



Factors Contributing to the Motivation to Practice Yoga: A Study from Kerala State, India

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Abstract

The practice of yoga contributes to improvement in physical and psychological health. Analys of the factors contributing to the motivation to practice yoga can be expected to provide information for its more effective adoption among people. It was in this context that this study was undertaken among a randomly selected sample of 110 yoga practitioners from Kozhikode District of Kerala State, India using a questionnaire containing the measure of motivation, different characteristics of the respondents, and the opinion of the respondents on clubbing tourism facilities with yoga practice by yoga centres. The data was analysed as proportion, score and through statistical tests. The results show that the yoga practitioners have valid factors (reasons) such as yoga practice being important for them, it makes the practitioner feel good, it is something which is pleasant, it has to be practiced even if one is not sure if it is worth doing / pursuing it etc. The comparatively high mean scores obtained by the respondents for majority of the factors helps to further validate this. Regarding the factors, namely, it is interesting to practice yoga, practicing yoga is fun, and yoga is practiced since it is the best choice to improve health, not many respondents have attributed them as important factors which have motivated them to practice yoga. This shows the seriousness with which the respondents have gone in for yoga practice as well as their dependence on medical care for improving their health. The mean total score of 81.9 % respondents for factors which have motivated them to practice yoga lie within a high score range of 75 to 100 % of the maximum possible score under the study, which also establishes that the yoga practitioners under this study have done yoga due to significant reasons enumerated under the study. Even though there was no statistically significant difference in the mean total score for factors which have motivated the respondents to practice yoga between men and women, between different age groups, and between married and unmarried yoga practitioners, statistically significant difference was observed between the mean score of working and unemployed yoga practitioners. Studies carried out by research institutions and yoga centres in various regions of different countries, among people of different religions, income levels, occupation, health status etc. on factors which can motivate people to start practicing and continuing yoga could prove beneficial to make informed decisions on ways and means of promoting yoga practice for the wellbeing of people. Making them available, not only as research publications, but also through on-line webinars etc. may be expected to lead to improvement in the adoption of yoga.

Keywords: Yoga; Practice; Motivation; Factors

Introduction

The practice of yoga is becoming popular around the world [1]. The interest to practice yoga may be attributed to its ability to produce psychophysiological changes that reduce the activity of the stress response systems and enhance self-regulation, resilience, mood, well-being, and quality of life [2]. People practice yoga for stress reduction and improvement in wellbeing [3].

It has been reported that the most common motivating factors for practicing yoga are for reducing illness symptoms, for pain relief, and for life style changes [4]. Majority of the respondents were interested to start yoga after knowing about its benefits from others and also because it will help to get relief from medical problems, and yoga practice has helped in developing a positive mental state for the practitioners [5].

Analysing the factors contributing to the motivation to practice yoga would provide information for its more effective adoption among people. It was in this context that the study reported in this article was undertaken.

Methodology

The study was undertaken among a randomly selected sample of 110 yoga practitioners from Kozhikode District of Kerala State, India using a questionnaire which contained the measure of motivation [6], and the characteristics of the respondents, namely sex, age, marital status, employment, and whether they have got any physical and psychological benefits due to yoga practice. There were 7 responses for each factor which could probably motivate the respondents to practice yoga, which were scored from 7 to 1 for the positive responses for positive factors, and reverse scored for negative factors. The data was analysed as proportion, score and through statistical tests. The respondents were also asked through the questionnaire about their opinion regarding clubbing tourism facilities with yoga practice by yoga centres.

Results

Table 1 shows the responses to factors which have motivated people to practice yoga.

Particulars	Respondents (%) reporting the extent of contribution of the factor to the motivation to practice yoga						
	Very much	Much	Sufficiently	Moderately	Less	Very less	Not at all
It is interesting to practice yoga	45.5	9.1	9.1	-	-	-	36.4
Yoga practice is for my own good	63.6	18.2	18.2	-	-	-	-
I am supposed to practice yoga	54.5	-	18.2			9.1	18.2
There may be good reasons to practice yoga. But personally	18.2	9.1	-	-	-	-	72.7
I don't see any reason							
It is pleasant to practice yoga	63.6	18.2	9.1	-	-	-	9.1
Practicing yoga is good for me	72.7	9.1	9.1	9.1	-	-	-
Yoga practice is something which I have to do	72.7	-	-	-	9.1	9.1	9.1
Particulars	Respondents (%) reporting the extent of contribution of the factor to the motivation to practice yoga						
	Very much	Much	Sufficiently	Moderately	Less	Very less	Not at all
I practice yoga even though I am not sure if it is worth doing	9.1	-	-	-	-	-	90.9
Practicing yoga is fun	45.5	-	-	-	9.1	-	45.5

Yoga practice has been my personal decision	72.7	9.1	-	-	-	9.1	9.1
I practice yoga since it is the best choice to improve my health	54.5	-	-	-	-	36.3	9.1
I practice yoga even though I don't understand how it helps me	9.1	-	-	-	-	-	90.9
I practice yoga since I feel good when doing it	54.5	9.1	-	9.1	-	27.3	-
Particulars	Respondents (%) reporting the extent of contribution of the factor to the motivation to practice yoga						
	Very much	Much	Sufficiently	Moderately	Less	Very less	Not at all
I practice yoga since I feel that it is important for me	81.8	-	18.2	-	-	-	-
I practice yoga since I feel that I have to definitely do it	90.9	-	-	-	-	-	9.1
I practice yoga even though I am not sure if it is good to pursue it	9.1	-	-	-	-	27.3	63.6

Table 1: Factors which have motivated people to practice yoga.

Factor	Mean score
It is interesting to practice yoga	4.54
Yoga practice is for my own good	6.45
I am supposed to practice yoga	5
There may be good reasons to practice yoga. But personally, I don't see any reason	5.54
It is pleasant to practice yoga	6.09
Practicing yoga is good for me	6.45
Yoga practice is something which I have to do	6.45
I practice yoga even though I am not sure if it is worth doing	6.45
Practicing yoga is fun	3.45
Yoga practice has been my personal decision	5.91
I practice yoga since it is the best choice to improve my health	4.27
I practice yoga even though I don't understand how it helps me	6.45
I practice yoga since I feel good when doing it	5.27
I practice yoga since I feel that it is important for me	6.63
I practice yoga since I feel that I have to definitely do it	6.45
I practice yoga even though I am not sure if it is good to pursue it	6.18

Table 2: Score of individual factors which have motivated the respondents to practice yoga.

Table 3 shows the total score of all the factors which have motivated the respondents to practice yoga

Range of total score*of factors	Respondents (%)
58.9- 63.3	18.1
75.0-79.5	27.3
81.3-83.9	27.3
99.1-100	27.3
Total	100

Table 3: Total score of factors which have motivated the respondents to practice yoga.

Table 4 shows the statistically significant difference between score of factors which have motivated them to practice yoga. working and unemployed yoga practitioners in the total

Mean total score of factors	
Working people	Un employed people
101.8	83.8
$t = 2.07; p < 0.10$	

Table 4: Statistically significant difference between working and unemployed yoga practitioners in the total score of motivating factors.

The opinion of the yoga practitioners on combining tourism facilities with yoga training by the yoga centres is shown in Table 5.

Particulars	Respondents (%)					
	Good idea	Not a good idea	No opinion	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
Arranging tourism facilities also by the yoga centre	54.5	18.2	27.3	NA	NA	NA
More people will join for yoga training if tourism facilities are also arranged by the yoga centre	NA	NA	NA	63.6	18.2	18.2

Table 5: Opinion of the yoga practitioners on combining tourism facilities with yoga training.

Discussion

It can be made out from the data presented in Table 1 that majority of the factors have contributed very much and much to the motivation of the respondents to practice yoga. This has resulted in mean scores in the range of 5.00 to 6.63 for these reasons (Table 2), which are sufficiently high, considering the fact that the maximum possible score for each factor under this study is 7. This result establishes the fact that the respondents under this study have valid factors which have motivated them to practice yoga (which have been considered in this study) such as yoga practice is important for them, it should be done, it is for one's good, it makes the practitioner feel good, it is something which is pleasant, it is a personal decision, it has to be practiced even if one is not sure if it is worth doing / pursuing it etc (Table

1). These findings can be considered as components of a favourable attitude of people to practice yoga.

However, in the case of the three factors mentioned below, the mean score is in the comparatively lower range of 3.45 to 4.54 only (Table 2).

It is interesting to practice yoga: 36.4% report that this factor has not all contributed to their motivation to practice yoga (Table 1), resulting in a comparatively low mean score of 4.54 for this factor (Table 2). This also indicates that the respondents under the study have considered the practice of yoga from more important perspectives other than just as an interesting thing in life. This could be probably because of their awareness on the multi-faceted benefits through yoga practice, which they might have obtained from different

sources.

Practicing yoga is fun: 45.5 % report that this factor has not all contributed to their motivation to practice yoga. 9.1 % report that this factor has contributed to their motivation to practice yoga to a less level only (Table 1). This has resulted in a comparatively low mean score of 3.45 for this factor (Table 2). Once again, this establishes the seriousness with which the respondents have approached yoga practice, instead of considering it as something which offers fun to them. This also could be probably due to their awareness on the benefits of yoga practice.

I practice yoga since it is the best choice to improve health: 9.1 % report that this factor has not all contributed to their motivation to practice yoga. 36.3 % report that this factor has contributed to their motivation to practice yoga to a very less level only (Table 1). This has resulted in a comparatively low mean score of 4.27 for this factor (Table 2). This trend could be probably due to the feeling that health improvement also requires treatment/medication. This may be because of the increasing dependence of people on medical care for many of their health problems, which is common in the society now.

The mean total score for factors which have motivated them to practice yoga of 81.9 % respondents lie within a high score range of 75 to 100 % of the maximum possible score under the study (total % of respondents in row 3, 4 and 5 in Table 3). This finding once again establishes the fact that the yoga practitioners under this study have valid factors / reasons which have motivated them to practice yoga.

There was no statistically significant difference in the mean total score for factors which have motivated the respondents to practice yoga between different age groups. The yoga practitioners in the age group of 27 to 64 years get a mean total score of 90.2 compared to those in the age group of 75 to 81 years, who have a mean score of 100. These results indicate that yoga practitioners in the older age group of 75 to 81 years were more motivated to practice yoga than the comparatively younger people.

The mean total score is 91.4 and 92.5 for married and unmarried respondents respectively, with no statistically significant difference in the scores. Married respondents have a score in the range of 89 to 112, while unmarried people get a lower score in the range of 91 to 94 only. This indicates that married people were more motivated to practice yoga than those who were not married.

Men have a mean total score of 95.5, while the score for women is 81.3, but with no statistically significant difference in these scores. 62.5 % of men had a mean total score in the range of 91 to 112, while 66.7 % of females had a score

in the comparatively lower range of 66 to 84 only. These results imply that men were more motivated to practice yoga than women. Even though ANOVA test did not show significant difference in the mean total motivation score of working, unemployed and retired respondents, t test showed statistically significant difference in the mean score of working and unemployed yoga practitioners (Table 4). Working yoga practitioners have a score in the range of 89 to 112, retired people in the range of 71 to 111, while unemployed yoga practitioners have a comparatively lower score in the range of 66 to 94 only. Hence, the findings indicate that those who are working were more motivated to practice yoga than unemployed people. This may be probably because working people encounter more mental and physical health issues, and hence, may feel more interested to practice wellbeing promoting techniques like yoga. All the yoga practitioners under this study have reported that they have got both physical and psychological benefits through yoga practice

Yoga and tourism, especially if it is eco-tourism can create a powerful synergy blending self-healing through yoga with environmental consciousness and appreciation, offering a holistic approach to the wellbeing of people. 54.5 % respondents under this study have mentioned that arranging tourism facilities also by the yoga centre is a good idea, while 18.2 % report that it is not a good idea and 27.3 % do not have any opinion about this (Table 5). This option also holds promise for promoting yoga practice for the yoga centres which can facilitate it. Even if some expenditure will have to be incurred by the yoga centres for this, over a period of time, more revenue can be expected through this program by them, some of which may not be getting sufficient takers for yoga training presently.

63.6 % of respondents have agreed that more people will join for yoga training if tourism facilities are also arranged by the yoga centre, while 18.2 % disagree and 18.2 % are not sure about this (Table 5). Such a perception by a majority of the respondents may be because of the of the perceived benefits of yoga practice being complimented through additional relaxation and wellbeing which may be attained by exposure to tourist areas.

Conclusion

The results of the study establish the fact that the yoga practitioners have pertinent factors (reasons) such as yoga practice is important for them and it should be done, it is for one's good, it makes the practitioner feel good, it is something which is pleasant, it is a personal decision, it has to be practiced even if one is not sure if it is worth doing / pursuing it etc (Table 1). The comparatively high mean scores obtained by the respondents for majority of the factors further helps to validate this. Hence, these results

can be considered as indicating a favourable attitude to practice yoga. With respect to three factors, namely, it is interesting to practice yoga, practicing yoga is fun, and yoga is practiced since it is the best choice to improve health, not many respondents have attributed them as important factors which have motivated them to do yoga. This shows the seriousness with which the respondents have gone in for yoga practice as well as their dependence on medical care for improving their health.

The mean total score for factors which have motivated them to practice yoga of 81.9 % respondents lie within a high score range of 75 to 100 % of the maximum possible score under the study, which again establishes the fact that the yoga practitioners under this study have pertinent reasons which have motivated them to practice yoga. Even though there was no statistically significant difference in the mean total score for the motivating factors between men and women, between different age groups, and between married and unmarried yoga practitioners, statistically significant difference was observed between the mean score of working and unemployed yoga practitioners.

Studies carried out by research institutions and, if possible, by various yoga centres using the expertise of competent researchers in various regions of different countries, among people of different religions, income levels, occupation, health status etc. on factors which can motivate people to practice and continue yoga could prove beneficial to make informed decisions on ways and means of promoting yoga for the wellbeing of people. Empirical results of such research could be more appealing to people to start practicing and continue yoga, especially with yoga involving short, manageable durations being offered by yoga centres now. This is important for a country like India, where, even with the Government trying to promote yoga through measures such as organizing yoga day, seminars etc., the extent of adoption and continuation of yoga is far from satisfactory

at present. One of the reasons for this appears to be lack of sufficient awareness among majority of the people in the country on why these techniques should be practiced. It will also be worthwhile if the data collected through studies by various institutions in the country are made available, not only as research publications, but also through on-line webinars organised by them. With social media being so widespread, such an exercise may be expected to lead to an improvement in the adoption of yoga practice in India.

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