

Yoga: Maintaining Healthy Employees at Workplace



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ABSTRACT: The origin of yoga dates back to the Vedic era, when the Indian saints stressed the importance of meditation among their disciples to concentrate on studies. They started practising 'yoga' and it started to spread in other countries due its spiritual and physical importance. The 'Rigveda' though, stresses on the importance of yoga and despite the fact that it is valued by many people till now, it started gaining momentum after the declaration of the International Yoga Day on 21st June 2015. Considering its importance, first yoga university was opened in 2013 in Gujrat. Many schools introduced a yoga teacher and a period for yoga practice in the schools. The corporate or the service sector where the employees have to bear the long working hours without the opportunity to move in different directions, have no strict law related to practice of yoga. Generally, the employees either sit or work in the same posture with only a break for taking lunch. Yoga is widely practiced on 21st June but there is no provision for its practice on the other days. If yoga is introduced in the workplace as a norm, it will help the employees in remaining fit; mentally and physically both, which will result in maximum productivity from their end and the same will ultimately affect the organisation positively. The need of the hour is to understand the importance of yoga in the workplace to maintain a healthy workforce to get the desired outcome.

KEYWORDS: yoga, physical, mental, momentum, employees, importance.

Impact of yoga on employees' stress

When an employee feels stressed, his performance is hampered. If an employee is stressed, it also leads to physical injuries and musculoskeletal pains such as back pain and health conditions like carpal tunnel syndrome. Performing yoga regularly, improves health conditions and it relieves an individual from any kind of pain or discomfort. As a result of this, employee absenteeism due to sickness or any other health problems decreases. Moreover, employee's morale and productivity increase because, "a healthy mind lies in a healthy body." Yoga, if practiced often at workplace, can decrease work generated stress and help an individual to control his senses resulting in lesser absenteeism. Yoga relaxes the body and calms the mind. A person who is calm, thinks rationally, and is not angered by any kind of stimulus. In addition to that, a person with no or less stress would involve less in activities that leads to a negative workplace outcome. Employees who are stress-free are more likely to be productive than employees who are not. Such employees will function harmoniously with each other and will handle incidents of hostility with a calm and rational mind.

This is one more reason why engaging in one or two sessions of yoga every week is so beneficial for workplace productivity and employee health. Being flexible has lots of benefits such as lower blood pressure and reduced chronic joint pain. It prevents the muscle strains which can happen with rigorous exercises and improve posture. Yoga poses, gradually make a person flexible and with lots of practice, it increases employees' flexibility to work physically and mentally also. Also, by increasing flexibility, they learn how to apply it in other aspects of their lives. They learn how to go with the flow of things and not get worked up about little things. Situations which felt hard and inflexible do not feel so rigid anymore.

A corporate lifestyle usually means sitting all day without any kind of physical activity. And corporate employees mostly eat unhealthy and readily available food items which can cause digestive problems among many others. Digestive problems can also impact the day to day activities leading to decreased productivity. Yoga has many postures which when done properly can aid in heartburn, indigestion and decrease acidity. These postures can boost your employees' metabolism, and help in detoxification, helping them to lead a healthier life without worries. Most of all, it increases concentration which in turn helps in attaining a calm mind.

ORIGIN AND ITS USE

Yoga - 'Yielding optimistic, gleeful atmosphere', renders stability of mind and sharpens the power of focusing. In modern era, it is hailed as an exercising tool. India is the birthplace of yogic postures, called 'Asanas'. Indus Valley Civilization, Vedic period - Vedas, classical era, Buddhism - Jainism, Bhakti movement etc. laid the traditional significance of yoga hierarchically, though the

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written texts of the later periods are only revived. The earliest evidences of yogis and yoga teachings is extracted from the verses of Rig Veda. Actually, this culture of yoga - meditation was latent or somehow dormant in the society of Ancient India. It gained popularity around the globe in the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century. Since then, there was no looking back and in the present scenario, India is looked upon with respect and dignity, with the mass spreading of yoga.

The news of origin of yoga has its roots in the successful discovery of Harappan civilization by the, then formulated, Archaeological Survey of India. At the excavation site, some artifacts suggested the presence of yoga in (3300 - 1900 B.C.E.). The Vedas and other literary manuscripts direct the 'tapas' as an important method of concentrating in 'yajnas'. As far as the researchers describe, the trend of yoga was established as a mode to meditate and gather peace inside our body and soul. This state of brain escorts one towards 'nirvana' through psychological consciousness. Some texts, like Buddhist texts, mentions that 'Buddha' was the founder of his (Yoga) system. After Vedas, Upanishads refer that restoring breath, focusing mind near a serene ambiance is the best and most appropriate definition of yoga. Later, Bhagwat-Gita introduced that how yoga and its different meanings are relatable to our lives. With the advent of Europeans or explorers, yoga moulded itself in different forms. But, Then, it was forgotten for a period of time. Later, when the West came to know about yoga from early Indian influential personalities, like Swami Vivekananda, they adorned it with recognition and graced it with a boon of undefying fame. Consequently, India is still emerging as a 'Yoga Mascot'.

With each surpassing years, Yoga's charm is flooding the minds of many people who needs a free and relaxed body. Nowadays, yoga suits everyone as all can modify it with one's interests and needs. Yoga is like a machine which can be incorporated for the diverse multitudes in different possible ways. It is a remedy for studies, fitness, physical, medication, extracurricular agility etc.

Though since ages the uses of yoga has changed in different fields of life or spheres of society, still its essence is same - yielding optimistic, gleeful atmosphere!

NECESSITY OF YOGA, THE ELIXIR OF LIFE, IN OUR WORK CULTURE

Yoga, the elixir of life, is the ultimate gateway to unravelling and unifying the ultimate strength accumulated in our intangible being. Yoga is purely a mean of connecting with the element beyond the physical vessel enclosing the incorporeal soul of humans and identifying with the rich fabric of our own body.

Yoga when practised and approached in the righteous manner bestows innumerable benefits and liberates us from the hectic burdens of materialistic world in which our soul is trapped.

Many people have got busy as a beaver in their workplaces that they tirelessly shower their sweat and soul in their private enterprises to the fullest that they are unable to eke out a portion of time to feel emotionally liberated and ecstatic, indifferent to the dizzying workload.

Yoga can serve as a measure to distress the exhausted employees if they have been allotted specific times to stretch out and experience inner circulation of energy. Yoga can effectively counteract the build-up of stress, which is the arch negative by-product of our modern fast paced lives which haunts the employees and decreases the efficiency.

Yoga stimulates parasympathetic nervous system. Yoga is viewed as a vital and extensive storehouse of integral life force called **prana** that sustains everything and is speculated as a key to facilitate physical awakening.

Incorporating yoga into your lives can produce manifold benefits.

It can serve to alleviate physical pain, backache, workplace stress owing to long sitting hours and spikes up energy level and mood stature, replenishing and revitalising them for more productive work.

With ever rising work demands and elevating workplace stress, the importance of employees' well-being increases twenty folds.

Further yoga initiative is cost effective and requires considerably small expenditure of 10-20 minutes and can produce significant differences within short span of time. It increases focus at work and decreases habitual absenteeism, which many employees chance upon, at times while being in busy work. It further brings down aggression and frustration and productivity notches higher. It circulates a positive current of emotions up our nerves and these positive feelings in turn translate to better workplace environment, decreased employee absenteeism and splendid health. Yoga has myriad of advantages like increased confidence, improved stability and posture, better retention power and effective immunity against ready-to-knock-us-down a lot of chronic diseases.

Having well proven and scientifically abetted facts, yoga and its techniques have risen to prominence. In our sedentary lifestyle we often become victims of decreased fatigue and lowered energy. Yoga, by deep breathing increases lung capacity and oxygen inflow in blood and hence makes employees refuelled. Yoga by boosting morale of employees, keeps disconcert and anger at bay and elevates the mood. Thus, conducting yoga fosters a healthy workforce in the company. Practising opportune dose of yoga expands the horizon of creative expression and helps employees in completing tasks with an improved vision and with better innovative ideas.

Thus, Yoga is a must implement in our work culture for its dynamic benefits and hence, it becomes imperative to adopt measures to oust stress at workplace by embracing the yoga.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Yoga keeps the mind calm and there are varied asanas for different body parts. Yoga claims to heal the internal organs, increase concentration and calm the mind. Yoga is stress reliever, body and health maintenance technique which improves quality of life.¹ Yoga is a kind of practice which doesn't need a big set up with expensive equipments. It can be done by an individual on its own. Once learned, it can be practiced forever. Yoga is the simplest thing we can use to improve our quality of life.² Yoga gives us full authority over our body. An individual can keep his body, the way he wants it to be, with the use of yoga. One of the principles of yoga is empowering oneself as a pupil has full authority over his health and he can make himself healthy. It gives a sense of authority over oneself and they play an active part in improving their health.³ It is maintained by Maslow that our main goal is to achieve self-actualisation. It can be done only if we have a calm mind with which we can interpret our actual needs and keep our body fit according to that. Yoga Sutra, Patanjali, uses eightfold path which leads to self-realisation and insight.⁴

"A healthy mind resides in a healthy body," this thought seems to be true as when one is unhealthy, one cannot indulge himself positively in his work. At times, even a small headache forbids a person from positively involving in his work. Yoga, though not immediately, yet gradually makes a person physically and mentally fit. Stress has a negative impact on the immune system and prolonged exposure increases susceptibility to disease and leads to physical and mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.⁵

Yoga is meant for every age. There are yoga exercises for the elderly people also which keeps them fit. When milder yoga exercises are practiced daily by the elderly, it helps them to keep healthy. Elderly population also became healthy and improved their quality of life with proper exercise of yoga in their life.⁶

Yoga not only maintains the physiological health but also helps in the psychological health of people. Psychological condition of person is also improved if yoga is practiced regularly by him. It also improves positive thoughts, curb stress, help in mental calm and reduce negative emotions.⁷

Yoga intoxicates and rejuvenates an individual's body. It develops a sense of healthy feeling from inside. As stated by many researchers, whoever practices yoga, develops a feeling of healthiness because yoga is considered an exercise for the heart and the mind both.⁸

Yoga calms a person's mind which further helps in relieving any kind of stress. The results from one study shows that stress can be removed by improving psychological health with the exercise of yoga only twice a week.⁹

There are many yoga exercises which benefits one or the other part of our body. It intoxicates the internal organs, improves memory, make our lung healthy and it makes our body flexible. A study conducted by Hepburn and McMahan concluded that Pranayama manages and decreases stress. This was concluded after pranayama was done by the experimental group for five weeks regularly.¹⁰ Importance of Kapalbhathi as a stress reliever was accepted when Tripathy, M., in his research made a group of people practice yoga for 12 weeks.¹¹

Many educational institutes have yoga as one of their subjects citing its importance on an individual's health and people also have understood its importance in their daily life. So, the people who work and do not get time to practice yoga, have many yoga poses which can be performed while sitting and working. The research concluded that yoga is very helpful in managing stress at workplace.¹²

If an employer really wants less leaves to be taken by his employees due to ill health, he can introduce sessions of yoga in the workplace. Yoga, introduced as the corporate wellness programmes for employees is the most used method by an employer for his employees.¹³

New studies show that yoga is now considered important by the employers at workplace.¹⁴

The studies acknowledged the fact that yoga is useful in reducing stress levels and that is its biggest mental benefit.¹⁵

Many studies have proved that the breathing exercises in yoga keeps the lungs healthy. Though our ancient literature has already accepted its importance but the advent of covid-19 also dawned upon us the importance of yoga and the breathing exercises it suggests. It is proved that Yoga is a reasonably priced phenomenon with myriad benefits on mental well-being and peace which is used for improving work-life balance in working women.¹⁶

OBJECTIVES

Human beings face many kinds of stress in today's world, due to pollution, fast life and technological advancements. This study interprets the significance and use of yoga in the ancient time in India, and maintains how it has gained importance and laid a positive impact on people in today's scenario, especially in the workplace. The service sector employee or even the business people face stress due to the many responsibilities they have to fulfil. This study aims to establish the importance yoga in reducing stress. Yoga as an essential part of the corporate life, may help in reducing stress and give peace of mind to everyone in the workplace. It helps a human body internally and externally both. This study finds that yoga intoxicates the body and mind, it makes the mind calm and enhances concentration power which further leads to increased work productivity, positive work environment, no stress, fit body, healthy mind and work environment where everyone is positive towards his work.

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METHODOLOGY

Secondary data has been used in the entire study. The facts are interpreted keeping in mind the present literature and the available papers citing importance of yoga. Observation method is also used and it has been deciphered that people on International Yoga Day, practice yoga at the workplace and feel rejuvenated the entire day which can be maintained on the other days of the year also. Descriptive method is used in this research according to the facts obtained from secondary data. Information is collected from journals and articles available online.

CONCLUSION

In light of the above explanation and the literature cited, it can be maintained that yoga has been there since ages and it was also considered important by the ancient Indians. Yoga was first mentioned in the 'Rigveda.' It was practiced to keep the body flexible and mind controlled but later the importance of yoga was accepted by many other countries also. In fact, International Yoga Day has been celebrated now on 21st June and it started from 2015 onwards. Establishment of one yoga university in Gujarat in India, is also an example of understanding the importance of yoga by the masses. It has been observed that yoga is introduced in many schools and yoga claims to keep many diseases at bay. Yet the employers do not give much attention towards introducing yoga in the workplaces. We have come a long way from theoretically talking about yoga to practicing it on global level but if the Indian organisations are taken on account, there is no policy made for the practice of yoga exercises for the employees. As said, "Health is wealth," yoga also has the potential to keep an employee healthy not only from outside but also from within. Yoga exercises will help an employee to have a flexible body to work efficiently, a calm mind to avoid workplace stress, and properly working internal organs to avoid diseases and be regular to his work. Employer must understand that regular yoga practices in the workplace would help them in the long run and provide them with a workforce which feels they are taken care of, which is healthy and which is more productive and efficient because of their perfect health.

SUGGESTIONS

Yoga should be followed as mentioned in the Indian scriptures which mentions its innumerable benefits. It helps in increasing concentration, body flexibility and keep off many diseases. Thus, to maintain a healthy work environment where an employee can work positively, yoga should be introduced at the workplace on a regular basis. The employer should understand that yoga will make his employees healthy, leading to a healthy and stress-free workforce who work with maximum efficiency, that too happily. In the long working hours of the employees, they should get at least a few moments towards their health.

There should be trained yoga instructors for healthy yoga practices. In addition to that, yoga for specific muscular and postural problems should be introduced. This will give the employees, a sense of belongingness and personal care from the organisation, they are working in.

Meditation should be an integral part of the organisational culture as employees suffer immense stress due to role conflicts and work overload. It will help them in getting relieved from their stress, creating a healthy environment in the workplace.

A calm mind is necessary to undertake any task especially in the workplace. Meditation, different types of yoga and its breathing exercises will assist the employees to remain hearty and healthy, resulting in giving their maximum output.

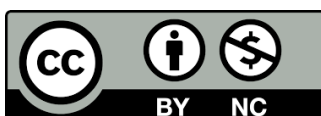
Government should introduce workshops stressing on the importance of yoga for the citizens and make laws which makes such things indispensable at workplace and the employers who do not follow yoga practices willingly, will have to follow it compulsorily. An employees' welfare seeking organisation can also take initiatives in this regard.

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