



The Effect of Yoga on Organizational Happiness of Female Employees of Islamic Azad University, Tehran Medical Sciences Branch

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Abstract

Background & Aims: The present study was carried out to assess the effect of yoga on organizational happiness in female employees of the Tehran Islamic Azad University-Tehran Medical Sciences.

Materials and Methods: This randomized study was conducted in Tehran on 40 female employees in 2019. The volunteers were randomly assigned to two control and exercise groups. The exercise group (20 people) performed two sessions of yoga exercises every week for 12 weeks. The control group (20 people) only performed daily activities. After 12 weeks of training, the data was collected in both groups using the Hills and Argyle Standard Happiness Questionnaire (2002), which included 25 questions and 5 components. A group of expert faculty members confirmed the face and content validity of the instrument. Also, reliability was reported as 0.73 through Cronbach's alpha test. Data were analyzed using independent t-tests and paired-sample t tests.

Results: Findings demonstrated that yoga had significant effects on the organizational happiness of female employees of the Tehran Azad University of Medical Sciences ($P < 0.001$).

Conclusion: Considering the findings, it can be concluded that yoga can promote the physical health and happiness of female personnel.

Keywords: Yoga, Organizations, Happiness, Women

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1. Introduction

Today, the importance of the human factor and its singular role as a strategic resource and designer and implementer of organizational systems and processes has been promoted to the degree that in advanced organizational thinking, human resources are considered the most important resource and asset of an organization. In this regard, today, organizations strive for their organization and reputation through elite human resources in the global arena to achieve rapid growth, efficiency, profitability, flexibility, adaptiveness, and preparedness for the future and attain a privileged position in their field of activity. Without these qualities, it would be truly impossible for organizations to perform competitively and efficiently against the highest standards [1]. In the contemporary world, human resources are of the utmost importance, and even the most renowned economists believe that human resources can stimulate economic and social development, and the main focus of organizations and administrations is to ensure that their human resources attend their workplace healthy, motivated, and content. Exercise and sports activities are considered the main strategies for maintaining such a workforce [2].

As an intervention, exercise can promote the health

and well-being of society [3], and its development is of essential importance for any society. The promotion of physical activity is one of the most important and effective strategies for minimizing the risk of some diseases, decreasing social deviations, and enhancing joy and cheerfulness. In fact, exercise, as a main component of education, has a unique and determining role, and its different effects on society are obvious [4]. Therefore, some believe that they should reduce employees' working hours and encourage exercise for their health, happiness, and joy, and in this regard, many lifestyles need to be altered and improved so that some sessions in the week should be devoted to sports activities [5]. This process and social strategy have led to the promotion of interest in the creation, development, and compilation of more professional information about the various effects of physical activity and exercise on the fitness and health of individuals [6]. In contrast, a sedentary lifestyle can lead to the development of different diseases, inactivity, and shortness of life, and any alternation in this, as a cause-effect cycle, can lead to positive or negative consequences. Urban lifestyle, although facilitated some aspects of life, has posed irreversible risks to societies today. Activity and physical exercise, one of the main needs of humans every



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day, are fading, and physical and behavioral risks have increased [7]. Physical activity can be integrated into lives of the society and particularly employees during daily life. Although several studies on the effects of sports on the physical and spiritual health of employees have been conducted, there is limited evidence on yoga and its effect on organizational happiness. In this regard, Seifpanahi Shabani and Parvandi have recommended that for the promotion of the function of the employees, aerobic exercises should be regularly performed [8]. Alawi et al demonstrated that physical activity can promote the general health of employees. Therefore, it can be asserted that through exercise and sport, the enhanced capacity of employees against mental stress in the workplace can guarantee their general health [9]. The results of the studies of Fawaraq and Arzani Biryani demonstrated that sports activities are considered the main causes of happiness and have a positive and significant relationship with joy, self-esteem, positive mood, self-confidence, satisfaction with life, and mental health [10]. The results of the studies by Kim and colleagues demonstrated that participation in sports activities promotes happiness among the elderly, and since they are the social assets of any country, the activities that promote their happiness should be encouraged and among them, sports and physical activity should be a priority for all older individuals [11]. Moreover, Kim and James investigated the role of exercise in happiness and concluded that both in the short term and in the long term, exercise can promote happiness. They also found that exercise can improve health and well-being [12].

Since exercise and physical activity can influence the performance and productivity of employees and the organization [13], it can be concluded that since the happiness of employees may be different in different cultures, cheerful employees bring happiness from the workplace to their homes and from home to the workplace. This indicates that there is a very close relationship between people's work and life.

The advantages of happiness can be classified into three levels at any organization: 1) organization: increased productivity indicators, improved decision-making capacity, reduced absenteeism, and employee sick leave, and increased energy of cheerful people to work, 2) managers: variables of supervising a competitive task, fulfillment of the organization mission statement, public appreciation, improvement of supervision and leadership values 3) employees: variables of emotional intelligence, happiness at home, increased concentration and passion at work [14]. On the other hand, Chaiprasit and Santidhiraku described the five following factors for happiness at work: 1) work passion, 2) shared organizational value, 3) communication, 4) quality of work life, and 5) leadership [15]. Similarly, Malekzadeh and Rahnama considered four factors as indicators of happiness: 1) employment

status, 2) income, 3) friendship with colleagues, and 4) work duties [16]. However, nowadays, in organizations, in addition to the mentioned ones, other factors such as physical activity are known to promote organizational happiness. Therefore, it can be asserted that cheerful employees can have more organizational motivation and commitment, which in turn, enhances the organization's productivity [17]. Moreover, as physical activities and sports are considered an undeniable necessity in the current situations in different societies of the world, and due to the advancement of technology and consequent sedentary lifestyle, the need to dedicate some hours to physical activity is widely accepted [18]. On the other hand, yoga is employed as an exercise to improve physical, mental, and social health and enhance the conception of health. This is because yoga connects the mind and body, and its ultimate goal is to balance both as a life philosophy. Moreover, to maximize the performance of their employees, organizations aim to establish a balance between their work and life, and in this regard, the provision of a balance between their mind and body can be of great importance. Therefore, as exercise can promote positive emotions in employees and reduce negative ones, which leads to the improvement of the performance of employees, the main question of the current research is whether yoga exercises can promote organizational happiness at the Azad University of Medical Sciences female employees.

2. Materials and Methods

This randomized study was conducted in the form of pre-test and post-test on female employees of Tehran Islamic Azad University of Medical Sciences in the fall of 2019.

The study population consisted of all the female employees of Tehran Islamic Azad University of Medical Sciences who were selected through the available sampling method among the volunteers. The sample size was estimated to be 40 people, and among eligible volunteers, 40 women were selected as the study population and were divided into two training and control groups. The inclusion criteria included: completing an informed consent form, being in perfect health (based on the medical records), not having any neurological or psychological diseases, having no hypertension, not being a smoker, not using certain drugs, and having a sedentary lifestyle (having no regular sports activities in the past six months before the study and having less than one session of physical training in a week.

Also, among the exclusion criteria, the following can be mentioned: not participating in 3 consecutive training sessions or 4 alternating sessions, injury during the training sessions, and refusal from participation in the study. All 40 subjects had continuous participation for twelve weeks and complied with all conditions. Before the initiation of the training protocol, a briefing session was

held with the presence of the researcher to familiarize the subjects with the research methods, allocate them to the training groups, explain the day and time of the training sessions, and other necessary briefings. In this session, the subjects were asked to refrain from any other physical and sports activities or participating in competitions during the study period. Moreover, the subjects were briefed to follow further recommendations of the yoga instructor to control and eliminate the effect of confounders on the outcomes. Subsequently, personal information forms were completed, which included age, education level, duration of employment, and medical records, and a written informed consent form for participation in the training sessions were completed. Moreover, the subjects who were to practice yoga exercises (experimental group) were required to participate in the sessions, which were to be held for twelve weeks, two sessions per week, and each session was about one hour. In this study, subjects performed selected yoga exercises and asanas in three levels: 1) beginner level (first and the second week), intermediate level (third to the seventh week), and 3) advanced level (8th to the 12th week).

The exercises were selected based on the instructions of an experienced yoga tutor about the research variable, which included:

- The principles of the exercises, correct sitting, and standing postures sleeping on the back and stomach for yoga exercises understanding the correct postures of the body during the exercises and daily life and having insight about incorrect postures in daily activities.
- Yoga stretching movements and Pawan Mukta Asanas, which are a set of movements for circulation of the synovial fluid and relieving joint stiffness.
- Strength, endurance, and yoga balance exercises as activities
- Dynamic yoga exercises for integration

The duration of the classes was 3 months (12 weeks) and each week included 2 yoga sessions. The duration of each session was 60 minutes. Sessions were held on Saturdays and Tuesdays from 16:00 to 17:00. People were asked to attend class in comfortable clothes. Exercises were performed at three levels: beginner, intermediate and advanced. The training program was based on the Hatha Yoga method and included: Shraavana (body release exercises), Asanas (physical movements), Pranayama (breathing exercises), relaxation, and Yoga Nidra. Before the commencement of the main exercises, 15 minutes was dedicated to relaxing the body and loosening cramps and contractions, stretching movements, and general body warm-ups. Then 30 minutes of main asanas (physical movements) and pranayama (breathing exercises) were performed. In the end, there was a 5-minute cooling down time to return the body to its physiological state, followed by 10 minutes of relaxation or yoga Nidra for

relaxing the mind and muscles. During Yoga Nidra, the subjects were asked to repeat a sentence to themselves 3 times: "I have a healthy and strong body and a tranquil mind".

2.1. Yoga Nidra

An exercise in lying on the back position which causes deeper relaxation and tranquility.

Yoga exercises are usually performed in standing, sitting, and lying positions. Therefore, before the first session, the correct postures of standing, sitting, and sleeping was explained.

In this research, ethical considerations included: 1) the present research was conducted with the technical and staff support of Nova Scientific Yoga Institute, 2) the subjects participated in the study willingly with their consent, 3) all stages and practice levels were fully explained 4) The participants were assured about the confidentiality of information including names, demographic information, and evaluation results, 5) participation did not involve any costs. To collect data, Hills and Argyle's standard happiness questionnaire, which included 25 questions and 5 components, was used [19]. After receiving the opinions of the experts (10 sports management faculties) about the face and content validity of the questionnaire and necessary amendments, a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale (completely disagree to completely agree) was prepared. Moreover, in a preliminary study using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the reliability of the questionnaire was estimated at 0.73. Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the data. Shapiro-Wilk test was used to assess the normality of the questionnaires. Data were analyzed using independent *t* test. The SPSS software version 25 and Excel software version 10 were used for data analyses.

3. Results

The results of the descriptive analyses showed that among 40 people in the statistical sample, the age range of 10 people (0.25%) was 36 to 40 years old, 20 people (0.50%) were between 41 to 45 years old, and 10 people (0.25%) were between 46 to 50 years old. The educational level of 6 people (16.0%) was a pre-bachelor degree, 16 people had a bachelor's degree (40.0%), and 18 had master's degrees. The duration of employment of 24 participants was less than 10 years (60.0%), 11 persons (27.5%) 10 to 20 years, and 5 individuals (12.5%) were more than 25 years. [Table 1](#) demonstrates that the distribution of the organizational happiness variables was normal because the probability of error or significance (*P*) was greater than the error level of 0.05. The data tabulated in [Table 1](#) indicates that the average effect of yoga exercises on the organizational happiness of female employees of Tehran Islamic Azad University of Medical Sciences in the pre-test in the control group was (1.8000 ± 0.767) and in the

experimental group was (2.1000 ± 0.718) .

The independent *t*-test of the effects of yoga exercises on organizational happiness in the pre-test of the research groups demonstrated that the level of significance was greater than 0.05 (*P* value=0.465 and *t*=-1.276). Therefore, there was no significant difference between the control and experimental groups in terms of the effects of yoga exercises on organizational happiness in the pre-test of the research groups (Table 2).

The results of the *t* test for dependent groups demonstrated that there was no significant difference between the average effects of yoga exercise on organizational happiness in the control group (*P* value=0.379 and *t*=-0.900). However, the average effects of yoga exercises on organizational happiness in the experimental group were significant (*P* value=0.001 and *t*=-9.195); therefore, the mean effects of yoga exercises on organizational happiness in the post-test of the experimental group increased significantly compared to the pre-test time (Table 3).

Table 4 demonstrates that the average post-test effect of yoga exercises on organizational happiness in the control group was (1.9500 ± 0.604) and in the experimental group was (5.0000 ± 0.858) . As Figure 1 reveals the average of it was significantly more in experimental group rather than control one.

The results of the independent *t* test analysis of yoga exercises on the organizational happiness of female employees of Tehran Islamic Azad University of Medical Sciences in the post-test of the research groups showed that the significance level was less than 0.05 (*P* value=0.001 and *t*=12.990). Therefore, there was a significant difference between the control and experimental groups in terms of the effects of yoga exercises on the organizational happiness of female employees of Tehran Islamic Azad University of Medical Sciences in the post-test of the research groups and the average effect of yoga exercises on the organizational happiness of female employees of Tehran Islamic Azad University of Medical Sciences was higher in the experimental group compared to the control group (Table 5).

4. Discussion

Today, the rampant use of machines in most activities,

both in the workplace and at home, has dramatically decreased physical activity levels [20].

Therefore, the work style is mainly mental and intellectual, the physical aspect of life and physical activity have alarmingly decreased, and people may sit at their desks for hours and only use two eyesight and touch senses to carry out their daily activities, and do not have any particular physical activity [13].

This per se can lead to many diseases, such as chronic muscle pains, and significantly decreases the concentration and performance of employees with huge direct economic impacts and a significant decrease in their livelihoods. As a result, productivity in offices and organizations decreases [21]. But management standards require that employees have good morale so that they can increase their work efficiency and present in the workplace cheerfully and with enthusiasm in work and professional activities [22]. Therefore, this research investigated the effect of yoga exercises on the organizational happiness of female employees of Azad Islamic University of Medical Sciences in Tehran.

The findings of the study demonstrated that yoga exercises have a significant effect on the organizational happiness of female employees of Tehran Islamic Azad University of Medical Sciences. These results are consistent with the results of studies by Ahmadi et al [23], Fawaraq and Arzani Biryani [10], and Kim and James et al [12]. Ahmadi et al stated that considering the effects of sports activities and their role in the promotion of livelihood in the workplace environment, several studies in the past two decades have been conducted with a focus on this issue, and the results demonstrated that content employees have sports activities during the week [23]. The productivity of cheerful employees increases, and this not only increases productivity but also promotes

Table 3. Comparison of pre-test and post-test average yoga exercises on organizational happiness in research groups

Group	Number	Pre-test	Post-test	t	P value
		Mean \pm SD	Mean \pm SD		
Control	20	1.8000 \pm 0.767	1.9500 \pm 0.604	-0.900	0.379
Experimental	20	2.1000 \pm 0.718	5.0000 \pm 0.858	-9.195	0.001

Table 1. Statistics of the control and experimental groups of yoga exercises on organizational happiness in the pre-test

		Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean deviation error
Yoga exercises on organizational Happiness	Control group	20	1.8000	0.767	0.171
	Experimental group	20	2.1000	0.718	0.160

Table 2. Comparison of the average of yoga exercises on organizational happiness of the research groups in the pre-test

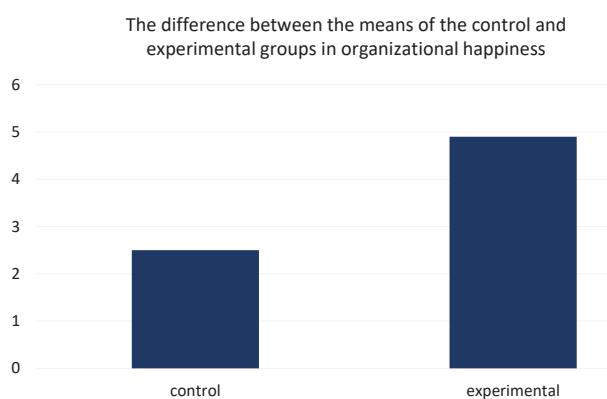
Levene's test		T test				
F	P value	t	Degree of freedom	P value	Mean difference	Difference in standard error
0.545	0.465	-1.276	38	0.210	-0.30000	0.235
		-1.276	37.832	0.210	-0.30000	0.235

Table 4. Control and experimental group statistics for yoga exercises effects on organizational happiness in the post-test

		Number	Mean \pm SD	Mean deviation error
Yoga exercises on organizational	Control group	20	1.9500 \pm 0.604	0.135
Happiness	Experimental group	20	5.0000 \pm 0.858	0.191

Table 5. Comparison of the average of yoga exercises on organizational happiness in the post-test of the research groups

	Levene's test			T test			
	F	P value	t	Degree of freedom	P value	Mean of difference	standard error difference
Equal variance assumption	4.710	0.036	-12.900	38	0.001	-3.05000	0.234
Unequal variance assumption	4.710	0.036	-12.900	34.135	0.001	-3.05000	0.234

**Figure 1.** The difference between the means of organization happiness in the control and experimental groups

the quality of the products and generates pride and commitment to work in employees [24]. Nowadays, as people spend most of their time in their offices, if they have a cheerful workplace, they can enjoy the benefits. Many managers believe that there is no place for happiness in the workplace. Nonetheless, today, employees need refreshing work. The creation of a balance between these two conflicting expectations is challenging. Happiness and work are not conflicting, and they can exist together. Work has the highest productivity when its environment is cheerful [23]. The results of the study demonstrated that the significance level in the post-test of the research groups was smaller than 0.05.

Therefore, there was a significant post-test difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of the effects of yoga exercises on the organizational happiness of female employees of Tehran Islamic Azad University of Medical Sciences and the average of the effects of yoga on the organizational happiness of female employees of Tehran Azad University of Medical Sciences in the experimental group was greater than the control group. It can be stated that sports activities, particularly yoga, can promote happiness, and as sports and physical activities increase plasma endorphin levels, they can promote happiness and also increase serotonin (a hormone influential on temperament) levels. On the other hand, yoga exercises are easy, comfortable, and

low-cost sports activities with a significant effect on the happiness of female employees of Azad University of Medical Sciences. Therefore, considering the impressive effects of yoga on physical and spiritual health, it is of great importance that awareness-raising through media and conferences should be conducted, and necessary arrangements should be made so that this important activity is implemented in educational and organizational environments. Yoga was one of the strengths of this study, as this exercise can lead to different responses and adaptations in comparison with other exercises. There were also limitations in the study. As the questionnaire only evaluated the viewpoints of the employees, it cannot be considered an accurate instrument for the evaluation of reality. One other limitation of the study was the lack of generalization of the findings to other universities. Therefore, it may be suggested that in other situations, this research should be conducted, and the results should be compared.

5. Conclusion

Considering the results, it is recommended that to ensure physical health and happiness in organizations, the authorities of the university of medical sciences should dedicate some hours to it during the day so that female employees can exercise yoga. It is advisable that the managers of medical universities should provide the requirements for the implementation of physical activity and sports in the organization. The managers and authorities may believe that sports activities may decrease the performance of the employees. It is suggested to the managers of the university of medical sciences that sports activities not only do not damage activities and work, but also can promote competence of the employees through maximizing their physical and spiritual health, and the employees can continue their work with energy and happiness many times more, and enjoy being in the workplace. Moreover, it is recommended to the managers of the medical university should be innovative in the implementation of sports activities to ensure the health and liveliness of the employees in the workplace. This intelligent and conscious decision can lead to savings in organizational costs.

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Conflict of interests

The authors did not have any conflicts of interest.

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