

Effect of Integrated Yoga on Emotional Stability and Performance of Employees: An Action Research Study

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Abstract

Development of the performance of employees is an important concern for employees, employers, and the society at large. In this study, an important personality trait, that is, emotional stability, its importance in the performance of an employee, and the impact of the practice of Integrated Yoga on emotional stability and performance of an employee were studied; 51 employees were given Integrated Yoga intervention and another 51 employees, who comprised of the control group, were not given any intervention for 4 months. Using the Big Five Personality Questionnaire, data about emotional stability was collected from the yoga intervention group and control group before the study, in the middle of the study, and at the end of the study. The data was analyzed using SPSS, and a significant increase (p - value <0.001) in emotional stability among the subjects in the yoga intervention group was found (it was not found in the control group). So, it is concluded that the practice of Integrated Yoga improves the emotional stability, and thus the performance of the employees.

Keywords : personality and performance of employees, Integrated Yoga, emotional stability

JEL Classification : M10, M12, M14, Z12

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Improving the performance of an employee is an important issue for employees, employers, and the society at large. The Big Five Personality Model identifies five personality dimensions namely Conscientiousness, Openness to Experience, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Emotional Stability, which influence the performance of employee (Robbins, 1994). Emotional stability is often labeled through its converse neuroticism. In this paper, emotional stability is referred through its converse 'neuroticism' at appropriate contexts. Being calm, steady, self - confident, and secure are the facets of emotional stability.

Emotional Stability and Job Performance

Pioneering studies on the relationship between personality and job performance were conducted by Barrick

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and Mount (1991) and Barrick, Stewart, Neubert, and Mount (1998). They studied the importance of emotional stability with respect to the following aspects of employee performance, that is, citizenship and non counterproductive work behavior, low turnover and absenteeism, leadership and entrepreneurship, expatriate success, earnings, safety, compliance, healthy behaviors and longevity, motivation, job satisfaction, commitment, and life satisfaction.

In eight meta-analyses, Barrick and Mount (1991) reported that construct valid measures of emotional stability predicted overall job performance with an average true score validity of 0.15. Conscientiousness and emotional stability were found to consistently (negatively) predict an individual's propensity to withdraw from the job. Zimmerman (2008) showed that personality traits impacted individuals' intentions to withdraw from work. Thus, focusing on conscientiousness and emotional stability will reduce workforce instability due to excessive absenteeism, tardiness, and even turnover.

Barrick et al. (1998) found that conscientiousness and emotional stability were consistently related to team work. Based on the responses of employees in 51 work teams, they found that teams higher in conscientiousness and emotional stability (as well as general mental ability and extraversion) received higher supervisor ratings of team performance.

Employers are very interested in eliminating counterproductive or antisocial behavior at work. Research demonstrates that integrity tests are valid predictors of these behaviors, and also predict supervisory ratings of performance. It found that integrity tests were related primarily to conscientiousness and emotional stability (along with agreeableness). Hurtz and Donovan (2000) found that conscientiousness and emotional stability influenced citizenship behaviors at work through their relationship to job dedication and interpersonal facilitation. Berry, Ones, and Sackett (2007) clarified how emotional stability and conscientiousness predicted counterproductive behavior. They stated that emotional stability predicted both interpersonal deviance and organizational deviance, the more conscientious and emotionally stable a firm's employees are, the less likely they are to engage in counterproductive behaviors at work. A meta - analysis by Clarke and Robertson (2005) showed that emotional stability was also found to be negatively correlated to accidents.

Hogan and Holland (2003) stated that emotional stability is expected to be related to workers' customer orientation. Correlation between emotional stability and work performance was found to be consistent even across different occupational categories (e.g., sales, customer service, and managers).

Selecting employees on conscientiousness and emotional stability is also important from the viewpoint of conforming to laws on anti discrimination. In a meta-analysis reported by Hough (1995), when selection of employees was made based on personality tests, differences in selection between different races were found to be very small. Similar non-significant differences were found for gender. Feingold (1994) observed that only small gender differences were found on measures of conscientiousness and emotional stability. Thus, from a legal perspective, selecting on conscientiousness and emotional stability (and other personality dimensions) is advantageous.

McHenry, Hough, Toquam, Hanson, and Ashworth (1990) found in Project A that intelligence tests provided the best prediction of job-specific and general task proficiency (core technical proficiency and general soldiering proficiency) ; whereas, the personality composites, particularly those traits measuring conscientiousness and emotional stability, were the best predictors of putting extra effort and leadership. Judge, Bono, Ilies, and Gerhardt (2002) conducted a meta - analysis of the relationship between personality traits and leadership using a criterion that consisted of both leader emergence and leader effectiveness. Their results showed that both conscientiousness and emotional stability were generalizable predictors of leadership as were extraversion and openness to experience.

Smithikrai (2007) found that emotional stability could predict job performance better than conscientiousness in Asian countries. Civil servants who had higher emotional stability described themselves as trusting, unsuspecting, and accepting. They were also self-assured, unworried, and complacent ; relaxed ; placid,

patient, and emotionally stable ; and adaptive & mature. All these traits contributed to high job performance, especially on - task performance, followed by contextual performance and supervisory assessment. According to Mol, Born, Willemssen, and Van Der Molen (2005), individuals who were higher on both conscientiousness and emotional stability performed better as expatriates.

Neurotic individuals have been shown to have lower resistance to stress and spend more time ruminating about illnesses (Ozer & Benet - Martinez, 2006). In essence, those with lower levels of emotional stability experience higher rates of actual illness and are more vulnerable to illnesses due to how the trait shapes the person's reaction to illnesses. Neurotic people are not able to control their emotions and moods. Consequently, they cannot maintain focus and concentration upon the task at hand, especially under stress or in crisis situations (Kanfer & Heggestad, 1997). This lack of attention can lead to less productivity, more errors, and hence lower performance. Borman, White, Pulakos, and Oppler (1991) stated that those prone to greater anxiety and insecurity (low on emotional stability) tend to be fearful of novel situations, are more concerned about failure, and are more susceptible to fail. Those who experience greater and more frequent negative emotions may choose to withhold effort rather than risk the potential affective consequences of failure. Inability of neurotics to cope with fear of failure substantively impacts job performance through the inhibitory effects on motivational levels. In contrast, employees scoring high on emotional stability are likely to be steady, calm, and predictable, which helps them obtain more commendations and recognition at work. In turn, commendations along with fewer disciplinary actions and reprimands have been linked to higher-performance ratings.

Conscientiousness and emotional stability are positively related to job satisfaction. Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, and Barrick (1999) found that conscientiousness and emotional stability assessed at an early age (12-14 years) were strong predictors of overall job satisfaction in late adulthood, and job satisfaction motivated employees to perform well in their jobs. Judge and Bono (2001) found that results based on 274 correlations suggested that emotional stability was a predictor of job satisfaction and job performance. Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, and de Chermont (2003) found that neurotic individuals were less satisfied, less committed to the organization, and had higher turnover intentions. People who suffered from low emotional stability experienced greater distress and reduced job and life satisfaction because they experienced more adverse events, and reacted negatively and more strongly when such problems occurred.

Research on the Big Five personality dimensions found that burnout is linked to the dimension of neuroticism (Adhia, Nagendra, & Mahadevan, 2010). Several studies in the past concluded that burnout has negative effects on job performance. Burnout leads to lower productivity and effectiveness at work (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Consequently, it is associated with decreased job satisfaction and a reduced commitment to the job or the organization. People who experience burnout can have a negative impact on their colleagues, both by causing greater personal conflict and by disrupting job tasks. Thus, burnout can be “contagious” and can perpetuate itself through informal interactions on the job (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). The visible portion of these costs stems from compensation claims, reduced productivity, and increased absenteeism (Manuso & James, 1979), added health insurance costs (Mulcahy, 1991), and direct medical expenses for related diseases such as ulcers, high blood pressure, and heart attacks (Newman & Beehr, 1979).

Integrated Yoga as the Facilitator to Improve Emotional Stability

Emotional stability can be improved, among other things, through employee empowerment, training, job enrichment, and trust. Some research has been done to study the effect of the practice of yoga to improve emotional intelligence and stress management. However, to the best of our knowledge, no study has been made so far to assess if the practice of yoga can improve emotional stability in the context of improving employee performance.

Yoga is one of the six schools of Indian philosophy, and it is practiced by many people from ancient times. An

analysis of the term yoga, as given by different scriptures and gurus in different contexts, is as follows :

"*Yujyate anena iti yogah*" - yoga is that which joins. It implies that yoga elevates a narrow-minded person who is constricted in false ego (*Ahamkara*) to higher levels of consciousness where he/she identifies himself/herself with his real ego (*Aham*) or the universe. Patanjali, an ancient yoga sage, defined yoga as "*Yogah cittavritti nirodhah*" - yoga is a technique used to still the fluctuations of the mind to reach the central reality of the true self. Patanjali's *The Yoga Sutras* outline a skillful way of conducting life that fosters moderation and harmony. According to Yoga Vashishta (3.9.32), "*Manah prasamanopayah yoga ityabhidhiyate*," which means that yoga is a skillful and subtle process to calm down the mind. Thus, the primary purpose of yoga is to control disturbances of the mind, or in other words, to bring stability to the mind.

The Bhagavad Gita is an important scripture of yoga. When Arjuna, the warrior, is emotionally disturbed and withdraws from his duty of war, Lord Krishna counsels him and treats him to bring emotional stability in him. '*Sthitapragnya*' is the term used in *The Bhagavad Gita* to describe an emotionally stable person. According to *The Bhagavad Gita* (2.56), the facets of *Sthitapragnya* are : whose mind is not perturbed by adversity ; who does not crave for happiness ; who is free from fondness, fear, and anger ; such a person is the *muni* of constant wisdom. According to *The Bhagavad Gita* (2.48), one should perform one's duty by being fixed in yoga, renouncing attachments and even minded success and failure. Therefore, equilibrium is verily yoga.

It is difficult to find an exact synonym in English language for many words used in the ancient Indian scriptures in the spirit used by them. However, taking the essence of *The Bhagavad Gita*, a person with emotional stability or *Sthitapragnya* works in the following ways (Mahadevan, 2012):

- (1) Working with mastery over knowledge of means and goals of work,
- (2) Working with dexterity and skill in action,
- (3) Working with proper order and industry,
- (4) Working with focus on present activity rather than future results, which depend upon many external factors,
- (5) Working in a sustainable way of life and social order (*Dharma*),
- (6) Working without attachment to the results of action,
- (7) Working ones way to contentment,
- (8) Working with excellence in execution,
- (9) Yoga is working with knowledge and abilities of how to react to real time events, of change management ; there is no state of 'no work', work is the only means for evolution of one self, engaging in work is always superior to no work, other than the work itself ; we have no locus of control on other aspects of work ; hence, work without attachment (what is in it for me) is bound to be always superior & fulfilling,

According to Swamy Vivekananda, *The Bhagavad Gita* envisages four important methods to bring perfection in a person, that is, by work (*Karma Yoga*), by worship (*Bhakti Yoga*), by philosophy (*Jnana Yoga*), and by psychic control (*Raja Yoga*). Yoga practices which aim at the integral development of the personality by a fine combination of the above four methods of yoga, that is, *Karma Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Jnana Yoga*, and *Raja Yoga* is called as Integrated Yoga.

Based on the above principles Swamy Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthan (S-Vyasa)University, Bengaluru, India developed a Holistic and Integrated Yoga Module. It encompasses the philosophy of *Raja Yoga* (asanas, pranayama, dhyana etc.), *Karma Yoga* (path of detached actions), *Jnana Yoga* (knowledge of the self), and *Bhakti Yoga* (trust in the supreme order). Practicing this knowledge may bring out a complete transformation of one's personality on physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual levels which, among other things, improve a person's performance levels.

In modern times, some research has been done on the application of yoga for personality development, which is summarized as follows :

Bhole (1977), in his conceptual paper, explained different aspects of yoga. The yoga way of life encompasses the philosophy of *Karma Yoga* (path of detached action), *Jnana Yoga* (knowledge of self), *Bhakti Yoga* (trust in the supreme order), and *Raja Yoga* (asana, pranayama, meditation, etc.). Practicing this knowledge may bring about a complete transformation of one's personality, on physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual levels, which strengthen one's stress-coping skills.

Pande and Naidu (1986) studied the effort and outcome orientations as moderators of the stress-strain relationship. They noted that the concept of 'detachment' is highly valued in Indian culture. The doctrine of detached action calls upon the individual to serve the society by scrupulous performance of one's duties with utmost skill, but without desiring the fruits of the actions so performed. It is one of the ways in which an altered super-conscious state or self-realization can be attained. Effort orientation, according to this doctrine, is the 'individual's focus on the task at hand' and 'advice of not to focus on or to be concerned about the outcomes of that activity.' Furthermore, the doctrine emphasizes that an effort should be made to maintain emotional stability regardless of the outcome of the effort, be it success or failure.

Pande and Naidu (1986) theorized that the effort and outcome orientations may moderate the stress-strain relationship for three reasons. First, the individual practicing the ideal of detached action would concentrate on most of the activities in which he/she engages which, in turn, would lead to the attainment of a higher degree of skills. Second, the practice of being mentally less concerned about the outcomes may help in conserving the physical and psychic energies, and hence, the subject would be less affected by mental distractions such as anxiety and fear of failure (which lead to energy dissipation). Third, it is likely that the person practicing these ideals cognizes the stressful events in relatively more positive terms. In the light of these reasons, the authors hypothesized that in the case of subjects with a high degree of effort orientation compared to those with a high outcome orientation: (a) the correlation between stress and strain events would be smaller; and (b) the means of different strain scores would be smaller.

Misra (1989) found that effort orientation rather than concerns for outcome led to greater intrinsic satisfaction. Chakraborty (1987, 1993) provided experimental evidence that practicing yoga could enable workers and managers to control their turbulent mind and develop their self to include others around them and work without a false ego.

Palsane, Bhavsar, Goswami, and Evans (1993) observed that modern Western psychological literature focusing on ideas related to the strength of motives, frustration, and their behavioural consequences; the frustration-aggression hypothesis; ego involvement; mind-body interactions (psychosomatics); and locus of control have their parallels in ancient Indian thought.

According to Srinivas (1994), a series of techniques collectively known under the general label, 'Yoga,' is a way of management of human resources which is better than western methods. He further stated that yoga is a well formulated approach to planned change.

In a study by Kumari (2008), the author showed that the practice of yoga improved emotional intelligence and emotional competence. Deshpande, Nagendra, and Raghuram (2009), in a randomized control trial of the effect of yoga on personalities of 226 people, stated that the practice of yoga developed *Sattva Guna* (balanced personality). According to Ganpat and Nagendra (2011), the practice of yoga could improve the emotional quotient (EQ) of the employees and could enable them to excel in execution.

Adhia et al. (2010) conducted an important study relating to improving organizational performance by practice of Integrated Yoga by employees. This study dealt with the impact of adoption of yoga as a way of life on the organizational factors responsible for success of the organization. It was established in the study that by the practice of the Integrated Yoga Module, emotional intelligence could be enhanced, and job burnout could be reduced.

Hence, the literature has revealed that emotional intelligence is positively correlated with job satisfaction, goal orientation, affective organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviour. The present paper discusses emotional stability and its improvement through the practice of integrated yoga.

Methodology

The salient features of the method of this study is summarized as below:

- (1) The aim of the study is to analyze if emotional stability is improved by the practice of Integrated Yoga.
- (2) The subjects for the study were 102 employees (after considering drop outs from the study) ; 51 of them practiced Integrated Yoga (intervention group) and the remaining 51 did not practice Integrated Yoga (control group).
- (3) The subjects - for the intervention group - were people who came voluntarily to learn and practice Integrated Yoga in an institute run by the government in Hyderabad. Subjects for the control group were employees working in different organizations in Hyderabad, who volunteered to participate in the study.
- (4) Employees - men and women - of normal health acted as the subjects (the participants) of the study. Those who had any previous experience of any yoga program, people following any type of yoga program, people taking any medication for psychosomatic problems, self employed people, or retired people were excluded from the study.
- (5) The data for the study was collected before the study, that is, before giving the intervention (pre - study), in the middle of the study, that is, two months after the intervention (post 1), and at the end of the study, that is, four months into the study (post 2).
- (6) The period of study is four months, that is, from October 1, 2014 to January 31, 2015.
- (7) The subjects in the intervention group practiced Integrated Yoga for 4 months (100 days, after deducting holidays, absents, etc) for 1.5 hours a day.
- (8) The daily program contained surya namaskaras (sun salutations), asanas (body postures), pranayama (breath regulation exercises), self awareness meditation, and the respondents attended a 10 minutes lecture on the application of traditional Indian knowledge to modern work habits and their personal lives.

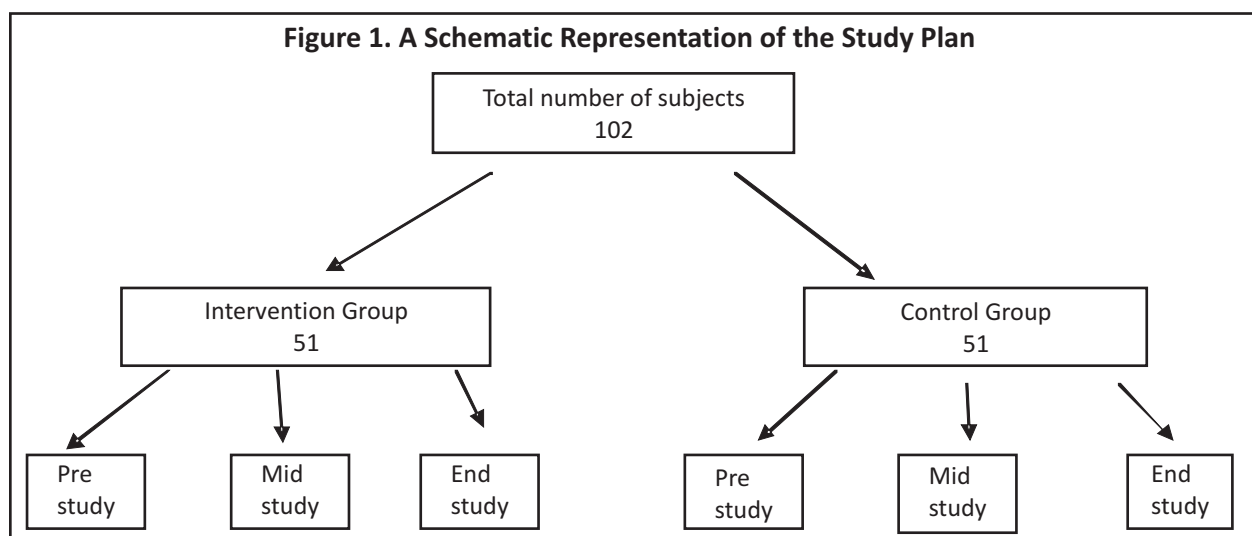


Table 1. Age and Job Experience of the Subjects

	Age of Intervention group	Experience of Intervention Group	Age of Control Group	Experience of Control Group
Mean	34.784	10.627	32.21	7.2157
Std. Deviation	6.6677	6.1722	4.7744	4.265

Table 2. Sector Wise Distribution of Subjects

Sectors	Intervention group	Control group
IT and related	21	20
Finance and related	14	13
Others	16	18

(9) Every month, a lecture, that is, a *Jnana Yoga* class was conducted for 1 hour on the application of traditional Indian knowledge by the first author of this paper, that is, Mr. Chokkalingam on the following topics (either through oral lectures or audio visual presentations) : a) Yogah Karmasu Koushalam, b) six dimensions of *Karma Yoga*, c) axioms of meaningful work, and 4) Lord Krishna as the modern manager.

(10) The subjects in the control group were not given any intervention.

(11) In order to prove or disprove the hypothesis, data were collected for both the groups before the study, that is, in 2014, in the middle of the study, that is, in December 2014, at the end of the study, that is, in January 2015.

(12) The Big Five Inventory developed by John and Srivastava (1999) was used. It is a 5-point likert scale, contains 44 questions, and 8 of them are related to neuroticism (the converse of emotional stability). It has a reliability of 0.82 and a validity of 0.92.

Analysis and Results

The Figure 1 represents the design of the study, depicting the division of the total sample into intervention and control groups (51+ 51) and also the three times of assessment - the pre, mid, and end at the end of the first, second, and third months.

The Table 1 depicts the age and experience of the subjects. The average age of the participants in the intervention group was 34.7 years, with standard deviation of 6.6 years ; whereas, the average age of the subjects in the control group was 32.21 years, with a standard deviation of 4.77 years. The average experience of the subjects in the intervention group was 10.6 years, with standard deviation of 6.17 years ; whereas, the average experience of the subjects in the control group was 7.21 years, with a standard deviation of 4.2 years. The average experience of the subjects in the intervention group was about 3.4 years more than what was possessed by the participants in the control group. The average age of the subjects in the intervention group was more by only 2.5 years than the respondents in the control group.

The Table 1 shows that the background of the subjects both in terms of age and experience in the control group and in the intervention group is similar. The Table 2 represents the industries in which the subjects were employed. For the sake of the study, the industries are divided as : a) IT and related services like BPO, electronics ; b) Finance and related services include banking, insurance, mutual funds, and accounting services; c) those who did not fall under the above two were categorized as 'others'. The Table 2 shows the similarity in distribution of the subjects in both the control group and the intervention group.

The Table 3 represents the average changes in the openness among the subjects in the intervention group and

Table 3. Change in Neuroticism in Intervention and Control Groups

	Intervention Group			Control Group		
	Pre	Post1	Post2	Pre	Post1	Post2
Mean	28.12	25.94	23.1	26.39	26.02	26.01
SD	3.3	3.9	4.55	3.518	3.86	4.02
Change		-7.9	-17		-1.9	-2.4

Table 4. Change in Neuroticism

Group	Time factor	Significance (<i>p</i> - value)
Yoga	Pre vs post 1	.000**
	Pre vs post 2	.000**
	Post 1 vs post 2	.000**
Control	Pre vs post 1	.529
	Pre vs post 2	1.000
	Post 1 vs post 2	1.000

Notes: ** indicates that the values are significant

Pre, post 1, post 2 means the study before intervention (baseline data), study in the middle of intervention, study at the end of intervention, respectively

Y1, Y2, Y3 means yoga group (intervention group) at the time of before study, middle of study, after study

C1,C2,C3 means control group at the time of before study, middle of study, and after study

the control group. Since the total number of items in neuroticism are eight and scales are five, so the maximum score is 40. The pre study, that is, the base line data shows that the score of neuroticism is 28.12 with a standard deviation of 3.3 in subjects of the intervention group ; whereas, the same for the control group is 26.39 and 3.518, respectively, which shows that the subjects had similar traits before the study. The post 1 study, that is, the data collected in the middle of the study shows that there is a 7.9% decrease in neuroticism in the intervention group, but only a 1.9% corresponding decrease in the control group. Similarly, in the post 2 study, that is, data collected at the end of the study compared to the data collected during the beginning of study shows there is a 17% decrease in neuroticism in the intervention group ; whereas, the corresponding decrease is only 2.4% in the control group.

Since the design of the study required repetitive studies of the same subjects, repetitive measures ANOVA, that is, the RMANOVA test was used to analyze the data which were collected before the study (pre study), in the middle of the study (post 1 study), and at the end of the study (post 2 study) both for the intervention group and the control group.

The Table 4 shows changes in neuroticism within the intervention group and control group during the study. It shows a continuous increase in neuroticism from the beginning to the middle ($p < .001$), middle to end ($p < .001$), and beginning to end ($p < .001$) in subjects of the intervention group. There was no significant increase in agreeableness from the beginning to the middle ($p > .05$), middle to end ($p > .05$), and beginning to end ($p > .05$) in subjects of the control group.

Implications and Conclusion

The managements of organizations can create a positive environment in the organizations by ensuring the practice of Integrated Yoga by employees in their organizations. Besides improving employee performance and achieving the organization's vision, it will also ensure industrial peace and corporate social responsibility.

The study shows the importance of personality traits, especially emotional stability on the performance of employees, and the study also shows that personality can be changed throughout adulthood, thus instilling optimism for progress in one's personality and performance. Emotional disturbances can be controlled by practice of Integrated Yoga, which ensures peace, good performance, and progress of employees and the organization.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The subjects were from different organizations and sectors. The changes in the environment of their respective organizations and sectors during the study period may have affected their responses. For further research, it is recommended to have subjects from the same organization. The control group was not given any intervention, which may have affected their interest to participate in the study (filling the questionnaires and giving accurate responses). Considering the ethical issues, it was difficult for an outsider to insist on the interest of the subjects of the control group while they were giving their responses. For further research, it is recommended to give some non- yoga intervention to the control group.

It is recommended for further research that if the intervention for both groups is given within the organization, the same physical and office environment for all subjects in both groups can ensure better accuracy and unbiased responses.

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