

Research Paper

A Comparative Study of Life Satisfaction, Work-Life Balance and Mental Health among Young Male and Female Employees Practicing Yoga and Meditation

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the research under consideration is to make a comparison of the impact of yoga and meditation on life satisfaction, work-life balance, and mental health of young females and males working at a corporate organization. The modern workplace is an increasingly stressful and emotionally exhausting place with workers subjected to increasing cases of occupational stress, emotional fatigue, and worsened mental health, which negatively impacts their general quality of life. Yoga and meditation have become prospective complementary therapies of enhancing psychological conditions and reestablishing the equilibrium of personal and professional life. This research design is a descriptive and comparative design. A sample size of 200 (100 males and 100 females) young employees aged between 22-35 years will be purposely sampled since they have at least six months of regular yoga and meditation practices in various organizations. The standardized psychological measurements that will be used to collect data will include Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), Work-Life Balance Scale and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12). The use of statistical methods like mean, standard deviation and t-test will be used to determine the difference in gender about the three variables. The hypothesis of the study is that young male and female employees will significantly differ in terms of their level of life satisfaction, work-life balance, and mental health. It is probable that findings will contribute to the body of literature available on the aspect of workplace wellness and will present evidence-based practice to justify the inclusion of yoga and meditation programs in the health policy of organizations, particularly gender sensitivity.

Keywords: *Life Satisfaction, Work-Life Balance, Mental Health, Yoga, Meditation, Young Employees, Gender Differences*

The modern business environment is marked with increased requirements, stressful competition, and 24/7 connectedness of work culture that erases the distinction between professional and personal lives. Intrinsic to the daily workload in various sectors, employees are increasingly complaining of increased occupational stress, burnout, and emotional fatigue, which are negatively impacting their mental health, job satisfaction, and general living standards (Salvagioni et al., 2017). The young workers, especially those

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workers in the early years of their careers aged between 22-35 years are particularly susceptible to these pressures trying to juggle the two worlds: establishing their professional identities and ensuring personal relationships and self-care practices (Twenge, 2017).

One of the most important measures of psychological health is life satisfaction, which is considered as the cognitive assessment of the overall quality of life of an individual in relation to self-determined norms (Diener et al., 1985). The perceived balance between work and non-work areas has also proven to be a major predictor of employee retention, engagement and well-being (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011). Mental health, including emotional, psychological, and social functioning is the cornerstone on which productive and satisfying work experiences are established (World Health Organization, 2022). The combination of these three constructs offers a holistic concept of employee well-being in the contemporary organizational setting.

Over the last few decades, complementary and alternative health practices, especially yoga and meditation, have received significant acceptance as evidence-based interventions to improve psychological well-being. As an ancient Indian practice, yoga, which combines physical poses (asanas), breathing (pranayama), and meditations (dhyana), has been demonstrated to lower cortisol levels, mitigate the effects of anxiety and depression, and increase the overall satisfaction with life (Pascoe and Bauer, 2015). Meditation (mindfulness-based and Vipassana traditions in particular) includes the systematic practice of attention and awareness, and has been linked to an increase in emotional and cognitive control, a decrease in rumination, and a graduated capacity to be flexible in cognitions (Goyal et al., 2014).

The study has already reported various studies that have found positive impacts of yoga and meditation in the workplace. An example would be a study by Wolever et al. (2012) which showed that yoga programs in the workplace had a great impact of reducing perceived stress and enhancing the quality of sleep in the employees. On the same note, a meta-analysis conducted by Lomas et al. (2017) found that mindfulness-based programs in companies resulted in significant psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and work engagement. A lot of this research has however been carried out on corporate situations in the west and there is a significant gap in literature about the gendered experience of such practices in Indian corporate employees.

The psychological well-being of males/females has been widely reported to be different across cultures. Even studies indicate that women are more likely to admit to having experienced psychological distress in part due to the excessive burden of domestic roles and the need to perform their work (Matud, 2004). On the other hand, the men can experience different stress factors in terms of social norms of emotional restraint and career success (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Of interest to such gender-specific patterns of stress might be the experienced difference in yoga and meditation practices and their effects on life satisfaction, work-life balance, and mental health outcomes.

Although the trend of introducing corporate wellness programs based on yoga and meditation is on the rise, there is a paucity of empirical studies on the differences in the results of the programs based on their gender application among young Indian employees. The proposed study will help close this gap as it will involve a comparative analysis of life satisfaction, work-life balance, and mental health among young male and female employees

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who practice yoga and meditation regularly. The results should have a contribution to theoretical knowledge and practical policy implications on gender-sensitive workplace wellness programs.

Aims and Objectives

The main objective of the current research is to investigate and compare life satisfaction level, work-life balance, and mental well-being of young male and female employees with equal regular yoga and meditation exercises.

The purpose of the study is:

- 1) To determine the degree of life satisfaction in young male and female employees practicing yoga and meditation.
- 2) To examine the levels of the work-life balance among young male and female workers who practice yoga and meditation.
- 3) To study the mental health condition of young male and female yoga and meditation-practicing employees.
- 4) To make the comparison of male and female employees on the three variables and note the significant gender differences.

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses are developed based on the literature review and the aim of the study:

- **H1:** The level of life satisfaction between young male and female employees is significantly different.
- **H2:** It is true that there is an important difference between the work-life balance of young male and female employees.
- **H3:** The level of mental health of the young male and female employee is significantly different between the two.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

The current research is based on the descriptive and comparative research design. The design suits the study because it seeks to state the existing conditions and to compare two groups (male and female employees) with regard to certain psychological variables without controlling any independent variable.

Sample:

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristic	Category	Male (n=100)	Female (n=100)
Age Range	22–35 years	100	100
Practice Duration	6–12 months	42	47
	13–24 months	35	33
	>24 months	23	20
Sector	IT/ITES	48	52
	Finance/Banking	30	27
	Other	22	21

The sample will include 200 young workers (100 males and 100 females) between the ages of 22 and 35 years involved in different corporate organizations in the metropolitan cities in

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India. The purposive sampling was used to select participants, and their eligibility criterion was that they need to have been practicing yoga and meditation at least six months. Regular practice was considered as taking at least 3 visits per week, and a minimum of 30 minutes.

Tools Used: The following standardized psychological instruments were used for data collection:

- A. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS):** This is a 5-item scale created by Diener et al. (1985) to gauge global cognitive estimates on life satisfaction on a 7-point Likert scale with 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree) being the two extremes. Internal consistency (Cronbach 0.87) and test-retest reliability of the SWWS has been noted to be high.
- B. Work-Life Balance Scale:** The scale measures the perceived work-personal life balance. It has 15 questions with a 5-point Likert scale. The scale has been tested on the Indian organizational spheres, and it has sufficient psychometric characteristics (6).
- C. General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12):** The GHQ-12 is a popular screening tool to identify small-scale psychiatric conditions developed by Goldberg (1972). It has 12 items rated on a 4-point scale (03). The higher the scores, the more there is psychological distress. The GHQ-12 has been highly tested among various populations ($\alpha = 0.89$).

Procedure:

The respondents were contacted using the human resource departments of their respective organizations, and the corporate wellness coordinators. Questionnaires were given out either face-to-face with informed consent or in a secure online environment. The involvement was also voluntary, and the anonymity of the responses was guaranteed. Data was collected in three months.

Statistical Analysis:

Statistical tools that were used to analyze data included descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (independent samples t-test), which were used to test the differences in gender in the three dependent variables. The level of significance of p was set to $p < 0.05$. All the statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 26.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

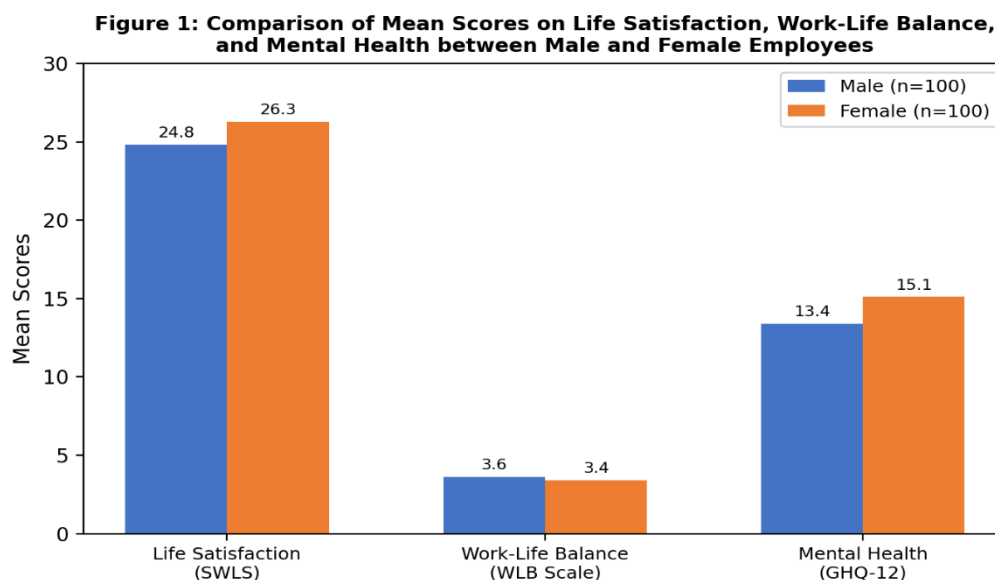
The findings of the research will be discussed in the next sections and by each variable observed. Each hypothesis is given the descriptive statistics and t-test results.

Table 2 Mean, SD, and t-values for Life Satisfaction, Work-Life Balance, and Mental Health

Variable	Male M	Male SD	Female M	Female SD	t-value	p-value
Life Satisfaction	24.80	4.12	26.30	3.95	2.63*	0.009
Work-Life Balance	3.62	0.58	3.41	0.62	2.47*	0.014
Mental Health (GHQ-12)	13.40	3.87	15.10	4.23	2.97**	0.003

Note. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$. Higher GHQ-12 scores indicate greater psychological distress.

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Life Satisfaction:

The results indicate that female employees ($M = 26.30$, $SD = 3.95$) reported significantly higher life satisfaction than male employees ($M = 24.80$, $SD = 4.12$), $t(198) = 2.63$, $p = 0.009$. This observation proves Hypothesis 1 and in agreement with previous studies that women who practice yoga and meditation might achieve more subjective well-being outcomes since they are more disposed to introspection and body-awareness practices (Cartwright et al., 2020). The increased life satisfaction of female practitioners could also be a reflection of the role that yoga plays in offering an organized coping mechanism to the various role requirements that women in the corporate world normally encounter (Kinser et al., 2013).

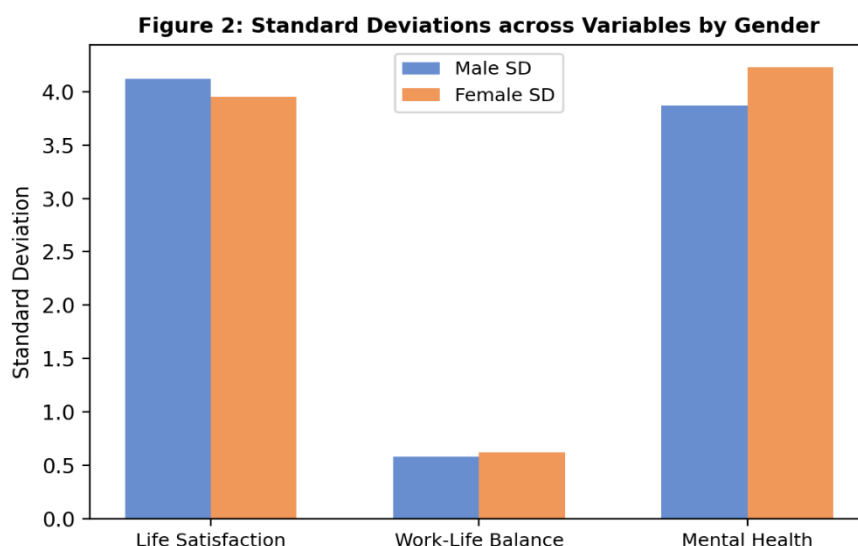
Work-Life Balance:

Male employees ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.58$) reported significantly higher perceived work-life balance than female employees ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.62$), $t(198) = 2.47$, $p = 0.014$. This result confirms Hypothesis 2 and coincides with prior research, which showed that though women practice yoga and meditation, they still experience more work-family conflict because of the unequal sharing of domestic roles and expectations of a role (Shockley et al., 2017). It can be argued that this information indicates that yoga and meditation can help both genders have a better work-life balance, although structural and sociocultural obstacles can neutralize these positive effects on female workers.

Mental Health:

Female workers had much higher scores in the GHQ-12 ($M = 15.10$, $SD = 4.23$) than male workers ($M = 13.40$, $SD = 3.87$) which is a strong indication of a greater amount of psychological distress in women. This result confirms Hypothesis 3 and coincides with epidemiological evidence of the increased prevalence rates of anxiety and depression in women all over the world (WHO, 2022). It should be noted that despite both groups regularly practicing yoga and meditation; the disparity in mental health between the two sexes remained and could imply that these two methods are not exclusively enough to overcome both the structural and psychological vulnerabilities that disproportionately impact women in the work environment. The finding highlights the importance of providing holistic, gender-sensitive mental health support systems and wellness programs.

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The general trend of findings demonstrates a subtle view of gender disparities of psychological outcomes of yoga and meditation amongst young corporate workers. Female practitioners had better life satisfaction, but they also had worse work-life balance and poor mental health outcomes. Such rather contradictory results can be interpreted in the framework of the gender role theory (Eagly and Wood, 2012) according to which both men and women internalize various demands of their society that have distinct impacts on their psychological experiences. Women workers can find this sense of self fulfilment and cognitive contentment in their yoga and meditation sessions, but still fail to adapt to the practical and emotional needs of the work-life balance between work and family.

Organizational policy has significant implications to these results as well. The noticeable disparities between the genders in all the three variables indicate that universal methods of addressing wellness programs in the workplace may not be sufficient. This would help the organizations to develop gender responsive wellness programs that would meet the particular needs and challenges that both male and female employees would face. As an example, female workers are likely to need extra DH services in the form of flexible working hours, childcare, and specialized mental health counselling and yoga/meditation sessions.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The current research offers empirical data about the presence of considerable gender differences in life satisfaction, work-life balance and mental health in young male and female employees practicing yoga and meditation regularly. Women workers had a higher life satisfaction and lower work-life balance and more psychological distress in comparison to their male counterparts. All these findings are a confirmation of all the three hypotheses and an addition to the existing body of knowledge on the topic of workplace wellness and gender sensitive organizational practices.

This study has both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the results shed light on the necessity to pay attention to gender as a moderating factor in studies on yoga, meditation, and psychological well-being. The different results provided indicate that the processes by which yoga and meditation can produce their psychological effects could depend on gender-specific factors like role expectations, coping strategies, and sociocultural norms.

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In practice, the paper highlights the importance of organizations to be gender-sensitive when considering the wellness of employees. Instead of trying to implement generic yoga/meditation programs, organizations can take into consideration the following evidence-based recommendations: (a) needs assessments to understand gender-specific stressors to employees; (b) customized wellness programs that might impact both psychological and structural barriers to employee well-being; (c) providing additional support such as flexible work policies, mental health counselling, peer support groups; and (d) periodically reviewing the effectiveness of well.

There are no limitations to the study. The sampling method adopted in the study is purposive, which restricts the extrapolation of results. Social desirability bias may be a factor in self-report measures. The cross-sectional design does not allow making causal inferences. The future studies must utilize longitudinal and experimental designs and use bigger and more varied samples to determine causal links between yoga and meditation and psychological outcomes in both sexes.

To sum up, yoga and meditation can be effective methods to improve the well-being of employees, but they have a different impact on men and women. To develop genuinely inclusive and effective organizational health policies, a gender-sensitive approach to workplace wellness must be considered.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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