

Self Confidence Before and After the Practice of Yoga: A Study

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Abstract

Self-confidence is a psychological phenomenon, which indicates faith in abilities and judgments and facilitates taking risks and pursuing goals in life. It can contribute to the well-being of people. The study reported in this article was carried out among a randomly selected sample of 100 people practicing yoga in various yoga centres of Kerala State in India using a questionnaire containing the measure of self-confidence in life, and the characteristics of the respondents, namely, sex, age, marital status, and the level of health problems faced (if any) during the past six months. The data were analysed as scores, proportion of respondents reporting and through statistical test. The results have shown improvement in self-confidence after the practice of yoga, when compared to before practicing yoga. When compared to those who reported moderate level of health problems, self-confidence after yoga practice is more for those who had no health problems during the past six months. It is necessary to undertake studies on the benefits of yoga among a large sample of practitioners by institutions including yoga training centres and share the results widely to motivate more people to practice yoga. This is especially important for a country like India, where the adoption of yoga is still limited at present, and some of the people are discontinuing yoga after some period of practice.

Keywords: Self Confidence, Before Yoga Practice, After Yoga Practice, Kerala, India.

Introduction

Self-confidence is a psychological phenomenon, which indicates faith in abilities and judgments and facilitates taking risks and pursuing goals in life. It can contribute to the psychological well-being of people by promoting resilience, motivation, positive relationships, ability to face challenges in a better way, and in reducing mental stress. On the other hand, less self-confidence may result in anxiety, depression and other problems in life.

Unfavourable past experience, comparing one's life with others, illogical expectations, looking for perfectionism in life and mental and physical health issues can contribute to less self-confidence. In the present-day context, when life is running very fast with various pressures and stresses, it is necessary to build

up the self-confidence of individuals in order to lead a life with greater well-being and health. Otherwise, many people will fall prey to psychosomatic disorders, which may necessitate medical treatment with possible side effects.

A study reported that when compared to 'power poses', yoga practice helped to increase self-esteem of the practitioners, which indicates self-confidence [1]. Research indicates that yoga may effectively improve self-esteem and regulate emotional states, highlighting its viability as a useful psychological therapy [2]. Adolescents practicing yoga significantly differed from the non-yoga group in emotional regulation and self-esteem [3]. Another study has reported about the need to do yoga for more period of time to enhance self-esteem [4].

Method

The study reported in this article was undertaken using a questionnaire among a randomly selected sample of 100 people practicing yoga in various yoga centres of Kerala State in India. The questionnaire contained the measure of self-confidence in life with 20 items and five response options ranging from agree to disagree, with scores ranging from 5 to 1 respectively for the positive items and reverse-scored for the negative items (Source: Self-esteem Test. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/tests/personality/self-esteem-test>), and the characteristics of

the respondents, namely, sex, age, marital status, and the level of health problems faced (if any) during the past six months. A higher score indicates more of self-confidence and vice versa. The data were analysed as scores, proportion of respondents reporting and through statistical test.

Results

Table 1 shows the statistical significance of the difference in self-confidence scores before and after yoga practice.

Table 1: Statistical Significance of the Difference in Self-confidence Scores Before and After Yoga Practice

Mean score for self-confidence*		t value and significance
Before yoga practice	After yoga practice	
64.2	80.8	- 8.5; p < 0.01

*as % of the maximum possible score under the study

Table 2 shows the range of self-confidence scores before and after yoga practice.

Table 2: Range of Self-confidence Scores Before and After Yoga Practice

Before yoga practice		After yoga practice	
Range of self-confidence score*	Respondents (%)	Range of self-confidence score*	Respondents (%)
61-63	60	78-80	60
65-69	40	81-86	40
Total	100	Total	100

*as % of the maximum possible score under the study

Table 3 gives details of statistical significance of the difference in item wise self-confidence scores before and after yoga practice.

Table 3: Statistical Significance of the Difference in item wise Self-confidence Scores Before and after Yoga Practice

Item of self-confidence	Mean score		t value and significance
	Before yoga practice	After yoga practice	
Feeling ashamed of oneself when critical feedback is received	2.4	4.0	- 2.7; p < 0.05
Feeling worthy just like other people	3.0	3.8	- 2.1; p < 0.10
Ruminating about all the things that are wrong in life	3.0	4.2	- 2.4; p < 0.05
Brooding over one's flaws	2.8	3.8	- 3.5; p < 0.01
Thinking positively about oneself	2.6	4.2	- 3.6; p < 0.01
Avoiding beating oneself up and having self-compassion	3.6	4.6	- 2.9; p < 0.05
Avoiding being judgmental about oneself	3.0	4.0	- 2.4; p < 0.05
Wishing to become more confident just like other people	3.0	4.2	- 3.2; p < 0.01
Wondering what people are thinking about oneself and considering that it is negative	3.6	4.2	- 1.9; p < 0.10
Shutting down because one is not worthy when he or she feels bad	3.0	4.0	- 2.4; p < 0.05

Being mostly satisfied with oneself	3.0	4.2	- 3.2; $p < 0.01$
Welcoming a challenge and becoming more single-minded about succeeding	3.0	4.0	- 2.4; $p < 0.05$

Statistical significance of the difference in self-confidence scores after yoga practice based on the health problems of respondents is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Statistical Significance of the Difference in Self-confidence Scores After Yoga Practice Based on Health Problems of the Respondents

Mean score for self-confidence*		t value and significance
Health problems during the past six months		
Moderate	Nil	
79.5	86.0	10.1; p < 0.01

*as % of the maximum possible score under the study

Discussion

Self-confidence Score Before and After yoga Practice

Statistically significant difference exists in the self-confidence score before and after yoga practice, with a comparatively higher score after starting yoga practice (Table 1). This implies that there is improvement in self-confidence of the respondents through the practice of yoga. The self-confidence scores of 60 % of respondents before starting yoga practice is in the range of 61 to 63 % of the maximum possible score under the study, while 40 % respondents have a score in the range of 65 to 69 % of the maximum possible score only before starting yoga practice (Table 2). However, after starting yoga practice, 60 % of respondents are getting a score in the comparatively higher range of 78 to 80 % of the maximum possible score, while the remaining 40 % respondents also get a higher score in the range of 81 to 86 % of the maximum possible score (Table 2). These findings once again establish the influence of yoga practice in improving the self-confidence of the respondents in this study.

Difference in Item wise Self-confidence Scores Before and After Yoga Practice

It can be made out from the data presented in Table 3 that the mean score of the following 12 items of self-confidence out of the total number of 20 items under the study is more after yoga practice, when compared to the score before starting yoga practice, with statistically significant difference in the scores before and after yoga practice:

Feeling ashamed of oneself when critical feedback is received, feeling worthy just like other people, ruminating about all the things that are wrong in life, brooding over one's flaws, thinking positively about oneself, avoiding beating oneself up and having self-compassion, avoiding being judgmental about oneself, wishing to become more confident just like other people, wondering what people are thinking about oneself and considering that it is negative, shutting down because one is not worthy when he or she feels bad, being mostly satisfied with oneself, welcoming a challenge and becoming more single-minded about succeeding. This may be the reason for the respondents getting higher self-confidence scores after they started practicing yoga.

A study found that majority of the yoga practitioners have felt

high level of inspiration in life [5]. Results of another study have established the influence of yoga in improving contentment in life for the practitioners [6]. The influence of yoga in reducing feelings of disgust, when compared to before starting yoga practice has been reported [7]. Such psychological benefits achieved through yoga may be expected to help in building more self-confidence also among the practitioners.

Difference in Self-confidence Score After Yoga Practice Based on Health Problems Faced

Statistical significance of the difference in self-confidence score after yoga practice based on the health problems of respondents is evident from the data shown in Table 4. The mean score is also comparatively higher for those who did not report any health problems, when compared to the yoga practitioners who experienced moderate level of health problems during the past six months (Table 4). This indicates that health problems have resulted in less of self-confidence even with yoga practice. This may be because health problems mostly also result in making individuals psychologically upset in many of the cases, which may probably lead to less of self-confidence in life on account of experiencing limitations, less ability to cope with illness etc.

Conclusion

Improvement in self-confidence after the practice of yoga, when compared to before practicing yoga is evident from the self-confidence score as well as the scores for different items of self-confidence considered under this study. Self-confidence after yoga practice is found to be more for those who had no health problems during the past six months, when compared to those who reported moderate level of health problems.

It is necessary to undertake studies on the benefits of yoga among a large sample of practitioners by institutions including yoga training centres and share the results widely to motivate more people to practice yoga. This is especially important for a country like India, where the adoption of yoga is still limited at present, and some of the people are discontinuing yoga after some period of practice.

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