

Research Paper

Level of Happiness Before and After the Practice of Yoga: A Comparative Study from Kerala State, India

Dr. K. Madhava Chandran^{1*}, P. Unniraman², Ram Subramanian³, K. A. Rinsha⁴,
M. Mehjabin⁵, M. Mohamed Prince⁶

ABSTRACT

Happiness, which is an important component of mental well-being represents an optimal state of emotional health, life satisfaction, and positive functioning. In today's fast-paced and stress-laden society, cultivating happiness has become a global public health priority. The philosophical principle of *Santosh* (contentment) emphasized in yoga encourages individuals to find happiness within themselves instead of depending on external factors. The study reported in this article was undertaken in Kerala State of India among 50 yoga practitioners using a measure of happiness in order to analyze the effect of yoga on the level of happiness before and after its practice. The results have shown significant improvement in the happiness score after yoga practice. Even though statistically significant difference in the mean happiness scores based on the period of yoga practice is not observed, the happiness scores under different periods of yoga practice are as high as 67.0 to 71.1 % of the maximum possible score, when compared to the comparatively lower range of 35.7 to 64.3 % of the maximum possible score only before yoga practice. Statistically significant difference exists in the happiness scores after yoga practice based on the age of respondents, with elders in the age group of 61 to 70 years having comparatively higher level of happiness through yoga practice than youngsters and middle-aged people in the age groups of 25 to 49 and 51 to 59 years respectively. Overall, the study highlights yoga as a practice, which improves the level of happiness for people.

Keywords: *Happiness, Level, Before Yoga, After Yoga*

World Health Organization defines mental well-being as a state, in which individuals realize their abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively, and contribute to their community (WHO, 2022). Happiness, which is an important component of mental well-being represents an optimal state of emotional health, life

¹Independent Social Researcher, Kozhikode, Kerala, India

²Yogacharya, Patanjali Yoga Research Centre (PYRC), Kozhikode

³Director, PYRC, Kozhikode

⁴PG Scholar, Dept. of Health and Yoga, The Zamorin's Guruvayurappan College, Kozhikode

⁵PG Scholar, Dept. of Health and Yoga, The Zamorin's Guruvayurappan College, Kozhikode

⁶Research Scholar, Dept. of Physical Education, Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

*Corresponding Author

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satisfaction, and positive functioning. In today's fast-paced and stress-laden society, cultivating happiness has become a global public health priority.

Yoga, a holistic system rooted in Indian philosophy integrates asana (postures), pranayama (breath regulation), and dhyana (meditation) to harmonize body, mind, and emotions. These practices collectively reduce physiological stress responses by lowering cortisol levels and activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which induces relaxation and emotional calmness. The philosophical principle of *Santosha* (contentment) emphasized in yoga encourages individuals to find happiness within themselves instead of depending on external factors. Beyond its physical benefits, yoga has been increasingly recognized by WHO and global health researchers as a preventive and promotive tool for mental well-being, capable of reducing stress, anxiety, and depression, while enhancing happiness and quality of life. A randomized controlled trial among Indian armed forces personnel revealed that a structured yoga-based program significantly improved psychological immunity, emotional balance, and life satisfaction, when compared to control participants (Pandey et al., 2025).

METHODOLOGY

The study reported in this article was undertaken among 50 yoga practitioners by Patanjali Yoga Research Centre, Kozhikode, Kerala State, India using a questionnaire containing the measure of happiness (Lyubomirsky and Lepper, 1999) before and after the practice of yoga, and the characteristics of the respondents, namely, age and period of yoga practice. The sum of scores of the happiness related items was worked out as the happiness score of the respondents. The data was analysed as scores and through statistical tests.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the statistical significance of the difference in happiness scores before and after the practice of yoga

Table 1. Statistical significance of the difference in happiness scores before and after the practice of yoga

Mean Happiness Score*		t value and statistical significance
Before Yoga Practice	After Yoga Practice	
58.2	66.8	- 3.16; $p < 0.01$

* as % of the maximum possible score under the study

The happiness scores of the respondents after yoga practice based on the period of yoga practice is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Happiness scores of respondents after yoga practice based on the period of yoga practice

Period of yoga practice (Months)	Mean Happiness Score*	Result of statistical test of ANOVA
1 to 24	67.0	F value is non-significant
26 to 44	68.8	
> 48	71.1	

* as % of the maximum possible score

Table 3 shows the statistical significance of the difference in happiness scores after the practice of yoga based on the age of respondents.

Table 3. Statistical significance of the difference in happiness scores after the practice of yoga based on the age of respondents

Age (Years)	Mean Happiness Score*	F value and statistical significance
25 to 49	60.0	19.51; $p < 0.01$
51 to 59	69.3	
61 to 70	77.1	

* as % of the maximum possible score

DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the statistical significance of the difference in happiness scores before and after the practice of yoga, with an improvement in happiness score following the practice of yoga. Even though there is no statistically significant difference in the mean happiness scores based on the period of yoga practice, the happiness scores under different periods of yoga practice are as high as 67.0 to 71.1 % of the maximum possible happiness score under the study (Table 2). However, the happiness scores of 83.3% of respondents before yoga practice were found to be in the comparatively lower range of 35.7 to 64.3 % of the maximum possible score only. This may be probably because the beneficial effects of yoga on happiness manifest relatively early in the practice and may reach a plateau over time. Once individuals have integrated yoga into their lifestyle and internalized its principles of mindfulness, self-regulation, and balance, additional period of practice may sustain, but may not dramatically increase their happiness levels. Another possible reason is that individual level differences such as motivation, consistency or the quality and type of yoga practice could play a more important role in determining happiness outcomes than the period of practice.

The results of the study indicate the influence of yoga in contributing to a perceptible improvement in the level of happiness of the practitioners. From a psychological perspective, this may be attributed to several factors. Yoga integrates physical postures, controlled breathing, and mindfulness, all of which are known to reduce stress and enhance emotional regulation. The meditative aspects of yoga encourage present-moment awareness and foster a sense of calmness and self-acceptance, which may contribute to increased levels of happiness. Furthermore, the physical activity component of yoga can stimulate endorphin release, improve mood and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Table 3 shows that there is statistically significant difference in the happiness scores after yoga practice based on the age of respondents. The mean happiness scores show a clear upward trend with age, with elders in the age group of 61 to 70 years having comparatively higher level of happiness through yoga practice than youngsters and middle-aged people in the age groups of 25 to 49 and 51 to 59 years respectively (Table 3). Psychologically, this finding may probably reflect the role of age-related differences in life perspective, emotional regulation, and value orientation. Older individuals often demonstrate greater emotional stability, acceptance and mindfulness, the qualities which align closely with the benefits obtained through yoga practice. They may also have more time for consistent yoga practice and better appreciation of its meditative and spiritual dimensions, which could probably help to increase its positive psychological outcomes. In contrast, younger and middle-aged individuals may face greater occupational, familial and social pressures, thus limiting their ability to experience the psychological benefits of yoga. This result of the study on the level of happiness in relation to age may be considered to indicate the utility of yoga practice, especially for elders, who may seek more of peace and emotional fulfillment during their old age.

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A cross-sectional study among Indian university students found that individuals who practiced yoga regularly for at least six months reported higher subjective happiness and lower stress levels than non-practitioners (Suneetha et al., 2024). Based on a study on meditation, which is an integral component of yoga practice, Vijayaraghavan et al (2020) reported the influence of reduced stress in improving happiness also through its practice.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study have shown significant improvement in the happiness score after yoga practice. Even though statistically significant difference in the mean happiness scores based on the period of yoga practice is not observed, the happiness scores under different periods of yoga practice are as high as 67.0 to 71.1 % of the maximum possible score, when compared to the comparatively lower range of 35.7 to 64.3 % of the maximum possible score only before yoga practice. Statistically significant difference exists in the happiness scores after yoga practice based on the age of respondents, with elders in the age group of 61 to 70 years having comparatively higher level of happiness through yoga practice than youngsters and middle-aged people in the age groups of 25 to 49 and 51 to 59 years respectively. In short, the study highlights yoga as a practice, which improves the level of happiness for people.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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