

The Effect of 'Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga Meditation' Practice on Mental Health

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Abstract

The present research work was aimed to study the impact of Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga Meditation on mental health of the practitioners & the non-practitioners. A group of 100 practitioners were chosen for the study. 50 practitioners of Sahaj Marg and 50 non-practitioners were chosen for the study. It included males and females participants, who were studying in graduation and belonged to upper middle socio-economic status. The age ranged between 18 to 25 years. They were administered the questionnaire to measure mental health. The t-test was employed to differentiate between the practitioners & the non-practitioners. The obtained results were in support of the framed hypothesized that the practice of Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga Meditation would have positive effects on the mental health of the practitioners. The results indicated that with the practice of Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga meditation, the practitioners manifested better mental health than the non-practitioners and this difference was significant.

Introduction :

The aim of the present research work was to study the effect of Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga meditation system on the mental health of its practitioners in comparison to the group of individuals not practicing such meditation system. Raj Yoga Meditation is primarily concerned with the mind. The mind is traditionally conceived as the "king" of the psycho-physical structure. Present Raj Yoga Meditation is the evolved, modified and simplified form of the ancient Raj Yoga Meditation of Saint Patanjali (150 BC) to suit the lifestyles of modern human beings. He stated that Raj Yoga limits the oscillations of the mind in which mind can create false ideations. This process leads to a spontaneous state of quiet mind, in which there is no mental object of focus. This technique of meditation goes by the name because it integrates one's physical, mental and spiritual aspects without employing any pressure or force. Hence, it is called the

'yoga of mind'. This is a process which progressively dilutes and dissolves all sorts of prejudices, ego and pride, so that people can live full and natural lives. Raj Yoga Meditation teaches a person to create a sound balance between the material and spiritual existences, to lead a meaningful life. The process states that if any of the two existence is given more value than the other, it will create a state of imbalance which will result in the psychological and physiological deteriorated condition of the individual. Hence, it is stressed that meditation brings a balance between these two sides of existence, resulting in a balanced and fully functioning psychophysical health. As evident from the study by Murthy (1988), who found better functioning of neuro-physiological aspects of the participants following Raj Yoga System in comparison to the participants not following and Orme (1988) found that meditation technique significantly decreased emotional numbness, alcohol consumption,

family problems, insomnia, unemployment related stress, and overall post-traumatic stress disorder. Smith (1978) found that the meditation dropouts were more disturbed and less self-critical than the person who continued meditating. When both these sides of existence are in balance, it prompts a psychological wellbeing, it bears its effects on the physiological health also, which starts improving and an ideal health is achieved. Aftanas and Golocheikine (2001) found that the practice of Raj Yoga Meditation not only regulates the brain electrophysiology and mood but also regulates the anatomical and biochemical functions for the physical wellbeing.

Another necessary element of Raj Yoga practice is cleaning. All the experiences, actions, reactions, thoughts and emotions leave impressions. These impressions accumulate over time, influencing an individual's view of reality and consequently his behavior. As habit patterns emerge and solidify, the past experiences influence the future action. Through meditation, whatever is focused on, tends to expand, whereas, cleaning is a process whereby an individual directs his thought, in combination with his will, to remove or clean away these impressions of experience. Once these impressions are removed, the root causes of faulty behavior patterns and emotional problems will gently and naturally fall away. The cleaning is done for thirty minutes each evening when the day's work is over. The cleaning is approached in a general way with confidence that all impediments to personal human growth are leaving. A feeling of lightness is felt as the weight of the day's impressions has been lifted off. Manocha, Gordon, Black, Malhi & Seidler (2009) indicated the potentiality of meditation

as an effective mental health promotion and prevention strategy.

This 'ideal', cleaned, and positive physiological and psychological health readies the individual to meet the challenges, stress and pressures of the demanding modern life. Hence, resulting in improved job performance (Frew, 1974), better emotional intelligence (Dabrowski, Kawczak & Piechowski; 1970 & Cranson, Alexander & Gackenbach; 1991), increased self-development (Warner; 1987) and wholeness leading towards an actualized state. Alexander, Swanson, Rainforth, Carlisle, Todd & Oates (1993) also found that with regular practice of the mediation program, employees showed improved work, professional and personal satisfaction and personal relationships.

The main objective of the study was to explore the effects of Sahaj Marg Raj Yoga Meditation on the mental health of the practitioners. It was hypothesized that the practice of 'Sahaj Marg Raj Yoga Meditation' would influence the mental health of the practitioners in comparison with the non-practitioners.

Methodology

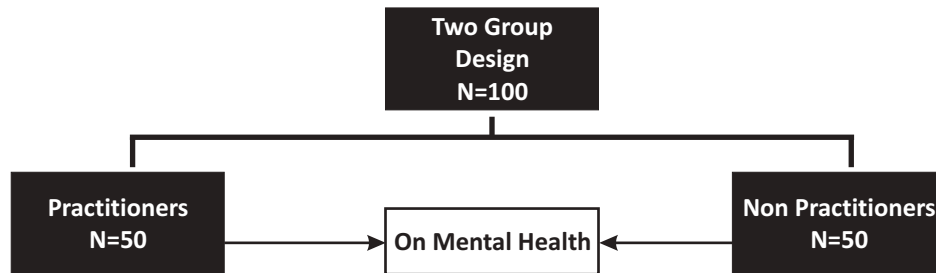
Participants

The present investigation was carried out on 100 participants, with age ranging between 20 to 30 years. The minimum educational qualification was senior secondary level. All the participants belonged to middle or upper socio-economic status. The sample was divided into two groups i.e., the group of practitioners of Sahaj Marg Raj Yoga Meditation and the group of non-practitioners. On the basis of the inclusion/exclusion criteria, only those participants were chosen for the practitioners'

group who were practicing Sahaj Marg Raj Yoga meditation, at least since one year.

Research design

The study involved a two group design- the practitioners of Sahaj Marg Raj Yoga meditation and the non practitioners.



Measures

The following measure was administered individually by contacting the participants personally:-Mental Health Inventory (MHI) was developed by Jagdish and Srivastav (1984) for the purpose of measuring positive mental health of normal individuals. The inventory has six dimensions and 56 items. The dimensions were- Positive self-evaluation, self confidence, self identity, self acceptance, feeling of worth-whileness and realization of one's potential.

Procedure

All the participants were contacted individually and a good rapport with all the participants was established. 100 participants were assessed on their mental health. These participants were divided into two groups- practitioners and non practitioners. The data for the practitioners' group was collected from the organization, named, Sahaj Marg, wherein, these practitioners followed a routine of meditation and cleaning under the system of Raj Yoga Meditation. Practitioners who were regular in their daily practice of meditation, which included morning meditation and evening cleaning, were chosen for the study, and this was confirmed by their trainer/preceptors. The non practicing participants were randomly chosen from the ones who were not practicing Raja Yoga Meditation. Their mental health was assessed. The mean values were drawn and t-test was employed to find significant difference between the two groups on their mental health.

Results

Table No-1: Showing comparison between practitioners and non practitioners on the dimensions of mental health- positive self-evaluation.

Groups	N	MEAN	S.D.	SED	df	t	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE
Practitioners	50	24.04	4.39	0.65	48	0.98#	Insignificant
Non-Practitioners	50	23.4	3.64				

Table 1 depicts that the two groups differ from each other insignificantly as shown by their t-test score of 0.98. This means that the groups do not differ significantly, although, the mean of the scores of the practitioners' group (24.04) was higher than that of the non practitioners' group (23.4). Self-evaluation included self confidence, self identity, self acceptance, feeling of worth-whileness, realization of one's potential.

Table No:2: Showing comparison between practitioners and non practitioners on the dimensions of mental health- perception of reality.

Groups	N	MEAN	S.D	SED	df	t	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE
Practitioners	50	19.68	0.27	0.6	48	2.7**	Significant at 0.01 level
Non-practitioners	50	18.08	0.52				

t-test score shows that the practitioners and non practitioners differ significantly from each other. The mean of the practitioners' group (19.68) is higher than the mean of the non practitioners' group (18.08). The practitioners have better perception of reality than the non practitioners. Their perception is free from need distortion, absence of excessive fantasy and a broad outlook to the world.

Table No-3: Showing comparison between practitioners and non practitioners on 'integration of mental health'.

Groups	N	MEAN	S.D.	SED	df	t	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE
Practitioners	50	28.49	3.12	0.71	48	2.11*	Significant at 0.05 level
Non-practitioners	50	27.01	4.04				

As suggested by the means, the practitioners (28.49) have more integrated mental health than the non practitioners (27.01). The t-test value (2.11) and the mean difference suggests that the two groups differ substantially from each other and that the practitioners have better balance of psychic forces, the ability to concentrate on work and interest in several activities, an ability to understand and share other people's emotions.

Table No:4: Showing comparison between practitioners and non practitioners on the dimensions of mental health- autonomy.

Groups	N	MEAN	S.D.	SED	Df	t	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE
Practitioners	50	15.16	2.14	0.47	48	2.1*	Significant at 0.05 level
Non practitioners	50	14.18	2.62				

The table no-4 provides with the mean values of 15.16 and 14.18 for practitioners and non practitioners, respectively and the t-test score of 2.1 suggesting that the practitioners differ from non practitioners substantially on autonomy. The practitioners have stable set of internal standards for their actions and are self dependent.

Table No-5: Showing comparison between practitioners and non practitioners on the dimensions of mental health- group orientation.

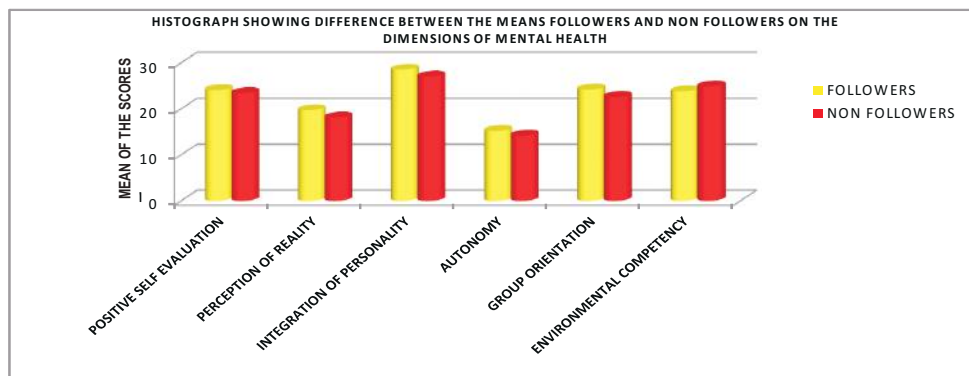
Groups	N	MEAN	S.D.	SED	df	t	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE
Practitioners	50	24.19	4.2	0.71	48	2.3*	Significant at 0.05 level
Non practitioners	50	22.58	3.01				

Table 5 exhibits t-test score of 2.3, which is significant at 0.05 level and mean values is 24.19 and 22.58 for practitioners and non practitioners, respectively. As suggested by the t-test score, both the groups differ significantly from each other. The practitioners have higher ability to get along with others, work with others and ability to find recreation than the non practitioners.

Table No-6: showing comparison between practitioners and non practitioners on 'environmental competency'.

Groups	N	MEAN	S.D.	SED	df	t	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE
Practitioners	50	23.78	3.68	0.7	48	1.06#	Insignificant
Non practitioners	50	24.84	4.37				

The mean score of practitioners i.e. 24.78 is higher than the mean score of non practitioners i.e. 23.84 but this difference is found insignificant (t-test score=1.06). This means that the two groups do not differ substantially on environmental competency. Both the groups are equally efficient according to the situational requirements, have the ability to work, to play, to take responsibilities and have the capacity for adjustment.



Histogram showing graphical representation of the mean difference between the practitioners and non practitioners on the dimensions on mental health.

Discussion

The study was an attempt to find out the effects of Sahaj Marg Raj Yoga Meditation on its regular practitioners in comparison with the participants of the non practicing group on their mental health. It is evident through the results that the Raja Yoga Meditation has considerable impact on the mental health of its practitioners. The result confirms the hypothesis that the practice of Sahaj Marg Raj Yoga Meditation would have positive effects on the mental health of the practitioners. Among the six dimensions of mental health as given in the MHI, on four dimensions, the two groups (practitioners and non practitioners) significantly differed from each other. Their mean values depicted that the practitioners have better perception of reality, greater integration of mental health, more autonomy and are more group orientation than the non practitioners.

The practice of Raja Yoga Meditation includes daily morning meditation of 45-60 minutes and daily evening cleaning for 30 minutes. The results show that due to the practice of Raja Yoga Meditation, the practitioners' perception of reality became independent from need distortion, absence of excessive fantasy and presented a broader outlook to the world than that of the non practitioners' perception. Benn (2003) found that this practice positively affected emotional development, affectivity, self-esteem, and

emotional competence.

They have better balance of psychic forces, they are able to concentrate on work in a better and efficient way, they take interest in many other activities, they have an ability to understand and share other's emotions. They express empathy, care, respect, love and understanding in their relationships and towards self as also indicated by results of a study by Shapiro (1978), which confirms the proposition that meditation leads to an increase in responsibility and self-control.

The practitioners gained stable set of internal standards for their actions and are self dependent. The practitioners possess the ability to get along with others to work with others and the ability to recreate with others. Kotwal (2007) found positive significance of meditation and other techniques for effective self-development and self-management.

The two groups did not differ substantially on the dimensions of mental health- 'positive self-evaluation' and 'environmental competency'. Both the groups are equally efficient when the situation requires, procure the ability to work, to play, to take responsibilities and the capacity for adjustment, have self-confidence, sense of self-identity, self-acceptance, deeper feelings of worthiness and wholeness, and have higher realization of their potential. Although, the t-test did not show any significant difference among the two groups on positive self evaluation (table no-1) and environmental competency (table no-6) but if their mean values were to be compared then it can be said that the mean values of the practitioners were higher than the mean values of the non

practitioners.

This is the most unique system as it has a major difference from other meditation techniques that is, it has an added procedure of evening cleaning through which a practicing individual can throw out all the negativity, reduces anxiety and the intensity of painful experiences by using their will power. This corrects the flow of psychic energy and brings balance in an individual. Modern life has many sources of anxiety, stress, negativity and pressures which creates an imbalance in the individual's psyche which later results in somatic problems and hence, creates a vicious cycle of misery and pain. Raja Yoga Meditation is equipped to counter such faulty styles of living and cognition and at the same time makes the practitioner more competent to face the world. Raj Yoga Cleaning is an active process in which the practitioner uses his will power to get rid of all the harmful and dangerous psychic elements. The morning meditation strengthens will power and motivates the practitioner to move towards a more 'self-actualized' state. It is already emphasized by many previous studies that meditation brings positive vitality, increases concentration and strengthens inner composition and when it is combined with the process of cleaning, can lead to a positive and improved mental health. Travis, Haaga, Hagelin, Tanner, Arenander, Nidich, Gaylord-King, Grosswald, Rainforth, & Schneider (2010) found that the TM program produced beneficial effects for health, brain functioning, and cognitive development.

Meditation alone also enhances many creative and positive attributes of an individual as supported by the results of a study conducted

by Dabrowski (1973), who found that meditation is encouraging for certain positive developmental functions, while inhibiting functions that retard development. In addition, meditation is considered as a help in the process of transcending one's psychological type, i.e., introverts develop extroversion and vice versa. He claims that meditation promotes the growth of the personality ideal. Meditation along with cleaning can prove to be a correctional method for changing negative and conflictual personality traits towards a balanced and integrated personality. This notion is confirmed by a study by Varadachari (1966), who found positive correlation between Raj Yoga meditation system and resolved personality problems.

In future, researchers can study the effect of Raj Yoga Meditation and Raj Yoga cleaning on physiological health and on the individuals suffering from any kind of neurosis. A future research can attempt to study the effectiveness of Raj Yoga Meditation in comparison with the other methods of Meditation. The difference in the effects of meditation and cleaning could also be a topic of future research.

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