

## Effect of Yoga on Self-concept and Emotional Maturity of Visually Challenged Students: An Experimental study

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The study was designed to examine whether the practice of yoga has a positive effect on self-concept and emotional maturity of visually impaired students. The sample consisted of 15 visually impaired students drawn purposively from a School for the Blind. A Yoga training programme was designed and the subjects were exposed to it for a period of four weeks. The effects of yoga on self-concept of visually impaired students were measured by administering Saraswat's Self-Concept Inventory whereas effects on emotional maturity were obtained by applying Yashvir Singh and Mahesh Bhargava's Emotional Maturity Scale. The data was analyzed in terms of mean, SD, and 't' test. The results indicate that on the whole, the level of self concept and emotional maturity of visually impaired students improves after the practice of yoga. Significance differences were found between mean gain scores on all the dimensions of Self-Concept Inventory and Emotional Maturity Scale. The study has its implications for school administrators, policy makers, parents, teachers, community leaders, and rehabilitation workers.

**Keywords:** Yoga, Self-concept, Emotional maturity, visually challenged students

It is a matter of great concern that abilities and potential of disabled persons have not yet been fully explored and tackled but practically, it is a great loss of human resources, which, if discovered, matured, appropriately channelized, and utilized, could add a new force to the progression of the society. In the present society, yoga is considered an important medical technique for developing the physical and mental functioning of an individual, especially of students with disabilities. It is one of the most important, effective, and valuable tools available for the students with disabilities to overcome their various physical and psychological problems such as anxiety, emotional instability, frustration, poor mental health, and so on. Yoga refers to the system of practices that help to control the mind, body, and soul. It is a holistic path that leads to a sense of peace and well-being. Through different poses (asanas), breathing technique (pranayama), and meditation (dhyana), yoga makes the practitioner aware of his inner self. It includes cultivation of correct attitudes and reconditioning of the neuromuscular systems. Yoga helps the whole body to enable it to

withstand greater stress and strain. Yoga proposes healthy diet and encourages the natural process of elimination, whenever it is necessary. Yoga aims at an integrated and harmonious development of all the potentialities of human beings. Several studies have shown that the practice of yoga has a definite role in the promotion of positive health, including mental health. Setterlind (1983) found that regular practice of meditation and yoga brings a positive change in the well-being of the subjects. Swami (1994) and Rao (1995) established that the yogic practices are good and useful as they help not only to strengthen each organ and develop every muscle of the body but also to regulate the circulation of the blood, purify the lungs, inspire the mind to be more alert, and gives a feeling of well-being and harmonious development of human personality.

Saraswat and Gaur (1981) described self-concept as the individual's way of looking at oneself. It also signifies his way of thinking, feeling, and behaving. According to Mosby's Medical Dictionary (2009), self-concept is the composite of ideas, feelings, and attitudes that a person has about his or her own identity, worth,

capabilities, and limitations. Such factors as the values and opinions of others, especially in the formative years of early childhood, play an important part in the development of the self-concept. The self-concept of being inferior or unworthy develops adjustment problems for students with visual impairment. They suffer from the problem of self-devaluation because they are unable to satisfy many of their emotional and social needs. Mishra (2013) found that self-concept, happiness, satisfaction, intellectual, and school status is better in sighted children as compared to visually challenged students. Due to their physical inadequacy, they face many psychological disadvantages, such as feeling of inferiority, fear of social ridicule, inability to compete with the sighted people, and limited social participation due to their visual impairment. This resultantly affects their self concept, their actions, abilities, potentialities and performance in all domains of life including school performance.

Emotional maturity is considered one of the important aspects of human life. It is one of the effective determinants of the personality patterns. Walter D. Smitson (1976) said that an emotionally stable child has a capacity to make effective adjustments with himself, his family members, and his peers. Emotional maturity is a process in which the personality is continuously striving for greater sense of emotional health, both intrapsychically and intra-personally. An emotionally matured individual has the capacity to withstand delay in satisfaction of needs, capability to tolerate a reasonable amount of frustration, belief in long term planning and is able of delaying or revising his expectations in terms of demands of the situations. Some studies (Beaty, 1991, 1992; Meighan, 1971) have found that visual impairment could be the cause of the feeling of incapacity and inferiority, which may be reflected in a lack of social acceptance, low academic results, physical incapacity, and poor social adjustment. Arora (2002) found in his study that visually challenged girls are emotionally less stable than boys. Gramer and Imai (2002) proposed that females are less emotionally stable than males. Aleem (2005) examines difference between the mean scores of male and female students on

emotional stability and revealed that male students are found to be more emotionally stable than female students. Thus, circumstances such as the presence of visual impairment have been noted to affect the formation and development of the self-concept and emotional maturity negatively.

Studies conducted by Vicente Pedro (1987) and Bhushan (1998) found a significant reduction in the anxiety of subjects due to regular practice of yoga. Yoga reduces depression and anxiety and increases self-confidence (Barota et al, 2001; Ventis, 2002). Generally, people who do yoga have high intelligence, less fatigue, order and motivation, self-confidence, and more output (Perez-De-Albeniz, 2000). Participating in yoga activities helps in socialization, achieving skill, adequacy, and also making friends and health relationship with peers (Rao et al, 2008). Various researches have shown that yoga increases creativity, independence, stress release, and a closer relationship with the people (Paluska et al, 2000; Lindwall et al, 2005). Also, yoga increases popularity and social adaptability of people (Alfermann et al, 2000). Narasimhan, Nagarathna and Nagendra (2011) revealed that yoga practices can reduce the negative emotions and increase the positive effect on emotions within one week. Sharma (2011) also revealed that yoga helps in developing positive mental health among adolescents. Thakar and Sharma (2012) also concluded that training of yoga can help to increase the academic achievement, develop positive mental health and enhance the physical development of the students.

Several studies have been conducted to see the effect of yoga on normal population but the studies on the effect of yoga on self-concept and emotional maturity of visually challenged students particularly in Indian context are very few. Therefore, the present study was carried out with an objective to see whether yoga has any positive effect on self-concept and emotional maturity of visually challenged students.

### **Objectives**

1. To assess the self concept and emotional maturity of visually impaired students

2. To develop a training programme, comprising selected yogic exercises and pranayamas.

3. To study the effect of yogic exercises on the self concept of visually impaired students.

4. To study the effect of yogic exercises on emotional maturity of visually impaired students

### **Hypotheses**

1. Yoga will significantly improve the self-concept of visually challenged students.

2. Yoga will significantly improve the emotional maturity of visually challenged students.

### **Method**

#### **Sample:**

The sample comprised 15 visually impaired students drawn from a special school for the blind situated in Chandigarh. The age group of 15 purposively selected participants was 14-18 years.

#### **Tools:**

*Self Concept Inventory:* It was developed by Saraswat (1992) and used for the assessment of self concept of visually challenged students. The scale consists of 48 statements which are concerned with the academic, social, temperamental, educational, moral, and intellectual dimensions of self-concept. The reliability of the 'Inventory' was .91 for the total self-concept measure. Reliability coefficients of its various dimensions vary from .67 to .88. The high scores were indicating high level of self concept and low score indicating low level of self-concept.

*Emotional Maturity Scale developed by Yashvir Singh and Mahesh Bhargava (1971):* It was used for the assessment of emotional maturity of visually challenged students. The scale consists of 48 statements which are concerned with the emotional instability, emotional regression, social maladjustment, personality disintegration, and lack of Independence dimensions of emotional maturity. Reliability coefficients of its various dimensions vary from .75 to .42. The higher the score on the scale, greater is the degree of the emotional immaturity and vice-versa. The tools were administered before

and after the yoga intervention programme and data were collected accordingly.

#### **Procedure:**

The study employed one group pre-test and post-test field experimental design. The design involved three operational stages. The first stage involved pre-testing of subjects about their self concept and emotional maturity. The second stage involved exposure of subjects to yoga training programme. The investigator took the help of a specialized yoga instructor for administering the yoga classes for 30 days daily for one hour in the morning. The participants were exposed to the theoretical as well as practical aspects of yoga. The students were given theory classes on the importance of yogic exercises, Ashtanga Yoga, Asanas, Pranayamas, natural diet, concentration, and meditation, followed by practical sessions on *Pranayama* and five *Asanas*. The theoretical session included only three days and practical session continued for the next 27 days. The component of Pranayama involved training on *Bhastrika*, *Kapalbhati*, *Bahya Pranayama*, *Anulom-Vilom*, *Brhamari*, and *Omkar* recitation whereas five kinds of yogic *Asanas* consisted of *Padmasana*, *Bhujangasana*, *Janu Sirsasana*, *Pascimottanasana*, and *Savasana*. It was felt that a regular practice of the Pranayama and asanas would bring total relaxation to the body which is essential for the development of positive self-concept and balanced emotional development of the visually challenged child. The third stage included post-testing of the same group using the same tool after a gap of fifteen days of yoga training programme.

### **Results**

Table1 reveals that there was significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of self concept variable of visually challenged students as the calculated value of "t" (13.08) is higher than its tabulated value (2.98 at 0.01 level and 2.14 at 0.05 level). This clearly shows that yoga practice leads to significant improvement in the self-concept of visually challenged students. Hence, on the basis of the results, the hypothesis 1 of the study i.e. "Yoga will significantly improve the self-concept of visually challenged students,"

**Table 1. Significant difference between Pre-test and Post-test scores of Self-concept variable and its dimensions for visually Challenged students (N=15).**

Sr. No. Variable and its dimensions	Pre-test		Post-test		't' - value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1. Self-concept (Total Score)	165.67	7.37	204.67	11.20	13.08*/**
Dimensions:					
a. Physical	27.27	3.19	33.80	1.76	6.53*/**
b. Social	24.60	3.32	32.60	3.70	6.72*/**
c. Temperamental	26.73	4.00	35.27	2.64	6.99*/**
d. Educational	30.53	2.70	36.20	2.76	5.71*/**
e. Moral	30.00	2.13	34.47	3.48	4.64*/**
f. Intellectual	26.53	3.16	32.33	3.77	4.03*/**

\*p&lt;.01, \*\*p&lt;.05

**Table 2. Significant difference between Pre-test and Post-test scores of Emotional maturity variable and its dimensions for visually Challenged students (N=15).**

Sr. No. Variable and its dimensions	Pre-test		Post-test		't' - value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1. Emotional Maturity (Total Score)	104.2	10.87	85.33	8.45	-10.42*/**
Dimensions:					
a. Emotional instability	26.8	4.32	20.67	3.93	-8.06*/**
b. Emotional regression	28.13	3.52	21.8	2.28	-10.72*/**
c. Social Maladjustment	19.4	3.49	17.27	1.91	-2.32**
d. Personality disintegration	15.8	3.25	13	2.19	-3.33*/**
e. Lack of Independence	14.06	2.14	12.6	1.85	-4.17*/**

\*p&lt;.01, \*\*p&lt;.05

was accepted. This table also reveals that on all the six dimensions of self-concept there has been significant improvement among the group. The results are in agreement with those reported in Alfermann et al., 2000; Paluska et al., 2000; Lindwall et al., 2005; Rao et al., 2008; Thakar and Sharma (2012) who also reported that yoga helps in increasing social adaptability, achievements, self-confidence and physical development of the practitioners. Dubey (2011) too reached the similar conclusion that practice of yoga for 15 days may help the adolescents to develop better self-concept. Thus, it may be inferred that the practice of yoga for one month may help the visually challenged students to develop better self-concept.

Table-2 reveals that there was significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of emotional maturity variable of visually challenged students as the calculated value of 't' (-10.27) is higher than its tabulated value (2.98 at 0.01 level

and 2.14 at 0.05 level). Results on emotional maturity have the same explanation as it was found to be increased due to yoga training. Therefore, practice of yoga by visually impaired children may help them from coming out of being restless, hostile, and aggressive. Yoga may also instill in them ability to live independent life and being active in social activities. Hence, on the basis of the results, the hypothesis 2 of the study i.e. "The yoga will significantly improve the emotional maturity of visually challenged students," was accepted. This table also reveals that on all the five dimensions of emotional maturity there has been significant improvement among the group but the calculated value of 't' (-2.32) for social maladjustment dimension is significant only at the 0.05 level. The results are in agreement with those reported in Narasimhan, Nagarathna and Nagendra (2011) and Sharma (2011) who reported that yoga practices helps in promoting emotional maturity and positive mental

health among adolescents. Thus, it may be inferred that the practice of yoga for one month may help the visually challenged students to develop better emotional maturity. Yoga helps in improving irritability, stubbornness, feeling of inferiority, restlessness, and immorality among the group.

Yoga not only improves the day to day functioning of the individual but also proves to be a motivational tool in the development of better self image and positive emotional maturity among these adolescents who are suffering from the problem of inferiority complexes, anxiety, depression, and maladjustment in their life. Therefore, concerted efforts in the form of suitably designed yogic intervention programmes, portrayal of visually disabled by media in a dignified way, appointment of skilled Yoga teachers by concerned authorities, developing and adopting appropriate educational policies concerning the introduction of yoga education in schools by government, ensuring strict compliance of Persons with Disability Act, 2005 together with implementation of Right to Education Act at different levels etc. are required for changing the mind sets of the visually challenged adolescents about their own abilities and potentialities which ultimately affects their self concept and emotional level in and out of the school world.

One holistic finding that emerged from the study is that Yoga training had beneficial effects on the human body. It indicates that positive changes in the life style of the individual can be brought through practicing it. Yoga develops the physical, mental, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual components, which help in building up a sound personality. Self-concept, which is the sum total of a person's perception, feelings and belief about the self, can be developed and strengthened through yoga. Emotional maturity can also be attained by practising it.

The present study has certain limitations. Firstly, the limited size of the sample precludes the generalization of the findings of the study. If the researchers want to replicate the study, they may select a large sample. Secondly, the present study undertook a pre-experimental design which

is not holding a high degree of acceptance among the researcher as it fails to provide the equivalence to the group and random selection of the sample, therefore, a true experimental design be implemented to address this issue.

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