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Dr. Amanendra Mann

Associate Professor,

DAV, Chandigarh, India

Jitender Singh

Research Scholar,

Department of Physical

Education, Panjab University,

Chandigarh, India

Effectiveness of kundalini yoga practice on mental well being

Dr. Amanendra Mann and Jitender Singh

Abstract

Introduction: In the evolution of mankind in context to growth and development, man had covered many a mile. Since many eternities he is indulged in the process of reaching towards perfection and of being perfect. He had converted many of his dreams into reality and also improved as well improvised his living standard with more and more comfort and luxury. In this race of making his life more easy and comfortable, he had invited many unwanted guests also. The natural and ethical worth starts degrading. Yoga is the solution to the overall health, soundness and development. Yoga is being practiced since many centuries and in many forms. Various yoga styles or improvisations are widely practiced throughout world like Ashtanga Yoga, Bikram's Hot Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Power Yoga and Viniyasa Flow Yoga, Power Yoga and many more. The name Kundalini Yoga is derived through a focus on arousing kundalini energy through regular practice of meditation, pranayama, mantras chanting and yogasanas.

Method & Procedure: The aim of the study was to find out the effect of six weeks of Kundalini Yoga practice on Mental Well-being as psychological variable. The study was conducted on 60 male school athletes of 14-16 years of age, divided into two groups (30 each) in experimental and control group. Warwick and Edinburg Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS, 2007) was used.

Result and Discussion: The mean pre-test and post-test scores of Experimental Group (Kundalini Yoga Training Group) on Mental Well-Being, were 43.47 and 46.07 respectively. Its SD pre-test score and SD post-test scores were 2.16 and 2.41 respectively. The calculated value of t-test of EG was recorded with 6.9092, which is higher than the tabulated value and is considered to be statistically significant.

Keywords: Kundalini yoga, mental well

Introduction

In the evolution of mankind in context to growth and development, man had covered many a mile. Since many eternities he is indulged in the process of reaching towards perfection and of being perfect. He had converted many of his dreams into reality and also improved as well improvised his living standard with more and more comfort and luxury. In this race of making his life more easy and comfortable, he had invited many unwanted guests also. The natural and ethical worth starts degrading. Various pollution of environment is direct resultant, which is considered as the main unwanted guest. In these developments man has forgotten that health is of utmost importance. The standard of living is narrow if we believe in standard of life. Health issues are not only concern with physical health but also mental health and wellbeing.

Yoga is the solution to the overall health, soundness and development. Yoga is being practiced since many centuries and in many forms. It has main four paths; or dimensions viz. the Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga and Raja Yoga. Yoga practitioner not only develops physical and mental soundness but also shine with spirituality.

The material growth and prosperity raises "The standard of living" whereas spirituality improves "The standard of life". Material prosperity by itself can't provide happiness to an individual, if he has not developed a sound and healthy inner personality. Longing for material wealth has declined human values.

Various yoga styles or improvisations are widely practiced throughout world like Ashtanga Yoga, Bikram's Hot Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Power Yoga and Viniyasa Flow Yoga, Power Yoga and many more. But all are based on root and foundational pillars of ancient yoga concepts. One of them is Kundalini Yoga Practice Style.

Correspondence

Dr. Amanendra Mann

Associate Professor,

DAV, Chandigarh, India

The name Kundalini Yoga is derived through a focus on arousing kundalini energy through regular practice of meditation, pranayama, mantras chanting and yogasanas. The unique blend of pious and physical practice of kundalini yoga are incorporates poses and movements with dynamic breathing patterns, meditation and the chanting of mantras.

The word Kundalini is derived from a Sanskrit word 'Kundal' meaning coiled up. Kundalini Yoga is also recognized as Laya Yoga. It is largely influenced by Shaktism and Tantra. It is the yogic practice of awareness, where focus is on a spiritual energy or life force located at the base of the spine, propagated as a coiled serpent. In addition, the practice of kundalini yoga is considered to awaken and activate the latent kundalini shakti from its coiled base to the highest chakra or the crown through the six chakras. This dormant energy flows freely upward towards the seventh chakra and leads the awakening of the actual consciousness.

According to Yogi Bhajan, "Kundalini Yoga consists of active and passive asana-based kriyas, pranayama and meditation which target the whole body system (nervous system, glands, mental faculties, chakras) to develop awareness, consciousness and spiritual strength." In context of Hathayoga Pradipika's describes the kundalini, in the form of latency, is coiled like a serpent. One who impels this power to move will attain liberation." (Hathayoga Pradipika, Ch.3, Verse 108)

Another description of kundalini in Hathayoga Pradipika is when the sleeping Kundalini is awakened by the grace of the Guru, then all the chakras and the knots are pierced. (Hathayoga Pradipika, Ch.3, Verse 02)

Yoga Kundalini Upanishad explains the divine power, Kundalini shines like the stem of a young lotus at the base of the body. (Yoga Kundalini Upanishad, 1.82)

Shri Jnyandeo explained in his text Jnyaneshwari, the life wind emerging out of the Kundalini creates a cooling sensation in the body, internally and also externally. In Shiv Samhita, it is described that, "In the pericarp of the (Mool) adhara lotus there is a triangular beautiful yoni, hidden and kept secret. In it is the supreme goddess Kundalini of the form of electricity, in a coil. It has three coils and a half (like a serpent) and is in the mouth of Sushumna. It represents the creative force of the world, and is always engaged in creation."

The spiritual teacher Meher Baba emphasized the need for a master when actively trying to awaken Kundalini. According to him, "Kundalini is a latent power in the higher body. When awakened, it pierces through six chakras or functional centers and activates them. Without a master, the awakening of the kundalini cannot take anyone very far on the Path; and such indiscriminate or premature awakening is fraught with dangers of self-deception as well as the misuse of powers. The kundalini enables man to consciously cross the lower planes and it ultimately merges into the universal cosmic power of which it is a part, and which also is at times described as kundalini... The important point is that the awakened kundalini is helpful only up to a certain degree, after which it cannot ensure further progress. It cannot dispense with the need for the grace of a Perfect Master."

According to Scotton, Bruce W. (1999), "Kundalini is considered to occur in the chakra and nadis of the subtle body. Each chakra is said to contain special characteristics and with proper training, moving Kundalini through these chakras can help express or open these characteristics."

According to Bruyere (1994)^[3] explores the seven chakras, or energy centers, of the body with particular focus on the first

chakra, which has to do with our basic life force, our physical bodies, and our sexuality.

According to Blawyn *et al.* (1996)^[2], Dynamic movement and controlled breathing are the stepping stones to spiritual enlightenment. Once the chi is felt flowing through the chakras, or energy centres, the first spiritual path has been taken.

Concept of kundalini shakti

Swami Vivekananda describes the concept of Kundalini briefly in his book Raja Yoga. He explained that according to the Yogis, there are two nerve currents in the spinal column, called Pingala and Ida, and a hollow canal called Sushumna running through the spinal cord. At the lower end of the hollow canal is what the Yogis call the "Lotus of the Kundalini". They describe it as triangular in a form in which, in the symbolical language of the Yogis, there is a power called the Kundalini, coiled up. When that Kundalini awakens, it tries to force a passage through this hollow canal, and as it rises step by step, as it were, layer after layer of the mind becomes open and all the different visions and wonderful powers come to the Yogi. When it reaches the brain, the Yogi is perfectly detached from the body and mind; the soul finds itself free. We know that the spinal cord is composed in a peculiar manner. If we take the figure eight horizontally, there are two parts which are connected in the middle. Suppose you add eight after eight, piled one on top of the other that will represent the spinal cord. The left is the Ida, the right Pingala, and that hollow canal which runs through the center of the spinal cord is the Sushumna. Where the spinal cord ends in some of the lumbar vertebrae, a fine fiber issues downwards, and the canal runs up even within that fiber, only much finer. The canal is closed at the lower end, which is situated near what is called the sacral plexus, which, according to modern physiology, is triangular in form.

Paramahansa Yogananda states that the yogi reverses the searchlights of intelligence, mind and life force inward through a secret astral pathway, the coiled way of the kundalini in the coccygeal plexus, and upward through the sacral, the lumbar, and the higher dorsal, cervical, and medullary plexuses, and the spiritual eye at the point between the eyebrows, to reveal finally the soul's presence in the highest center (Sahasrara) in the brain.

According to Saraswati, Swami Satyananda, Kundalini is described as a sleeping, dormant potential force in the human organism. It is one of the components of an esoteric description of the "subtle body", which consists of nadis, chakras, prana and bindu.

Ramana Maharshi mentioned that Kundalini is nothing but the natural energy of the Self, where Self is the universal consciousness (Paramatma) present in every being and that the individual mind of thoughts cloaks this natural energy from unadulterated expression. Advaita teaches self-realization, enlightenment, God-consciousness, and nirvana. But initial Kundalini awakening is just the beginning of the actual spiritual experience. Self-inquiry meditation is considered a very natural and simple means of reaching this goal.

Carl Jung confer that "Sakti-Kundalini or Devi-Kundalini is a goddess. She is the female principle, the self manifesting power which surrounds the gem at the center, the gold seed, the jewel, the pearl, the egg. The Kundalini serpent is, however, also Devi-Kundalini, a chain of glittering lights, the "world be wilderer."

Sir John Woodroffe clarifies the concept of kundalini that it

vivified by the “Serpent Fire” (Kundalini) they (chakras) become gates of connection between the physical and “astral” bodies. When the astral awakening of these centers first took place, this was not known to the physical consciousness. But the sense body can now “be brought to share all these advantages by repeating that process of awakening with the etheric centers. This is done by the arousing through will-force of the “Serpent Fire,” which exists clothed in “etheric matter in the physical plane, and sleeps in the corresponding etheric center—that at the base of the spine. When this is done, it vivifies the higher centers, with the effect that it brings into the physical consciousness the powers which are aroused by the development of their corresponding astral centers... There mere rousing of the Serpent Power does not, from the spiritual Yoga standpoint, amount too much. Nothing, however, of real moment, from the higher Yogi’s point of view, is achieved until the Ajna Chakra is reached. Here, again, it is said that the Sadhaka whose Atma is nothing but a meditation on the lotus “becomes the creator, preserver and destroyer of the three worlds”...It is not until the Tattvas of this center are also absorbed, and complete knowledge of the Sahasrara is gained, that the Yogi attains that which is both his aim and the motive of his labor, cessation from rebirth which follows on the control and concentration of the Citta on the Siva-sthanam, the Abode of Bliss.

George King, founder of the Aetherius Society, describes the concept of Kundalini throughout his works and claimed to have experienced this energy many times throughout his life while in a "positive samadhic yogic trance state." According to him, it should always be remembered that despite appearances to the contrary, the complete control of Kundalini through the spinal column is man's only reason for being on Earth, for when this is accomplished, the lessons in this classroom and the mystical examination is passed.

Concept of koshas

The Taittiriya Upanishad describes human being to be having a five sheaths personality (Pancha Kosha) comprising of the material or gross body (Anamaya Kosha), the vital or instinctual component (Pranamaya Kosha), the mental or psychological component (Manomaya Kosha), the intellectual component (Vigyanmaya Kosha), and the fifth aspect of pure bliss and happiness (Anandmaya Kosha).

‘Anna’ means food. This sheath is our physical body and is the densest of all the koshas. It includes bones and tissues which make up our muscles and various other organs. It is associated with the lowest vibration of us.

‘Prana’ means energy. This kosha is the very important life force that moves through the body. It exactly comprises of the breath and the five pranas, namely: prana, apana, udana, samana and vyana. These prana direct various functions inside the physical body, and without prana, the body would be lifeless, and unable to move or feel. It is the prana that formulates the blood flow, carries impulses through the nerves from our body, to the brain and reverse.

‘Mana’ means mind. This kosha is made up of our thoughts process, emotion and feelings. The height of experience is the conscious mind, which holds the two koshas, annamaya and pranamaya, together as an integrated whole.

‘Vijnana’ means subtle knowledge. In this kosha we attain intuitive knowledge and higher stages of consciousness. In this sheath the consciousness of the body and mind is vanished and awareness is established as the ‘higher’ mind.

‘Ananda’ means bliss. It is the spiritual or underlying body, where, finally, you become one with the divine light, which is

our soul. Anandamaya kosha is associated to the unconscious or superconscious mind.

Concept

The word Chakra is perhaps derived from Sanskrit Chakra meaning “Wheel” or “Circle”. It describes activated Chakras as revolving wheels, and it describes how Kundalini can be used stimulate and activate the Chakras from the bottom to the top.

In theory, Kundalini generates a force that helps to open the crown chakra, which is located at the top of the head.

1. The first Chakra is Mooladhar Chakra; this Chakra is situated in the basal region of the vertebral column at the mid spot between anus and testis. In meditation, this Chakra is visualized as a red lotus possessing four petals. This is the resting place of the Kundalini Shakti, which lies here as a snake having three and half coil. This Chakra is the symbol of Earth element. Activation of this Chakra results in riddance from tensions, true happiness, beauty, perfect health and physical strength, magnetic personality.
2. The second is Swadhishtan Chakra this Chakra is located in the vertebral column just opposite to the perennial region. In meditation, this Chakra is visualized as a vermilion colored lotus having six petals. This semi lunar Chakra is the symbol of Water element.
3. The Third Chakra is Manipur Chakra. Inside the vertebral column, this Chakra is situated just opposite to the naval region. This ten petalled lotus is of blue color. The Yantra of this Chakra is triangular in shape and it represents the fire element. Activation of this Chakra results in perfect digestion, riddance from ailments like kidney stones, diabetes, liver problems etc. Success in amazing Sadhanas like flying in the air, walking on water, telepathic contact with animals and plants, perfection in Prannayam and the highest achievement is success in Meditation.
4. The fourth Chakra is Anahat Chakra. The relative position of this Chakra inside the vertebral column is just opposite to the cardiac region (heart). This red colored lotus possesses twelve petals and it represents the Air element. Activation of this Chakra illuminates the entire body and the entire vertebral column starts vibrating. Activation of this Chakra results in peace of mind, boundless divine joy, Open hearted personality, Love with all, entering into Samadhi (divine trance), riddance from problems related to heart, increase in soft emotions.
5. The fifth one is Vishuddhi Chakra. Inside the vertebral column this Chakra is located opposite the throat region. This lotus of smoky color possesses sixteen petals and it represents the sky element. Activation of this Chakra results in riddance from all ailments related to throat, thyroid etc., increase in knowledge, gain of power of eloquence, deeper Samadhi, perfection in the art of Hypnotism, gain of power to die when one wills, total material success like comforts, wealth, fame etc.
6. The sixth and the Master Chakra is Agyan Chakra, this Chakra is located just opposite the mid spot between the two eyebrows. This white lotus has only two petals. Also called the Third Eye its activation brings wondrous powers like clairvoyance, telepathy, power of giving curses or blessings, instant fulfillment of anything one wishes, and gain of knowledge related to all subjects and sciences, power to control thoughts of others and interfere even in nature.

7. The highest and the last Chakra is Sahashrar Chakra. Beyond these six Chakras at the upper termination of the spinal cord, is the thousand petalled lotus; the abode of Lord Shiva (Supreme Being). When the Kundalini Shakti unites itself with the Supreme Being, the aspirant gets engrossed in deep meditation during which he perceives infinite bliss. This is a subtle centre in the brain. On activation of Sahashrara a very fine, elixir-like secretion is produced from it which permeates the whole body thus making the human forever free of all ailments. Sahashrara Chakra is situated two inches deep inside both the temporal region and three inches deep from the midspot between the eyebrows that is in the middle portion of cerebral hemispheres.

IDA, Pingla and sushumna nadi

The kundalini system consisting of 72,000 nadis and the Sushumna, Ida and Pingala are the locations of Pranmay Kosha. Nadi is a channel or flow of prana. The word 'nadi' comes from the Sanskrit root nad which means channel or current. They are the flows of different forms of prana which emanate from each transformer, from each chakra. Out of these nadis three are important ida, pingala and shushumna - the lunar force, the solar force and the integrated force. The lunar channel or ida nadi vitalises the mental dimension, the solar force or pingala nadi vitalises the physical dimension, and the shushumna nadi or integrated flow is the link between the individual and the cosmos.

Well-being

World Health Organization (2006) published a review of glossary terms that defined wellness thus: Wellness is the optimal state of health of individuals and groups. There are two focal concerns: the realization of the fullest potential of an individual physically, psychologically, socially, spiritually and economically, and the fulfillment of one's role expectations in the family, community, place of worship, workplace and other settings.

Mental Well-Being therefore involves perception of engagement with existential challenges of life and examines perceived thriving with regard to those challenges, such as: establishing trusting relationships with others, having a positive attitude towards the self, having a sense of directedness in life, growing and developing as a person etc.

Mental Well-Being can increase with age, education, extraversion and consciousness and decreases with neuroticism. The concept of mental well-being draws heavily on formulations of human development and existential challenges of life. Some of the theories aimed at describing positive psychological functioning include Maslow's conception of self-actualization, Rogers's view of the fully functioning person, Jung's formulation of individuation, and Allport's conception of maturity. By the same token, life span developmental perspectives such as Erikson's psychosocial stage model which emphasize the differing challenges faced at various phases of the living cycle, are another domain of theory for defining mental well-being.

Method and procedure

The aim of the study was to find out the effect of Kundalini Yoga practice on Mental Well-being. A single random group design was adopted for the study.

The study was conducted on 60 male school athletes of 14-16 years of age, studying in grades IX to X, in GMHS-43A, Chandigarh. The selected subjects were divided into

following two groups comprising of 30 subjects each in experimental and control group. The subjects were asked to fill the responses in the provided questionnaire i.e. Warwick and Edinburg Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS, 2007).

The Kundalini Yoga practice lasted for 06 weeks. There were three session of 50 minutes each on alternative days, for experimental group. However no other training or practices were given to the control group. Time was controlled for experimental group. This study was selected to investigate the effect of Kundalini Yoga practice on mental well-being as psychological variable.

Result and discussion

Below shown tables are representing the results of the research study conducted on the effect of Kundalini Yoga training followed by discussion.

Table 1: Pre-test and Post-test of EG – Kundalini Yoga Group on Mental Well-Being

Test	Mean	Std. deviation	t-value
Pre-test	43.47	2.16	6.9092
Post-test	46.07	2.41	

Significant at.05 level

*t'.05 (df=29) = 2.045

The above table-I represents pre-test scores and post-test scores on Mental Well-Being of EG. The number of subjects in EG was thirty. The mean pre-test scores and post-test scores of EG on Mental Well-Being, whose subject were given intervention with Kundalini Yoga Training, were 43.47 and 46.07 respectively. Its SD pre-test score and SD post-test scores were 2.16 and 2.41 respectively. The calculated value of t-test of EG (Experimental Group) was recorded with 6.9092 which is higher than the tabulated value i.e. 2.045, which is considered to be statistically significant.

Table 2: Pre-test and Post-test of CG – Control Group on Mental Well-Being

Test	Mean	Std. deviation	t-value
Pre-test	43.07	1.96	1.0000
Post-test	43.20	2.11	

Significant at.05 level

*t'.05 (df=29) = 2.045

The above table-II represents pre-test scores and post-test scores on Mental Well-Being of CG. The number of subjects in CG was thirty. The mean pre-test scores and post-test scores of CG, whose subjects was not provided with any treatment or training, was 43.07 and 43.20 respectively. Its SD pre-test scores and SD post-test scores were 1.96 and 2.11 respectively. Further, the t-value between the pre-test scores and post-test scores of CG was recorded with 1.0000, which is considered to be statistically insignificant.

Table 3: Post-test EG and CG on Mental Well-Being

Group	Mean	Std. deviation	t-value
Experimental Group	46.07	2.41	4.9075
Control Group	43.20	2.11	

Significant at.05 level

*t'.05 (df=58) = 2.021

The above table-III and graphical representation shows the means, mean difference, SDs and t-value between post-test scores on Mental Well-Being of EG and CG. The number of subjects in each group was thirty. In Table-III, the mean post-

test scores of EG and CG on Mental Well-Being was recorded as 46.07 and 43.20 respectively. And SD post-test scores of EG and CG were 2.41 and 2.11 respectively. The t-value was recorded as 4.9075. As per statistical analysis this difference was considered as significant.

Conclusion

On the bases of results (t-value in table-III), it is concluded that the 'Kundalini Yoga Training have significant effect on the Mental Well-being.

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