditation.

3. Introspection practices and

4. Kaya kalpa.

5. Data collection:

A group of 30 people throughout india attended a yoga training course of mana vala kalai as a residential course in arivuthirukoil at aliyar near coimbatore founded by vethathiri maharishi. Special permission was sought from the authorised personnels of this institution and the personality trait scale was given to the people to furnish their personal details and answer the questions. This was done before they start their training of yoga. They were allowed to complete the training which took for five days. Then in the last day the same scale was given to them to answer out of which the questions were shuffled. The questionnaires were collected and sorted out.

Findings and conclusions:

The raw data was computed and mean values were evaluated for all the 12 personality traits. The total mean score was also calculated to find out the difference in personality before and after yoga. Out of the 30 people 29 showed improvement in the personality trait scores and one of them showed no change before and after the yoga practice. The mean values of the personality scores for the 12 personality traits and for the total personality before and after yoga practice indicated an increase in the personality scores (table – 1, figures – 1 - 13). So this pilot study concludes and proves the fact that yoga definitely improves the personality of an individual and hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Implications:

The efficiency of the people not only depends on their intelligence, knowledge but also on their complete personality.

Their attitudes, self concept, mode of adjustment, reaction to frustrating situations are important in determining the dynamic aspects of their personality. Yoga's primary emphasis is upon general well-being. Although yoga has been shown to be beneficial in a variety of conditions, it is not considered a therapy for specific illnesses. Rather, yoga employs a broad holistic approach that focuses on teaching people a new lifestyle, way of thinking, and way of being in the world. In the process, however, it is also found to bring a myriad of healing effects. By attending to practices for improving, regaining or retaining general good health, a person is likely to find that some of his more specific difficulties tend to disappear. Many of the healing effects of yoga are clinically verified. However, one of the most important benefits of yoga is its application in relieving stress, fatigue, invigoration and vitality and its anti-aging properties and its application for relaxation therapy. Yoga can be considered as the most effective therapy for many

physiological and psychological ailments. When people follow a small practice of yoga regularly, they are sure to get the following benefits.

1. Physiological benefits.
2. Psychological benefits.
3. Spiritual benefits.

Developing the above implications with the help of continuous practice of yoga the best citizens can be chiselled out for our country.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude towards mana vala kalai in arivuthirukoil at aliyar near coimbatore founded by vethathiri maharishi for permitting us to conduct the study. We also would like to extend our warm regards to the volunteers who willingly participated in the experimental study and cooperated till the end.

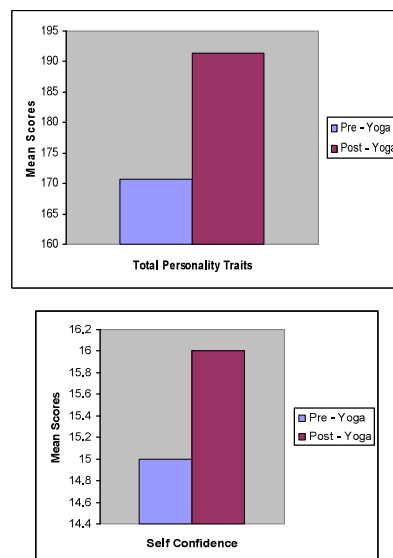
TABLE – 1

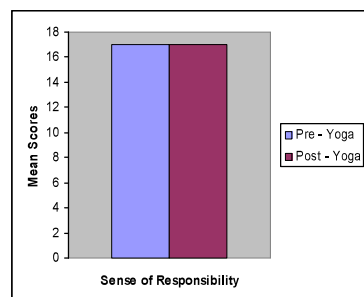
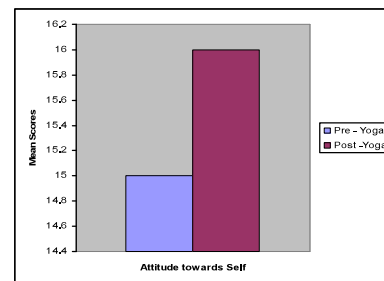
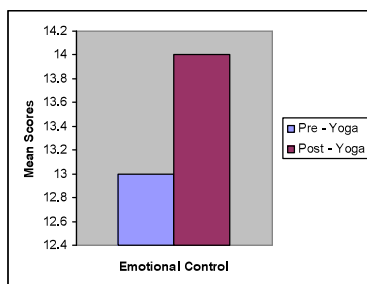
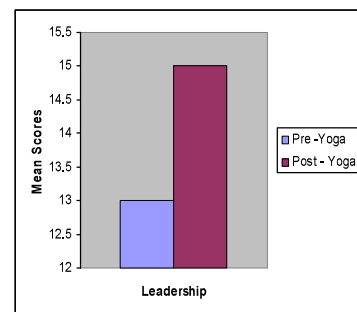
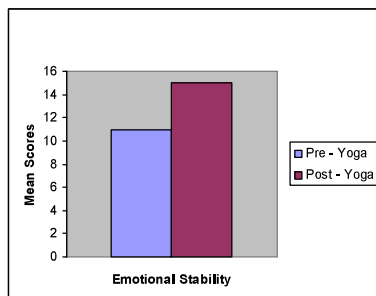
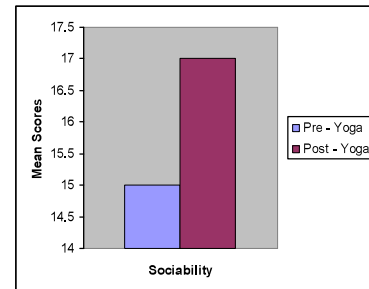
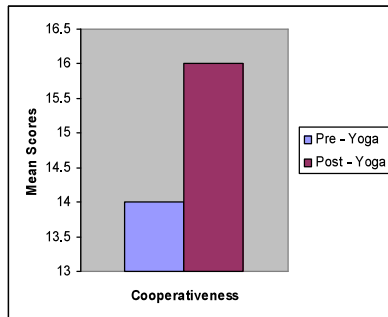
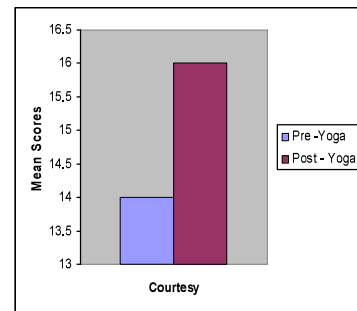
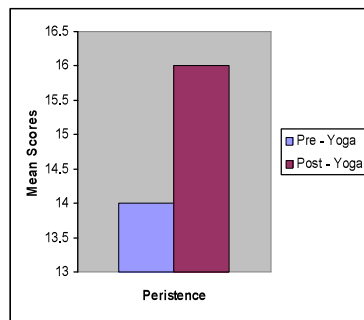
S.No.	Personality traits	Mean Scores	
		Pre - Yoga	Post - Yoga
1	Self Confidence	15	16
2	Persistence	14	16
3	Cooperativeness	14	16
4	Emotional Stability	11	15
5	Emotional Control	13	14
6	Sense of responsibility	17	17
7	Courtesy	14	16
8	Sociability	15	17
9	Leadership	13	15
10	Initiative	14	15
11	Attitude towards life	16	17
12	Attitude towards self	15	16
13	Total score	170.59	191.37

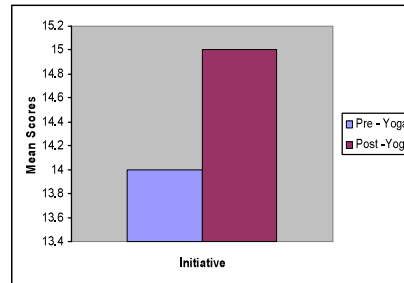
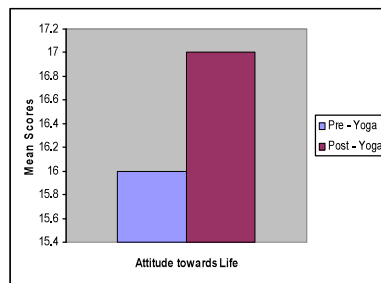
Change in mean scores due to yoga in personality traits

FIGURE - 1

Change in mean scores due to yoga in personality traits







References:

1. Knut A.Jacobsen (Ed), 2005. Theory and Practice of Yoga. Koninklijke Brill NV, Netherlands.
2. Aftanas L, Golosheykin S. (2005): Impact of regular meditation practice on EEG activity at rest and during evoked negative emotions. *International Journal of Neuroscience* 115(6):893-909.
3. Meena Venkatesh. The Effects of Yoga on the Personality Development of Students. <http://www.vyasa.org/report/theses3.asp>
4. Roth B., and Creaser T., (1997). Mindfulness meditation- based stress reduction, experience with bilingual inner –city program. In *Nurse Practitioners*.