

Effectiveness of Yoga in Stress Management at Workplace: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Background – Due to globalization, every enterprise puts so much work pressure on their employees. This pressure creates imbalance in personal as well as professional life of employees. Employees feel stressed because of this pressure. This stress later on becomes chronic in nature. Various companies organize different stress management programs but they are not so effective. Yoga is a simple & effective way to overcome stress in employees as it is easy to operate at workplace and easy to understand. It is a proven cure to stress among employees at workplace in many studies.

Purpose – Corporate sector employees have heavy workloads most of the times because of competitiveness & many other factors. This causes stress in lot of employees, sometimes positive stress and sometimes severe/acute stress. Yoga is very helpful in stress management as Yoga calms the mind & reduces stress. In this paper, we will try to figure out the effectiveness of Yoga in stress management at workplace in corporate sector personnel.

Methodology– A review of literature from Indian as well as international authors was examined to identify the effects of Yoga in stress management in employees at workplace.

Findings – It was found that Yoga is very helpful for employees to reduce stress levels at workplace. Yoga is revealed as a great tool in stress management in corporate sector employees.

Practical Implications – This study recommend that corporate sector should apply yoga practices at workplace for stress management so that organization's goal can be achieved easily. To remove stress in employees, companies should mandate these yoga practices periodically by well-qualified yoga teachers/instructors.

Key Words: Workplace, Employees, Stress, Yoga.

I. Introduction

Life is full of challenges. Everyday people face new challenges in their lives, sometimes small sometimes huge. Some people handle them easily while others found difficulty to battle with them. This type of situations creates a burden in life, which differ from person to person. This burden is stress & it is present in almost every human being. This stress is of two types; positive & negative. When someone takes that burden positively & does their work more efficiently without any extra pressure on their mind that is positive stress. Positive stress only works in positive manner in a person in order to do work efficiently and don't panic after finishing that work. While negative stress works vice-versa. It occurs before the work & creates panic in a person, which ruins that work. This stress not only affects the mind but also the body of people. Stress defined as a state which involves demand on physical or mental energy in Oxford dictionary. It's a condition which can disturb people's normal physiological and psychological functioning. In medical language stress is defined as a disruption in homeostasis of the human body. This demand occurs in mind & body when it tries to cope up with constant changes in life (Sharma, S. D., Chauhan, A., & Khanna, S. 2012). Employees need to do work on gadgets all the time. Excess use of technology like smartphones etc. leads a person to many health problems; stress is one of them (Malik, S., & Devi, N. 2018). Various symptoms of stress include low energy, headache, stomach problems, aches/pains in muscles, insomnia & loss of libido etc. It gives birth to many other diseases also and make the affected person weak in both sense; physically & mentally. High levels of stress can cause obesity, diabetes, depression, asthma & heart diseases etc. Physiological, psychological & behavioral consequences of workplace stress includes heart diseases, ulcers, high blood pressure, headaches, sleep disturbances, increased illness, exhaustion, depression, moodiness, low-commitment, job dissatisfaction, low job performance, more accidents, faulty decision & workplace aggression (Deshpande, R. C. 2012). In today's era of globalization where competition and innovations are at their peaks, there is tons of workload for corporate sector employees. This era of competitiveness is very demanding for them. This demanding nature made them to do extra work than normal working hours almost every day, which leads to stress. This stress affect them in many day to day things i.e. productivity, effectiveness, sleep & many other aspects of their respective lives. Yoga is a proven cure to many health problems and can help in stress management also. Many Yogic postures are helpful in releasing stress. Yoga makes a person mentally stable. It is a great tool for curing health problems (Sheetal, 2020). Yoga is helpful in maintaining good health, disease prevention and rehabilitation. It is effective in managing work related stress; respiratory disorders i.e. asthma, pulmonary tuberculosis, pleural effusion, obstructive pulmonary diseases, chronic bronchitis; cardiovascular disorders i.e. ischemic heart disease, coronary artery disease, angina, chronic heart failure, hypertension; digestive disorders i.e. irritable bowel syndrome, hyperacidity, colitis, indigestion, diabetes, gastro esophageal reflux disease, hepatitis, gall stones, celiac disease and genitourinary problems i.e. urinary stress incontinence, women sexuality, climacteric syndrome, premature ejaculation, pregnancy outcomes, labor pain and duration (Bhandari, C. B. et al. 2012). Pranayam (Yogic

breathing techniques) is very efficient in stress management and other Yoga practices like Bandhas, Mudras and Shat-Karmas (Yogic cleansing processes) are also very helpful to cure this health problem. Yoga Asanas like Sukhasana, Vajrasana, Shavasana, Halasana, Setubandhasana, Shashankasana, Padhastasana, Trikonasana, Marjariasana, Paschimottanasana, Garudasana, Adhomukha-Shavasana, Badha-Konasana, Uttanasana and Sarvangasana etc. are helpful to combat stress. Pranayama like Bhramari Pranayama, Nadi-Shodhana Pranayama, Sitkari Pranayama, Sheetali Pranayama and Ujjayi Pranayama and Yogic Cleansing Processes like Jala-Neti, Kapalabhati and Trataka are also beneficial in stress management.

II. Objective of the Study and Methodology

The objective of this paper is to find out the effectiveness of different Yoga practices in reducing stress level in corporate sector employees. This research study will review various literatures in order to find out the role of Yoga in stress management at workplace.

III. Developments in the Conceptual Framework

Various research studies from national & international authors were examined in order to achieve the objective of the study. Effects of different limbs of Yoga on stress management at workplace were concluded from vast literature. Different styles of yoga to combat workplace stress were extracted from extensive empirical work.

3.1. Occupational Stress in Corporate Personnel

Sharma, S. D., Chauhan, A., & Khanna, S. (2012) stated that only very hardworking and punctual employees can survive work pressure these days and maintain balance between work life and personal life. Because they are constantly exposed to stress and tension which causes many health problems like hypertension, high/low BP, insomnia, depression, backaches, migraine, spondylitis, etc. As a result, there is overall decrease in the employee's efficiency and productivity. Wolever, R. Q. et al. (2012) stated that there are greater health risks, increased cost and productivity losses for highly stressed employees compared to those with normal stress levels. To address this issue, worksite stress management programs should be run in order to engage individuals and maintain data on stress, health indices, work productivity, and health care costs. British industry has estimated cost of £17 billion per year for sickness absence; which mainly includes two major factors i.e. stress and back pain (Confederation of British Industry. Workplace Health and Absence Survey: Healthy Returns? London: CBI, 2011.). 10.8 million & 7.6 million working days were lost because of work-related stress and musculoskeletal disorders (40% of them related to back pain) respectively, reported by The Health and Safety Executive in 2011 (Health and Safety Executive. Annual Statistics Report 2010/11. London: HSE, 2011.). Ramya, P., & Malliga, N. (2015) stated that occupational stress is one of the major hazards for many employees. There are many causes responsible for stressful working environment;

some of them include increased workloads, downsizing, overtime and shift-work. Occupational stress causes negative effects on health of employees when the stressors of the workplace exceed out of the working ability of employees. Employees are overburdened with workloads that constantly remain high no matter how great are someone's efforts.

3.2. Mechanism of Yoga

Yoga is an ancient therapy, which is helpful in treating various health problems (Sheetal, 2020). Yoga completely renews & refreshes the mind, body and soul of an individual. Regular Yoga practice makes a person mentally & physically fit and more innovative. Yoga makes oneself disciplined and positive in life. Therefore negative thoughts gradually removed and people become healthy in both manner; mentally & physically. Thus, it is a great personality developer. Yoga is very effective in stress controlling also (Sharma, S. D., Chauhan, A., & Khanna, S. 2012). Yoga increase cortical arousal and reduced limbic arousal, which increase perceptual awareness and reduce emotional reaction. It affects sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system in positive manner. Yogic relaxation processes helps to cope up with the problem of stress (Dwivedi, M. K., & Singh, S. K. 2016). Yoga is a universal tool of self realization and also happens to be an art of life management. Every Yoga practitioner can achieve health benefits and human intelligence through regular Yoga practice. Yoga not only includes mind-body practices but spiritual practices also. The path of Raj Yoga can give total health and ascetic elevation to any individual who adopt it. This path is equally applicable to each individual who want to achieve perfect health, happiness, harmony, and ultimate bliss (Bhandari, C. B. et al. 2012). The benefits of Yoga includes stress control, sound sleep, reduced cortisol levels, cure to many medical conditions, allergy and asthma relief, lower blood pressure cure, smoking cessation help, lower heart rate cure, spiritual growth, well-being, anxiety and muscle tension cure, increased strength and flexibility and slow aging process (Ramya, P., & Malliga, N. 2015). Yoga is a time-tested and biopsychosocial approach to life. It gives healthy body, peaceful mind, helps in developing healthy relationships and harmony in society. One of the key features of Yoga is body-mind-spirit unity. Yogic postures and kriyas are helpful to achieve healthy body, while breathing techniques and meditation are helpful in clarity of mind and emotional balance. And for social harmony, Yama and Niyama are there (Doria, S., Irtelli, F., Sanlorenzo, R., & Durbano, F. 2015).

3.3. Yoga versus Occupational Stress

Yoga is all-in-one formula and great therapy for stress management among working people. It revitalizes the mind, body and soul of a person. Yoga includes the practice of Asanas, Pranayama, and Dhyana. It gives positive attitude to people and enhance their energy. It is a holistic formula and great therapy for reducing stress at workplace (Sharma, S. D., Chauhan, A., & Khanna, S. 2012). Regular Yoga practice is helpful in curing work related stress, respiratory problems, cardiac problems, digestive problems and genitourinary

problems. The effects of Yoga practices i.e. meditation, Asanas & Pranayama on human physiology can be classified as humoral factors, nervous system activity, cell trafficking, and bio-electromagnetism. Daily Yoga practice helps in curing chronic illness and stress (Bhandari, C. B. et al. 2012). Yoga offers several techniques for reducing stress. That includes breathing & stretching exercises and meditation. Even disable people can get benefits through Yoga by doing breathing exercises and meditation. Yoga is a great therapy and combined set of exercises; and very beneficial in stress management (Balaji, D. P. V. 2012). Yoga & meditation are very helpful in stress management. Stress management programs should be conducted in every organization for all employees and especially for women (Ramya, P., & Malliga, N. 2015). There is a very positive relationship between Yoga, Meditation and stress. Yoga & mediation have positive effects in stress management at workplace. Organization can implement Yoga & Meditation for stress reduction among employees (Deshpande, R. C. 2012). A study conducted by Hartfiel, N. et al. in (2012) reported that the experimental group of Yoga showed significant stress reduction and improvement in psychological well-being. In comparison with the control group at the end of the study, the Yoga group reports significant perceived stress, back pain, sadness and hostility, & feeling self-assured. The results of the study concluded that Yoga can reduce stress at workplace. A research conducted by Campbell, D., & Moore, K. in 2004 concluded that, at the end of the study after six weeks, the experimental group of Yoga showed lower levels of stress than at the starting of the study. Yoga is a promising therapy for reducing stress. Yoga should be taught for stress management (Sharma, M. 2013). A research study was conducted in 2017 by Maddux, R. E., Daukantaite, D., & Tellhed, U. concluded that after 16 weeks of Yoga intervention, the experimental group showed significant reduction in stress and all psychological health measures. As compared to the controlled group, the experimental group of Yoga practitioners showed significant decreases in stress and significant increases in well-being as well. The controlled group also started showing significant decreases in stress after practicing yoga for 8 weeks. Yoga is beneficial in stress management. It can improve mental and physical health of people. Yoga gives benefit on three levels i.e. greater bonding, mental/psychological flexibility and working out conflicts (Hall, T. M. 2009).

3.4. Effect of Different Yoga Types on Stress

3.4.1. Pranayama & Stress Management:

A research study was conducted by Hepburn, S. J., & McMahon, M. in 2017, in which the experimental group did Pranayama for five week. The experimental group reported decrease in stress and control in their emotions. It was concluded that Pranayama is helpful in stress management. A study was conducted by Sindal, A. S. in 2007, in which Nadi-Shodhana Pranayama was used as intervention. It was concluded that Nadi-Shodhana Pranayama is very effective in stress management. A research study was conducted by Bhimani, N.T., Kulkarni, N. B., Kowale, A., & Salvi, S. in 2011, in which various Pranayamas was used as intervention tool in experimental group for two months. It was revealed that the practice of various Pranayamas is very helpful in stress reduction. A study conducted by Tripathy, M. in 2018, in which the

experimental group practiced Pranayamas for 12 weeks. It was observed that there was a significant decrease in stress and resting pulse rate. It was concluded that Anuloma-Viloma Pranayama is very effective in stress management. A research was conducted by Vedamurthachar, A., Damodaran, B., Lakshmanan, S., & Kochupillai, V. in 2013, in which Pranayama was used as intervening tool. It was concluded that Pranayama is very effective in reducing stress and anxiety and improvement in stress coping skills can also be achieved through this.

3.4.2. Meditation (Dhyana) + Yogic Relaxing Techniques (Shithikaran-Abhyasa) & Stress Management:

A pilot study was conducted by Cutshall, S. M. et al. in 2011, in which participants practiced meditation for four weeks. It was concluded that meditation helps in stress and anxiety management. The technique of Yoga-Nidra has 8 stages i.e. Relaxation, Affirmation, Rotation of Consciousness, Respiration awareness, Manifestations of Opposites, Creative Visualization, Affirmation and Return to Full Awareness. It gives complete physical, mental and emotional relaxation. Yoga- Nidra is great intervention tool to overcome stress (Dwivedi, M. K., & Singh, S. K. 2016). Meditation is a great tool in improving concentration and relaxation. It channelizes the conscious level of a person in positive direction and transforms the mind. It is a way to connect with inner self (Hassan, S. M., Mir, U. S., & Hassan, S. S. 2015). Meditation and Relaxing processes can help people in stress management. They are beneficial in reducing stress, anxiety, depression, and negativity. Meditation balances the mind and body of people and increase concentration. Stress free employees can perform better work for organization as compared to others (Deshpande, R. C. 2012).

3.4.3. Yogic Asanas (in different Yogic styles) & Stress Management:

- **Hatha Yoga & Stress Management**

Hatha yoga is helpful in relaxing the body and mind. It is convenient at workplace and practical solution for work-related stressors. It teaches relaxation techniques to decrease tension among employees at workplace & improving work performance as well (Gura, S. T. 2002). Yoga Asanas are helpful in stress management. Some of them include Shavasana, Makarasana, Vajrasana, Virabdrasana, Siddhasana and Padmasana. They reduce the physical and mental tension of people (Balaji, D. P. V. 2012). A research conducted by Kulshrestha, A. in 2014, in which participants practiced Pragyā Yoga. It was found that Pragyā Yoga (a set of 16 Asanas) has positive effect on stress. It was concluded that Pragyā Yoga is great tool in stress management.

- **Ashtanga-Vinyasa Yoga & Stress Management**

A study was conducted by Gruber, K. in 2008, in which the experimental group practiced Ashtanga Yoga 60-90 minutes, two times weekly for three months. At the end of the study, it was found that Ashtanga Yoga

is helpful in stress management and improve mental health. Vini Yoga is helpful in significant reduction in stress and sleep difficulties. It also improves breathing rate and heart rhythm coherence (Wolever, R. Q. et al. 2012).

- **Dru Yoga & Stress Management**

A study conducted by Timlin, D., & Simpson, E. E. A. (2017) concluded that Dru yoga intervention group showed reduction in stress. It is also beneficial for the psychological well-being. A study conducted by Hartfiel, N. et al. in 2012, in which participants from British local government authority practiced one 50 minutes Dru Yoga session each week for 8 weeks. Dru Yoga includes activation exercises, movements, postures and relaxation. It was found that Dru Yoga is helpful in stress management & psychological well-being.

- **Gym Yoga & Stress Management**

A study conducted by Maddux, R. E., Daukantaite, D., & Tellhed, U. in 2017, in which the experimental group practiced Gym Yoga for 8 and 16 weeks. It was found that Gym Yoga is very effective in stress management and promotion of psychological health.

3.4.4. Shat-Karmas (Yogic Cleansing Processes) & Stress Management:

A research conducted by Tripathy, M. in 2018, in which participants practiced Kapalbhathi for 12 weeks. The experimental group reported reduction in stress and resting pulse rate. It was concluded that Kapalbhathi is very effective in stress management. Nauli kriya is of four types i.e. left, right, central & rotational. It generates negative sub-atmospheric pressure, which in turn massages the organs located in abdominal cavity and improves blood circulation. It stimulates digestive fire and cures many diseases. Nauli kriya is very helpful in stress reduction. Because it keeps abdominal organs healthy and indirectly cures stress (Gusain, V. S. 2019).

Overview of Different Yoga styles & practices used as intervening tools for stress management in reviewed literature:

S. No.	Author's Name	Year	Country	Yoga Practice
1	Tripathy, M.	2018	India	Anuloma Viloma Pranayama & Kapalbhathi
2	Bhimani, N.T., Kulkarni, N. B., Kowale, A., & Salvi, S.	2011	India	Pranayama
3	Gusain, V. S.	2019	India	Shat-Karmas

4	Wolever, R. Q. et al.	2012	U.S.	Vini-Yoga & Mindfulness
5	Dwivedi, M. K., & Singh, S. K.	2016	India	Yoga Nidra
6	Sindal, A. S.	2007	India	Pranayama
7	Deshpande, R. C.	2012	India	Yoga, Meditation & Soothing Humor
8	Ramya, P., & Malliga, N.	2015	India	Asana, Pranayama & Meditation
9	Maddux, R. E., Daukantaite, D., & Tellhed, U.	2017	Sweden	Gym Yoga
10	Timlin, D., & Simpson, E. E. A.	2017	Northern Ireland, U.K.	Dru Yoga
11	Hartfiel, N. et al.	2012	U. K.	Dru Yoga
12	Gura, S. T.	2002	USA	Hatha Yoga
13	Vedamurthachar, A., Damodaran, B., Lakshmanan, S., & Kochupillai, V.	2013	India	Pranayama & Sudarshan Kriya
14	Hepburn, S. J., & McMahon, M.	2017	Australia	Pranayama
15	Cutshall, S. M. et al.	2011	USA	Meditation
16	Gruber, K.		US	Ashtanga Yoga
17	Kulshrestha, A.	2014	India	Pragya Yoga
18	Hassan, S. M., Mir, U. R., & Hassan, S. S.	2015	Pakistan	Meditation
19	Balaji, D. P. V.	2012	India	Asanas & Pranayama
20	Campbell, D., & Moore, K.	2004	Australia	Asana, Pranayama, Meditation, Yoga-Nidra

IV. Conclusion

Yoga is revealed very effective tool in stress management (Tripathy, M. 2018). Yoga is found as great therapy in reducing stress among employees at workplace (Sharma, S. D., Chauhan, A., & Khanna, S. 2012). Pranayama is a great tool in stress reduction (Vedamurthachar, A., Damodaran, B., Lakshmanan, S., & Kochupillai, V. 2013). Yoga and Meditation are very helpful in stress management at workplace (Deshpande, R. C. 2012). Yoga intervention reduces stress at workplace (Hartfiel, N. et al. 2012). All the research studies in this area support Yoga as a great managing tool in coping up with stress at workplace.

Yoga practices are simple, natural healer, convenient and all pervasive. In modern times when people are left with no time from working, Yoga is an emerging therapy in stress management & well being and balancing physiological, psychological and psychosocial health to live life to the fullest. Corporate sector employees can practice Yoga easily in break times at work also and this thing make Yoga even more usable tool. Yoga is proven as very effective therapy in stress reduction, cure to many diseases caused by stress and very adaptable for employees at workplace. Yoga can be used as an intervening therapy for various health problems in upcoming research studies.

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