

Impact of Yoga on Wellbeing of HR Employees in Software Industry – an Emperical Study

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Abstract

In Indian organizations one of the strategies for sustainable competitive advantage in globalized era, is the Yoga practices for HR employees. In order to bring about management of HR employee's effectiveness for tomorrow's workforce yoga and its different practices is a must. The subject on employee happiness, wellbeing and productivity is a debate and there has been a long history of employees in workplace striving for happiness. This research paper discusses on how Yoga can be effective for mental and physical wellbeing. An attempt is made to find out whether adoption of the Yoga Way of Life by HR professionals in software industry can have a positive impact on personal effectiveness and productivity of the HR employees. Suggestions and strategies are recommended based on exploratory research conducted on software employees.

Key words: *yoga, mental and physical wellbeing, HR employees and strategies.*

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1. Introduction:

Yoga is a way of life, an integrated system of education of the mind, body and spirit. This art was perfected and practiced in India thousands years ago. The health outcomes of corporate wellness programs are many, including smoking cessation, weight loss and obesity prevention, diabetes, blood pressure, and cholesterol management, and personal health and safety practices like seat belt use, sleep hygiene, and stress management. Many have responded to the call of Yoga in recent times and reaped diverse benefits in terms of enhancements of quality of life. (Physical and Mental health). Many are first attracted to Yoga to keep oneself fit. Others join to get relief from ailments like backache, hypertension, diabetes etc. Secondly, Yoga postures look like physical postures that bring subtle changes in one's approach to life. By persistent toning and relaxing the body, calming the breath, one gets in touch with inner peace, as time progresses.

Yoga has a multitude of applications in modern life. It provides the much needed relaxation by releasing tension in the muscles and strengthening the immune system. Yogic postures and exercises provide stretching and toning of muscles, maintain flexibility of joints and thereby improve fitness.

Yoga teaches correct breathing techniques to improve vitality, and gain control over mental state by regulating the flow of prana. Yoga teaches proper attitudinal changes of appropriate restraints and disciplines and positive thinking and therein points to the role in education. Yoga brings harmony of mind and body. Preventive and rehabilitative benefits are unsurpassed. The traditional wisdom as encapsulated in Yoga deals with prevention and control of diseases, incorporating the fundamental pillars of positive health and prevention of diseases. The therapeutic benefits have been well established in a number of disease states including psychosomatic disorders.

Scientific studies and developments in research methodologies ranging from microelectrodes to Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), Position Emission Tomography (PET) and Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) have made it possible to probe secrets related to nearly billions of interconnected neurons of the brain and thereby establish the innumerable applications of Yoga.

Yoga and meditation have been tested pragmatically and findings are based on similar individual and group experiences, effects reported from generation to generation and technological advances. Understanding applications of Yoga has been possible by using appropriate methodology both theoretical and experimental. Theoretical is exploration of nature of human psyche by observation, analysis and evaluation of experiencing, while experimental study involves stimulus input into various systems by Yogic practices.

1.1 Yoga and Physical Fitness.

Improvement in motor skills is due to the effects of Yoga on improvement in muscle power, improved cardio respiratory efficiency is well established as evident by lower heart rate response to exercise, reduced oxygen consumption per unit work, reduced minute volume, and increase in breath holding time, improved respiratory endurance, and increase in maximum breathing capacity. Thus all these findings point to economical energy expenditure. Body composition studies showed reduced skin fold thickness and increase in lean body mass. The increase in endurance time could be due to alternate recruitment of motor units, onset of fatigue delayed, decrease in pyruvate and lactate levels, increase in aerobic power and postponement of aerobic threshold. The above benefits point to the important role of Yoga in sports.

National health policy on education (1986) has recommended the inclusion of Yoga in sports which aims at automatic balance, calm mind with increased awareness and concentration. Research evidences point to decrease in anxiety levels, improved performance, and improved memory can be achieved through regular practice of Yoga. Further, regular practice of Yoga provides asymmetry of shoulders, abdominal muscle toning and improved fitness. An important benefit derived is improved concentration, reduced distractibility and error scores.

The therapeutic benefits of Yoga has been well established in hypertension, asthma, obesity, diabetes, orthopedic problems, sleep loss related problem, Coronary artery disease etc. Thus, with the multitude of application of Yoga, the inclusion of Yoga as an intervention and supportive therapy, this can provide promotive, preventive and therapeutic benefits.

Work related psychological stressors are known to affect the body functions through psychological processes and influence health through four types of closely interrelated mechanisms, emotional, cognitive behavioral and physiological.(Levi 1990). The health outcome depends on situational (e.g, Social support) and individual factors (e.g, personality, coping repertoire.)

1.2 Yoga and HR :

HR is of great significance in strategic Management. As a Chinese saying goes...

If you wish to plan for a year, sow seeds-

If you wish to plan for ten years, plant trees-

If you wish to plan for life time, develop people.

The main role of HR is to hire, develop and harness the potential of people. But human potential can be properly harnessed only if the systems are supportive and HR initiatives are aligned to business results. The reward and punishment systems create a great impact on people's performance. Systems and processes are good contributors in cultivating the organizational culture. HR plays the central role of aligning people's capabilities with the strategic business initiatives. The HR chief plays the role of a Potter in the organization. It is he or she who moulds people to the company's needs and market demands.

1.3 Challenges of HRD and HRM in Indian Software Industry.

Today, there has been sea change in HR outlook. Earlier, employers were viewed as expenses – mainly as cost – and HR was considered a “Cost Centre”. And because IT emergencies can occur at any time and HR employees often have to monitor people , systems, processes also outside their normal business hours. Over time, extended periods at the computer can take a toll on your health. Today however, employees especially talents, are viewed as investments and source of wealth and HR is considered as a strategic partner in business. There are a few challenges faced by HRD and HRM departments. They are :

- a) **Change Management** is an approach to transitioning individuals, teams and organizations to a desired future state. – How people adopt to ideas and technology would be documented.
- b) **Employee effectiveness is learning and development (L & D).** It is designed to give L&D and HR professionals the insights and best practices, they need to help their organization win the “War for Talent” from within their own back yard.
- c) **Training and Development** is a function of human resource management concerned with organizational activity aimed at bettering the performance of individual and groups in organizational settings. It has been known by several names, including “Human Resource Development” and “Learning and development).
- d) **Leadership development** refers to any activity that enhances the quality of leadership within an individual or an organization. Also succession planning of high

potentials to effectively take over the current leadership when their time comes to exit their positions is known as succession planning.

e) **Staffing challenge** is the process of acquiring, deploying and retaining a workforce of sufficient quality and quantity. To create positive impacts on the organization's effectiveness.

f) **OD interventions** are principal learning processes. Interventions are structured activities used individually or in combination by the members to improve task performance. Structural activities mean such diverse procedures as experiential exercises, questionnaires, attitude surveys, interviews and relevant group discussions. Every action that influences an organization's improvement programme in a change agent- client system relationship can be said to be an intervention.

2. Review of Literature

The importance of job performance with respect to job performance and wellbeing among the employees of organizations and institutions goes back to the second half of the 20th century, with the appearance of Maslow's theory (1954). Researchers have given deep consideration to Maslow's theory and various analytical studies have been undertaken. The movement towards human relationships sheds more light on the importance of the morale and improvement of the social and work conditions for the employees of organizations and institutions aiming at increasing productivity.

In views of Srinivas (1994) a series of techniques collectively known under the general label 'Yoga' present a rich source for generating indigenous organizational development techniques that may perhaps find better acceptance than imported intervention designs from the west. Originally developed for personal spiritual growth, he feels that yoga offers a well-formulated approach to planned change.

Feuerstein G. Prescott (1998) feels that yoga way of life encompasses the philosophy of *Karma Yoga* (path of detached action), *Jnana Yoga* (knowledge of self), *Bhakti Yoga* (Trust in the supreme order) and *Raja Yoga* (*Asana, Pranayam, Meditation* etc.). Practicing this knowledge may bring about complete transformation of an employee's personality, on the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual levels, which strengthens one's ability and desire to put in one's best. Yoga is one of the six foundations of Indian philosophy and has been used for millennia to study, explain, and experience the complexities of the mind and human existence.

Starting in ancient Greece, Aristotle's (2000) *Nicomachean Ethics* centers on the pursuit of happiness. The *Dhammapada*, from India, devotes a chapter to the topic of happiness, and describes the ultimate end of a virtuous life as the attainment of lasting happiness ("Dhammapada," 2000).

Employees spend a significant proportion of their lives at work. Being miserable at work can spill over into personal lives so it makes sense to tackle any issues in the workplace sooner rather than later. The movement to track happiness as a measure of societal functioning is based on a long history that spans multiple philosophical traditions (Kesebir&Diener, 2008).

In IT companies the business outcomes include lower absenteeism, higher job satisfaction and work productivity, higher employee retention, and lower health care costs. In 2012 review of 62 studies, published in the American Journal of Health Promotion, found 25 percent lower sick leave, health plan, workers' compensation, and disability insurance costs among companies that had wellness programs. In 2014 Harvard Business Review study of 20 companies found an average annual health care cost increase of 1-2% for companies with wellness programs, compared to the 7% national average.

3. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

- 1) To understand and discuss the Importance of Yoga and its interventions.
- 2) To study the impact of Yoga interventions on HR professionals in Software Industry.
- 3) To examine the factors influencing job performance and working environment of HR professionals in software industry and
- 4) To identify the problems hindering the growth of IT industry and
- 5) To offer recommendations for improving the level of job performance of HR employees.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Sampling frame: Systematic sampling technique was adopted to select the required sample frame of respondents for the study. The respondent's number was 400 and all were selected from Bengaluru. 400 HR employees were from different age groups, experience and background.

4.2 Instrument: Questionnaire prepared by researchers that was checked for validation and reliability. Questionnaire had both closed and open ended questions containing 23 items. Pilot study was carried out for 25 respondents initially with T Test. Main aim of preparing the questionnaire was to identify the mental desire and willingness and happiness of respondents towards work related issues.

4.3 Modus Operandi of Yoga training interventions

Questionnaire was distributed for better understanding of the participants and later respondents were divided into small groups of 25. 25 employees from 16 software companies taken as sample totaling to 400 employees.

All 400 employees were given training for 3 hours, on 8 Saturdays in the theory and practice of selected Hatha Yoga Exercises.

The Yoga experts provided instructions on the way, the warm up exercises, stretching moves, pranayamas and SudarshanKriya have to be performed. The Yoga experts first demonstrated each exercise and the employees were made to perform the same and learn the yoga postures and exercises experientially.

The yoga experts were monitoring the employees' performance closely and they were able to identify certain areas where the employees were not doing correctly. In such cases, the yoga experts were able to help the employees to understand the mistakes and learn the right way

of performing yoga exercises and postures .No written material or books were used. The employees had to listen to the instructions and see the demonstrations and learn and pick up and practice the right way. The reason why no written instructions were provided is that the yoga experts want the employees to listen carefully, learn and internalize the knowledge and be able to practice regularly and correctly.

5. Results And Discussions

Table 5.1--Length of service and level of Job Performance-(Two Way Table)

Sl.No.	Length of service		Length of service and the level of job performance					Total
			SA	A	NEU	DA	SDA	
1	UP to 5 Years	Freq	13	28	16	25	14	96
		%	4.25	7	4	6.25	3.5	24%
2	6-11 Years	Freq	20	35	10	29	27	121
		%	5	8.75	2.5	7.25	6.75	40.25%
3	11-15 Years	Freq	9	38	6	24	22	99
		%	2.25	9.5	1.5	6	5.5	24.75%
4	Above 15 Years	Freq	11	31	5	13	24	84
		%	3.75	7.75	1.25	3.25	6	21%
Total		Freq	53	132	37	91	87	400
		%	13.25	43	9.25	22.75	21.75	100.0%

Source: Primary Data Computed

For the question and discussion on “whether job experience has a impact on performance” the respondents have mentioned “yes”. Above Table depicts that level of job performance and year of experience correlates was agreed by 5% of the employees of 6-11 Years of experience, and the lowest (2.25 percent) for 11-15 years of experience. From the agree category 38 employees of 11-15 years of experience (9.5 percent) has the highest level of performance followed by the employees of 6-11 years of experience (8.75 percent) , and the lowest (7 percent) for the employees up to 5 years of experience. From the strongly disagree category the employees 6-11 years of experience 6.75% has the highest level of disagreement followed by above 15 years experienced employees (6 percent), and the lowest (3.5 percent) was with the employees having up to 5 years of experience.

Table 5.2 –ANOVA--Length of service and level of job performance

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F- Value	P- Value
Between Groups	32290.12	3	10763.3	17.233	.000**
Within Groups	247337	396	624.588		
TOTAL	280566	399			

**** P<0.01 * P<0.05 S-Significant NS- Not Significant**

It is revealed from the table 4.24 that the p-value is less than 0.01; and the results are significant. This shows that there is a significant association between length of the service and its level of job performance of employees.

Table 5.3--Age and level of Job Performance

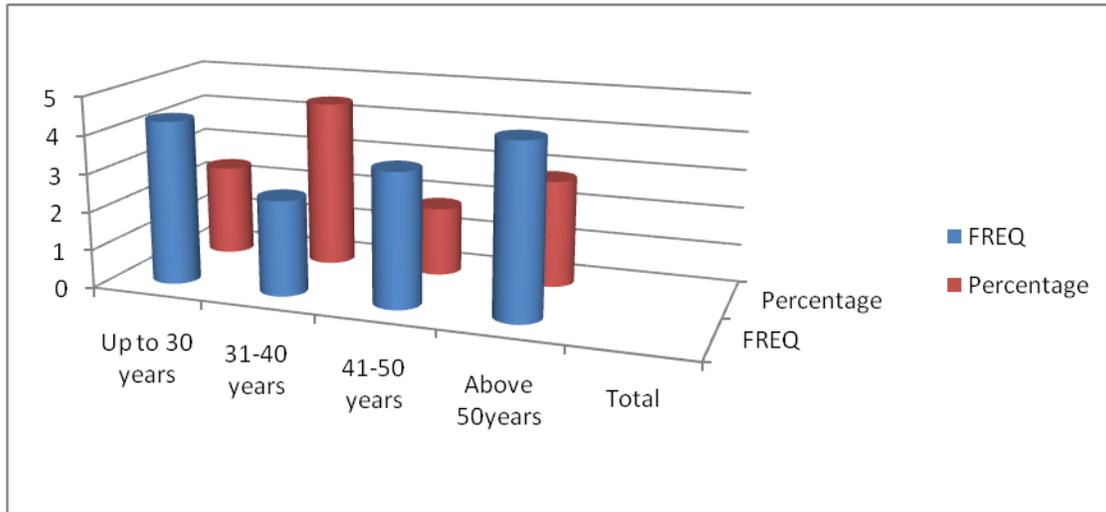
Sl. No.	Age	Freq	%	Mean	Sd	Range	
						Min	Max
1	Up to 30 years	120	40	77.0000	32.42538	47	168
2	31-40years	114	28.5	92.5758	23.01227	47	168
3	41-50 years	97	24.25	78.0324	31.49634	47	168
4	Above 50years	69	17.25	83.6129	28.92792	47	168
TOTAL		400	100.0				

Source: Primary Data Computed

It is observed that 17.25 percent of the respondents belong to age group Above 50 years and that level of job performance on this age group ranged between 47 and 168 with an average of 83.6129. 40 percent of the respondents are from 'up to 30 years age group and the level of job performance on this age group ranged between 47 and 168 with an average of 77.00.

28.5% of the respondents belong to 31 - 40 years of age and the level of job performance on this age group ranged between 47 and 168 with an average of 92.57. 24.25% of the respondents belong to 41 - 50 years of age and the level of job performance on this age group ranged between 47 and 168 with an average of with an average of 78.0324. With a view to find the degree of association between the age groups and level of job performance among HR employees in software industry, two-way table was prepared and the results are shown in table 5.3.

Figure 5.1-----Age and level of Job Performance



6. Proactive strategies to stay ahead.

The word ‘Proactive’ is not a very old word. Dr Victor. E .Frankl – The founder of Logo Therapy – in his famous 1946 book, ‘Man’s search for meaning’ came up with this word. ‘Mentally healthy people are proactive’ he writes in the book.

He advises – ‘ Anticipate events and take charge by initiatives’ later, this word was imported from psychotherapy to business management in 1988 by Dr Stephen Covey who highlighted ‘ Proactive’ as the most important characteristic of highly effective people of the world, in the book ‘ The seven habits of highly effective people’.

6.1 General Findings

One needs to realize the significant impact of trends and challenges in human resource management. There are many variables that influence human resource management. To have a glimpse at some of the upcoming changes, the HR Leadership Council has released the following statistics:

- 1) One in four high HR potentials plans to leave their organization in the next year.
- 2) By effectively developing employees, managers can be better coaches and improve performance up to 25%.
- 3) Three out of five organizations have either restructured or plan to restructure within the next six months.
- 4) Recent declines in employee engagement further decreased overall productivity by 3 to 5%.

- 5) Leaders with strong people development skills are 50% more likely to outperform revenue expectations.
- 6) Delivering on critical onboarding activities boosts new hire performance by 11.3%.
- 7) 77% of mid-sized companies use (or plan to use) wellness to reduce costs.
- 8) 46% of mid-sized-company CFOs anticipate a merger or acquisition in less than six months.

6.2 The Yoga Training Intervention Programme

This holistic approach to harness the potential of the body, mind and spirit would consist of warm up exercises, systematic stretching of all muscles, activation of all joints by various kinds of physical movements, a set of few selected asanas(Postures), a set of selected pranayamas like anuloma, viloma, bhastrika, sudarshankriya (breathing exercises). The Yoga training sessions would give good exposure to the knowledge of these healing practices and enable them to pick up the right way of practising Yoga through experiential learning. All the training sessions are closely monitored by experts and appropriate advice on the correct way of exercising are given, so that they pick up the right habits of performing Yoga exercises.

6.3 Benefits of Yoga Training and Interventions

The slow, calm movement, the controlled breathing and the purpose behind the various postures (asanas) used in Yoga bring balance and tranquility to the body, mind and spirit. Yoga exercises improve both posture and breathing, which in turn benefit the circulation of the blood and the body's intake and utilization of oxygen. Like most other movement therapies, it also increases the rate and efficiency with which waste material is excreted from the body via Kidneys, Bowel, skin, Liver and Lungs, thereby strengthening the immune defence system in its fight against infections, allergies and ailments.

Yoga practices also boost the body's nervous and hormonal systems and improve both flexibility and muscle tone and reintroduce the habits of stretching and bending after years of sedentary life style. Health author Mark Bricklin writing in 'The practical encyclopedia of natural healing' (Rodale Press) says of Yoga 'If you practice Yoga postures, you are strengthening the body. If you control your breathing, you are creating a chemical and emotional balance. If one can concentrate your mind in affirmations, you are practicing the power of prayer. But if you synthesize all three, you are entering the most powerful mystery of healing – the basic harmony of life.

At the end of 8 Saturdays of concentrated instructions, almost 80% of the 400 employees appreciated the positive impact and value of yoga intervention programme and have given the following feedback:

- Reduced level of joint pains in Arthrih's patients.
- Increased level of well-being in Asthama patients.
- Positive impact on employees who felt they were obese.
- Increased level of well-being with reference to body functions – like better appetite, better digestion, better quality of sleep, feeling energetic after regular yoga practices.
- Increased level of well-being which helps them to cope up with the tensions / stress levels of daily living.
- Increased willingness to align themselves to organizational goals.
- Wanting to be effective team players.
- Increased willingness to learn and develop their knowledge and skills.
- Increased level of Immunity against constant cough and cold, fever and tiredness and body pain.
- Increased level of enthusiasm to come back to work and contribute positively to the organisation.
- People who have decided to quit, have again decided to come back with a resolve to be more proactive and productive.
- Reduced levels of discomfort and stress at the shoulders and the spinal cord.

7. Suggestions:

As the Yoga training intervention programme has yielded positive results and has been positively well received by the employee – trainees and the managements, We suggest that this positive Yoga training intervention initiative be introduced in many more Indian organizations and spread the good news of the positive healing impact of Yoga practices on the health and wellness of the Indian workforce.

8. Conclusion

The Yoga training intervention programme is a proactive initiative. It leads to greater employee effectiveness. The 20 minutes Yoga training intervention programme is designed to transform employees to be more healthy, more energetic, more focused, more interested in their quality of work, more skillful, more positive and definitely more proactive and willing to improve their health, their responses to industry and their response to life.

To conclude yoga training intervention initiative has proved to be one of the social and sustainable HR – strategies, to achieve competitive advantage in globalized era. This HR intervention develops and harnesses the potential of people and increases their capabilities and aligns them to software companies needs and market demands and leads to employee effectiveness.

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