

Examining the True Determinants of Well-being and Happiness among Yoga-Practicing and Non-Practicing Students in Kolkata

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Abstract: Yoga has generated multiple claims for improving mental well-being and happiness. However, this study investigates whether yoga practice does have significant effects on these meanings concerned or if other external determinants influence the oralities more. With a sample size of 258 students from Kolkata, the research tried to compare among yoga practitioners ($N = 164$) and their non-nonpractitioners peers ($N = 94$) applying the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. Analysis from t -tests and ANOVA revealed no significant difference in well-being and happiness between yoga practitioners and non-practitioners ($p > .05$). Other factors, such as age and education level, were found to have a greater influence on well-being and happiness. This concurs with research establishing that well-being is not a single-dimensional attribute but rather is influenced by aspects like financial stability, social relationships, and personality traits beyond yoga alone. The study undermines this oversimplified claim of yoga being synonymous with happiness, calling for a balanced viewpoint to mental welfare integrating multiple socio-psychological perspectives. The results gainfully offer educators, policymakers, and mental health practitioners' useful ideas in finding effective approaches in addressing student well-being other than yoga-based interventions.

Keywords: Mental Wellbeing, Happiness, Yoga, Adolescents.

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between mental well-being and happiness has received increasing attention in psychological and educational research, especially due to rising stress levels in students. In an urban academic context like Kolkata, further ramifications arise from academic pressure, career uncertainty, and social expectations on student well-being (Banerjee & Mukherjee, 2019). On the other hand, while their promotion prides themselves as providing lessons of and emotional resilience in a person regarding happiness (Khalsa et al., 2016; Wang & Szabo, 2020), research contradicts other results. Some researchers suggested that life satisfaction is, rather, determined by the person's financial security, social relationships, and personality attributes than through yoga itself (Diener & Seligman, 2004; Ryff & Singer, 1998). Kirkwood et al. (2005) and Holzel et al. (2011) further point out the broader socio-psychological influences that might act in an indirect-but-prominent manner. In Kolkata, well-being and lifestyle choices are also dictated by family values, collective achievement aspirations, and societal expectations (Sanyal & Dasgupta, 2017). This research will explore whether the yoga significantly contributes to well-being and happiness among students or whether other factors, such as age, education, and life circumstances, are more prevalent (Steptoe, Deaton, & Stone, 2015). The insight realized will allow educators and policymakers to lay more foundation for pursuing holistic well-being strategies beyond yoga interventions.

2. Review of Related studies

Studies indicate that practitioners of yoga are better off in terms of happiness, emotional stability, and well-being than non-practitioners of all the groups (Malathi & Damodaran, 1999; Cattha et al., 2008). Research has demonstrated that yoga decreases anxiety, stress, and negative emotions, and it also enhances the states of relaxation, concentration, and mental well-being (Iqbal, 2015; Mishra, 2014; Ross, 2013). Some researchers said that resistance training and hatha yoga may have varying effects on well-being and mental health (Taspinar, 2014). Hatha yoga enhanced the aspects of quality of life, weariness, and self-esteem. Yoga effects the well-being and happiness of people but some studies have few inconsistencies in their results. In-fact yoga is believed to reduce stress but it has not been determined how far all this contributes to happiness or the well-being of the person over the longer time scale (Kirkwood et al., 2005; Goyal et al., 2014). Other factors such as personality variables, types of coping, and socioeconomic conditions appear to heavily influence well-being as compared even to simply practicing yoga (Diener & Seligman, 2004; Holzel et al., 2011). Instead, research has found that external factors such as financial status, education, and social support would have much more profound impacts on well-being than lifestyle factors such as yoga (Ryff & Singer, 1998; Headey & Wearing, 1992). Furthermore, in India and other collectivist cultures, family systems and societal expectations are often seen to dominate possible individual benefits of yoga in deciding happiness (Park et al., 2018; Steger, 2009). Our findings, showing no difference in happiness and well-being between yoga practitioners and non-practitioners, are in line with the studies that see well-being as a multidimensional construct formed by many psychological, social, and economic factors and not merely by one practice (Keyes, 2002; Steptoe et al., 2015).

3. Rationale of the Study

Yoga is now touted as a cure-all for the issues of stress, happiness, and general well-being. A sort of yoga craze has overtaken every advertising space, from social media influencers down to wellness coaches, and it seems that everyone is directly linking yoga to a happy life. But is this really the full picture? Well-being, we argue, goes far beyond doing a few yoga postures: strong friendships, financial stability, personal mindset, and even life objectives can play a huge role. And, yoga, contrary to what the common perception of commercial yoga activities lays out, does not respond in quite the same way to all. For those more inclined towards self-reflection and inner work, there is probably great benefit from yoga, while for those relying more on outer support or having different coping strategies, yoga hardly makes a dent. For many people, yoga is simply a fad rather than a deeply rooted practice. This study wishes to pass by the hype to see whether yoga practitioners are happier than those who don't do so, or if contrary lifestyle factors play an even stronger part. The aim is to dethrone the stereotype that yoga equals happiness, and thus give a fuller and more realistic picture of what actually works to make humans feel happy and well.

4. Need and Significance

Yoga has been approached in reference to a universal application for bettering life quality and well-being; however, it is shown that well-being is composed of wide-ranging socio-cultural, economic, psychosocial factors far beyond physical to exercise (Diener & Seligman, 2004; Ryff & Singer, 1998). In the case of Kolkata, these would include connectedness socially, belonging to a family, academic stress, and economic uncertainties that play vital roles in student well-being here (Banerjee & Mukherjee, 2019). Other studies undertaken in Kolkata also brought out such findings that family environment, peer pressure for future career anxiety, as well as sociopolitical stress, have very strong bearing on one's health as well as mental health outcomes, if perhaps out-powering even the personal choices made in lifestyle like yoga (Chakraborty & Chatterjee, 2018; Sanyal & Dasgupta, 2017). Apart from this, culturally, the perceptions about happiness and well-being in Kolkata tend toward collective achievement, family prestige, and social validation, which may not necessarily correlate with the yoga-modern treatment of self-care and individualistic orientation (Sen, 2010). Yoga may be able to decrease stress in therapeutic settings but may not be as efficient in uplifting happiness and well-being among Bengali youth in their routine lives (Kirkwood et al., 2005; Park et al., 2018). This is one of the important studies as it tries to critically engage the narrative of yoga and happiness, drawing it into the socio-cultural reality of the students in Kolkata, which stresses that true well-being emanates from the active interaction between personal resilience and external support systems (Holzel et al., 2011; Ryff, 2014).

5. Objective of the Study

To find out the relationship between Mental Well-being and Happiness with Yoga & Yoga's effect on Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students of Kolkata, the researcher identified the following objectives:

- I. To investigate the age differences in Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata.
- II. To examine the gender differences in Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata.
- III. To ascertain the level of education wise differences in Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students.
- IV. To ascertain the relationship between students' Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata.
- V. To figure out the relationship of Yoga on Happiness and Mental Well-being among the students of Kolkata.

6. Hypothesis of the Study

The researcher undertook the null hypothesis to investigate the research problem. The researcher formulated the following null hypothesis on the basis of objectives of the study. The following null hypothesis were formulated:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata with respect to their *Age*.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata with respect to their *Gender*.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata with respect to their level of education.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the relationship between Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students.

H₀₅: There is no significant difference in the relationship of Yoga on Happiness and Mental Well-being among the students of Kolkata.

7. Methodology

- **Research Design:** The study utilized a Descriptive Survey Research design to collect quantitative data on Mental Well-being and Happiness levels from a diverse population, including respondents from various backgrounds.
- **Population:** Students studying in Secondary, Higher Secondary, College and University level in West Bengal were considered as population of the study.
- **Sample:** A sample of 258 students from Secondary, Higher Secondary, College and University levels was randomly selected in Kolkata.
- **Sampling Technique:** The present study was conducted using the Simple Random Sampling Method from different schools, colleges and universities in Kolkata.
- **Variables:** Variable is a measurable characteristic or a logical set of attributes of the subjects of the research that can vary. In the present study the following variables were identified and used.

Independent variables are believed to be the influencing variable effect to dependent variables. Here independent variables are Age, Gender, and Practice of Yoga.

This study was to measure the impact of the independent variable of the status of dependent variable. In this study Mental Well-being and Happiness are the dependent variable.

- **Measuring Tools Used in the Study:** To collect data, the following measuring tools are used in the study:

1. The socio-demographic measures were prepared by the investigator for the study that includes Age, Gender, Level of Education and yoga practicing or non- practicing.

2. In the present study The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) was used.

3. Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was used. Utilizing the Likert Scale Technique, these scales were created with a total of 14 components and 29 components.

- **Statistical Techniques used:** Data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS package), version 21.0 because it accommodates a large number of variables at the same time and reduces detailed laborious calculation by hand and thereby minimized the chance of error.

8. Analysis & Interpretation

8.1 Mental Wellbeing and Happiness with Age group

Objective I: To investigate the age differences in Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata with respect to their *Age*.

Table 8.1.1 ANOVA test showing the Age group Wise Comparison in Mental Wellbeing and Happiness

Measure	Age Group	N	M	SD	F	p
WEMWBS Total Score	16-20	97	41.78	7.52	3.63	.028*
	21-25	110	42.52	6.31		
	26-30	51	44.96	6.90		
	Total	258	42.72	6.97		
Oxford Happiness Total Score	16-20	97	3.51	0.49	7.79	.001**
	21-25	110	3.52	0.40		
	26-30	51	3.80	0.59		
	Total	258	3.57	0.49		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

One-way ANOVA was performed to analyze the influence of age groups on well-being, as measured by WEMWBS, and happiness, as measured by the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. There was a statistically significant difference in the WEMWBS score between age groups, $F = 3.63$, $p = .028$, indicating that well-being increases with age. Differences in happiness were similarly significant, $F = 7.79$, $p = .001$, with older individuals having reported higher levels of happiness.

So, the null hypothesis “There is no significant difference in the Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata with respect to their *Age*” is rejected. Here these findings support the present study, where older participants showed higher WEMWBS and Oxford Happiness scores than younger participants. Research indicates that well-being and happiness seem to improve with advancing age because older adults usually have better emotional regulation and higher life satisfaction compared to younger adults (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2008; Steptoe, Deaton, & Stone, 2015). Young individuals, going through a greater amount of stress and with more life transition, instead report lower well-being (Arnett, 2000).

8.2 Mental Wellbeing and Happiness with Gender

Objective II: To examine the gender differences in Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata with respect to their *Gender*.

Table 8.2.1 T-test showing the Gender wise Comparison in Mental Wellbeing and Happiness

Measure	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
WEMWBS Total Score	Male	136	42.72	6.86	-0.010	256	.992
	Female	122	42.73	7.13			
Oxford Happiness Total Score	Male	136	3.61	0.49	1.35	256	.179
	Female	122	3.53	0.48			

Not significant

All these confirm that both respondents, males ($M = 42.72$, $S.D = 6.86$) and females ($M = 42.73$, $S.D = 7.13$), do report no significant difference on well-being, $p = .992$. Similarly, no significant difference was found on happiness between males ($M = 3.61$, $S.D = 0.49$) and females ($M = 3.53$, $S.D = 0.48$), $p = .179$.

So, the null hypothesis “There is no significant difference in Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata with respect to their *Gender*” is not rejected. Some studies found practically no indications of gender differences in well-being and happiness among student populations. Findings from a study indicate that there exist no major gender differences in happiness scores among university students from Peru (Méndez-Giménez et al., 2023). Another study reports that gender does not have a significant effect on well-being among postgraduate students in India, as stated by Kantariya in 2017. Although females are generally more stressed, they and males give similar ratings of their overall life satisfaction and happiness according to adjusted studies which account for education and social support (Diener et al., 1999; Matud, 2004).

8.3 Mental Wellbeing and Happiness with Level of Education

Objective III: To ascertain the level of education wise differences in Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata with respect to their level of education.

Table 8.3.1 ANOVA test showing the Education Level Wise Comparison in Mental Wellbeing and Happiness

Measure	Educational Level	N	M	SD	F	p
WEMWBS Total Score	School	95	41.96	7.24	3.97	.020*
	College	120	42.38	6.42		
	University	43	45.40	7.38		
	Total	258	42.72	6.97		
Oxford Happiness Total Score	School	95	3.53	0.43	9.48	.001**
	College	120	3.50	0.46		
	University	43	3.85	0.56		
	Total	258	3.57	0.49		

*p < .05, **p < .001

One-way ANOVA on the students of the university reported levels of well-being and happiness much higher than those of their counterparts at the school and college levels; this was confirmed by significant ANOVA results for both WEMWBS (p = .020) and Oxford Happiness scores (p < .001). This suggests that the level of education has an influence on both well-being and happiness.

So, the null hypothesis “There is no significant difference in Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata with respect to their level of education” is rejected. Research shows that individuals with high educational achievement show more well-being and life satisfaction than the rest. There is an associated better process of coping, self-efficacy, and bigger social networks with higher education, all having a positive change on psychological well-being (Step toe et al., 2015). Particularly during university, some students may experience personal development and will be able to carve out greater autonomy, thereby benefiting their happiness levels (Siedlecki et al., 2014).

8.4 Correlation in Mental Wellbeing and Happiness

Objective IV: To ascertain the relationship between students' Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students in Kolkata.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the relationship between Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students.

Table 8.4.1 Correlation showing the Comparison in Mental Wellbeing and Happiness

Measure	Mean	SD	N	WEMWBS Total Score	Oxford Happiness Total Score	Sig(2-tailed)
WEMWBS Total Score	42.72	6.97	258	-	.46**	.000
Oxford Happiness Total Score	3.57	0.49	258	.46**	-	.000

**p < .001

This demonstrates a moderate positive correlation between well-being and happiness, $r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$, suggesting that people with a higher level of well-being tend to report happiness in higher quantity. So, the hypothesis “There is no significant difference in the relationship between Mental Well-being and Happiness among the students” is rejected. This appears to substantiate earlier studies showing that well-being and happiness correlate closely; both conceptions reflect the ultimate psychological and emotional condition of the person (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). Numerous studies have pointed out that research tends to show those with higher psychological well-being experience more positive emotional experiences, which stimulate the overall sense of happiness (Diener, 2000). The established connection emphasizes the necessity to ameliorate well-being in order to create happiness among students (Keyes, 2007).

8.5 T-test among Yoga Practitioner or Non-Practitioner with Mental Wellbeing and Happiness

Objective V: To figure out the relationship of Yoga on Happiness and Mental Well-being among the students of Kolkata.

H₀₅: There is no significant difference in the relationship of Yoga on Happiness and Mental Well-being among the students of Kolkata.

Table 8.5.1 T-test showing the Yoga Practitioner Group Wise Comparison in Mental Wellbeing and Happiness

Measure	Yoga	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Oxford Happiness Total Score	Practitioner Group	164	3.58	0.44	0.488	256	.626
	Non-Practitioner Group	94	3.55	0.56			
WEMWBS Total Score	Practitioner Group	164	42.66	6.74	-0.201	256	.841
	Non-Practitioner Group	94	42.84	7.40			

Not significant

It was established through the independent samples t-test that yoga practitioners and non-practitioners do not significantly differ in any of their happiness levels (Oxford Total Score) and well-being scores (WEMWBS Total Score) ($p > .05$), and it can therefore be suggested that the introduction of yoga would not affect these two variables essentially.

So, the null hypothesis “There is no significant difference in the relationship of yoga on happiness and mental well-being among the students of Kolkata” is not rejected. While yoga is becoming an accepted mode of enhancing well-being, research presents a much more heterogeneous picture of how happiness and well-being are moulded from a number of interlacing variables that transcend the yoga mat. Kirkwood et al. (2005) reported that the effects of yoga on stress and anxiety were greater in clinical settings, while the influence of yoga on happiness in healthy individuals was inconsistent; they face psychological distress. Much to the contrary, social support, financial security, purposeful employment, and enriching personal relationships usually overshadow these weekly hours of asanas when it comes to happiness. Personality also plays an important role here; Holzel et al. (2011) suggested that individuals who naturally are inclined toward self-reflection and mindfulness may benefit from yoga to a greater extent, while those having an avoidant coping style are likely to find it ineffective and, therefore, might need therapies or social interventions instead. In addition, Diener and Seligman (2004) indicated that stable income, good health, and nurturing relationships remain reliably ahead of lifestyle activities like yoga in the prediction of happiness. Ryff and Singer (1998) have pointed out that the concept of well-being has multidimensional aspects like autonomy, purpose, and environmental mastery—areas that yoga cannot fulfil on its own. According to Park et al. (2018), the well-being that lasts finds security in the interplay of our social relations, purpose in life, and self-actualisation.

9. Educational Implication

Education-wise, these have enormous implications because they suggest that educational institutions should adopt a holistic view of well-being rather than only promoting yoga. Schools and colleges should be teaching emotional resilience and coping skills; should encourage constructive peer interactions; should promote life skill education and promote learning through purposive activities. One way to tackle more general determinants of happiness and well-being among students is by integrating mental health education, career counseling, and life-skill training so students are able to maintain an equilibrium in the threefold aspects of self, purpose, and emotional strength as they pursue academic and personal goals.

10. Recommendation

Several lines of inquiry in future research on the mental well-being and happiness of yoga-practicing and non-practicing students in Kolkata may be developed. Longitudinal studies may be conducted in order to learn about the long-run consequence of continuous practice of yoga for students' mental wellbeing (Kumar & Sharma, 2023). Other areas where further research might be conducted include looking into the effects of different kinds of yoga, be it Hatha, Ashtanga or mindfulness-based yoga on distinct domains of mental well-being (Singh & Banerjee, 2022). That would indeed yield finer knowledge that a general understanding might not reveal through a comparative study with other extended studies among bigger populations and other socio-economic strata. Integrating qualitative methods, for instance, interview or focus groups, could help to provide more qualitative information about the subject's experiences with respect to personal experiences with yoga and its impacts on one's happiness and reduction of stress (Patel & Bose, 2021). Future research on students who meditated and those who did not, as well as a study on female employees' happiness, should be conducted.

11. CONCLUSION

Since the study has uncovered that the mental well-being of students and their happiness is greatly determined by the interrelated factors such as age, education level, and personal life situation, gender does not have a significant impact in determining mental well-being and happiness, whereas, those who practice yoga do not automatically get wealthier or happier. Older students and higher education ones tend to report better well-being and happiness. This may ascribe to improved coping abilities, emotional regulation, and personal growth opportunity. In addition, the moderate positive correlation between well-being and happiness signifies the depth of interconnection, indicating further that happiness is best derived from a rich quinoa of personal development, social relationships, financial stability, and purposeful living—much more than through yoga alone. Sufficiently, thus, point scores should subject well-being and happiness to holistic approaches rather than depend on single lifestyle practice.

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