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## Simplified Kundalini Yoga – An Empirical Study

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### Abstract

The present study aims to find the correlation between the components of simplified kundalini yoga such as simplified physical exercises, meditation and introspection. The study further investigates if simplified kundalini yoga has any differential impact on respondents based on demographic differences. The demographic variables include gender, age, number of years of practicing yoga, marital status, children status (having children/ not having children) and number of married practitioner (dual/single spouse). The data is elicited from 106 respondents who are practitioners of simplified kundalini yoga. Data was collected through questionnaires and the elicited data is analyzed using statistical tools such as correlation and independent sample t test. The results indicated strong relationship between the three components of simplified kundalini yoga. Further significant difference in the impact, yoga has made on the respondents in terms of their demographic differences is also observed.

Keywords: Simplified kundalini yoga, physical exercises, meditation, introspection

The term Yoga means ‘Yuj’ in Sanskrit which means union. Yoga is a union of body, mind and soul. According to Vethathiri Maharishi<sup>1</sup> (1992) ‘Yoga is a systematic psychic practice to improve awareness, to develop will-power and to realize the self’. Yoga is broadly classified into Bhakthi yoga, Karma yoga, Hatha yoga and Gnana yoga. These branches of yoga serves as the base for the origin of different yoga forms such as kriya yoga, laya yoga, kundalini yoga, sahaja yoga, raja yoga, mantra yoga, etc. Simplified kundalini yoga (SKY) is a combination of raja yoga and kundalini yoga initiated by Yogiraj Vethathiri Maharishi Simplified kundalini yoga is an integrated system consisting of 4 major components such as kayakalpa exercises, simplified physical exercises, meditation and introspection. kayakalpa exercises and simplified physical exercises help to enhance the quality of life-force and promote good physical health. Meditation practice helps in elevating the mind of the practitioner and finally, Introspection courses help an individual to analyze his/her emotions, which ultimately leads to spiritual development through personality transformation (Sripriya Krishnan<sup>2</sup>, 2006). For the purpose of present study, Kayakalpa exercises are included under Simplified physical exercises.

### **Simplified Physical Exercises:**

The first component of simplified kundalini yoga imparted to the practitioners is simplified physical exercises because physical body acts as a fundamental base for physical and mental fitness. To attain spiritual development, the practitioners should be healthy and must be free from

physical pain or mental strain to the maximum extent possible (Vethathiri Maharishi, 1992). Shri Vethathiri Maharishi developed the simplified physical exercises after 40 years of intense research. As the name itself suggest, the simplified physical exercises are very simple but very effective which can be practiced by people aged between eight and eighty years. Simplified physical simplified exercises are sub-divided into nine divisions such as hand exercises, leg exercises, neuro-muscular exercises, eye exercises, kapalapathi, makarasana, massage, acu pressure and finally relaxation techniques. These simplified physical exercises help in proper circulation of blood, heat, air and energy throughout the body and helps in building up the immune system, thus acting as a preventive and curative measure to various diseases (Sripriya Krishnan, 2006).

### **Meditation:**

According to Walsh and Shapiro<sup>3</sup>(2006) ‘Meditation refers to a family of self-regulation practices. It focuses in bringing about mental processes under greater voluntary control thereby establishing specific capacities such as learning to stay calm, having better clarity and concentration ability’. Basically there are three stages in meditation. Aghna meditation is the first stage when the ‘kundalini power’ is aroused from mooladhar to the middle of the eyebrows. At this stage, the frequency of mind reduces from Beta state (14 to 40 cycles /sec) to Alpha state of mind (8 to 13 cycles /sec). The next stage is called as ‘Shanthi yoga’ where the force rising to the Aghna chakra is controlled, so that it does not create any discomfort to the practitioner. The last stage is when this power is raised to crown chakra which helps the practitioners to attain spiritual enlightenment. This stage is called ‘Dhuriya stage’. At this stage, the frequency of mind further gets reduced to 4 to 7 cycles/per sec called as ‘Theeta stage’. Apart from these meditations, other types of meditation namely Thurayatheetha, Panchabootha Navagraha, Nithyananda and Divine meditations are also imparted to the practitioners of simplified kundalini yoga.

### **Introspection:**

Consistent practice of meditation leads to tranquil state of mind (Pragadeeswaran and Panchanathan<sup>4</sup>,2005). So at this stage, the practitioners are put to some important psychic practices through introspection courses so as to enable the practitioner to introspect, to bring reformation in his character, to get better enlightenment and to enjoy a peaceful and happy life. Vethathiri Maharishi (1992) defines Introspection as ‘the process of analyzing and getting a total understanding of oneself’. Introspection courses deals with the following five primary aspects of introspection such as Analysis of thoughts, Moralization of Desires, Neutralization of Anger, Eradication of Worries, and Realization of the Self? These courses helps the practitioners to become aware of their inner self, and helps to identify and regulate unwanted emotions such jealousy, fear, stress, anger etc., Consequently the introspection courses along with simplified physical exercises and meditation results in personality transformation of the practitioners of SKY (Sripriya Krishnan, 2006)

### **Review of Literature**

There is limited research studies conducted in Simplified kundalini yoga. Pragadeeswaran and Panchanathan (2005) proposed a model for ‘Excellence’ i.e., Intelligence Quotient (IQ) + Quotient (EQ) + Quotient (SQ) = ‘Excellence’. The research study suggested that this equation can work well on those individuals who practice sky. In today’s competitive world, due to the

revolution in the information technology, the corporate are finding it difficult to 'retain number one position'. It has become the greatest challenge. To meet this challenge, there is a need for a transformational leader who is able to manage one's own emotions and that of others. Regular practice of simplified kundalini yoga leads to tranquil mind, self awareness, self-observation and self management which enhance both emotional quotient and spiritual quotient. Emotional quotient refers to moralization of desires, memory development, anger management, eradication of worries and vengeance, adaptability and reactivity. The variables which contribute to spiritual quotient are perspicacity, magnanimity, creativity, clear vision, value based decision and learning attitude. IQ and SQ helps the leaders to adopt pro-active communication, optimistic motivation towards their employees with human touch which ultimately leads to employee's involvement towards 'Excellence'.

Sripriya Krishnan (2006) had studied the effect of yoga on personality development and academic achievement of school students from government, government-aided and private schools in Chennai district. The various dimensions that were covered under personality were physique, social skills, feelings and emotions, stress management, learning skills and interpersonal skills. A total of 450 students were taken from these schools. 200 formed the control group and the rest 250 formed as an experimental group. Questionnaire and schedules were used to collect the data. The results showed that all the components of Simplified kundalini yoga had a significant impact on all the dimensions of the personality irrespective of the gender and subjects studied and type of school studied. The training also increased the academic achievement of the students belonging to all the three types of school such as government, government-aided and private schools.

Yoga not only contributes to the development of one's personality but also helps in increasing the memory development of those who practice yoga. This was the result of a research conducted by Sundaramoorthy<sup>5</sup> (2007) in Tamilnadu. The objective of the study was to identify whether the philosophy and yogic practice of Vethathiri Maharishi was helpful to induce, develop and retain the memory power which improves the life of the youth. The research was conducted in schools, colleges, Industrial training Institute (ITI), and teachers training institute, universities and yoga centers where simplified kundalini yoga was taught. The number of respondents under study was 61,758. The respondents were given training in all the components of simplified kundalini yoga. PGI memory scale was used to measure the memory capacity of the students before the training and post training sessions. T test was used to analyze the data elicited from the respondents. The results from the experimental research revealed that the mean scores of the total memory were increased from 28.50 during pre-test study to 64.60 in the post test study.

### **Methodology:**

The present empirical study is exploratory in nature. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents who are practitioners of simplified kundalini yoga. A total of 134 questionnaires were distributed to the practitioners of simplified kundalini yoga, out of which 106 questionnaires were found to be complete in all aspects. The questionnaire consist of two parts, the first part being questions relating to demographic variables and the second part consists of forty statements which measures the components of simplified kundalini yoga using four point scales such as always, often rarely and never. Statistical analysis of data was carried

out using correlation, and independent sample t test. Convenience sampling was adopted for the selection of the sample. The scale used for the study was tested using cronbach alpha and the reliability score was found to be .824 which is highly reliable.

**Results and discussion:**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Simplified physical exercises	2.8935	.70878	106
Meditation	3.3653	.45906	106
Introspection	3.3963	.54645	106

The results from table-1 indicate that introspection has the highest mean score and simplified physical exercises have lowest mean score. The higher means scores for introspection reveals that introspection (self analysis) has become an integral part in the lives of the practitioners of yoga. Simplified physical exercises and meditation enhances the practitioners to observe and analyze their emotions, actions and the corresponding reactions of the events that occur in their life.

Though the practitioners are aware that the components of simplified kundalini yoga are linked with each other, so far no systematic attempts had been made empirically to explore the correlation among the components of simplified kundalini yoga such as simplified physical exercises, meditation and introspection empirically. Therefore the following hypothesis is framed to test the correlation between Simplified physical exercises, meditation and introspection.

Ho.1 – There is no significant relationship between Simplified physical exercises, Meditation and Introspection

		SKY Exercises	Meditation	Introspection
SKY Exercises	Pearson Correlation	1	.625**	.592**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	106	106	106
Meditation	Pearson Correlation	.625**	1	.734**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	106	106	106
Introspection	Pearson Correlation	.592**	.734**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	

	N	106	106	106
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

The analysis from correlation table-2 indicates that there is a strong correlation among the components of simplified kundalini yoga. In fact, these components are positively correlated and all three have significant relationship at 1% confidence level. The extent of inter correlation among these components range between .592(lowest) and .734(highest). The lowest correlation .592 is between simplified physical exercises and introspection. This is because simplified physical exercises are mostly related to the physical movements of the body whereas introspection relates to analysis of emotions that arises in the mind. The inter correlation between meditation and introspection is high because meditation involves deep concentration which helps the mind to introspect in a focused manner. The results further suggest that there is a strong relationship between simplified physical exercises and meditation (.625) and this reveals that physical fitness forms the base for meditation. Hence it can be concluded that there is significant relationship among all the three components of simplified yoga.

The following hypotheses are formulated to investigate the differential impact of Simplified kundalini yoga on the respondents practicing SKY with respect to demographic variables such as gender, age, number of years of practicing yoga, marital status, children status (having children/ not having children) and number of married practitioner (dual/single spouse). Independent t test was employed to analyze the data and the subsequent results are presented in table – 3.

Ho.2.1- There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female respondents with respect to the components of SKY

Ho 2.2–There is no significant difference in the mean scores of respondents belonging to different age group with respect to the components of SKY

Ho 2.3 – There is no significant difference in the mean scores of respondents belonging to different years of practicing yoga with respect to the components of SKY

Ho 2.4 – There is no significant difference in the mean scores of married and unmarried respondents with respect to the components of SKY

Ho 2.5 – There is no significant difference in the mean scores of respondents who have children and who do not have children with respect to the components of SKY

Ho 2.6 – There is no significant difference in the mean scores of number of married practitioner (single/dual spouse) with respect to the components of SKY

<b>Table-3 Differential impact of SKY on demographic variables</b>							
Simplified kundalini yoga	Demographic variable	Group variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances (sig. value)	'p' value
Simplified physical exercises	Gender	Male	40	2.8625	.78469	.162	.729
		Female	66	2.9118	.66555		
Meditation		Male	40	3.4862	.42332	.392	<b>.035*</b>
		Female	66	3.2941	.46729		
Introspection		Male	40	3.3925	.60765	.114	.956
		Female	66	3.3985	.51180		
Simplified physical exercises	Age	Less than 40 years	51	2.7407	.60146	.053	<b>.033*</b>
		More than 40 years	55	3.0303	.77239		
Meditation		Less than 40 years	51	3.2608	.40581	.338	<b>.025*</b>
		More than 40 years	55	3.4588	.48659		
Introspection		Less than 40 years	51	3.2279	.48602	.912	<b>.002*</b>
		More than 40 years	55	3.5469	.55744		
Simplified physical exercises	Number of years of practicing SKY	Less than 10 years	84	2.7523	.66298	.338	<b>.000**</b>
		More than 10 years	22	3.4455	.61628		
Meditation		Less than 10 years	84	3.2689	.44655	.061	<b>.000**</b>
		More than 10 years	22	3.7420	.28257		
Introspection		Less than 10 years	84	3.3180	.52315	.178	<b>.003*</b>
		More than 10 years	22	3.7023	.53901		
Simplified physical exercises	Marital status	Married	64	2.7992	.71893	.839	.083
		Unmarried	42	3.0417	.67442		
Meditation		Married	64	3.3750	.43945	.172	.784
		Unmarried	42	3.3500	.49337		

Introspection		Married	64	3.4326	.51952	.115	.390
		Unmarried	42	3.3393	.58817		
Simplified kundalini yoga	Demographic variable	Group variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances (sig. value)	'p' value
Simplified physical exercises	Children status	Having children	42	2.9293	.74436	.210	.530
		No children	22	2.8205	.61265		
Meditation		Having children	42	3.3622	.49439	.054	.647
		No children	22	3.4136	.34215		
Introspection		Having children	42	3.4244	.54785	.658	.230
		No children	22	3.2636	.58109		
Simplified physical exercises	Number of married practitioner	Single	48	2.7864	.69755	.874	<b>.032*</b>
Meditation		Single	48	3.2950	.46266	.371	<b>.030*</b>
		Dual	18	3.4947	.42859		
Introspection		Single	48	3.2586	.52399	.646	<b>.033*</b>
	Dual	18	3.4658	.58640			

\* Significant at 5% level, \*\* Significant at 1% level

Levene's test for equality of variances and test for equality on means is conducted to find out whether the components of simplified kundalini yoga has differential impact on respondents based on demographic difference such as gender, age, number of years of practicing yoga, marital status, children status and number of married practitioner practicing yoga. It is evident from table-3, that Levene's test for equality of variances (Homogeneity) shows that significant value is greater than 0.05 for all demographic variables, which implies that both groups under gender (male/female), age (below forty/above forty years), number of years of practicing yoga (less than ten years/more than ten years), marital status (married/unmarried), children status (having children/not having children and number of married practitioner (single/dual spouse) are homogeneous in nature with respect to the components of simplified kundalini yoga. Therefore test for equal variance assumed is considered for all the demographic variables.

Table-3 shows the difference in the mean scores of male and female in relation to the components of SKY. With respect to simplified physical exercises and introspection the mean scores of female are higher than male and it is observed that 'p value is not significant at 5%

level of confidence. So it is understood that there is no significant difference among male and female for simplified physical exercises and introspection. The 'p' value of meditation .035 is less than 0.05 which suggests that there is significant difference between male and female with respect to meditation and the higher mean scores for males highlight that males are practicing meditation than females.

As presented in table-3, the results indicated that the mean scores of respondents whose age is more than forty years is greater than those practicing yoga with less than forty years of age. The difference in the mean scores for physical exercises, meditation and introspection between respondents of varying age group is statistically significant at 5% level since the 'p' values are less than 0.05. People who are above forty years are likely to have health problems such as hypertension, arthritis, diabetics etc., as compared to younger age group. So people try to follow yoga practice to promote good health and longevity (Ann Pizer<sup>6</sup>, 2013). This may be attributed to the difference in the mean scores of varying age group. Hence there is significant difference between respondents belonging to different age group with respect to the components of simplified kundalini yoga which means  $H_0$  2.2 is rejected. Thus it is observed that simplified kundalini yoga has an impact on the varying age group of the practitioners.

As far as number of years of practicing simplified kundalini yoga is concerned, The mean scores for all the components of SKY is high for respondents whose number of practicing SKY yoga is greater than ten years than who practice for less than ten years. The results also indicate that the difference is highly significant at 1% level for physical exercises and mediation and is significant at 5% level for introspection. This proves that more the number of practices in SKY, the benefits accrued from physical exercises, meditation and introspection will be high in comparison to those who practice for less than ten years. Therefore  $H_0$  2.3 is rejected and it is concluded that there is significant difference between the respondents.

In terms of marital status, it is evident from table-3 that the mean scores for married respondents relating to meditation and introspection is higher than the unmarried respondents but the p value highlights that the difference in the mean scores are not significant at 5% level. It is also observed that for physical exercises, the mean score for unmarried respondents is higher than married respondents. Again, the p value for physical exercises indicates the difference is not statistically significant at 5% level. Therefore the null hypothesis  $H_0$  2.4 is accepted and it is inferred that there is no significant difference in the respondents irrespective of their marital status with regard to the components of SKY.

A similar result was revealed for the children status from table-3. Though the mean scores for respondents who have children are higher for physical exercises and introspection than the respondents who do not have children, the p value indicates that the difference is not significant. Again the results are not significant for meditation though the mean scores are slightly higher for who respondents do not have children than practitioners having children. Therefore null hypothesis  $H_0$  2.5 is accepted, which means that there is significant difference in the respondents with respect to the components of SKY.

For the demographic variable number of practitioner for married couples, there is significant difference between couples where only one of the spouses is practicing yoga or both the spouses

are practicing yoga as revealed from the table-3. The results from the table clearly indicate that the mean scores for both the spouses practicing SKY are greater than couple where only one of the spouses practicing yoga with respect to all the components of SKY such as physical exercises, meditation and introspection. The p value further highlights that the difference in the mean scores are statistically significant at 5% level. Therefore it is concluded that there is significant difference between the couples who practice in single and those who practice along with their spouse.

### **Summary and Conclusion:**

This study is an important addition to the existing literature on yoga in general and simplified kundalini yoga in particular. The strong correlation among the components of simplified kundalini yoga such as, meditation and introspection proves that the courses imparted under simplified kundalini yoga would be beneficial to the practitioners in the process of spiritual development. The findings also suggest that among the components, introspection plays a crucial role in the process of self analysis for which simplified physical exercises and meditation serves as a strong foundation. The results revealed significant difference for age, number of years of practicing yoga and the number of the married practitioner but not for marital status and children status. Further research is required to explore status for which significant difference was not found. A contrast results is revealed from the independent t test relating to gender difference indicates that while there is no significant difference between male and female with respect to simplified physical exercises and introspection but with meditation significant difference is observed. The complexity of the results from the independent t test regarding the gender differences on simplified physical exercises, meditation and introspection provides further gap for the future researchers.

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