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Hope in Life: A Comparative Study among Yoga Practitioners and Non-Practitioners

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Abstract

This article reports the results of a comparative study on hope in life of yoga practitioners and non-practitioners carried out among 100 yoga practitioners and 100 people who do not do yoga in India using a questionnaire containing the measure of hope in life and the characteristics of the yoga respondents such as age, period of yoga practice, whether faced any psychological problems during the past two months and whether faced any other problems in life during the past two months. The findings reveal that the yoga practitioners have experienced all the hope related parameters comparatively better than non-practitioners. Statistically significant difference in the scores between yoga practitioners and non-practitioners for many of the parameters is also evident. The characteristics, namely, age of the yoga practitioners, period of yoga practice, level of psychological problems, and level of other problems they faced during the past two months contribute to 88.7 % variation in their hope score. Statistically significant difference is observed in the hope score of yoga practitioners under different categories of age and the level of other problems faced in life during the past two months. It will worthwhile if yoga centres in different countries undertake relevant studies on relaxation techniques like yoga, meditation etc. with the help of experts and transfer the results to as many people as possible in order to motivate them to practice these methods and achieve better meaning and wellbeing in their lives.

Keywords: Yoga; Practice; Hope in life

Introduction

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), having hope is having an expectation that something good will happen in the future or that something bad won't happen. Being hopeful makes you an optimist, which the APA defines as someone who anticipates positive outcomes, whether serendipitously or through perseverance and effort, and who is confident of attaining desired goals. We can think about hope in different ways such as an emotional feeling, as one way to motivate yourself to action or as part of a coping mechanism that gets us through some form of loss. Hope is a component of the self-narrative about life which we all have running through our brains, helping us to determine what we want to achieve. There are three elements related to hope in life. They include having a desire for something that is valuable, and the belief that it is possible to attain this wish even when it might appear to be uncertain. Then comes the trust that we have the internal and external resources to achieve the desire even when we experience setbacks along the way. Yoga is a powerful tool for emotional well-being. By incorporating specific poses and breathing techniques, yoga helps to

release emotional tension and cultivates a sense of balance. Regular yoga practice can lead to increased self-awareness, improved mood, and a more positive outlook on life. It also provides a safe space for self-reflection and healing. (<https://namastedwaar.com/the-benefits-of-a-daily-yoga-practice-how-consistency-can-transform-your-life/>). All these benefits could provide more hope in life for the yoga practitioners

Materials and Methods

This study was carried out among 100 yoga practitioners of Patanjali Yoga Research Centre, Kozhikode, Kerala, India and 100 respondents who are not practicing yoga in Kozhikode using a questionnaire containing the measure of hope in life and the characteristics of the yoga practitioners such as age, period of yoga practice, whether faced any psychological problems during the past two months, and whether faced any other problems in life during the past two months [1]. The responses to the hope related parameters were: Definitely true, mostly true, somewhat true, slightly true,



slightly false, somewhat false, mostly false, and Definitely false, which were scored on an eight-point continuum on the Likert scale. The sum of scores of the hope related parameters was worked out as the hope score of the respondents. The data was analysed as percentage, scores and through the statistical tests, namely, t test, Multiple Regression and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Results and Discussion

Interpretation of the results on various hope related parameters are given below:

Possible to think of many ways to get out of a jam: 80% of yoga practitioners reported that this is somewhat true and 20% reported that this is slightly true. However, only 40% of non-yoga practitioners reported this as somewhat true, while 30% mentioned that this is slightly false. This implies that yoga practitioners have better ability to find ways to come out of problems in life than people who do not practice yoga. Yoga practitioners getting a higher score for this hope related parameter than people who do not practice yoga, with statistically significant difference between the scores validates the trend mentioned above (Table 1).

Yoga practice contributes to a better understanding of the mind, body and emotions. It can help you become more balanced and calmer as you go through the ups and downs of life, enabling you to find ways to escape from the problems in life in a better manner.

Pursuing goals energetically: 40% of yoga practitioners reported that this is mostly true, while 40% mentioned that it is somewhat true. In the case of those who were not doing yoga, 30 % reported that this is mostly true, 40% as only slightly true, while 20% indicated that this is slightly false. This indicates that yoga practitioners have more ability to strive energetically to achieve their goals in life than people who are not doing yoga. Yoga focuses on achieving harmony between the mind, body and spirit, through which the activities of life can be undertaken in a better way, bringing out the best of one's abilities (<https://www.dabur.com/blog/yoga/importance-and-benefits-yoga>). This may be considered as an outcome of the mental benefits which yoga can give to the practitioners.

Feeling tired most of the time: 70% of yoga practitioners reported that this is mostly false. But, 40% of those who do not practice yoga mentioned that this is somewhat true, and 30% as slightly true. This means that those who practice yoga experience less fatigue than those who do not practice it. Yoga practitioners getting a higher score for this parameter than people who do not practice yoga, with statistically significant difference between the scores validates the trend mentioned above (Table 1). Moving your body in a sustained and focused way through Yog asanas clears stagnation and boosts endorphin hormone production, making you feel more energized. This will help to reduce tiredness.

Having lots of ways around any problem: 80% of the yoga practitioners mentioned that this is somewhat true, and only 10 percent of people said that this is slightly false. However, among those who do not do yoga, only 40% reported that this is somewhat true, while 30% were of the opinion that this is somewhat false. This indicates that those who practice yoga are more likely to have many ways to solve problems, as compared to those who do not practice yoga. Yoga practitioners getting a higher score for this parameter than people who do not practice yoga, with statistically

significant difference between the scores validates this result (Table 1). Yoga practice helps to eliminate mental disturbances by calming the mind and body. This enables us to use our self-awareness more, which helps in finding out innovative solutions that may not have been thought of before (How Yoga Can Help You Succeed in Professional Life. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-yoga-can-help-you-succeed-professional-life-masha-liokumovich/>). Through yoga practice, it becomes possible to pay attention to the sensations, thoughts, and feelings that arise in your body and mind. This helps to improve self-awareness.

Getting easily downed in an argument: Only 10% of the yoga practitioners in this study reported that this is somewhat true, while 30% of them mentioned that this is slightly false. However, 20% of the people who do not practice yoga reported that this is somewhat true, while only 20% of them mentioned that this is slightly false. This implies that those who practice yoga are likely to succeed more in arguments than those who do not do yoga. Even though arguing with others is not good, it may be unavoidable it may be unavoidable. It may be probably because of the better mental state attained through yoga that people who practice it are less likely to lose in arguments.

Possibility of thinking about many ways to achieve important things in life: 70% of the yoga practitioners said that this is somewhat true, and 10% said this is slightly false. However, 40% of those who have not done yoga said this is somewhat true and 40% of them said this is slightly false. This indicates that yoga practitioners are more capable of thinking about many ways to achieve important things in life than those who have not done yoga. When there is not much of mental clarity, many of our thoughts and feelings may not be proper. In such situations, the methods we choose to achieve things may prove ineffective. Yoga helps to improve mental clarity and concentration. (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-yoga-can-help-you-succeed-professional-life-masha-liokumovich/>). (How yoga can help you succeed in professional life). Yoga can help to regulate emotions, focus on tasks, and increase productivity (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-yoga-can-help-you-succeed-professional-life-masha-liokumovich/>). These mental qualities may be helpful for the yoga practitioners in deciding important things in life and choosing proper ways to achieve them. Studies have also shown that endorphins, a hormone produced more in yoga practitioners contribute to mental well-being.

Worrying about health: All the yoga practitioners have reported that this is definitely false, mostly false, somewhat false and slightly false. However, 30% of people who have not done yoga reported that this is somewhat true, and only 70% of them reported that this is mostly false, somewhat false or slightly false. These results show that yoga practitioners are not that much concerned about their health as compared to those who have not practiced yoga. As shown in Table 1, yoga practitioners have got a higher score for this parameter than non-practitioners with statistically significant difference in the scores. This result establishes less worry about health for yoga practitioners in this study.

Studies have reported the beneficial effects of yoga for reducing stress, obesity, diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary problem etc. These studies suggest that yoga can be used as a non-pharmaceutical method or as an adjunct to the use of drugs for the treatment of these medical conditions [2]. A study has reported that after practicing yoga, many people experienced reduction in their mental and physical health problems when compared to before its practice [3].

Decrease in Growth Hormone (GH) and Dehydroepiandrosterone Sulphate (DHEAS) secretion are signs of aging. Graded yogic training promotes healthy aging by maintaining baseline levels of GH and DHEAS in the human body [4]

Ability to find a way to solve a problem even when others get discouraged: All the yoga practitioners have reported that this is true. But 50% of those who do not do yoga reported that this is wrong and only 50% mentioned that this is true. Yoga practitioners got a higher score for this parameter than non-practitioners with statistically significantly difference in the scores, establishing the influence of yoga practice in not getting much discouraged with problems (Table 1). The reason for this may be the positive attitude developed by the yoga practitioners about finding necessary ways to do things in life/solve problems, as observed in the case of the hope item no. 1, 4 and 6 in this study. The psychological benefits of yoga practice may be expected to help in people not getting much discouraged even when faced with problems in life.

Past experiences helping to prepare well for the future: All the yoga practitioners have answered this as slightly true, somewhat true and mostly true, while all those who are not doing yoga have answered as slightly true and somewhat true. These responses show that there is not much difference between those who practice and those who do not practice yoga with respect to preparing oneself for the future based on past experiences. This may be probably because previous experiences helpful in getting prepared well for the future for many of the yoga respondents were there even before they started doing yoga. Under such a situation, much difference in the response to this hope related factor cannot be expected between those who practiced and those who did not practice yoga. However, 10% of yoga respondents have given the response, namely, mostly true for this hope related item, unlike the non-yoga group. This could be probably because they have started practicing yoga earlier itself and experienced good things in life, which could have helped them to prepare well for their future from then onwards.

Being pretty successful in life: 80% of the yoga practitioners reported that this is mostly correct, compared to only 40% of those who are not doing yoga. Further, while 10% of those who are not doing yoga indicated that this was slightly false, none of the yoga practitioners have responded in this manner. This means that yoga practitioners are able to achieve more success in life than those who have not done yoga. Comparatively higher score for this this parameter for yoga practitioners than those who have not practiced yoga, with statistically significant difference between the scores validates the above result (Table 1).

As already mentioned, under this study, yoga practitioners are found to be having better ability to find many ways to escape from life's problems even when others are discouraged by their problems, striving energetically to achieve goals, and finding many ways to achieve important things in life than non-practitioners. All these would have probably contributed to yoga practitioners feeling more successful in life. Hope on success in life is something which would be mostly there in people having a positive mind set. Practicing yoga increases the level of feel-good hormones such as dopamine, endorphins and serotonin in the brain, which are helpful in creating a positive mind set.

Yoga is helpful in keeping the body and mind healthy. The body should be in good condition to have a clear mind. Yoga creates harmony between the body and mind

(https://kfoundation.org/krishnamurti-yoga/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwoPOwBhAeEiwAJuXRh0gg7tYd4HvOEKAA0cqf3yZaN7Wx7djRh7ctLFYupOxfHOl6QCM_1BoC6PgQAvD_BwE). This can be expected to make life more meaningful and help to achieve better success in life. Success in life comes when important goals are achieved. This requires a positive attitude and good effort (What makes you successful in life. <https://in.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/key-factors-to-success>). The fact that the yoga practitioners in this study have more positive attitude than the non-practitioners can be inferred from the responses to many of the hope related items mentioned earlier. Yoga practitioners have also reported about more energetically pursuing goals in life. These two qualities might have probably helped them to be more successful in life.

Usually worrying about something: All the yoga practitioners have answered this as mostly false and somewhat false. However, only 50% of non-practitioners gave both these answers, while 20% of them indicated that this is slightly true. This shows that people who have done yoga have experienced less worry. Yoga practitioners have a higher score for this parameter than people who do not practice yoga, with statistically significant difference between the scores (Table 1). A study reported that when compared to before doing yoga, after doing it, the respondents enjoyed life more, had more positive emotions, increased self-confidence, relaxation, happiness and contentment in life, and decreased negative emotions, feeling of hopelessness, anxiety, and depression [5].

Meeting the goals which are set for oneself: 90% of yoga practitioners responded to this as slightly true and somewhat true, while only 70 percent of non-practitioners responded in this manner. 30% of them mentioned that this is slightly wrong. This indicates that the yoga practitioners are able to accomplish their goals better. Yoga practitioners have a higher score for this hope related parameter than people who do not practice yoga, with statistically significant difference between the scores (Table 1).

Item	Mean Score		t value and statistical significance
	Yoga practitioners	Non-practitioners	
We can think of many ways to get out of a jam	5.8	4.8	2.3; p < 0.05
We feel tired most of the time	6.5	5.5	2.2; p < 0.05
There are lots of ways around any problem	5.7	5.1	1.7; p < 0.10
We worry about health	5.7	4.6	2.4; p < 0.05
Even when others are discouraged by their problems, we can find a way to solve problems	6	5.2	1.8; p < 0.10
We have achieved good success in life	6.7	5.8	2.2; p < 0.05
We usually worry about things	6.5	5.4	3.2; p < 0.01
We accomplish the goals which I set in life	5.6	5	1.8; p < 0.10

Table 1. Statistical significance of the difference in hope related item scores between yoga practitioners and non-practitioners.

As already observed, the hope related items, namely, ability to find many ways to escape from life's problems, striving energetically to achieve goals in life, ability to think of many ways to achieve important things in life, having hope that one can find a way to solve problems even when others are discouraged by their problems are all more for yoga practitioners than non-practitioners. All these qualities might have probably helped them to achieve their goals in life in a better manner. Yoga helps to improve mental clarity, calmness, self-awareness, energy, confidence and better attainment of goals. (Source: 6 Ways Yoga Can Help You Achieve Your Life Goals. <https://www.loseit.com/articles/6-ways-yoga-can-help-you-achieve-your-life-goals/>).

Multiple regression analysis showed that the characteristics, namely, age of the yoga practitioners, period of yoga practice, level of psychological problems, and level of other problems they had during the past two months contribute to 88.7 % variation in their hope score ($R^2 = 0.887$; significant $p < 0.01$). Period of yoga practice and the level of other problems they faced during the past two months showed statistically significant regression coefficients (Table 2).

Characteristics	Regression coefficient (r) and statistical significance
Level of other problems faced during the past two months	- 4.06; $p < 0.01$
Period of yoga practice (months)	0.16; $p < 0.10$

Table 2: Regression coefficients of characteristics of the yoga practitioners in the multiple regression analysis.

The results of ANOVA of hope score of yoga practitioners based on age is given in Table 3. Yoga practitioners in the age group of 5 to 12 years get the lowest hope score, followed by those in the 18 to 24 age group and then, those in the 29 to 36 age group. The significance of the F value indicates that these scores differ statistically.

Age (years)	Mean hope score of yoga practitioners	F value and statistical significance
5 to 12	66	6.1; $p < 0.05$
18 to 24	69.8	
29 to 36	72.8	

Table 3: Results of ANOVA of hope score of yoga practitioners based on age.

The results of ANOVA of hope score of yoga practitioners based on the level of other problems faced in life during the past two months

is shown in Table 4. Yoga practitioners reporting no problems are getting the highest hope score, followed by those who had low level of problems, and then, those who had medium level of problems, with statistically significant difference in the scores.

Level of other problems faced in life during the past two months	Mean hope score of yoga practitioners	F value and statistical significance
Nil	74	10.7; $p < 0.01$
Low	70.5	
Medium	65.5	

Table 4: Results of ANOVA of hope score of yoga practitioners based on the level of other problems faced in life during the past two months.

Conclusion

Yoga practitioners have experienced all the hope related parameters considered under the study in a better manner than non-practitioners. Statistically significant difference in the scores for many of the parameters between yoga practitioners and non-practitioners is also evident, further substantiating this result. The characteristics, namely, age of the yoga practitioners, period of yoga practice, level of psychological problems, and level of other problems they faced during the past two months contribute to 88.7% variation in their hope score. Statistically significant difference is observed in the hope score of yoga practitioners under different categories of age and the level of other problems faced in life during the past two months.

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