

Lifestyle Survey of Urban Youth : An Analysis of Healthy Behaviour in Relation to Yoga Practice

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The study aims to investigate the pattern of lifestyle of a cross section of youth in urban area. Using the questionnaires information was elicited on the specific demographic data, host of practices such as use of tobacco, eating pattern, exercise, sleep and recreational activities and also specific risky health behaviours. The study covered a convenient sample of 870 youth in the age range of 15 to 28 years from Chennai. The data was analysed to understand the lifestyle pattern in terms of the healthy and health compromising behaviour patterns. The significant relationship between the lifestyles and physical and psychological wellbeing are analysed. The results of regression analysis show that the specific lifestyles such as sleep quality, eating habits, and exercise behaviours significantly predict the physical wellbeing. The psychological wellbeing was influenced positively by exercise behaviours, quality of sleep and stress management ability. Psychological wellbeing was negatively associated with emotional distress, risky eating pattern, indulgent and impulsive behaviours. The practice of yoga among a group of youth is found to be associated with positive protective lifestyle habits and the same was lower among youth who were not practicing yoga. Further, the ability to control and discipline health compromising habits was stronger in youth practicing yoga.

Key Words: Lifestyle, Yoga, Urban youth, Healthy behaviours.

INTRODUCTION

India is the second largest populated country in the world, with an estimated 1.21 billion people. The youth population under 34 years is around 41.05% of India's total population. This potential resource is expected to last until 2050. Currently, India is emerging as a strong economic power due to its young human resource who has capacity for scientific knowledge, technology, readiness for mobility, and language acquisition. On the flip side, this younger generation is also facing many psychosocial issues which can cause depletion of quality. The major concern is about their health care and harnessing their potential in a productive manner. The youngsters' physical, mental, social, emotional, spiritual health and lifestyle form assets which have to be protected.

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Major concerns of youth:

Lifestyles of youth have been studied intensively by social scientists and health care professionals to document the prevalence of smoking, alcoholism, drug addiction, crime, unintentional injuries, violence, sexual behaviours, juvenile delinquency, deviant behaviour (terrorism) as social issues. On the other hand, depression, hypertension, obesity, asthma, juvenile diabetes, and other psychosomatic problems afflicting the youth are highlighted by health surveys.

Sociological surveys indicate that in India, over half of men (57.0%) and one tenth (10.9%) of women in the age group of 15-39 years use tobacco (Advocacy Forum for Tobacco Control, 2006). In 2007, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India report stated an increase in alcohol consumption from 5 to 20 percent. As estimated in 2006, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India tells that 7.5 crore Indians are drug addicts, the number is significantly increasing and the use of illicit drugs is 3.6 percent.

A report in Lancet (2004) states that 1,54,000 people committed suicide in Southern India, and suicide rates among young men and women in Southern India are the highest in India. National Family Health Survey, 2007 says that 12.1% male and 16% female are obese in India. Hypertension among youth is 23.2% (Das, Sanyal and Basu, 2005). Psychosomatic complaints in children and adolescents are 10% and 25% (Brill, Patel and MacDonald, 2001). With these statistics, it is possible to understand the multiple social and health issues that have been impacting the quality of life of younger people.

These points throw light on the need for focusing on primordial prevention where the onset of many risky behaviours and promotion of healthy behaviours in youth need to be studied predominantly.

Psychophysiological studies on yoga practitioners have shown improved physiological functions, subjective wellbeing (Malathi, Damodaran, Shah, Patil and Maratha, 2000), reduced anxiety, depression, stress, pain, insomnia, trauma and increased self-esteem and mental alertness (Woolery, Myers, Sternlieb, Zeltzer, 2004).

A comparative research study among practitioners and non-practitioners of yoga showed that there was significant difference in psychological distress, somatization, anxiety and insomnia, social dysfunction and depression (Sudha, Jyotsna, Sumita and Nalini, 2006).

Specific yoga practices are found to enhance positive desirable qualities (Sativik temperament) in college students (Bhushan, 2006).

Similarly mindfulness intervention study showed that there was a significant reduction of aggressive and impulsive behaviours among adolescent such as bullying, fire setting, aggression, cruelty towards animals and noncompliance (Singh, Lancioni, Singh Joy, Winton, Sabaawi, Wahler and Singh, 2007).

Research evidences state that involvement of youth in physical activities and exercises reduce the risky behaviour and promote healthy habits, social self-esteem, body appearance, prevents and reduces chronic major diseases among young people (Rattan, Kang, Thakur and Parthi, 2006., Kruk, 2007., Ortega, Ruiz, Castillo and Sjostrom, 2008).

The intervention of Yoga and Meditation among younger group shows positive results such as improvement in body flexibility, stability, agility, energy level and breath capacity (Kawade, 2011., Singh, Singh and Vaz, 2011).

Latha and Priya (2011) reported a significant level of state and trait anxiety among college students and associated with cognitive. This self reported cognitive failure indicated that students experience frequent distractibility and memory loss. In the same study, the result of yoga intervention indicated that there was a significant decrease in the level of cognitive failure and anxiety, and also the practice of relaxation and breathing techniques provided calmness and confidence among college students.

A glimpse of research surveys indicate that social and health related issues affect the overall quality of life among youth. The role of yoga on a healthy lifestyle and as a protective factor needs to be understood. How far this practice is prevalent in youth has to be explored along with the other healthy and unhealthy habits.

Objectives:

- To explore the lifestyle pattern of urban youth.
- To study the predictive relationship between the lifestyle practices, psychological and physiological wellbeing.
- To analyse the role of yoga as a lifestyle practice in youth.

METHOD

Sample:

The sample for the study covered 870 youth from Chennai in the age range of 15 to 28 years. Both the genders were included for the study. Convenient sampling technique was used for selection. A cross

section of subjects who consented to answer the questions constituted present sample.

Tools:

The relevant data was collected by using a structured questionnaire. The **personal data sheet** elicited information on age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, occupation, religion, caste, and annual income of the respondent or father.

The **Lifestyle questionnaire** (Latha, 2009) is a rating scale which consisted of 43 items covering major habits such as sleep quality, eating behaviours, substance abuse, exercise behaviour, stress and rest, recreational behaviour. Rating on four-point Likert scale (Always, Sometimes, Occasionally and Not at all) was used. Few questions were open-ended. Reverse scoring was done for the negatively worded items. Thus, higher the scores greater the frequency of particular habit in the respondent which indicates overall positive trends. The Chronbach alpha Coefficient was 0.86 for this questionnaire.

Health behaviour Questionnaire (Senthil kumar, 2011). This was a need based tool developed for this study. This consisted of 20 items and the questionnaire identifies the respondent's health compromising and risky behaviors such as risky driving, movie habits, negative thoughts, unhealthy eating habit, academic stress/tension, relationship problem, safety habits and indulgence behaviours. Responses were on a four-point scale (Always, Sometimes, Occasionally and Not at all). Positive items were reverse scored. Thus, higher scores represented a lesser frequency of risky behaviours.

The Chronbach α of the questionnaire was 0.76 and factorial validity was also established, using principle component analysis. This resulted in eight factors namely Indulgence behavior, Risky driving, Movie habits, Negative thoughts, Unhealthy eating habits, Academic stress/tension, Relationship problems and Safety habits.

In addition, the psychological wellbeing score was obtained using 13 items which had psychological functional parameters. The Chronbach α of the psychological wellbeing questionnaire was 0.81. The physical wellbeing scores using 9 items which incorporated the physiological functional status. The Chronbach α of the physical wellbeing questionnaire was 0.66.

The data collected was analyzed using 13th version of SPSS. Analysis involved the significance of Mean, Regression and Factor analysis.

RESULTS

The mean age of the sample was 21.89 years (SD=3.56). This represented 46.8% of males and 53.2% of females. Among these 89.8% were unmarried and 8.5% were married. The distribution of educational qualification of the sample indicated 24.6% of Under Graduates, 24.4% doing their Professional courses, 19.4% being Post Graduates. Majority of the participants were Hindus (82.0%). 76.9% respondents reported absence of any health issues. Among this 368 were yoga practitioners and 502 were non practitioners of yoga.

Lifestyle and Yoga Practice:

The major objective of the study was to look into the role of yoga practice and its relation to lifestyle practices. Independent ‘t’ test was computed to analyze the significance of mean difference.

Table-1: Showing the Mean, SD, and its Significance on Lifestyle for Yoga and Non-Yoga Group

Variables	Non-yoga practitioners		Yoga practitioners		t	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Sleep Quality	9.66	2.75	10.89	2.70	6.18	.00
Substance Usage	7.25	2.18	7.88	1.59	4.35	.00
Eating Habit	20.66	4.84	24.93	5.10	11.79	.00
Exercise Behavior	5.65	2.49	7.88	2.47	12.26	.00
Stress Management	13.15	3.73	15.91	3.88	9.96	.00
Recreational Involvement	9.14	3.30	12.47	3.17	13.99	.00
Health Behavior	37.68	8.06	43.24	7.56	9.79	.00

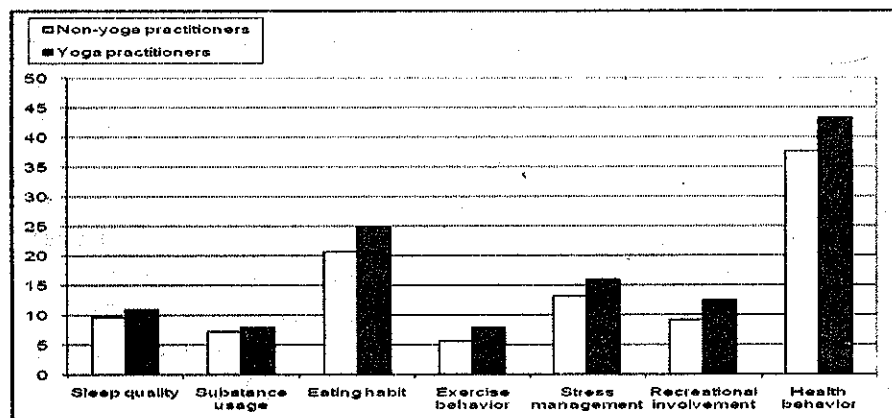


Figure-1: Showing the Lifestyle Practices of Yoga and Non-Yoga Group

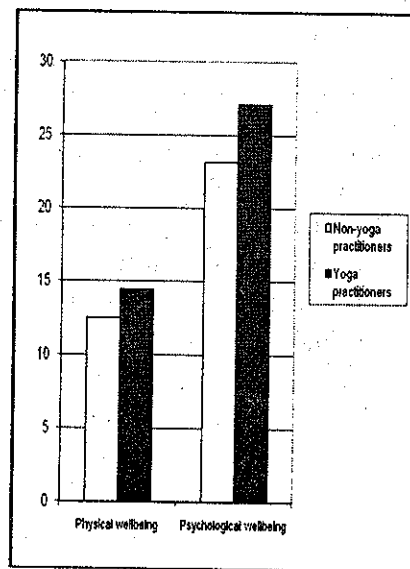
Examination of the results reveals that yoga practitioners have significantly better sleep quality, healthier eating pattern, stress

management ability, recreational involvement, ability to exercise and in general, a healthy behavior pattern. They have also shown a higher score on substance usage indicating that they use less of tobacco and alcoholic beverages. This finding confirms that yoga practice is a holistic practice

Table-2: Showing the Mean, SD, and its Significance for Psychophysical Wellbeing Status of Yoga and Non-Yoga Groups

Variables	Non-yoga practitioners		Yoga practitioners		t-value	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Physical Wellbeing	12.51	2.64	14.46	2.23	10.74	.00
Psychological Wellbeing	23.11	4.03	27.10	4.66	12.69	.00

Figure-2: Showing the Physical and Psychological Wellbeing of Yoga and Non-Yoga Group



which influences many aspects of life such as sleep, eating (Tuner & Tuner, 2010), stress management (Kauts & Sharma, 2009; Ramadoss & Bose, 2010) and many other disciplines. The findings of the study are in line with Tuner and Tuner (2010) research which found that more yoga practitioners reported maintaining fitness by exercising regularly, conscious of eating and are more active.

The psycho-physiological wellbeing of the yoga practitioner is significantly higher than the non-yoga practitioner youth in this study. The findings confirm the research evidence on yoga which supports that

yoga enhances physical fitness, emotional wellbeing and self-confidence (Lisa, Peterson, Fischer and Peterson, 2010).

This also confirms the report of IAYT (2010; 11) stating an increase in somatic and kinesthetic awareness, subjective wellbeing, self-acceptance, reduced anxiety, depression and hostility.

Predictors of Lifestyle:

Second objective of the study was to understand the lifestyle predictors of the physical wellbeing of the youth. Fourteen lifestyle practices were entered as independents simultaneously with physical functional status as dependent variable.

Table-3: Showing the Summary of Regression Analysis with Physical Functional Status as Dependent and its Significant Predictors

Predictor	Constant	R ²	Beta	't'	Sig.
Sleep Quality	5.57	.40	.40	11.73	.00
Substance Usage			-.07	2.05	.04
Exercise Behavior			.14	3.93	.00
Stress Management			.19	4.93	.00
Indulgent Behavior			.09	2.40	.02

All the fourteen dimensions of the lifestyle practices namely-sleep quality, substance usage, eating behavior, exercise behavior, stress management ability, recreational involvement, indulgent behavior, risky driving, movie habits, bothering thoughts, unhealthy eating habits, academic stress, relationship problems and safety habits were entered as independents. Five lifestyle factors were found to correlate significantly with the physical wellbeing score, in the regression analysis. These lifestyle practices together contributed to 40% of the variance in the physical wellbeing of the individual. The result revealed sleep quality (β .40, $p < 0.01$), non-usage of substance (β -.07, $p < 0.05$), exercise behavior (β .14, $p < 0.01$), stress management (β .19, $p < 0.01$) and control of indulgence behavior (β .09, $p < 0.05$) to be the significant predictors of

Table-4: Showing the Summary of Regression Analysis with Psychological Functional Status as Dependent and its Significant Predictors

Predictor	Constant	R ²	Beta	't'	Sig.
Sleep quality	10.29	.37	.18	5.08	.00
Eating behavior			.10	2.57	.01
Exercise behavior			.18	5.05	.00
Stress management			.18	4.64	.00
Recreational involvement			.07	2.02	.04
Bothering thoughts			.18	5.18	.00
Unhealthy eating			-.08	2.28	.02
Academic stress			.12	3.60	.00

physical wellbeing. In the same way the predictors of psychological wellbeing of the youth was also analyzed.

In this regression analysis, sleep quality, substance usage, eating behavior, exercise behavior, stress management, recreational involvement, indulgent behavior, risky driving, movie habits, bothering thoughts, unhealthy eating habits, academic stress, relationship problems and safety habits were entered together as predictors with psychological wellbeing of the youth as dependents variable. Eight of the lifestyle factors contributed to 37% of the variance in the dependent variable. Sleep quality (β .18, $p < 0.01$), eating behavior (β .10, $p < 0.01$), exercise behavior (β .18, $p < 0.01$), stress management (β .18, $p < 0.01$), recreational involvement (β .07, $p < 0.05$), bothering thought (β .18, $p < 0.01$), unhealthy eating behavior (β -.08, $p < 0.05$), and academic stress (β .12, $p < 0.01$) emerged as significant predictors of the psychological wellbeing.

Lifestyle Factors Validation:

Factor analysis was used to reduce the number of lifestyle parameters into few sets of factors after examining the correlation matrix of the key variables. The key practices considered were *Sleep quality, substance usage, Healthy eating pattern, exercise frequency, ability to moderate stress, recreational involvement, perceived academic stress, indulgence behavior, bothering thoughts, and risky practices.*

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.828
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1733.488
	df	66
	Sig.	.000

Kaiser-meyer-olkin measure assessing the sampling adequacy is 0.82 is much higher than the needed (0.60) and Bartlett's test of sphericity indicate that the variables in the study are significantly correlated and thus indicating an underlying factor structure to be explored.

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Using principal axis Factor procedures with an orthogonal rotation a two-factor solution was obtained explaining 31.96 % of total variance. The first factor explaining largest variance of 29% and the second factor contributing 13%.

Table 5: Showing the Summary of Factor Analysis of Key Variables of the Study

Factor	Initial Eigen Values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	1	3.517	29.305	29.305	2.892	24.104
2	1.611	13.422	42.727	.944	7.863	31.967

The following table provides the simple structure of lifestyle habits which load on the factors. Examining the results, the factor-I is loaded high with ability to manage stress (.752), adequate exercise habits (.590), adequate eating pattern (.564), sleep quality (.446), ability to be involved in recreational activity (.379) and manage academic stress (.355). This was termed as **Protective Lifestyle Pattern**.

The factor II loaded on risky driving (.578), substance usage (.552), indulgent behavior (.539), relationship problems (.517) and

Table 6: Showing the Rotated Factor Matrix

	Factor	
	1	2
Stress Management	.752	.137
Exercise Behavior	.590	.051
Eating Habits	.564	.446
Sleep Quality	.446	.287
Recreational Involvement	.379	.139
Academic Stress	.355	.310
Safety Habits	.273	-.123
Risky Driving	-.044	.578
Substance Usage	-.007	.552
Indulgent Behaviour	.341	.539
Relationship Issues	.158	.517
Bothering Thoughts	.191	.501

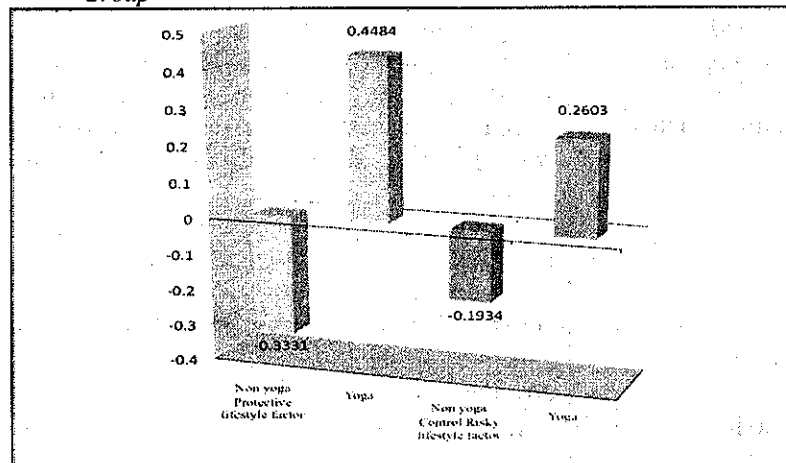
bothering thoughts (.501). The higher scores indicate a less likely frequency of the behavior and thus this factor was termed as **Control on Risky lifestyle Pattern**.

The finding of the study confirm the theoretical hypothesis that lifestyle factors involve protective, health enhancing practices and there are also compromising habits which may exist as other constellation

The lifestyle pattern is best interpreted when the scores are validated against the criteria group that is yoga practitioners and non-practitioners based on the factor scores of the two groups and the significance of difference of the mean factor scores.

Table 7: Showing the Factor Scoring of Protective Lifestyle Factors and Control/Risky Lifestyle Factors of Yoga Group and Non-Yoga Group

Factors	Group	Mean Factor score	SD	t-value
Protective Lifestyle Factor	Non yoga	-.3331	.73	13.67**
	Yoga	.4484	.80	
Control Risky Lifestyle Factor	Non yoga	-.1934	.90	7.59**
	Yoga	.2603	.64	

Figure 3: Protective and Control/Risky Lifestyle Factors of Yoga and Non-Yoga Group

The scoring on questionnaires were made positive and uni-directional. Thus a higher score indicate a stronger frequency of healthy practices. The non-yoga group of youth is found to be lower on the protective pattern of lifestyle habits and also lower on discipline or control over risky pattern of behaviours and thoughts. On the other hand yoga group is relatively better in adhering to protective lifestyle pattern and are also positioned better in controlling or disciplining themselves in reducing from risky behaviours.

This study being an exploratory survey suggests a possibility of yoga as a major solution in achieving behavior and emotional control in strengthening a positive health oriented lifestyle among youth.

Qualitative data analysis:

All the yoga subjects in the study were asked to provide response to a question stated "Brief explanation of Physical and Mental Health Status due to yoga" and to non yoga group a "Brief account of Physical and Mental Health Status". The responses were content analysed by two judges by coding the responses into themes independently. Non-response

was 298 in non-yoga group and 187 in yoga group. Later the coders discussed the coded themes and arrived at 89% concurrence on themes identified by the raters for the yoga group and 98% of concurrence on themes related to non-yoga group.

The following major themes were identified by both the raters while analyzing the yoga practitioners' responses.

Table 8: Content of Qualitative Analysis of Yoga Group

Major themes	Sub themes
Improved physical wellbeing and functional status	Stamina, flexibility, symptom relief, pain reduction, breath comfort, immunity, lightness, freshness at the body level
Improved psychological wellbeing and functional status	Subjective wellbeing characterized by energy, relaxation, positive mood and affect. Emotional and feeling oriented status such as calmness, mental peace, anger control, self control, reduced restlessness, feeling fresh, confidence, self awareness and stress relief. Cognitive changes characterized by ability to concentrate, focus, academic interest-involvement, memory, thought regulation and ability to make decisions, cognitive attitudes perceived increase in clarity, acceptance and positive attitudes.
Lifestyle related changes	Enhanced sleep quality and regulation in food habits.

The following themes were identified by the raters while analyzing the responses of youth who do not incorporate yoga in their practice.

Table 9: Content of Qualitative Analysis of Non-Yoga Group

Major themes	Sub themes
Perception of positive states of health	Feel healthy, physical and mental fitness.
Stress and disturbed mental wellbeing	Experience of stress, tension, agitation, emotional instability, tension and depression.
Specific symptoms reports	Tiredness both at physical and mental level, aches and pain, obesity and a vague senses of not feeling fit.

The themes of the yoga group indicate a wider level of awareness of the participants of their own physical health and functional

status. The practice of yoga is a process of self-awareness and self-regulation and thus provides rich insights to practitioners about their own body and mind.

Increased level of physical quality of life is reported where respondents experience stamina, flexibility and energy level.

DISCUSSION

Research has focused on identifying the lifestyle and health related problems of adult sample. Currently many physical and mental health issues afflict the younger generation with the early onset of problems have propelled the health care professionals to look at possible factors and lifestyles and behaviour patterns as major source of problems as well as the corrective measures. The study on a cross section of youth reinstates clearly, the multi dimensionality of lifestyle. Sense of wellbeing is ultimately a lifestyle pattern or process. This study do not establish a causal link, however presents the potential problems or issues which have to be addressed in public health domain.

The practice of yoga is positively present in at least 37.8% of the youth. There is a gaining importance of this regimen among younger generation. Yoga practitioners have a more positive lifestyle indicators than the non-practitioners. The fact that yoga itself is a lifestyle activity is clearly substantiated in this study.

The finding here underscores the point that yoga practitioners are more likely move towards adhering to stress releasing activities, take steps to practice physical postures and other physical activities. They are more likely to be careful about their eating quality, quantity, sleep and recreations. Thus yoga adherence is a major lifestyle strategy which addresses many aspects of life and even a single regimen is likely to alter the other habits. The results also indicate that they are less likely to be affected by bothering thoughts or impulsive or risky behaviours. This is an important **mental maturity factor** which ensures not only physical but also mental control and discipline.

Having an adequate sleep pattern, eating habits, regularly exercising, being aware of and managing stress and also regulating many impulsive and indulgence are associated with physical and psychological functional quality in the youth. And these behaviours are likely to be more dominant in the group of yoga practitioners and thus suggest it to be a facilitative factor in correcting and maintaining many healthy and positive practices.

Yoga as a way of life promotes and incorporates many disciplines and thus nurturing a positive lifestyle. There is however, a need to look for the prospectively, how these patterns are maintained and possibility of long term outcomes of such a healthy lifestyle on physical health, mental health and overall quality of life.

Conclusion:

Self reported physical and psychological wellbeing among youth is significantly predicted by sleep quality, exercise behaviour, eating pattern and lower level of behavioural indulgence and impulsivity.

Practice of yoga is associated with healthier lifestyle practices and physical and psycho-psychological wellbeing among youth.

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