

# Impact of Yoga on Mindfulness Self Compassion and Quality of Life

Dr. Vikesh Kamra, Associate Professor, Victorious Girls College, Amritsar  
Shikha Bansal, Associate Professor, SV Jain College, Bhadra

## ABSTRACT

*Yoga is a centuries-old Indian practise that promotes self-awareness and harmony with others, society, and the natural world, ultimately leading to a more peaceful and harmonious world (Modi, 2015). For total harmony, the mind and body and spirit must work together in tandem to activate their respective powers. Improved mental and physical capacities are possible via the practise of yoga, which has been scientifically proven to work (Sadhguru, 2015). A growing body of evidence demonstrates that yoga might help people gain control over their own mental health and well-being. According to Kabat-Zinn (2003, 2003), mindfulness is a state of consciousness that arises from a non-judgmental focus on present-moment experience, which is characterised by a variety of attention, awareness, and non-judgmentalism. To be mindful, one must be receptive to new experiences, watchful in seeing the relationship between one's inner self and the external environment, and mindful in observing one's own thoughts and feelings without judgement or reaction. One of the most notable studies on self-compassion was prompted by a growing influence from the East, which emphasised the need of cultivating meaningful relationships with oneself and promoting positive psychological health. Yoga-based therapies have been empirically proven to benefit in both mental and physical well-being. Through growing mindfulness, they are able to exercise better control over their minds and bodies. Defining quality of life is important since sickness and its treatment affect people's emotional, social and economic well-being as well as their biological integrity. This allows the effect of different disease states or therapies on the overall quality of life to be determined.*

Keywords: Yoga, Mindfulness, Quality of life, Self-Compassion

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Patanjali's description of Yoga dates back to at least 2500 years, according to some sources (Pandurangi, Keshavan, Ganapathy, & Gangadhar, 2015). Yoga has been described in numerous writings as an art, a science, and a philosophy that may be practised in a variety of different ways. According to the Bhagavad Gita, an aspirant seeking to understand the core of yoga must possess four qualities: devotion, fervour, continuous awareness, and extended duration (Iyengar, 2014, pg-31). As a result, it elevates Yoga from being a set of contemporary exercises to something far more profound: a way of life based on moral ideals, principles, and human characteristics. Traditionally, Yoga has been viewed as a way to investigate the interplay between the three aspects of the mind: cognition, concentration, and motion. Yoga is a collection of specific asana (physical and mental) and asana (mind-body-soul) exercises. In this discipline, the senses are stimulated physically, mentally, and spiritually so that the practitioner may become more aware of their inner self and how it interacts with the environment around them. According to the standpoint of awareness, Yoga has been characterised as a stabilising factor for conscious experience.

The concepts of mindfulness, self-compassion, and quality of life are discussed in the sections that follow. Constructs provided in this paper are examined in terms of their historical context as well as their reported interactions with yoga.

## 2. MINDFULNESS: THEN AND NOW

As a method for overcoming, one's own suffering, mindfulness has its roots in the Buddhist traditions of antiquity (Thera, 1962; Silananda, 1990). A Sanskrit term for "memory" known as Smti and Pli sati may be traced back to its nomenclature (Monier-Williams, 1872; Davids & Stede, 1999). When Western psychologists began to study the Buddha's notion of sati, it evolved into the modern concept of mindfulness. By the year 1910, the English language had a commonly recognised translation of the Japanese term "Mindfulness" (Gethin, 2011). Since Kabat-groundbreaking Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme,



developed in the late 1970s, brought mindfulness into therapeutic settings for the first time, it has gone a long way. The notion of 'smṛti-upaśthāna,' which in English translates to the basis of mindfulness, initially emerged in mind training traditions like yoga as a 'smṛti-upaśthāna,' according to scientific studies conducted in India (Menon, Doddoli, Singh, & Bhogal, 2014). With Nyanaponika Thera's (1901-1994) pioneering efforts to revive Mindfulness Meditation outside of Buddhist monasteries in the mid-19th century and make it accessible to the general public, mindfulness has gained widespread popularity today (Thera, 1996). He also spoke about "bare attention," which he described as a condition in which the mind is freed from any judgements or assumptions about the objects of experience (Gethin, 2011; Thera, 1969, 1972). A few important instructors (Goldstein, 1976, 2002; Kornfield, 1993; McMahan, 2008) built on this knowledge of the construct, leading to additional advances and elaborations that resulted in an influential lineage investigating the function of mindfulness in stress reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 1979 as cited in Niazi & Niazi, 2011).

### **2.1 Mindfulness in Consonance with Yoga**

Over the last two decades, there has been an upward trend in research on mindfulness and therapies involving the interplay of the mind, body, and spirit (Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Shapiro, Oman, Thoresen, Plante & Flinders, 2008; Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007; Baer, 2003). Restorative techniques such as Yoga are being studied as part of mindfulness-based therapies in an effort to detoxify the internal makeup and promote conscious control of thoughts and behaviour (Yuan Tang, Jiang, & Tang, 2015). Many studies have been conducted in the past few years to look at the relationship between yoga and mindfulness (Stephens, 2015). However, there is a noticeable research gap when it comes to studying how Yoga impacts each aspect of mindfulness separately. According to current study, young urban adults in India are more likely to practise yoga as an adjuvant treatment to promote good mental health (Tripathy & Thakur, 2015) than those in rural areas (Saksena & Sharma, 2014).

Yoga and mindfulness, according to psychology, are two distinct but complementary practises that promote mental well-being and present-centered awareness (Gordon, 2013). Unlike Yoga, which aims to harmonise the body, mind, and emotions by engaging all the senses and intentionally concentrating focus and consciousness in the present moment, Mindfulness is described as an integration of various elements (Khalsa, 2004; Saraswati, 1996). Conscious self-regulation of attention to enhance the experience of the present moment from a non-judgmental perspective (Bishop et al., 2004) and adopting an orientation marked by curiosity, openness, and acceptance (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) are some of the characteristics of this approach (Bishop et al., 2004). There has been a lot of empirical work done on the effects of yoga-based practises on mindfulness in young Indian adults, with the main focus on reducing aggression and stress (Dwivedi, Kumari, Akhilesh and Nagendra, 2015); improving memory and concentration (Jois and D'Souza, 2014); and improving parenting (Gupta Singh Bhatt and Gupta Gupta, 2015). (Satapathy, Choudhary, Sharma, & Sagar, 2016). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the relationship between Hatha Yoga and the Five Facets of Mindfulness (Baer et al., 2006). Studying the 15 individual components of mindfulness, including observing and describing emotions and inner experiences, acting with awareness, non-judging and non-reacting as critical aids in bringing about impulse control among young urban Indian adults, was the primary goal of this research.

### **3. EMERGING NEED FOR SELF-COMPASSION**

Humans are born with a certain amount of imperfection. On the basis of their ability, people are frequently categorised as low, average, or high. The vast majority of people fall into the "average" category, with a few individuals who are truly exceptional. Social expectations and influences prevail, creating a continual drive to recognise oneself as ideal in every endeavour. Parental pressure, for example, focuses on children's academics, sports, vocation, or aspirations to be a step ahead of their classmates (Sarma, 2014). (Ray, 2015). Being mediocre invites

mental resistance, which leads to harmful ideas and behaviours for one's mental health and well-being as a result of competitive training and the need to be at the top (Joy, 2016; Deb, Strodl, & Sun, 2015; Ponnudurai, 2012). Building individual strengths and strengthening human capacity to flourish rather than remain susceptible are two areas where research has focused on improving psychological well-being and mental endurance in the face of adversity (Rak and Patterson, 1996 as quoted by Van Breda, 2001). It is considered to be a condition of well-being in which an individual realises his or her abilities, can cope with the usual demands of daily life, can work efficiently, and is able to contribute to the community according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2004 as cited in Galderisi, Heinz, Kastrup, Beezhold, & Sartorius, 2015). Positive sentiments, cognitive aspects of thinking, learning, memory, and focus, self-esteem, body image, and negative feelings all play a part in maintaining good mental health, which is a gift to all of mankind (WHOQOL User Manual, 1998). Mental health has also been defined as an individual's sense of self-worth, the quality of their relationships, and their capacity to control their emotions and cope with adversity. The authors (Sharma & Kumar, 2015).

### **3.1 What is Self-Compassion?**

The ability to halt, think, empathise, and accept are all part of the notion of self-compassion, which is a one-stop shop. Neff, Pisitsungkagarn, and Hsieh (2008) describe the notion of self-compassion as coming from Buddhist teachings (Neff, 2003a as referenced in Neff, Pisitsungkagarn, and Hsieh, 2008). Kindness vs prejudice, a humanitarian attitude versus self-exclusion, and mindfulness versus over-representation are three interlocking and mutually interacting components that come together to assist oneself amid unfavourable life experiences (Neff, 2003)

To be kind to oneself in times of loss, pain, or failure is to be warm, compassionate, and caring to oneself (Neff, 2003). It requires a willingness to accept one's flaws and shortcomings rather than a harsh self-criticism and self-judgment of one's own (Neff, 2011; Neff & Dahm, 2015). Self-compassion is focusing on one's own well-being rather than focusing on one's shortcomings or accepting the thought that one isn't good enough. As a concept, "Common Humanity" refers to the idea of acknowledging the importance of failure, mistakes, and pain in our lives (Neff, 2003). To avoid feeling alienated, one must imagine one's 17 deficiencies from a larger perspective and perceive it as an experience that is shared by all people (Neff, 2003; Neff & Dahm, 2015). It is possible to have a strong sense of social identity (Williams, 2005 as referenced in Bhat & Shah, 2015) and sentiments of belongingness if one has a shared sense throughout challenging circumstances. 'Mindfulness' is the third component of self-compassion, which implies experiencing the present moment without any bias or judgement or attachment to it (Neff, 2003; Neff & Dahm, 2015). Being attentive involves being more cognizant of the present moment experience and witnessing a flow of ideas without associating with them (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Saksena & Sharma, 2014; Srinivasan, Raffone, & Barendregt, 2014). (Saksena & Sharma, 2014). During times of uncertainty, an individual's reason is likely to be stifled by the negative effect. Compassion may be directed inside if one is reasonable and knowledgeable about the impermanence of life events.

### **3.2 Self-Compassion in Association with Yoga**

Compassion has been shown to be a beneficial therapeutic modality in the treatment of clinical symptoms such as depression, anxiety, self-loathing, and self-injurious behaviour (Lawrence, 2015) when integrated in treatments (Rosenberg, et al., 2015; Janys, 2013). (Newsome, 2012). Yoga's construct of self-compassion has gained academics' attention as a way to improve mental health and control cognitive functions (Neff, 2012). Yoga-based therapies have already been found to be successful in raising self-compassion in adults (Newby, 2014) as well as improving their overall well-being (Danucalov, Kozasa, Afonso, Galduroz, and Leite, 2015; Gard, Brach, Hölzel, Noggle, Conboy, and Lazar, 2012). Self-Compassion in Association with



Yoga has also been investigated in research that has examined Yoga's ability to bring about personal transformation as well as its ability to enhance social relationships and increase social capital (Ross et al. 2013; Bevans; Friedmann; Willams et al. 2013). Experiments show that the inclusion of compassion in treatments can be an effective therapy strategy for a wide range of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. It can also be used as an agent in mindfulness-based training (Newsome, 2012). Self-compassion as a concept in line with Researchers have been particularly interested in yoga as a way to achieve psychological well-being and to favourably regulate mental capabilities (Neff, 2012). Yoga-based therapies have been shown to boost self-compassion in adults (Newby, 2014) and improve quality of life (Danucalov, Kozasa, Afonso, Galduroz, & Leite, 2015; Gard, Brach, Hölzel, Noggle, Conboy, & Lazar, 2012). Studying Yoga's role in personal development, improving social connections and boosting social capital has also been explored by researchers. Yoga has also been found to increase coping strategies to weather obstacles and losses (Park, Braun & Siegel 2015).

#### **4. QUALITY OF LIFE**

To measure quality of life, we look at how people see themselves as a part of their communities, and how they view their lives in relation to their objectives, aspirations, and standards (WHOQOL User Manual, 1998). Another way of looking at quality of life is as a result of the interaction of social, health, economic, and environmental factors (Shookner, 1997). According to several studies, well-being and subjective and objective components of quality of life are intertwined (Preedy & Watson, 2010). Early elucidations claim that quality of life research is an organisation of two essential points of view: research on social markers, which are the elites' evaluation of the requirements of people, and research on the conventional quality of life, which studies the wants of people in order to improve their quality of life (Mukherjee, 1989). A person's quality of life may also be defined as a state of mind and body that encourages them to work harder to achieve their desired standard of living (Karmakar & Pant, 2015)

Quality of life is a multidimensional indicator and a standardised metric that has been approved by a broad cross-section of society. The sense of one's own well-being, one's bodily health, one's mental health, one's social connections, and one's environmental well-being are all on the short list of important determinants of one's overall happiness (WHOQOL User Manual, 1998). WHO recommends that a person's general quality of life may be properly measured by the sum of their assessment of quality of life and health. Measures of physical health, such as levels of exercise, nutrition, medication use, and medical treatment, have been used to describe physical health as a tangible dimension. When it comes to measuring one's psychological well-being, characteristics such as the absence of mental disease, a tendency toward negativity in one's thinking or conduct, a higher level of positive affect, a positive self-image, good short-term memory, and focus are often cited. A person's overall well-being relies on their social network and the environment in which they live. Quality of personal connections, family and friend support, sexual engagement, financial resources, knowledge and expertise, recreational options, health and social care services, transportation, and the physical surroundings all play a role.

##### **4.1 Influence of Yoga on Quality of Life**

Yoga has been shown to have a substantial impact on one's overall well-being (Karmakar & Pant, 2015). According to a study by Ross, Bevans, Friedmann, Willams and Thomas (2013), Yoga may have a good impact on personal change, interpersonal connections, spiritual realisation and a feeling of purpose. This study's research design aims to examine the effects of Hatha Yoga on quality-of-life factors in clinically healthy adults from metropolitan India, a population that faces significant risks from contemporary life challenges and thus necessitates significant research attention.

Human convenience has been greatly enhanced by the changing dynamics of environmental structures, but this has also led to an imbalance in the general health status, which has resulted



in harmful repercussions on an individual and social level. Mental health has been adversely affected by an increase in demand to cope with high levels of competence and complexity. This has a wide influence on the urban adult population.

With the goal of improving the mental health and well-being of young people, this research combines the eastern philosophy of Hatha Yoga with the Western concepts of Mindfulness, Self-Compassion, and Quality of Life. Both approaches are well balanced, allowing for an empirical confirmation of old Indian traditions and the role they play in improving psychological function. Yoga and its associated practises have a wealth of research on its impact on mindfulness, self-compassion and general well-being, but few studies have looked at the findings in clinically healthy urban Indian adult populations. This research study studied the influence of Hatha Yoga – and its basic components – Yoga Asana, Pranayama, and Meditation – in order to bridge the gap and provide a fresh viewpoint to the richness of data.

## 5. CONCLUSION

A new report estimates that using Yoga to cure medical issues might save \$145 billion in medical costs each month (Tomar, 2016). Yoga is a long-term practise that can help alleviate anxiety, frustration, societal tensions, or stress, making it a useful tool in the prevention and treatment of many diseases (Tomar, 2016). Yoga has been dubbed the "technology of the self" by specialists because to the overwhelming proof of its numerous health advantages (Foucault, 1988). It refers to methods that enable individuals to affect specific operations on their body and spirit, thoughts and deeds, as a means of bringing about self-transformation and attaining happiness, knowledge and perfection via self-improvement. Mindfulness has attracted a lot of attention as a practical strategy for reducing stress-induced cognitive vulnerability and emotional suffering throughout the years (Bishop et al., 2004). As a result of studies conducted in the last few years, it has been determined that Mindfulness plays an important role in resolving mind-body conflicts and preventing psychological distress. When it comes to treating chronic diseases, emotional and behavioural problems, and minimising the psychological morbidity linked with them, mindfulness has shown to be an essential component. Cognitive restructuring is the primary process through which self-compassion works (Clark, 2014). Using cognitive restructuring, one can shift from a negative self-evaluation to a more compassionate one by reversing the process of processing information in an unhelpful way to one that is more helpful (Clark, 2014). To be really compassionate, one must have four basic components: knowledge of pain, empathy for the plight of others, an intention to alleviate that suffering, and a drive to do so (Jinpa, 2010; Jazaieri, McGonigal, Jinpa, Doty, Gross, & Goldin, 2013). (Responsiveness in helping relieve the suffering). With the goal of improving the mental health and well-being of young people, this research combines the eastern philosophy of Hatha Yoga with the Western concepts of Mindfulness, Self-Compassion, and Quality of Life. Both approaches are well balanced, allowing for an empirical confirmation of old Indian traditions and the role they play in improving psychological function. Yoga and its associated practises have a wealth of research on its impact on mindfulness, self-compassion and general well-being, but few studies have looked at the findings in clinically healthy urban Indian adult populations.

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