

Role of yoga and physical exercise on happiness and quality of life

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Abstract: This study explored the influence of Yoga and Physical exercise on happiness and quality of life (QOL) among adults purposive sample of 100 participants (51 males, 49 females), aged 18 years and above, was recruited Data were collected using a structured Happiness and QOL questionnaire compassing 24 items on Likert scales. A quantitative, correlational design was employed to analyze the relationship between happiness and QOL. Results revealed significant positive correlations across all groups, with yoga participants showing a stronger association ($r = 0.731$, $p < 0.01$) compared to those engaging in other forms of physical exercise ($r = 0.674$, $p < 0.01$). These findings suggest that while physical activity in general enhances well-being, yoga's unique integration of mindful movement, breath work, and stillness provides a slightly greater contribution to overall life satisfaction. The study highlights yoga's adaptability across diverse populations and emphasizes its potential when combined with community-based initiatives such as workplace wellness programs or free public classes. Although yoga is not a universal solution for all life challenges, its integration into broader support systems may significantly improve happiness and quality of life.

Keywords: Yoga, Physical Exercise, Happiness, Quality of Life, Well-being.

Introduction: Yoga, derived from the Sanskrit word *Yuj* meaning “to unite,” is traditionally understood as the union of the soul with the spirit. Ancient texts describe this union as a gradual process requiring lifetimes, while modern interpretations emphasize the harmonization of bodily energies and the integration of mind and body. In practice, yoga is expressed through *asanas*—physical postures that cultivate strength, flexibility, and mental focus. These postures are more than simple stretches; they represent a dialogue between body and mind, fostering balance, awareness, and resilience.

Human beings are inherently designed for movement, yet contemporary lifestyles have become increasingly sedentary. Historically, physical activity was essential for survival, but in modern society it has shifted from necessity to choice. Exercise is often perceived as a means to achieve fitness goals, but growing evidence suggests it functions as medicine for both body and mind, contributing to cardiovascular health, muscular strength, and psychological well-being.

Happiness, a multidimensional construct encompassing affective states and cognitive evaluations, has long been a subject of philosophical and scientific inquiry. Aristotle emphasized the importance of virtue and material sufficiency, while Socrates argued that virtue alone was sufficient. Jefferson's Declaration of Independence reframed happiness as an active pursuit and a human right. Contemporary psychology views happiness as attainable through intentional behaviors and personal effort, influenced by personality traits, social relationships, economic conditions, and cultural context (Kesebir & Diener, 2008; Oishi, 2012). Research consistently highlights the role of physical activity in enhancing happiness and well-being. For instance, studies demonstrate

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that both yoga and aerobic exercise improve physical fitness and psychological outcomes, with yoga offering additional benefits through its spiritual and mindfulness dimensions (P. & D., 2018; Bussing et al., 2012).

Quality of life (QOL) extends beyond the fulfillment of basic needs to encompass emotional, psychological, spiritual, physical, and social well-being. It reflects the richness of human existence, including autonomy, purpose, and engagement with the environment. Recent scholarship underscores yoga's potential to promote adaptive thinking, improve lifestyle factors, and alleviate suffering, reinforcing its therapeutic value in healthcare and mental health settings (Chawla et al., 2023; Woodyard, 2011).

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that both yoga and physical exercise play vital roles in enhancing happiness and QOL. However, yoga's holistic integration of body, mind, and spirit may provide unique advantages, making it a particularly compelling focus for research into well-being. The present study therefore investigates the comparative influence of yoga and physical exercise on happiness and quality of life among adults, employing a quantitative, correlational design to examine whether yoga participants demonstrate stronger associations between these variables than those engaging in other forms of exercise.

Methodology

Hypothesis: It was hypothesized that individuals who engage in yoga and physical exercise would report higher levels of happiness and quality of life compared to those who do not participate in such activities.

Sample: A purposive sampling technique was employed to recruit 100 adult participants, comprising 51 males and 49 females to ensure balanced gender representation. Eligibility criteria required participants to be at least 18 years of age and fluent in either English or Hindi, the languages used in the questionnaire.

Instruments: Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to assess the *Influence of Yoga and Physical Exercise on Happiness and Quality of Life*. The instrument consisted of 24 items in total—8 measuring happiness and 16 measuring quality of life—rated on Likert scales ranging from 1–6 and 1–7 respectively.

- *Oxford Happiness Questionnaire – Short Form (OHQ-SF)*: This abbreviated 8-item version of the original 29-item OHQ was selected for its brevity and strong psychometric properties. Items assess dimensions such as joy, optimism, and life satisfaction. Responses are recorded on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree), with two items reverse-scored. Scores range from 8 to 48, with higher totals reflecting greater happiness.
- *Quality of Life Scale (QOLS)*: The adapted 16-item version of Flanagan's QOLS was used, which includes an additional item on independence and self-care. Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = terrible to 7 = delighted). Total scores range from 16 to 112, with higher scores indicating greater life satisfaction.

Procedure: The questionnaire was distributed electronically via Google Forms to maximize accessibility and efficiency. Participants received a link accompanied by an information sheet explaining the study's purpose, confidentiality safeguards, and consent requirements. Data collection was conducted over a four-week period. Responses were automatically compiled in Google Sheets, and incomplete or duplicate entries were excluded. The dataset was subsequently cleaned, coded, and analyzed using SPSS version 23.

Research Design: This study employed a quantitative, correlational design to examine the relationship between happiness and quality of life among individuals practicing yoga and physical exercise compared to those who did not.

Table 1. Correlation between Happiness (HT) and Quality of Life (QT)

Group	N	Pearson's r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Shared Variance (r ²)
Overall Sample	99	0.706**	.000	0.50
Yoga Practitioners	50	0.731**	.000	0.53
Non-Yoga Group	49	0.674**	.000	0.45

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Sample Characteristics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	100	1.00	2.00	1.49	0.50
Qualification	100	1.00	4.00	3.11	0.74
Yoga Practice	100	1.00	2.00	1.49	0.50

Discussion: References (QT), with particular attention to differences between individuals who practice yoga and those who do not. Across the full sample, results revealed a strong positive correlation, confirming that higher levels of subjective happiness are closely aligned with greater perceived quality of life. This finding is consistent with prior research demonstrating that emotional well-being is a central determinant of life satisfaction and overall functioning (Diener & Lucas, 2000; Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Importantly, the strength of this association varied slightly between groups. Among yoga practitioners, the correlation between happiness and quality of life was stronger than among non-practitioners. Although the difference was modest, it suggests that yoga may serve as a moderating factor, reinforcing the alignment between emotional and life domains. Yoga's emphasis on mindfulness, stress reduction, and physical vitality has been widely documented as beneficial for psychological well-being (Khalsa et al., 2012; Park et al., 2018). The current findings add to this literature by highlighting yoga's potential role in harmonizing subjective happiness with broader life satisfaction.

The results also underscore the multidimensional nature of quality of life. While happiness reflects an internal, affective state, quality of life encompasses external conditions such as health, relationships, and environment. The observed correlations suggest that yoga may help individuals integrate these domains more effectively, fostering a holistic sense of well-being. This aligns with theoretical perspectives that emphasize the interplay between psychological resilience and lifestyle practices in sustaining quality of life (Seligman, 2011).

Nevertheless, several limitations warrant consideration. The study's correlational design precludes causal inference; it remains unclear whether yoga directly strengthens the happiness–quality of life relationship or whether individuals predisposed to higher well-being are more likely to engage in yoga. Additionally, the sample size, though adequate, was relatively modest, and future studies should employ larger, more diverse populations to enhance generalizability. Longitudinal and experimental designs would be particularly valuable in clarifying the causal pathways involved.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence linking yoga practice with enhanced well-being. By demonstrating a stronger correlation between happiness and quality of life among yoga practitioners, the findings suggest that yoga may play a subtle but meaningful role in harmonizing emotional and life satisfaction. Future research should continue to explore yoga's potential as a lifestyle intervention for promoting holistic well-being across diverse populations.

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