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A Study on the Effects of Certain Yogic Practices (Surya Namaskar & Yoga Nidra) on Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence is a relatively new and growing area of behavioural research that has caught the interests of the general public, the commercial world, and the scientific community. It refers to the ability for realization, rationalization and implementation of self and other emotions in accordance with pre-specified objective. Yoga is a formulated system of scientific investigation in the direction of life's truth & integrity. Life is a continuous flow of energy in various vibrational modes. Hence alteration as well as evolution is possible in life. Yoga is also competent for rapid biological evolution in life through several alterations at psychosomatic level; present study is aimed at finding out the effects of certain yogic practices (Surya Namaskar & Yoga Nidra) on emotional intelligence of employees. The results revealed that post experiment emotional intelligence was higher than of pre-experiment

Keywords -Emotional intelligence (EI), Psychoneuroimmunity (PNI), Work life balance, Yogic practices, Surya Namaskar, Yoga Nidra

Introduction

In the mid of 1800s, Work-Life Balance was invented as a phrase in the field of management (Peter; 1995; Rene' *et al*, 2010). Work-life balance is a state of equilibrium in job and life of a person (Work life balance, 2002). For this a person should has suitable level of emotional intelligence because it is elite aspect of life. The specific concept of emotional intelligence has been defined since the beginning of the 1990s, interest in the interaction of emotions and intelligence is not new. Piaget (1954/1981) explored theoretical links between affectivity and intelligence, while researchers such as Izard (1985), Lazarus (1982) and LeDeoux (1989) discussed the link between emotion and cognition in the 1980s. The idea of Salovey and Mayer (1990) on emotional intelligence arises from Thorndike's (1920) work on social intelligence and Gardener's (1983) development of the constructs of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. Although Salovey and Mayer first coined the term emotional intelligence, subsequent writers such as Bar-On (1997), Cooper and Sawaf (1996), Goleman (1995, 1998a, 1998b), Shapiro (1997) and Weisenger (1998) have expressed their own notion of emotional intelligence. The researchers have observed that work-life conflicts are associated with poor health, which includes less physical exercise, poor appetite, fatigue, higher level of stress, increased anxiety and depression level, grievances and higher

level of emotional exhaustion (Frone *et al*, 1996; Allen *et al*, 2000; Rose *et al*, 2007). Emotional intelligence refers to a combination of empathy, self-control, self-awareness, sensitivity to the feeling of others, persistence and self-motivation among others (Salovey and Mayer, 1997). It has been studied that highly emotionally intelligent person frolics in harmonious as well as coordinated manner with self as well as others' emotions. Yoga is the science which is developed by great Indians andseers to seek the ultimate truth of life. All developed therapies are capable to work only at gross level. On the other hand Yoga can work at all the levels of existence of human being viz. as gross, subtle and casual levels of existence. Through Yoga one can enhance bioimmunity, psychoimmunity as well as psychoneuroimmunity Yogic practices are found to be an ideal antidote for physical and neural diseases (Singh 2013). Yoga is emerging as an effective and harmless remedy for abnormalities. *Sage Valmiki* explained in '*Yoga Vashishtha*' that yoga is the technique of psychosomatic discipline by which one can attain the absolute restraining of body as well as mind (Sharma, 1998). Yoga therapy is the process of empowering individuals to progress towards improved health and well-being (Matthew, 2007). It is successful because of the balance created in the nervous and endocrine systems which directly influences all the other systems and organs of the body (Satyanand, 2008).

Some studies in the context of yoga and emotional intelligence have reported that yogic practices are applicable for strengthening the emotional intelligence and increasing the self-control in our life. Ganpat, Tikhe & Nagendra (2011) reported that business executives' lives have become a never-ending race against time, technology and targets. This race creates tension, which leads to dissatisfaction, frustration and eventually manifests itself as psychological as well as physiological stress with mental and emotional drain. This modern lifestyle intensifies the stress leading to "excessive tension" and consequent deterioration in "executive efficiency". And the results suggest that participation in a yoga-based self-management of excessive tension program was associated with improvement in EQ and may have implications for "executive efficiency." Adhia, Nagendra & Mahadevan, (2010) studied that the impact of the yogic way of life on EI was positive. The results indicate the importance of yoga as an integral element in improving managerial performance in organizations.

Material and methods

Thirty employees were selected from Ballia district on the basis of accidental sampling and were made to practice four rounds Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation) and 30 minutes of Yoga nidra daily. Emotional intelligence level of each subject was measured by questionnaire (Hyde *et. al.*, 2001), before starting the experiment and after completion of experiment. The duration of experimentation was 45 days.

Results and discussion

The mean pre-test and post-test emotional intelligence levels of subjects were found to be 59.63 (± 8.98) and 65.83(± 10.01) respectively (Table 1). It is obvious that the mean value of EI is higher in post-test than that in pre-test. The values of pre-test and post-test varied at 0.01 significant levels.

Table–1 Emotional intelligence of Employee (Mean Value)

Condition	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Level of Significance
Pre Test	59.63	8.98	7.94	0.01
Post Test	65.83	10.01		

Body and mind are not two separate things. Both are considered to be inter dependent i.e. psycho somatic and soma psycho system. The whole system is linking psycho to soma. Psycho comprises mind, emotion, and ego and Soma comprises molecules, cells & organs. A biochemical basis for awareness and consciousness exists that shows that the mind and body are indeed one and that our emotions and feelings are the bridge that link the two. The chemicals that are running our body and our brain are the same chemicals that are involved in our emotions (Pert, 2013).

Emotion and chemicals are related intimately together. Emotion influences the chemicals through mind and vice-versa (Jain, 1996). Mind has tremendous power over body. The mind directs everything in body (Rajneesh, 2008). Every event of body influences the mind because the body is the instrument of mind, heart and spirit. Focusing on the body is mandatory because if body will not be appeased then the mind cannot be relaxed. Hence beginning of the yogic practices from the body is easier because it is the outermost layer (Rajneesh, 2012).

Each asana conveys an image to the archetypal depths of our mind. The prayer pose, as the first and last pose of the Surya Namaskar (sunsalutation) series, marks the peace, tranquility and beauty of the sunrise and sunset. It induces a state of introversion, relaxation and calmness. The raised arms pose indicates the drawing in of the energy of the newly risen sun, not only via the breath but through every pore in the body. The vital energy is lifted upwards to the upper parts of the body, propelled by inhalation. The hand to foot pose and mountain pose seem to represent the introversion, yet they are more symbolic of introspection. The equestrian pose represents the power and courage required to face the problems of life and the self-confidence. The salute with eight parts pose represents our complete surrender to the power of the midday sun. The cobra pose represents our awakening from sleep; the arising of knowledge from ignorance, the awakening of rajasic vital energy out of the inertia of tamas. When the serpent, representing wisdom, arises we begin our ascent back towards the spiritual, balanced sattwic state. (Satyanand, 2007)

The body (action), mind (thought) and heart (emotion) have harbor knots. Every knot has a corresponding physical muscular knot and vice-versa. The aim of poses is to release theses knots. Asanas release tensions by dealing with them on the physical level, acting somato-psychically, through body to the mind. For example emotional tensions and suppressions can tighten up and block the smooth functioning of the lungs, diaphragm and breathing process, contributing to a very debilitating form of illness in the form of asthma (Satyanand, 2008). Asana eliminates the imbalances between nor-adrenaline and serotonin also. (Sharma, 1998). The outer posture is of the body, the inner posture is of the mind; both are connected. When the body is in the middle, restful, steady; the mind is also in the middle, restful, steady. When the body is in rest, body-feeling disappears; when the mind is in rest, mind feeling disappears. Then you are only the soul, the transcendental, which is neither the body nor the mind (Rajneesh, 2012).

Postures probably have general balancing effects on the hormones and peptides of the body; they certainly do increase endorphins, the '*feel good*' peptides (Rishivivekanand, 2005). Exercise activates beta-endorphins, which may stimulate Natural Killer Cell activity; therefore exercise may be an important buffer against stress related immune changes (Shelley, 2006). Flexibility of the body produces flexibility of the mind, so we are able to assess our negative attitudes etc. and change them. Relaxation produced by a yoga session lasts way beyond the session and becomes an ongoing state as we continue overtime with our practices. It breaks the vicious circles such as *Anxiety- Tension- Fear- Anxiety* (Rishivivekanand, 2005)

Relaxation may mute the effects of stress on immune system. In a study with elderly adults, participants were assigned to relaxation training, social contact, or no intervention (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1985). Participants in the relaxation condition had significantly higher levels of Natural Killer cell activity after the intervention than at baseline and significantly lower antibody titers to herpes simplex virus I, suggesting some enhancement of cellular immunity associated with the relaxation intervention (Shelley, 2006). The immune system stands as a potential mediator of variety of psycho-physiologic effects (Ader, 1983).

Modulators of neurotransmitters level also influence behavior, particularly, when effects are exerted early in the course of Central Nervous System development (Ader, 1983). The immune status of an organism has consequences for behavior. New research indicates that the nervous and immune systems are the two most complex systems involved in the maintenance of homeostasis (Cohen and Ader, 1993).

People's emotions- both positive and negative – play a critical role in the balance of immune functions. But positive emotions can also affect immune function, giving it a boost (Sarafino, 1998). The positive emotions are processed mainly in the left hemisphere of the brain. Incontrast, negative emotions are processed in the right hemisphere. Scientists are used to think that all emotions are processed by the cerebral cortex (Coon, 2003). LeDeoux and other researchers have found that an area of the brain called the amygdala specializes in producing fear. Amygdala receives sensory information very directly and quickly, bypassing the cortex. (LeDeoux, 1999) Parasympathetic branch generally reverses emotional arousal and calms and relaxes the body.

Greater characteristic mindfulness is associated with higher emotional intelligence (Brown and Ryan, 2003; Schutte & Malouff, 2011), and mindfulness may be a platform for the development of emotional intelligence (Schutte and Malouff, 2011). Various interventions have been found to increase mindfulness and to increase beneficial outcomes associated with mindfulness (Hofmann *et al.*, 2010). Therelaxation influences more frequently the enhancement of T-Lymphocyte percentages during examinations, after controlling for baseline levels (Kiecolt-Glaser *et al.*, 1986)

From the above discussion it is clear that yogic practices are very beneficial for enhancing the emotional intelligence as well as controlling work-life conflicts and establishing work-life balance.

Conclusion

It is obvious from the above mentioned facts and evidences that yogic practices emerge as a powerful means to exert conscious control over our usually occult inner body systems, a regulator or fine tuning mechanism for body processes along with enhancement of neural and reflective intelligence; when emotional development catches up with the physical component, the physical ripening can proceed in a controlled manner, free from the emotional trauma scars later on. In addition yogic practices enhance the

immunity at bio as well as psycho strata. Various psychological approaches, such as meditation, relaxation, and stress management training can actually boost immune system functioning. Thereby it is clear that yoga establishes self-control in life also, hence emotional intelligence grows rapidly.

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