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Comparative study of physiological health issues in menopausal women

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Abstract

The present research is a comparative study that aims to study the effect of yoga on the physiological health issues of menopausal women. The research consisted of 30 participants with an equal number of menopause yoga and non-yoga participants between the age group of 35-60 years. It was found out that yoga practitioners experienced low to very mild severity of menopausal symptoms like reduced vaginal dryness, exhaustion, joint pains, and nearly no stress, anxiety, etc. Whereas those who did not practice yoga or any other kind of physical activity experienced moderate to severe levels of menopausal symptoms like increased hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, stress, and depression. It was also found that both yoga and non-yoga participants changed their lifestyle in some or the other way after entering the menopausal phase. Non-yoga participants started with medication to either relieve menopausal symptoms or to relieve their body pains. It was further found that those who benefitted from yoga, practiced asanas like suryanamaskar, halasana, savasana, bhadrasana etc. along with pranayama like anulom vilom, kapalbhati, omkar chanting, etc. on a daily basis. The study concluded that Yoga practice is best for a healthy lifestyle and scientific and convenient method of practice reduces the symptoms of menopause and enhances the quality of life.

Keywords: Menopause, yoga practitioner, physiological health, healthy lifestyle

Introduction

Menopause signifies the end of a women's reproductive potential capacity. It is the end of some 50 years of reproductive aging which is a process that unfolds from birth to the premenopausal transition, menopausal transition, and post-menopause which every female goes through in her life. This transition plays a very major role in causing many symptoms in middle age and may contribute to certain issues like osteoporosis, cardiovascular risk, stress, anxiety etc. (Sherman S, 2019) [27].

Menopause is a normal physiological process of life, women experience so many problems like hot flashes, night sweats, insomnia, mood disturbances, impairment of memory, bone and joint pain, lack of concentration, nervousness, and depression. The severity, duration and impact of these symptoms vary from person to person.

Yoga helps to prevent stress. It is an action that improves physiological symptoms that are associated with menopause. In a study related to the role of meditative forms of yoga and the treatment of symptoms associated with menopause, it was found that "there was a decrease in symptoms of hot flashes; yoga can also lead to a decrease in disease susceptibility, helps improve balance, and maintains a diminished sense of pain and depression." (Manocha, Semmar and Black, 2007) [28]. Similarly, due to the stretching, and fixed postures implemented, pain management was known to be prevented. (Hudson, 1998; Luskin *et al*, 2000) [29-30].

It is found that the utilization of yoga exercises was linked to the management of hypertension. It is concluded that due to the breathing exercises, such as those involved in yoga practice, people finds their diastolic and systolic blood pressures becoming stabilized at an appropriate level. (Harinath, *et al.*, 2004) [31]. The body is able to maintain at a state of balance more efficiently as a result of yoga (Harinath, *et al.*, 2004, p.266) [31].

Specific to sleep disturbances (i.e., a common symptom reported by women experiencing menopause), it is reported that "as a result of yoga participation, circulation improves allowing for an increase in serotonin, which in turn might be acting as a precursor for increasing melatonin synthesis" (Harinath, *et al.* 2004) [31].

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“Meditation led to increased melatonin levels within the body. Melatonin is associated with sleep patterns and one’s circadian rhythm; an increase in melatonin may improve an individual’s potential for sleeping more soundly, with fewer disturbances during the sleep pattern” (Turek & Gillette, 2004) [32].

Now that we have found through several studies that yoga acts as an alternative intervention for managing symptoms associated with menopause, it is important that we do deeper research that will lead to an improvement in premenopausal, menopausal and postmenopausal symptoms of women by practicing yoga and meditation.

Aims and Objectives

Aim of the study: To study the effect of Yoga on Physiological health Issues of menopausal women.

Objectives of the study

- To study Physiological health-related issues associated with menopausal women.
- To compare the health symptoms of yoga practitioners and non-yoga practitioners during the menopause

Methodology

The research was conducted to study the effect of Yoga on the Physiological health Issues of menopausal women.

Sample size

A sample of 72 menopausal women participants was taken as total sample population out of which 30 participants were re-interviewed (via interview method), with equal 15 number of yoga practitioners and 15 non-yoga practitioners.

Sampling procedure

Purposive selection of sampling was done. It included women from different parts of India, ones who were either in their premenopausal, menopausal, or postmenopausal stage. For

this, women of the age group between 35-60 years were selected. It was taken as a questionnaire method via google forms and then the selected 30 participants were re-interviewed. Their willingness and consent to participate in the research was considered while sampling.

Inclusion criteria

- The study was delimited to only menopausal women in the age group of only 35-60 years.
- The study was limited to a specific sample of women practicing yoga and not practicing yoga and residents of India
- Their willingness to participate in the study.

Exclusion criteria

- Women of the age group below 35 and above 60 years were not included.
- Subjects suffering from issues such as diabetes, depression etc. were not included.
- Factors like diet, economic condition, environment etc. were not taken into consideration.

Tools of data collection

- A questionnaire for the participants was prepared to understand their symptoms associated with menopause and also to understand their knowledge on the benefits of yoga.
- The participants had to fill in the questionnaire which contained open and close ended questions.
- The questionnaire contained questions based on personal information, symptoms and severity of menopause.
- It also contained questions on their knowledge and awareness about benefits of yoga
- It also contained questions related to asanas and pranayamas they followed along with their lifestyle changes after they entered menopausal phase.

Results and Discussion

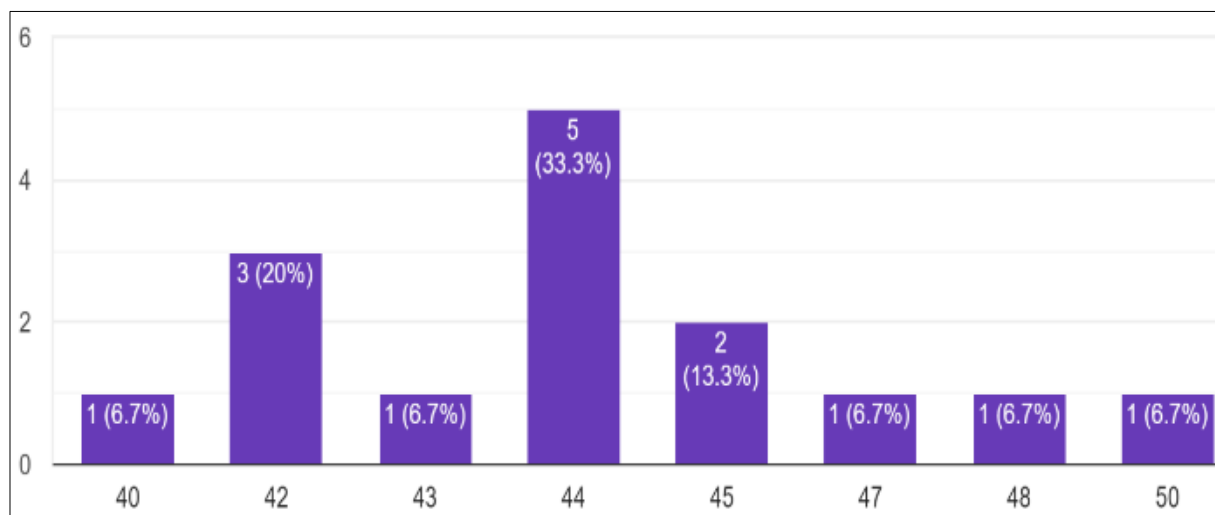


Fig 1: Changes of menstrual cycle starting menopause

Fig 1 shows the changes in the menopausal cycle, in this study 33% of women experienced the starting of menopause

at the age of 44, 20% experienced it at the age of 42, and 13% at the age of 45.

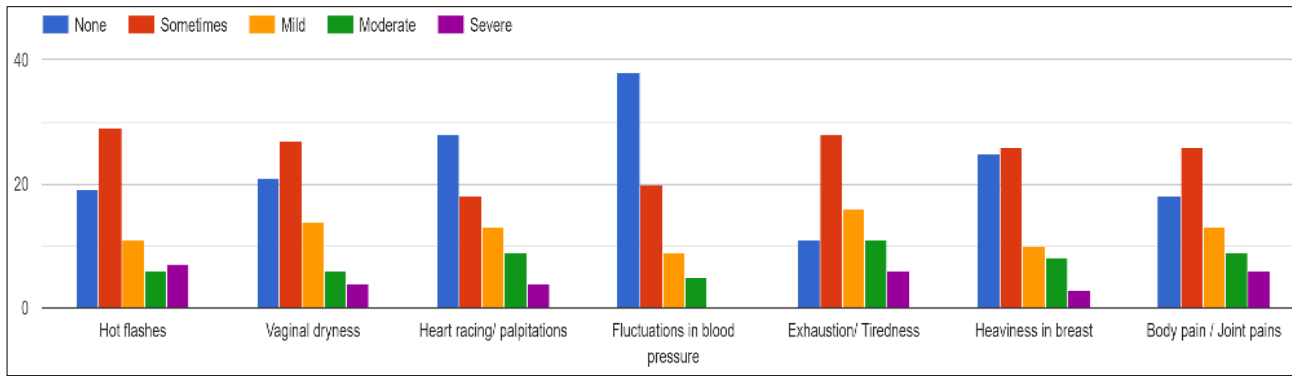


Fig 2: Non- Yoga practitioner physiological health issues

Fig 2 shows the Non-Yoga Practitioner’s Physiological Health Issues. The graph shows that all the symptoms like hot flashes, Vaginal dryness, Heart palpitation, fluctuation in

blood pressure exhaustion, heaviness in breast body pain or joint pain were present in non-yoga practitioners from some times to severe.

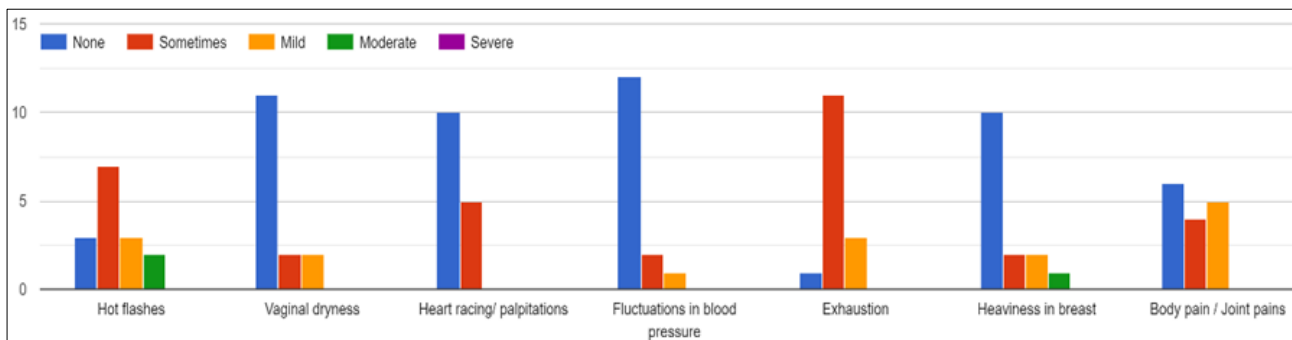


Fig 3: Yoga practitioner physiological health issues

Fig 3 shows the Yoga Practitioner’s Physiological Health Issues. The graph shows that all the symptoms like hot flashes, Vaginal dryness, Heart palpitation, fluctuation in

blood pressure exhaustion, heaviness in breast body pain, or joint pain were present in yoga practitioners sometimes, there is no severity found.

Table 1: Yoga practitioner physiological health issues

Health issues	None	Sometimes	Mild	Moderate	Sever
Hot flashes	3	7	3	2	0
Vaginal dryness	11	2	2	0	0
Palpitations	10	5	0	0	0
Fluctuations in blood pressure	12	2	1	0	0
Exhaustion	1	11	3	0	0
Heaviness in breast	10	2	2	1	0
Joint /Body Pain	6	4	5	0	0
Total	53	33	16	3	0

Table 1. The above table shows that Yoga Practitioners experienced the health issues symptoms like hot flashes, Vaginal dryness, Heart palpitation, fluctuation in blood

pressure exhaustion, heaviness in breast body pain, or joint pain 53 None, 33 Sometimes, 16 Mild and 3 Moderate and severity is 0.

Table 2: Non-yoga practitioner physiological health issues

Health Issues	None	Sometimes	Mild	Moderate	Sever
Hot flashes	1	5	5	2	2
Vaginal dryness	3	8	2	1	1
Palpitations	6	2	1	2	4
Fluctuations in Blood pressure	6	5	4	0	0
Exhaustion	0	2	5	5	3
Heaviness in Breast	5	5	4	1	0
Joint /Body Pain	5	6	1	3	0
Total	26	33	22	14	10

Table 2. The above table shows that Yoga Practitioners experienced health issues with symptoms like hot flashes,

Vaginal dryness, Heart palpitation, fluctuation in blood pressure exhaustion, heaviness in breast body pain, or joint

pain 26 None, 33 Sometimes, 22 Mild and 14 Moderate and severity is 10.

Summary and Conclusion

Menopause signifies the end of a women's reproductive potential capacity. It is the end of some 50 years of reproductive aging which is a process that unfolds from birth to the menopausal transition and the post-menopause that every female goes through in her life. This transition plays a very major role in causing many symptoms in middle age and may contribute to certain issues like osteoporosis, cardiovascular risk, stress, anxiety etc. (Sherman S, 2019). It is a very challenging period for women as menopause may occur when they are in their sandwich generation phase or are at the peak time of their careers.

The present study was conducted to study the effect of yoga on the health issues of menopausal women. Purposive selection of sampling was done. A sample of 72 participants was taken as the total sample population out of which 30 participants were re-interviewed, with an equal number of yoga practitioners and non-yoga practitioners (from each menopausal phase). It included women from different parts of India, who were between the age group of 35-60 years, who were either in their premenopausal, menopausal, or postmenopausal stage.

Data analysis showed that there was a difference between the severity of symptoms for yoga and non-yoga practitioners. Yoga practitioners group showed that those who practiced yoga since long time did not experience much severity of physiological and psychological menopausal symptoms. They experienced nearly no stress, anxiety, sleep disorder etc with decreased level of hot flashes, palpitations, vaginal dryness etc. Whereas Non Yoga practitioners who did not perform yoga at all with nearly no physical exercise, experienced moderate to severe level of menopausal symptoms like decreased energy in (93%) of women, decrease in physical strength and stamina (64.1%), muscles and joint pain (55.0%), hot flashes (60%), Night sweating (97%) etc. with increased severity of stress, anxiety and depression.

It was found out that both Yoga and Non yoga practitioners other than performing yoga or other physical exercise opted for some or the other lifestyle change after they entered menopausal phase of their life. Non yoga practitioners, after entering menopause made changes in their lifestyle.

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