

Health Consciousness and Health Knowledge among Yoga Enthusiasts during COVID-19 Pandemic 2020: A Qualitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Coronavirus pandemic has threatened the lives of people in many ways. It has also created health-related awareness among people. The present study focused on health consciousness and health knowledge among yoga enthusiasts during this pandemic. This exploratory study used convenient sampling to collect data from 60 participants. The results reveal that yoga aspirants are highly conscious about their health. They identify health consciousness and healthy life with physical fitness, nutritious food, stress-free life situation and safety from hazards. The interpersonal network of friends and family members, media channels, and reading blogs are the three medium from which they seek health information. Only a very few participants stated that they joined yoga practices due to the pandemic. However, they fully believe that the coronavirus pandemic has changed their health concept, and they have made radical changes in their lifestyle.

Keywords: COVID-19 and health, Health and yoga, Health consciousness, Health knowledge, Health consciousness and yoga

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 pandemic has become a global phenomenon that threatens the regular life of every individual all over the world. When people are threatened by uncertainty and, the fear of sickness increases, worry and stress develops as a response. Besides the economic burdens and fear of job-related anxiety, people are equally worried about their health. Herd

immunity or vaccine - is the question that lingers in the mind of every person when thinking about the pandemic. The very fact that the immunity of the body is the best prevention against this virus, lifestyle change is the best security option available today. This situation leads people to have an increased health consciousness, desire to know more about health concerns. Though the mandatory requirement to stay at home resulted in reduced outside games and exercise, WHO encourages people of different age to have home-related exercises in its recommendations to increase physical and mental health (WHO, 2020). Yoga in India is an easy solution to many people in this pandemic to provide physical and psychological health.

Health consciousness: Health consciousness is a crucial psychological variable today to understand many health-related behaviours. Health consciousness refers to the level to which an individual is likely to carry out actions related to health (Becker, et al, 1977). Jayanti and Burns (1998) define health consciousness as the degree to which health concerns are integrated into a person's daily activities. An individual's level of health consciousness is closely related to how he or she seeks and responds to health information (Iversen & Kraft, 2006; Basu & Dutta, 2008). Individuals' health consciousness is essential in planning health interventions.

Health consciousness is a psychological or inner status of a person that motivates a person for action (Gould, 1988). Research findings suggest that people with increased health-consciousness are more likely to involve in health-related activities and are healthier; also, people's health consciousness is often identified with food and physical activities (Divine & Lepisto, 2005). These involve healthy food, a sound living environment and excellent practices. Depending upon the individual difference, personality profile, nature, and availability of possible resources, health consciousness and health-seeking behaviour take different dimensions. Generally, it is focused on increased personal concerns and care towards health, seeking health-related information and involvement in healthy activities (Gould, 1988). Health consciousness further predicts a variety of health attitudes and behaviours (Gould, 1990). Understanding health consciousness also determines the sources of health information the person seeks; also, it aids in proposing right, suitable health interventions.

Perceived Knowledge: Knowledge of healthy behaviour is another important factor that often interacts with health consciousness. People who are open to new ideas seek knowledge on health and the related healthy behaviour styles from newspapers, magazines, Internet, and interpersonal networks (e.g., family, friends) and other mass media. Since people's existing knowledge is often challenged by the new information they receive, this knowledge leads to change in belief too (Bonanno, 2002). It is correct to say that once an individual gets health consciousness, there is a chance for the person to seek more and more health-related information and learning using communication channels (Dutta-Bergman, 2007). Therefore, health consciousness, the related perceived awareness through knowledge play a vital role in the behaviour and action of people. Dutta-Bergman (2005)

also identifies health consciousness as a positive predictor of a person's search for knowledge on health information.

Yoga and meditation: Yoga, an Indian way of modulating and disciplining mind and body, is a combination of breathing exercises, and physical postures, roots back to ancient philosophy over 5,000 years. There is no single style of yoga that is practised or propagated in India. However, all forms of yoga advocate in their way, insist on some common elements with their philosophy, on physical postures, exercises, breathing practices, relaxation techniques, and meditation that lead to higher states of consciousness, physical and mental happiness. Since it is a part of the Indian way of life and living, people in India adhere to these exercises in many forms, often integrated into their lifestyles, either learning systematically or by mere self-practice. It is not only in India, but also globally practice yoga as a means of enhancing health and fitness.

Although people attribute all lot of benefits of yoga to various sickness, clinical trials show some evidence-based results in stress, depression, and many physical fitness-related ailments (Büssing, et al, 2012). A lot of physical and mental health benefits are attributed to this simple breathing exercise and bodily postures (Yatendra, 2019; Muthanna, 2015). The results of yoga as a relaxation technique is a proven fact. United Nations welfare tips for UN Personnel, in response to COVID-19 pandemic, recommends yoga and meditation as a means of psychological well-being (UN, 2020). According to yoga guru Borra Kaleswara, 'pranayama, the breathing exercise improves the functioning of lungs and helps to pump of oxygen-rich blood to all cells of the body' and therefore it is a good fight against the coronavirus that damage the respiratory system (Rao, 2020).

Objectives: This study is focused on the health consciousness and health knowledge of yoga students during the 2020 COVID-19

pandemic. Specifically, the study focused on the following three questions:

- i) What is the concept of health consciousness among yoga aspirants?
- ii) What are the channels through which yoga students receive knowledge on health-related concerns?
- iii) In what way the COVID pandemic affected the health consciousness of people to imitate yoga practices

METHODS

This qualitative study is exploratory in nature. The data was collected using the survey method. Using a convenient sampling method authors collected data from 60 yoga enthusiasts who practice yoga regularly, from Gujarat, Karnataka, and

Uttar Pradesh states of India. The authors used a purposive sampling method to collect data from those who learn and practice yoga in a centre or taught by some freelancers. In Google form, the authors formulated a 29-item survey questionnaire for this study, which focused on the three research questions. The questionnaire had a few questions on demographic details too. By using qualitative data analysis methods, the answers were categorised based on the research questions.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The first two tables describe the demographic details like age, sex, marital status, employment, and economic condition of the subjects.

Table 1: Demographic details of subjects

Gender		Marital Status		Age	
Male	33.3%	Married	46.7%	18-20	3.3%
				21-22	10%
Female	66.7%	Single	48.3%	23-25	28.3 %
				26-30	10%
		In a relationship	5.0%	31-40	20 %
				40 above	28.3%

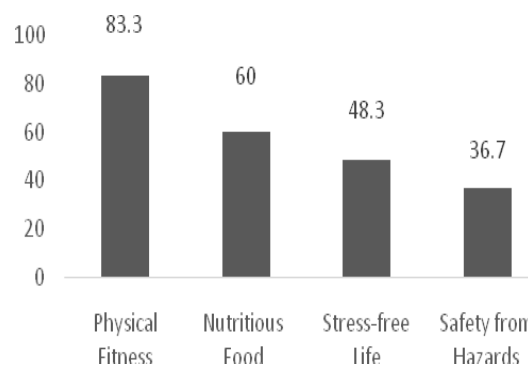
As the table shows, 66.7% of the subjects were female, 33.3% are males. Married and single participants were somewhat equal in number. Majority of the participants were below 30 years of age; 48% were above 30 years of age. Most of the participants were either self-employed, working or doing business, 25% of the subjects were housewives and 25% were students and a few were retired or unemployed. There were also a few yoga teachers who participated in the survey. Majority of the participants reported that they belong to the middle class economically.

Table 2: Demographic details of subjects

Employment		Economic Status	
Employed	36.6%	Lower M Class	3.3%
Housewife	25%	Middle class	60%
Yoga Teachers	5.1%	Upper middle	36.7%
Student	25%		
Unemployed	8.3%		

Almost all the participants are highly conscious about health (96%) and 91.7%, are concerned about their health in all their activities. 75% strongly agree in life without

disease is healthy. All the participants categorically accept that they are responsible for their health, 96.7% of the participants believe that health is a personal responsibility of each person, and 58.3% strongly believe that health depends upon the way we take care of ourselves. When they think about health consciousness, they consider four elements. They are physical fitness, nutritious food, stress-free life, and safety from hazards. The following graph shows that concept of health factors in per cent.



Graph 1: Showing the Concept of health

Since they consider physical fitness, nutritious food, stress-free life, and safety from hazards as their concept of a healthy life, they give high priority to a healthy lifestyle as a means of achieving health.

The top three ways of receiving knowledge on health-related matters are: from an interpersonal network of friends and family members, media channels and reading blogs. Except for 11.7% of the participants, all others seek health information and enrich their knowledge. 35% of the people read health-related information daily. 91.7% of the subjects believe that health information seeking lead them to health promotion. Even though they seek health information, 45% say that they never involved in any health promotion activities, 33.3% would participate in the future if they get an opportunity. Currently 21.7% of the participants involved in health promotion activities. These numbers show that the knowledge they seek lead them to their health consciousness, not necessarily lead them to health promotion activities, even though they attribute the health-related information to health promotion. Still, 71.7% personally provided health information to their friends and others, and 21.7% are ready to provide information to others.

As per the reasons for practising yoga, more than half of the participants (53.3%) revealed that they do it out of personal interest and they are self-motivated. Besides this, the other main reasons identified are, for peace of mind (40%) and as exercise (10%). 8.3% of the participants expressed that they joined yoga practices due to the pandemic.

Almost all the participants (93.3%) believe that doing yoga gives them better health and wellbeing and 95% encourage their friends to join yoga and other similar activities. 70% of the subject expressed that COVID-19 pandemic has increased health awareness in them. 90% of the participants believe (50% strongly believe and 40 believe) that health awareness intensified among the public due to this pandemic. A

vast majority of the subjects (85%) have taken significant steps to improve their health in the COVID-19 Pandemic period. The main changes adopted in their lifestyle are doing exercise, practising yoga, eating nutritious food, increasing herbal products in food and drinks, regular multivitamin intake, avoiding junk food, taking ayurvedic products and similar products. Some participants even believe that doing yoga gave better immunity during this pandemic because even though they came across many COVID infected persons they are not infected by the virus. They also believe that it is more than an exercise, is a therapy that every corporate people should practice in relieving stress.

CONCLUSION

The study focused on three elements, mainly, health consciousness and health knowledge of those who practice yoga in small yoga centres and how they perceive yoga with the current pandemic. The yoga aspirants are highly conscious about their health. They identify health consciousness and healthy life with physical fitness, nutritious food, stress-free life situation and safety from hazards. The three medium from which they seek health information are: an interpersonal network of friends and family members, media channels and reading blogs. They passionately believe that this knowledge leads to health promotion, and most of them give health-related advice to their friends. However, they do not involve any conscious health promotion activities. Although most of them do not read health-related information daily, a vast majority do it occasionally and whenever they get an opportunity. Only a very few participants stated that they joined yoga practices due to the pandemic, they fully believe that the coronavirus pandemic has changed their health concept that made radical changes in their lifestyle. A similar study could be conducted on different sectors of people to know the changes they have made in their lifestyle for healthy living.

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