

Experiment

An Investigation on the Importance of Yoga in Geriatric Care

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ABSTRACT

Background: Yoga is the act of unifying and balancing our cognitive, corporeal, and metaphysical components. It is a practice that encompasses individuals with diverse religious views, ages, and abilities. Yoga is considered advantageous for older individuals living in geriatric care facilities. Presently, elderly persons are encountering a variety of medical and psychological afflictions such as diabetes, arthritis, cardiovascular conditions, respiratory disorders, depression, worry, and stress. Yoga and pranayamas have shown promising effects and advantages in the therapy of older individuals.

Objective: An investigation was conducted to assess the elderly understanding of yoga, their interest in practicing yoga, and current opportunities available for them to learn and practice yoga.

Methodology: Employed an exploratory research methodology and utilized an interview schedule to gather data from 50 elderly people living in different institutions (old age homes) in Patna, Bihar, India.

Conclusion: The level of knowledge and enthusiasm for yoga among the elderly, together with the accessibility of yoga and pranayama practice opportunities, are considered essential for delivering appropriate care to the old in contemporary society. Yoga and pranayamas are considered a cost-effective approach for elderly individuals in today's technological day to improve their physical strength and energy levels, resulting in a stress-free life.

Introduction

The ultimate goal in the practice of Yoga is to achieve self-development and self-realization. The term 'Yoga' primarily originates from the Sanskrit root 'yuj', which signifies 'to unite' or 'to yoke'. Yoga is the practice of integrating and harmonizing our mental, physical, and spiritual aspects. It is a practice that can be undertaken by individuals of various religious affiliations, age groups, and skill levels. Yoga is primarily a physical practice that promotes harmony and tranquility in both the body and

mind, hence improving overall physical and psychological health.^[1]

In the contemporary technological era, physical and health issues, mental and psychological disorders, and emotional ailments are rapidly increasing. This is primarily attributed to various aspects of development, including urbanization, modern employment practices, lack of time for recreational activities due to busy work schedules, and inadequate access to nutritious foods. Consequently, individuals are more prone to experiencing

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psychological problems such as depression, stress, and anxiety, which have become prevalent in today's society. [2] All age groups of human beings experience various physical and psychological issues, and the elderly are not exempt from these types of challenges. The age group of 60 years and above is sometimes referred to as "Geriatric" "elders," "senior citizens," "aged individuals," or "dependent population." Old age, in the context of human lifespan, refers to the latter stage of life or the period sometimes referred to as the second childhood, since elderly individual requires the same level of care and support as a child. [3]

In contemporary culture, the care and assistance for the elderly are typically provided by a single institution known as the joint family system. Within this system, the elders are cared for, provided with meals, and given support and nourishment to a significant degree. However, the joint family system is declining due to various advancements, leading to a dependent population (elderly individuals) who are experiencing a range of physical ailments including diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, respiratory disorders, vision and eye problems, dementia, etc. Additionally, they are also facing psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, stress, and mood disorders due to the lack of care and support from the modern separated family system [4,5]

Indian Ageing Demographics

The increasing population of elderly individuals in India is attributed to factors such as improved healthcare leading to longer life expectancy, declining birth rates, and better living conditions. This demographic shift poses challenges in terms of providing quality healthcare, social security, and pension benefits for the elderly population. As a result, there is a growing need for policies and programs that address the specific needs of the elderly population in India, such as geriatric care facilities, home healthcare services, and financial assistance programs. It is crucial for the government and healthcare providers to plan and implement strategies to ensure the well-being and quality of life for the growing elderly population in India. [6,7]

With the rapid growth of their population, the concerns of physical, psychological, emotional, social, economic, and cultural difficulties have been increasingly significant in recent years. The process of ageing is linked to several medical disorders mostly caused by declining physiological reserves and compromised immunological mechanisms. Epidemiological and population ageing research indicate that chronic, non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and arthritis are commonly associated with the aging process. Additionally, there is a significant prevalence of psychiatric disorders, including depression and dementia, among the elderly, ranging from 9% to 35%. In addition, the elderly often have sleep difficulties, excessive daytime sleepiness, insomnia, night time awakenings, snoring, restlessness, and periodic leg movements during sleep. The sleep disruptions were significantly linked to respiratory symptoms, physical impairments, non-prescription drug use, depressed and anxiety symptoms, cognitive impairment, and lower self-perceived health among the elderly population to a greater degree [8,9,10]

Advantages of practising Yoga

Yoga is a mind-body intervention that is being increasingly studied for its therapeutic potential in the elderly. Yoga, originating from ancient Indian philosophy, is employed to promote physical, mental, and spiritual wellness. The technique consists of stretching and positioning exercises that aim to enhance physical well-being, fitness, and mental control. [11,12,13]

The benefits of Yoga include improved strength, balance, and flexibility, both mentally and physically. Additionally, it enhances the individual's capacity to cope with stress. Other benefits are as under:

- Enhanced interpersonal connection.
- Enhanced mood and sleep quality.
- Assists in regulating blood glucose levels for those with diabetes.
- Provides analgesic effects and serves as a pain treatment modality.
- Improve respiratory function
- Enhance bone mineral density and mitigate the risk of osteoporosis.
- Aids in alleviating depression and enhancing human well-being.

Several research have been undertaken on the importance of yoga for the elderly population. One study specifically found that yoga had positive impacts on the mental and physical well-being of older individuals, providing therapeutic advantages. It is employed as a proactive healthcare program for senior citizens to mitigate a range of physical and psychological issues. [Haber, 1983]. Moreover, consistent engagement in yoga has been found to yield significant enhancements in psychological well-being and a reduction in hypertension.

Yoga can be beneficial for enhancing positive health in older individuals. Yoga and pranayamas have been scientifically demonstrated to be an excellent approach for enhancing health, as well as preventing and managing diseases. Yoga has been found to decrease stress and anxiety while enhancing autonomic functions. [Pallav Sengupta,2012]. A study was done to explore the relevance of yoga for the elderly population in today's society, taking into account the literature background. [14,15,16,17,18]

Study Objectives

The study intends to achieve the following objectives.

- To determine the efficacy of yoga in contemporary society.
- To assess the impact of yoga on elderly individuals residing in institutional settings.
- To determine the importance of yoga for older adults in geriatric care.
- To identify strategies for enhancing the practice of yoga and its importance for elderly individuals in geriatric care.

Study Methodology

To accomplish the aforementioned goals, the study employed an exploratory research design and utilized interview schedule techniques as a means to gather data from 50 elderly participants residing in institutions such as old age homes, in Patna, Bihar, India using a simple random sample procedure.

RESULTS

Table 1

Displaying the demographic characteristics of elderly individuals residing in institutions.

Total Sample Size: 50

Age - Group	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years & above
Sample Size	30	15	05
Percentage	60	30	10

Table 2

Evaluating the respondents' understanding of yoga and its advantages.


Rating 	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor
No. of elderly participants having understanding of yoga and its advantages	35	7	6	2
Percentage of elderly participants having understanding of yoga and its advantages	70	14	12	4

Table 3

Indicating the respondents' level of interest in engaging in yoga.



Interval 	Regular	Periodic	Not interested
No. of elderly's level of interest in engaging in yoga	32	15	3
Percentage of elderly's level of interest in engaging in yoga	64	30	6

Table 4

Presenting the availability of current opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills in the practice of yoga.

Response 	Yes	No	No response
No. of Elderly indicating the availability of opportunities around them for acquiring knowledge and skills in the practice of yoga.	40	8	2
Percentage of elderly indicating the availability of opportunities around them for acquiring knowledge and skills in the practice of yoga.	80	16	4

Discussion

Yoga therapy enhances bone density and fortifies bones, hence reducing the likelihood of bone degenerative conditions such as osteoporosis, diminished bone density, and weakened bones. Yoga and pranayamas enhance lung function and alleviate respiratory issues. Yoga and pranayamas synergistically stimulate the nervous system and the brain, enhancing memory, focus, and alleviating anxiety. ^[19] Yoga knowledge helps elders understand its importance and health benefits. **Table 2** shows the level of knowledge about yoga and its benefits for the elderly living at institutions. The results depict that the majority of the elders have a very good knowledge of yoga and its benefits through awareness programme, by reading newspapers, magazines, books and sharing the knowledge with others. It can be ascertained that the Institutionalized elders have good knowledge of yoga and its significance. However, the majority fail to practice due to diminishing physical strength and energy.

Engaging in yoga, pranayamas, and meditation has been shown to effectively decrease stress levels, lower blood sugar and cholesterol levels, and significantly reduce the risk of stroke, heart disease, and diabetes. In addition, practicing yoga and pranayamas regularly can improve flexibility, balance, and overall physical strength. The mindfulness and relaxation techniques learned through meditation can also help individuals manage chronic pain and improve their overall quality of life. ^[20, 21] **Table 3** depicts that the majority of the elderly remain interested towards engaging in Yoga practices. It can thus be established that the majority of institutionalized elders have the interest to practice yoga but, various types of health problems and decreased physical energy hinder them to a greater extent.

Overall, incorporating yoga, pranayamas, and meditation into a daily routine can have numerous benefits for both physical and mental well-being. By taking the time to prioritize self-care and mindfulness through these practices, individuals can experience a greater sense of calm and clarity in their daily lives. The deep breathing exercises and focus on present moment awareness can also help to reduce feelings of anxiety and improve overall mental health. With consistent practice, individuals may find themselves feeling more energized, centered, and connected to their inner selves, leading to a more balanced and fulfilling lifestyle. Embracing these holistic practices can truly transform both the body and mind, promoting overall well-being and a greater sense of peace and contentment. ^[22,23] In the modern day phenomenon, learning of the yoga is beneficial in the present condition due to increasing physical, psychological, social, economic and cultural issues. To reduce these problems to certain extent, practice of yoga and meditation is important for the institutionalized elders. **Table 4** shows that 80 percent of elderly have indicated that there are various opportunity around them for learning yoga and thus it is significant to mention that there are enough opportunities in the present era for the institutionalized elders to learn Yoga.

Conclusion

The finding of the Research study reveals that in the present scenario, the majority of elderly in the society have a clear understanding of Yoga and its advantages. Secondly, the elderly population also have a high level of interest in engaging in yoga and there are also ample opportunities around for acquiring knowledge and skills in the practice of yoga. Overall, this study highlights the importance of promoting yoga as a beneficial and accessible form of exercise for the elderly population. By recognizing the interest and understanding that many elderly individuals have towards yoga, society can work towards providing more opportunities for them to engage in this practice thereby ensuring improvement in the overall health and well-being of this demographic, ultimately leading to a more active and fulfilling lifestyle in their golden years.

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