

# Influence of Yoga in Maintaining a Positive Mental State: Study from Kerala State, India

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## Abstract

Practice of yoga leads to significant relaxation of the mind and body, which can contribute to the development of a positive mental state for people.

**Method:** The study was undertaken among 100 yoga practitioners from Kozhikode, Kerala State, India. Data was collected using a questionnaire containing the positive mental health scale (Justina Lukat et al, 2016) with four responses, and details of the respondents such as age, sex, no. of days yoga was practiced, and the reasons for starting yoga practice. Data was analyzed as percentage, score and through statistical test.

**Results:** Majority of the respondents report that they were interested to start yoga after knowing about its benefits of yoga from others, and also because it will help to get relief from medical problems. Yoga practice is found to be helpful in developing a positive mental state for the practitioners. People with comparatively higher age are able to achieve better positive mental condition through yoga practice, as evident from statistical significance of the mental state scores. However, no significant difference was observed between the score of males and females, as well as between the score of respondents who reported different periods (days) of yoga practice.

**Conclusion:** Practice of yoga will help people to maintain better mental health through the development of positive feelings, which will also help them to overcome psycho-somatic diseases/problems in their life.

**Keywords:** Yoga Practice; Positive Mental State; Psycho-Somatic Problems

## Introduction

Positive mental state indicates the presence of positive emotions and good functioning in both individual and social

environment. Individuals with good positive mental health are less likely to develop depression and chronic diseases. Practice of relaxation is good to improve one's mental state. Yoga is a practice which leads to significant relaxation, in

addition to other medical benefits. The effect of yoga on psychological and physical health parameters, reduction of anxiety, stress etc., which will ultimately result in a better psychological condition have been reported based on studies carried out [1-3].

## Materials and Methods

The study was undertaken jointly by WEDO (NGO), Kozhikode, Kerala, India and Patanjali Yoga Research Centre (PYRC), Kozhikode among 100 people from Kozhikode, who were imparted training on yoga by the yoga centre. Data was collected from the practitioners using a questionnaire

containing the nine item positive mental health scale [4] having four responses (strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree) and details of the respondents such as age, sex, no. of days of yoga practice/month, and the reasons for starting yoga practice. The sum of scores of the nine mental state items was worked out as the positive mental state score of the respondents. Data was analysed as percentage, score and through statistical test.

## Results

Table 1 shows the reasons reported by the respondents for starting yoga practice.

Sl. No.	Reason* for starting yoga practice	Respondents (%)
1	Became interested after knowing about the benefits of yoga from other people	80
2	To get relief from medical problems	60
3	For better mental health	10
4	Since time was available to practice it	10

\*Some respondents have given more than one reason.

**Table 1:** Reasons for starting yoga practice.

Table 2 shows the responses of the yoga practitioners to the positive mental state items (conditions) developed through yoga practice.

Positive mental state	Respondents (%)		Total (%)
	Agree	Strongly agree	
Due to yoga practice, I often feel carefree and in good spirits	80	20	100
Due to yoga practice, I enjoy my life	50	50	100
Due to yoga practice, all in all, I feel satisfied with my life	30	70	100
Due to yoga practice, in general, I feel confident	30	70	100
Due to yoga practice, I manage well to fulfil my needs	40	60	100
Due to yoga practice, I am in good physical and emotional condition	40	60	100
Due to yoga practice, I feel that I am actually well equipped to deal with life and its difficulties	60	40	100
Due to yoga practice, much of what I do brings me joy	30	70	100
Due to yoga practice, I am a calm, balanced person	40	60	100

**Table 2:** Experience of positive mental state by the yoga practitioners.

The mean positive mental state score for the 20-30 and >30 years age groups is found to be in the range of 27 to 32 and 28 to 36 respectively. While 66.7 % respondents in the 20-30 years age group get a score in the range of 27 to 28, in the >30 years age group, comparatively more proportion (71.5 %) have a higher score in the range of 32 to 36.

Table 3 shows the results of statistical significance of mean positive mental state score of two age groups (20 to 30 and > 30 years), with a comparatively higher score for the yoga practitioners in the >30 years group.

Details	Age group (years)	
	20-30	>30
Mean score for total positive mental state due to yoga practice	29	32.7
t stat	-1.89; Significant $p < 0.10$	

**Table 3:** Statistical significance of positive mental state score between two age groups.

However, no statistically significant difference was observed between the mean mental state score of males and females, as well as between the score of respondents who reported different periods (days) of yoga practice.

## Discussion

While 80 % of the yoga practitioners became interested in yoga after knowing about its benefits from other people, 60 % started yoga to get relief from medical problems. However, only 10 % respondents report the following two reasons to start yoga, namely, for better mental health, and due to availability of time to practice yoga (Table 1).

It is interesting to note from Table 2 that the respondents either agree or strongly agree that yoga has helped them in attaining all the nine positive mental state conditions considered in the study. Further, in the case of seven mental state conditions, 50 % or more respondents strongly agree that yoga practice has helped them in achieving the positive mental states. This finding helps to establish the fact that yoga is very helpful in developing a positive mental state for the practitioners, which could also be helpful for them to reduce psycho-somatic medical problems in their life.

The positive mental state score is comparatively higher for the > 30 years age group, when compared to the 20 to 30 years group. Statistically significant difference is also observed between the mean mental state score of the two groups (Table 3). These results indicate that people with comparatively higher age are able to achieve a better positive mental condition due to yoga practice. The results also indicate that yoga practice has not contributed to any significant difference in the development of mental state

between males and females, and also between people who have practiced yoga for different periods (days)/month.

## Conclusion

Practice of yoga will help people, irrespective of their sex or no. of days of practice, in maintaining better mental health through the development of positive feelings. This will ultimately help them to overcome psycho-somatic diseases/problems also in their life.

## References

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