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Yoga As A Therapeutic Tool For Improving Self-Esteem And Self-Concept In Young Women: A Six-Week Experimental Study

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Abstract: Introduction: Self-esteem and self-concept are vital psychological components that influence well-being, adjustment and personal development predominantly in young women. Yoga, as a mind-body practice, is more and more recognized for its psychological benefits in addition to physical health. Purpose: This study was carried out to examine the outcome of a structured six-week yoga programme on self-esteem and self-concept in young women. Methodology: Sixty female participants, aged between 18 to 23 years, were divided into two groups: 1) the **Experimental Group (Gr. Y; n = 30)**, who practiced yoga, and 2) the **Control Group (Gr. C; n = 30)**, who continued their usual lifestyle without yoga intervention. The Experimental Group (Gr. Y) took part in yoga training 3 times a week for 6 weeks. The training was administered for 60 minutes per session and asanas, pranayama, relaxation and mindfulness was included as activities. Demographic details of participants were documented. The measurement of the **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)** and the **Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS)** were administered through Psychological questionnaire before and after the 6 week intervention. Statistical analysis was carried out with paired *t*-tests within each group ($p < 0.05$). Results: The mean baseline RSES score of Gr. Y was 22.4 improving to 26.9 after yoga intervention ($t(29) = 7.70, p < 0.001$). The TSCS score enhanced from 58.7 to 64.3 ($t(29) = 6.13, p < 0.001$). In Gr. C, RSES improved a small amount from 22.1 to 22.9 ($p = 0.09$), and TSCS from 59.0 to 59.8 ($p = 0.28$) with no significant changes. Conclusions: From the obtained result it may be concluded that 6 weeks yoga training notably enhanced self-esteem and self-concept in young women. The control group demonstrated no significant changes in this period. Yoga shows to be a valuable therapeutic tool for improving positive self-perception and psychological well-being.

Keywords: Yoga, Self-Esteem, Self-Concept, Therapeutic.

INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem and self-concept symbolize two interconnected yet distinctive components that play an essential role in an individual's psychological adjustment and overall well-being. **Self-esteem** indicates the individual's global assessment of self-worth. It refers to the degree to which one values, accepts and respects oneself. **Self-concept** covers the comprehensive perceptions that an individual hold about himself across different spheres of life such as social, academic, emotional and physical aspects. In late adolescence and early adulthood, these aspects attain particular significance. This developmental phase is indicated by identity investigation, social assessment, academic confrontations, the establishment of autonomy and interpersonal relationships. Individuals with low self-esteem or a negative self-concept are more susceptible to anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, academic underperformance, and diminished life satisfaction (Rosenberg, 1965). On the other hand, affirmative self-assessments are related with emotional flexibility, coping and mental well-being. Reliable psychometric tools such as the **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)** and the **Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS)** (Fitts, 1965) have been widely employed to

evaluate these characteristics in both research and clinical circumstances to make sure the experimental uniformity across populations.

Recently, there has been rising awareness in the use of yoga-based interventions to improve mental health and self-perception among young women. **Yoga** is a holistic mind and body related discipline which derived from ancient Indian philosophy. It joins together physical postures (asanas), breathing regulation (pranayama) and meditation or relaxation techniques which promotes synchronize the body and mind. Experimental study has increasingly confirmed that yoga's positive influence on psychological parameters such as stress reduction, emotional stability, body image, mood enhancement, and self-esteem (Woodyard, 2011; Golec de Zavala et al., 2017). The anticipated mechanisms underlying these effects comprise better interceptive awareness, reduced physiological arousal, enlarged subjective vitality and enhanced emotional regulation (Elavsky & McAuley, 2007). By nurturing mindfulness, bodily awareness, and nonjudgmental self-acceptance, yoga promotes an affirmative self-concept and strengthen outlook of self-worth.

A number of studies have confirmed that yogic intervention has capability to promote self-esteem and allied psychological attributes across both non-clinical (student) and clinical populations (Sethi et al., 2013; Tejvani et al., 2016). These findings propose that yoga may serve as a useful non-pharmacological intervention for uphold self-esteem, self-concept and overall mental health of young women. The present study tries to investigate the role of yoga in enhancement of self-esteem and self-concept among young individuals.

PURPOSE

To determine the effect of a six-week Hatha yoga intervention on self-esteem (measured by RSES) and self-concept (measured by TSCS) in young women, using within-group paired t-tests to assess pre- to post-treatment changes, and to compare those changes with a contemporaneous control group.

METHODOLOGY

Study design:

In this study, 60 College Girls of Purba Medinipur District were included as subjects. The age of the subjects was between 18 to 23 years. All the subjects were divided into two distinctive groups: 1) the **Experimental Group (Gr. Y)** (n = 30) who received yoga intervention and 2) the **Control Group (Gr. C)** (n = 30) who did not receive any intervention during the study period. The participants were allocated in groups through non-randomized group design. A 6 weeks well planned yoga programme was applied on the Experimental Group. A 60 minutes schedule was consisted for this programme and three sessions were conducted in a week. Preparatory practices, asanas (postures), pranayama (breathing techniques), relaxation and short mindfulness practices were the various part of the programme. The Control Group maintained their regular lifestyle without yoga training. Demographic details of the subjects (age, education level, and physical activity background) were documented before the study commenced. Two authenticated psychological tools in questionnaire form were applied both before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the 6 weeks period. To measure the self- esteem, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was used. It is a 10-item global self-esteem measure commonly used in research with normative and psychometric support. Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem. (Original source: Rosenberg, 1965). To measure the self-concept, Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) was used. It is a broadly used tool for evaluation of manifold aspects of self-concept. High scores reflect more positive self-concept. (Fitts, 1965; psychometric evaluations available). All the informations were collected through questionnaires in group sessions at pre-intervention and within three days after end of the 6-week yoga intervention. Scoring was conducted following standard manuals of both questionnaires.

Intervention (Gr. Y)

The experimental group received a planned yoga programme delivered in group classes in 18 sessions. Each class included:

Table-1
Yoga schedule

Name of the practices	Time
Surya namaskar	5 mins
Standing posture	10 mins
Sitting posture	10 mins
Supine posture	10 mins
Prone posture	6 mins
Inverted posture	4 mins
Pranayama	5 mins
Relaxation	5 mins
Mindfulness	5 mins
Total time	60mins

- Degree of the difficulties was increased gradually step by step.

Table-2
Programme schedule

Frequency	3 alternative days in a week for 6 weeks
Duration	1 hour
Time	8.00 am to 9.00am
Place	Indoor of Bajkul Milani Mahavidyalaya, Bajkul, Purba Medinipur

Qualified instructors guided and conducted all sessions and recorded attendance. Subjects were encouraged to retain their usual lifestyle.

Control (Gr. C)

The control group received no such intervention and sustained usual activities. A post test was conducted on the control group after 6 weeks period.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using **paired t-tests** to compare pre and post-test scores within each group on RSES and TSCS. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was considered. Analyses were performed using standard statistical software.

RESULTS**Baseline characteristics**

Both groups were comparable in age (Gr. Y mean age 20.8 ± 1.9 years; Gr. C mean age 21.0 ± 1.8 years) and baseline questionnaire scores (RSES: Gr. Y 22.4 ± 3.8 ; Gr. C 22.1 ± 3.9 . TSCS: Gr. Y 58.7 ± 6.5 ; Gr. C 59.0 ± 6.8). Average attendance in Gr. Y was 16.4 ± 1.8 within 18 sessions.

Within-group changes

Table-3

Mean, S.D, t-ratio and p-value in pre and post test on **Experimental Group (Gr. Y)** and **Control group (Gr. C)**

Group	Measuring tools	Before intervention of yoga	After intervention of yoga	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Gr. Y	RSES	Mean: 22.4 SD: ± 3.8	Mean : 26.9 SD: ± 3.6	7.70	p < 0.001	Highly significant improvement
Gr. Y	TSCS	Mean: 58.7 SD: ± 6.5	Mean: 64.3 SD: ± 6.0	6.13	p < 0.001	Highly significant improvement
Gr. C	RSES	Mean: 22.1 SD: ± 3.9	Mean: 22.9 SD: ± 3.7	1.75	p = 0.09	Not significant
Gr. C	TSCS	Mean: 59.0 SD: ± 6.8	Mean: 59.8 SD: ± 6.4	1.10	p = 0.28	Not significant

Significance level of confidence at 0.05 level. $t_{.05}(29) = 2.04$

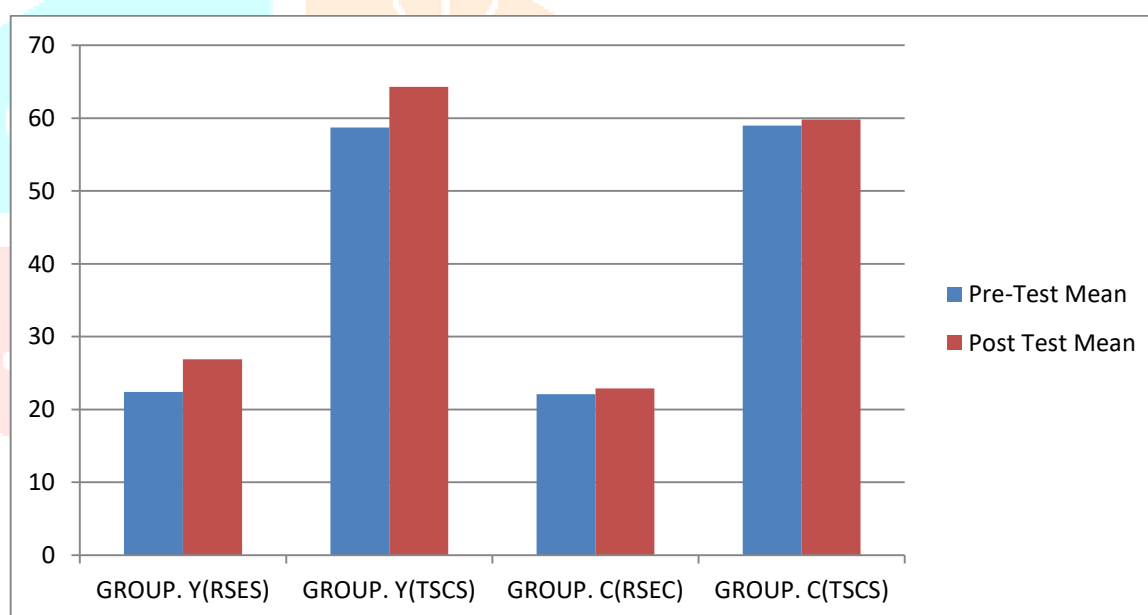


Figure-1 Graphical presentation of pre and post test mean

Result interpretation of Experimental group (Gr. Y; n = 30)

In case of **RSES**, the above table showed that a large statistically significant improvement in global self-esteem was identified after the yoga programme. In case of **TSCS**, the table also indicated that a statistically significant improvement in overall self-concept was identified after yoga intervention.

Result interpretation of Control group (Gr. C; n = 30)

From the above table, it can be stated that the small increase in **RSES** and **TSCS** was not statistically significant.

Statistical findings:

The experimental group demonstrated healthy statistically significant within-group improvements for both self-esteem and self-concept after 6 weeks of yoga intervention. The control group demonstrated small non-significant changes. These outcomes indicate that the yoga can boost subjective energy and give broader psychological benefits.

DISCUSSION:

This study found that a short, feasible six-week Hatha yoga programme produced significant improvements in both global self-esteem (RSES) and global self-concept (TSCS) among young women. The developments were largely relative to the control group and attained conventional levels of statistical significance. These results are similar with prior experimental and randomized investigations presenting that yoga practices, even brief interventions, can significantly enhance subjective energy and self-esteem (Golec de Zavala, Lantos, & Bowden, 2017) and with systematic reviews that report psychological benefits of yoga for young adults (Woodyard, 2011).

A number of possible mechanisms might explain these results. First, yoga enhances interceptive awareness and body appreciation, which may foster improved self-perception and body image (Elavsky & McAuley, 2007 and Coco, M. et al. 2020). Second, breath regulation and guided relaxation can diminish stress and reduce negative self-referential rumination, thereby contributing to positive self-esteem (Sethi et al., 2013). Third, the behavioral activation and mastery experiences associated with learning and accomplishing new postures may enhance self-efficacy and self-worth, echoing findings from randomized controlled trials showing yoga's role in boosting self-esteem and emotional regulation among adolescents (Janjhua, Y. et al. 2020). Finally, upright and open yoga postures have been shown to increase subjective energy, which in turn mediates improvements in state self-esteem (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017).

The present findings also align with evidence that yoga interventions improve self-esteem across diverse populations, including menopausal women (Elavsky & McAuley, 2007), overweight and obese adults (Meenakshi P. et al., 2022)), Yoga has greater influence on holistic personality growth (*Gunas*) (Despande, S. (2009) and adolescents in institutional care settings (Tejvani, R. et al. 2016). This suggests that yoga may exert broad psychological benefits irrespective of demographic context.

On the other hand, limitations must be accepted. The study used non-randomized group allocation, raising the possibility of selection bias. Additionally, the relatively small sample size was included in this study. Only immediate post-intervention effects were assessed. The study leaves the durability of benefits unknown. Additionally, outcomes relied completely on self-report questionnaires (RSES, TSCS) without behavioral or clinician-rated assessments which can commence response bias.

In spite of these limitations, the strengths of the study were to use the validated psychometric tools (Rosenberg, 1965; Fitts, 1965), a prepared instructor-led programme and strong adherence rates. These outcomes emphasize the therapeutic potential of yoga as a low-cost, accessible and effective intervention for improving self-esteem and self-concept in young women.

CONCLUSION:

A planned 6 weeks Hatha yoga programme (3 sessions/week) generated statistically significant improvements in self-esteem and self-concept among young women, while a no-intervention control group demonstrated small non-significant changes. Yoga comes out to be a promising, low-risk approach for supporting affirmative self-perception in young women. Future research should comprise randomized allocation, active control conditions, larger samples and longer follow-up to evaluate maintenance and mechanisms. Institutions can think the accessible yoga modules into well-being programmes for young women to encourage the development of mental health.

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