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A STUDY OF AWARENESS ABOUT YOGA AMONG ZILLA PARISHAD, SOLAPUR WORKING PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

***Background**: Yoga is universally recognized as a potent practice for maintaining physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, yet empirical evaluation of its awareness among specific demographic and professional groups remains limited.*
***Objective**: This study aims to evaluate the concept, awareness, and practical involvement in Yoga among working professionals at Zilla Parishad, Solapur.*
***Methods**: A descriptive survey was conducted using a non-probability accidental sampling technique. A sample of 166 working professionals (aged 18 to 60 years) participated. Data was collected via a Google Form using the 18-question Yoga Awareness Scale.*
***Results:** Statistical analysis using the Chi-square test revealed significant awareness regarding Yoga's benefits for the mind ($p = 0.02$), internal organs ($p = 0.04$), and external body ($p = 0.05$). However, the habit of daily practice ($p = 0.12$) and consultation with professional yoga therapists ($p = 0.40$) were statistically non-significant.*
***Conclusion**: There is significant awareness regarding the holistic benefits of Yoga among the study population, driven by self-motivation and medical advice, though the active integration of professional consultation remains lacking.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being, and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity [1]. The 21st century has been aptly called the "century of stress," witnessing a manifold increase in lifestyle disorders such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and psychosomatic illnesses [2].

Yoga, a profound science dating back over 5,000 years, is a gift to mankind from ancient Indian tradition. Maharshi Patanjali defined Yoga as "Yogah Citta Vritti Nirodhah," which translates to a process of gaining control over the mind [1]. Furthermore, the Bhagavad Gita describes Yoga as dexterity in action ("Yogah Karmasu Kausalam") and a state of evenness of mind. Yoga achieves this by developing the personality across four distinct streams: Karma Yoga (path of work), Bhakti Yoga (path of worship), Jnana Yoga (path of philosophy), and Raja Yoga (path of psychic control).

Recognizing its holistic approach to health and well-being, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) unanimously approved a resolution on December 11, 2014, to establish June 21st as the "International Day of Yoga" (IDY) [3]. The Ministry of AYUSH subsequently circulated a Common Yoga Protocol globally to promote disease prevention and health promotion.

Despite India being the birthplace of Yoga, its structured benefits have yet to reach every individual, often due to a lack of awareness or misconceptions that it is intended only for ascetics. As modern practitioners increasingly advise yoga for general wellness, empirical studies are required to gauge public awareness. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the awareness and involvement in Yoga among working professionals at Zilla Parishad, Solapur.

2. METHODS

2.1 Study Design and Population

A descriptive survey research method was utilized to measure the awareness, attitudes, and practices of the target demographic. The population consisted of working professionals employed at various departments of Zilla Parishad, Solapur.

2.2 Sampling Technique

A sample size of 166 individuals was selected using a non-probability-based accidental sampling technique. The inclusion criteria encompassed working professionals of both genders, aged between 18 and 60 years, irrespective of their socio-economic status, caste, religion, or previous medical history.

2.3 Data Collection Tool

The primary tool for data collection was the "Yoga Awareness Scale," previously developed and validated by Dr. Mani Kathapillai [4].

The questionnaire is divided into 4 main parts and consists of 18 questions covering 10 distinct items.
It utilizes a dichotomous scoring scale, where a positive response ("Yes") is awarded 1 point, and a negative response ("No") is awarded 0 points.
The maximum achievable score on the scale is 18, and the minimum is 0.

2.4 Procedure

The questionnaire was converted into a digital Google Form to facilitate wide distribution. The URL link was distributed individually via WhatsApp to the employees of Zilla Parishad Solapur. Participants were given a time limit of 4 weeks to complete and submit their responses.

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2.5 Statistical Analysis

After the 4-week period, the response data from the 166 participants was downloaded into an MS Excel spreadsheet. The collected data was processed using descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies) and inferential statistics. Specifically, the Chi-square test was applied using MS Excel 2013 software to determine the statistical significance of the awareness parameters, with a significance level set at p \le 0.05.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Demographic Statistics

A total of 166 participants successfully completed the survey. The gender distribution of the sample included 106 males (63.9%) and 60 females (36.1%).

3.2 Descriptive and Inferential Statistics

The data analysis evaluated 10 distinct items from the Yoga Awareness Scale. Out of these 10 items, 6 demonstrated a statistically significant difference (p \le 0.05), indicating strong awareness in those specific areas, while 4 items showed no significant difference (p > 0.05).

Significant Findings (p \le 0.05):

- Habit, Knowledge, and Previous Consultation: 127 participants affirmed this, yielding a significant p-value of 0.02.
- Benefits for the External Body: 152 participants agreed that yoga is good for the external body (p = 0.05).
- Benefits for Internal Organs: 165 participants agreed yoga boosts the immunity of internal organs (p = 0.04).
- Mental Health Benefits: 164 participants acknowledged that yoga is beneficial for the mind (p = 0.02).
- Timing of Practice: All 166 participants identified early morning as the ideal time for yoga practice (p = 0.05).
- Motivation: Sources of motivation (self, doctors, media, or body image dissatisfaction) varied but showed statistical significance overall (p = 0.05).

Non-Significant Findings (p > 0.05):

- Habit of Doing Yoga: Only 112 participants claimed to have a habit of doing yoga, which was not statistically significant (p = 0.12).
- General Knowledge of Benefits: While 160 participants said "Yes," the statistical variance was not significant (p = 0.88).
- Physical Fitness as a Reason: 163 participants noted physical fitness as a reason, but this lacked statistical significance in the distribution (p = 0.09).
- Professional Consultation: Only 65 participants had consulted a professional or yoga therapist, yielding a non-significant result (p = 0.40).

4. DISCUSSION

The results of the present study clearly indicate a significant level of awareness regarding Yoga knowledge among the Zilla Parishad Solapur working professionals. The overwhelming majority of participants recognized that yoga provides potent mental health benefits (p=0.02), aids the immunity of internal organs (p=0.04), and is highly beneficial for the external body (p=0.05). Furthermore, there was unanimous agreement among all 166 participants that early morning is the ideal time for yoga practice (p=0.05).

These findings corroborate previous reports stating that Yoga awareness is present at large. The high percentage of awareness may be attributed to the global celebration of the International Day of Yoga and the widespread dissemination of the Common Yoga Protocol, as noted by Manjunath (2023) [5]. The perception of Yoga as an effective tool for improving health and modifying lifestyle choices aligns with the findings of Iyer et al. [6] and Dr. Neena Sharma [7].

However, the study also highlights a critical implementation gap. While general awareness and knowledge of benefits are exceptionally high (96.3% affirming knowledge of benefits), translating this into a consistent daily habit is not statistically significant (p=0.12). Additionally, despite 52.4% of participants citing doctors or consultants as a source of motivation, formal consultation with a professional yoga therapist remains remarkably low and statistically non-significant (p=0.40), with only 65 out of 166 participants seeking expert guidance. This mirrors findings in medical students by Dr. Mani Kathapillai, where high knowledge did not necessarily equate to high practice habits [4].

5. CONCLUSION

There is a significant difference in the awareness of Yoga among Zilla Parishad Solapur working professionals. The population demonstrates a robust conceptual understanding of Yoga's physical and mental benefits, proper practice timing, and strong motivational triggers.

Recommendations

Future research is recommended to address the identified research gaps, specifically investigating why working professionals with high awareness levels do not frequently consult professional yoga therapists. Furthermore, additional qualitative studies should be conducted to rule out any underlying misconceptions about Yoga that may prevent individuals from adopting it as a daily, habitual practice.

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