

Effects of Yoga Prana Vidya intervention on psychological wellbeing and criminal attitude of under-trial prisoners

Venkata Satyanarayana Nanduri¹, Revathi Ram²

¹Consultant, Research & Publications, Yoga Prana Vidya Ashram, Sri Ramana Trust, Doddabbanur, Thally, Tamilnadu, India

²YPV Practitioner and Inspector of Police, KSPS, Chitradurga, Karnataka, India

ABSTRACT

Background: It is a general notion that rigorous isolation and custodial measures would reform the offenders of Law. Experience, however, contradicts this expectation and often imprisonment had the opposite effect. This study was conducted to test whether a known system of Yoga Prana Vidya (YPV) intervention can be applied for prisoners to increase their psychological well-being (PWB) and reduce the criminal attitude (CATS). **Materials & Method:** Pre and Post-test without control group design was adopted for the present study. A mixed method was used to collect the data to see the effect of a 3-month YPV intervention on 30 under-trial prisoners. For Quantitative part of study Psychological well-being (PWB) and Criminal Attitude Test (CATS) were used before and after the intervention. Statistical analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS. Qualitative research interviews were conducted on 10 participants out of the 30 and the interview notes were analyzed. **Results:** Statistical analysis of quantitative data showed that there was a significantly positive change in the PWB and CATS parameters after the intervention. The qualitative analysis yielded four themes: (1) YPV is a positively Life-changing phenomenon, easy to practice daily, (2) Clear Intention to sustain YPV practice after release from jail, (3) Desirous of promoting, helping and recommending YPV to others to learn and practice, and (4) Some challenges experienced by participants in the intervention. **Conclusions:** YPV intervention produced positive results for prisoners who practised regularly. It is recommended that Government agencies and Social Workers may consider these findings for appropriate implementation of YPV in their Prison reform efforts for reducing crime rate and recidivism.

Keywords: Prison, Breathing Exercises, Forgiveness Sadhana, Yoga Prana Vidya

INTRODUCTION

Criminal attitudes and activities of offenders are detrimental to the safety and security of the members of societies we live in. Crime control is the work of Legislature and Police, and punishing the guilty is the work of Judiciary. The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India website states – “Prisons/'persons detained therein' is a State subject under Entry 4 of List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. Administration and management of prisons is the responsibility of respective State Governments. However, the

Ministry of Home Affairs provides regular guidance and advice to States and UTs on various issues concerning prisons and prison inmates.”

Prisons are known to have existed throughout history and their existence can be traced back to the ancient period. It is commonly believed that rigorous isolation and custodial measures would reform the offenders. On the contrary, experience, however, contradicted this expectation and often imprisonment had the

Address for Correspondence:

Dr. Venkata Satyanarayana Nanduri
Consultant, Research & Publications, Yoga Prana Vidya Ashram, Sri Ramana Trust, Doddabbanur, Thally, Krishnigiri District, Tamilnadu
Pin – 635118 Email: vsnanduri@yahoo.com

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opposite effect. With the development of psychological and behavioural sciences, it began to be recognized that detention alone cannot ensure the reformation of offenders.^[1]

However, the criminal attitude of offenders is such that after they come out of the jails, they are very much prone to relapse and resume criminal activities. Although there are some service organizations which try to rehabilitate them, there is a great need to transform the prisoners and ex-convicts to live a normal life through proven reformatory processes. According to Vedit^[2] "The successful rehabilitation of the offender is the responsibility of the criminal justice system". Vedit further states, "It can safely be concluded that Indian Prison system has been shown to be counterproductive and it seems that it has also lost sight of a rehabilitative aspect of punishment", and, "the potential of probation, parole and furlough should be exploited to the maximum extent."^[2]

It appears essential to address the emotional and psychological well-being aspects of the prisoners and individuals with criminal attitude in order to bring about the much-needed transformation of such members of the society to achieve a reduction in crime rate. All do generally agree that punishing the criminals without actually addressing the root cause and emotional and psychological factors and imbalances would not be effective in reducing the overall crime rate.

According to Rote,^[1] the under-trial prisoners constitute a majority of the population in prisons than convicted prisoners. The undertrial prisoners are presumed to be innocent and most of them are discharged or acquitted after immeasurable physical and mental loss caused to them by detention due to delay in investigation and trial.

Prison reforms for reducing recidivism have been considered by various countries globally, for example, the USA Department of Justice, 2016.^[3] Social science research in the USA indicated that each inmate possesses his or her own "criminogenic factors," such as criminal history, substance abuse, and education level.^[4] Criminogenic needs are characteristics, traits, problems, or issues of an individual that directly relate to the individual's likelihood to commit another crime, such as low levels of

educational and employment performance, or substance abuse.

By identifying these factors as soon as an inmate enters custody, the Prisons' office can ensure that the individual receives appropriate services and can monitor his or her progress throughout the term of incarceration. Another research conducted in the USA shows that inmates who participate in correctional education programs have 43 percent lower odds of returning to prison than those who do not and that every dollar spent on prison education saves four to five dollars on the costs of re-incarceration.^[4]

In India, there are some programs initiated by various State governments for the reforms of the prisoners such as- educational facilities, prisoners' panchayats, Vocational training, Yoga and meditation, a facility for psychological treatment, etc. According to Harpreet^[5] the civil society and governments have to consider the role of non-custodial Methods in the reformation of prisoners. In India, some meditation organizations such as The Art of Living organization^[6] and Vipassana Research Institute have conducted prison program with a view to transforming the lives of people working in or incarcerated within the criminal justice system.^[7]

Yoga Prana Vidya System

YPV System is an integrated healing therapy for improving and sustaining good health in various ways (in terms of physical, emotional and psychological aspects) simultaneously. It consists of some self-practice techniques and additionally healing provided by a healer using energy-based non-touch procedures to heal the unregulated conditions. YPV is all about healing human beings and relieving people from various ailments including preventive healing for psychological ailments.

The YPV self-practice techniques comprise of integrated modules of Physical Exercises, Superbrain Asana, Breathing Exercises, Forgiveness Sadhana, meditation, and the right diet. The YPV System is a holistic approach with various healing protocols to assess and heal one's ailment by addressing the causes and making effort to heal the ailment. Recommended right diet is controlled vegetarian salt less diet; with at least once daily full fruit diet and it is an essential

protocol to be followed in YPV system. Through the practices of the YPV System, it is potentially possible to transform the entire locality. Such locality could be a village, district or city, based on the number of participants or practitioners.

YPV System has been proven to be very effective through decades of field practice. YPV healing protocols and techniques have been found to successfully treat and cure difficult medical cases,^[8] self-healing case of high blood cholesterol levels and asthma,^[9] addressing and resolving eye problems and achieving improvements of Vision,^[10] treating EXOSTOSIS of the ear without surgery,^[11] successful management of Post-Herpetic Neuralgia (PHN),^[12] treatment of heart block case-patient without surgery,^[13] management and control of diabetes,^[14] role of YPV in treating Emergency and First aid cases.^[15] A Review article ^[16] found that integrated YPV practice is a booster of immunity, also safe, easy and effective for senior citizens to stay healthy and fit holistically in physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions.

A survey of relevant literature revealed several studies using some form of Yoga and Energy Healing to rehabilitate prisoners. Some examples are; Positive outcome of a meditation program for prisoner rehabilitation,^[17] Use of energy healing,^[18] and Mindfulness exercise and meditation to address PTSD of inmates at a prison.^[19]

By some estimates more than half of the inmates held in jails and prisons in the United States have a substance use disorder.^[20] According to Lyons and Cantre^[20] treatments involving the teaching of meditation and other contemplative practices have been developed successfully for a variety of physical and mental disorders including drug and alcohol addiction. They further argue that in order to make a substantial impact on recidivism, such programs must mirror volunteer programs which emphasize interdependency and the building of meditation communities both inside and outside of prison. A study by Bleick and Abrams ^[21] found that Transcendental Meditation™ significantly reduced recidivism at 1 year and 6 mo. to 6 years after parole, whereas prison education, vocational training, and psychotherapy did not consistently reduce

recidivism. Himelstein's study^[22] observed that there is research that serves as evidence in favour of meditation-based programs as rehabilitative for incarcerated populations. Legal punishment of offenders does not necessarily change their mind-set, and they usually relapse and repeat their crimes. Experience shows that the practice of YPV system can enable the participants to transform the way they feel and think about themselves and society.

Aim of the study: To find out how the YPV System is helpful as a therapy to transform the Psychology Wellbeing and criminal attitude under-trial prisoners.

METHODOLOGY

Research design: Pre and Post-test without control group design was adopted for the present study. This was an interventional study that used Mixed methods both quantitative and qualitative investigation to see the effects of the intervention. For the quantitative part, two parameters, viz., psychological well-being and criminal attitude using valid and reliable psychometric scales were used. For the qualitative part, research interviews were conducted on selected participants and themes extracted using qualitative analysis to know how the YPV intervention worked for the sample participants of under-trial prisoners.

Population & Sample selection: The population for this study consists of people caught by police for criminal offences and held and kept in under-trial prison pending disposal of bail plea or final judgment after trial. Initially, a Sample of 48 under-trial prisoners from the Sub-Jail (42 males and 6 females) in Chitradurga, Karnataka, willing to participate in this study were enrolled. Most of them stated their mother tongue to be Kannada and a few others Hindi. Those speak other language or other communication challenges were not considered to be included. The investigators were informed that 18 out of 48 enrolled participants were released from the prison by the authorities during the course of the intervention on bail or some other reason and only 30 participants were available at the end of the intervention for data collection. There were 25 males with an age range from 19 to 70 years and mean age of 31.3 years and 5 females with age ranging from 30 to 50

years and mean age of 39.4 years (see Table 1). Informed consent of participants and permission from concerned Jail authorities were obtained before commencing fieldwork. Ethics clearance from IEC (Institutional Ethics committee) was also obtained before proceeding with fieldwork.

Table 1: Age- group-wise breakdown

| Age Group | Sex |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| 18 to 35 Youth 21(70%) | Females- 2, |
| | Males -19 |
| 36 to 55 Middle-aged 8(26.67%) | Females-3, |
| | Males – 5 |
| Above 65 Senior citizens 1(3.33%) | Male – 1 |

Particulars of YPV intervention conducted: The duration of the proposed intervention was three months. With the objective to effect positive changes in thinking and behaviour in them in respect of criminal attitude and psychological wellbeing, the following YPV techniques were used by the YPV trainer to train and guide the participants through an hour of daily practice, (1) Physical exercises, (2) Super-brain Asana, (3) Rhythmic Yogic breathing, (4) Forgiveness Sadhana and (5) Planetary Peace Meditation. It took approximately an hour daily when all of these techniques are practised in that sequence which is the recommended group practice for effective changes.^[9]

Quantitative data collection methods: The two parameters considered important in the quantitative part of this study are, (1) Criminal attitude, and (2) Psychological well-being, and the corresponding psychometric scales used are as described below.

(1) Criminal Attitude Scale (CATS): It was developed by Taylor;^[23] there are 15 statements in this scale which represent opinions some people hold. The participant was asked to say against each statement - “true” or “false” according to his/her own opinion. Then the response scored as per the key given. This scale is a sufficiently valid, reliable and useful psychometric tool for assessing the degree of criminality of any groups of offenders, in research projects in

which some degree of objectivity is required.^[23]

(2) Psychological Wellbeing: This is a 20 item four-factor measure of psychological well-being developed by Mehrotra et al.^[24] The distribution of the PWB 20 items-measure was normal and the overall scale had good internal consistency. According to Mehrotra et al., despite the fact that it was derived from a measure based on Ryff's six-dimensional models, the findings point to the possibility that their interpretations and relevance are likely to vary across cultures. Self-acceptance, mastery and competence, positive relations, engagement, and growth emerged as the four factors on a 20-item measure of psychological well-being developed through two field trials.

A team of four qualified members of the Chitradurga District Mental Health Program (DMHP), with specialization in Clinical psychology, Nursing and Social Work, were invited by the investigators to assist in the administration of psychometric scales pre and posttest. The DMHP team helped to interpret the questions/statements of the scales from English to Kannada/Hindi, and retrieve the responses from the participants. This was the most crucial part of data collection. Quantitative data analysis was carried out using IBM-SPSS software.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics comparing the means of the PWB scores showed an increase of 11% in this parameter at the end of the intervention. The statistical data analysis of Psychological well-being using paired t-test showed that there was a statistically significant change in the psychological well-being (p -value < .001), which is an improvement for participants attributable to practising Yoga Prana Vidya intervention.

From the descriptive statistics of the results of the Criminal Attitude Scale (CATS), it is observed that the mean values of pre and post-test data (-1.30, 0.70) showed a reduction of 153% in the criminal attitude of the participants. The paired t-test of pre and post-test data shows that the null hypothesis is rejected, as there is a statistically significant change in the means of pre and post-test scores (p values <.001). (See Table 1 below).

Table1: Pre-Post Comparison of Criminal Attitude and Psychological Wellbeing

| Paired Samples Test | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---|-------|-------|----|--------------------|
| Pre-post Test | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Criminal Attitude | -8.27 | 9.275 | 1.69 | -11.73 | -4.81 | -4.87 | 29 | .000 |
| Wellbeing | -2.0 | 2.97 | .54 | -3.11 | -.90 | -3.7 | 29 | .001 |

Qualitative Research data analysis

The research question this qualitative research is set to answer is, "How the under-trial prison participants perceived the phenomenon of Yoga Prana Vidya intervention and how they experienced it". Further to what the numbers in the quantitative analysis of measured parameters inform us about the effect YPV intervention had on participants; it will be interesting to know what the qualitative data analysis indicates. From the list of 30 participants who completed the intervention, 10 participants (8 men and 2 women) were randomly selected and qualitative research interviews were conducted individually in confidence with 12 semi-structured questions. They were asked to reflect on their experiences of the YPV intervention, how much daily practice they were able to do, what worked and how What did not work and why, their perception of the YPV as a new experience and individual outcome, and how they would like to take forward this learning after the intervention was over and returning to home after they get released from prison. Besides these 10 inmates of the prison, 2 participants who were released on bail were available and were interviewed by the investigators regarding their perceptions and experiences of the YPV intervention.

Due to the security rules administered by the prison authorities, the investigators were unable to audio record the 10 interview conversations. However, the investigators were allowed to keep written notes from the conversations. These 10 written notes together with the 2 recorded interviews of the participants released on bail formed the bulk of qualitative research data.

Qualitative data analysis emphasizes "sense-making" or understanding the phenomenon under investigation, rather than predicting or

explaining.^[25] Content analysis was used in this study to analyze the data and identify themes with regard to how the sample participants understood the phenomenon of YPV and what sense it made for them. The following four themes emerged in this analysis.

Theme 1 YPV is a positively Life-changing phenomenon, easy to practice daily: This theme emerged as the strongest theme in this study. All participants stated that before YPV intervention they were having conditions of a disturbed mind, bad/negative thoughts, sleeplessness, tension, body pains, anger and frustration, fear, anxiety about the case which affected their physical health, mental and emotional conditions. After they started participating, they were experiencing peace, good sleep, positive mind, reduced anger and frustration, felt less anxiety about the case, improved appetite and reduced digestive disorders, and friendly relations with others. Some quotes are given as examples here (pseudonyms are used for privacy of participants). Vicky availed maximum utilization of this program. He assumed leadership and formed a small group of inmates to practise together regularly. He said "Before, I was feeling very stressed. Now my mind became free, feel happy and relief from tension. If practised regularly, miracles can happen. I don't want to stop practising.

Theme 2 Clear Intention to sustain YPV practice after release from jail: Most participants were positive about their intention to continue practising YPV regularly after they return to homes after release. The principal reason they gave was YPV is helping them to keep peace in mind, to see things clearly and maintain calmness, which they consider as greatly adding value and meaning to their

lives. An example quote is given to her. *Kirit stated enthusiastically ... "exercise, breathing and meditation are so good, I will continue practice daily and also will share my knowledge with others through regularly practising and giving a demonstration. I cannot afford to lose the benefits of this practice, so I will continue after release."*

Theme 3. Desirous of promoting, helping and recommending YPV to others to learn and practice: In general, a majority of the interviewed participants stated that they were enthusiastic to teach YPV to others such as family and friends. One example quotes are given below. *Vicky – "I want to recommend and teach to my family and friends. I will convince them that they will be happy and healthy if practised regularly."*

The above themes arose from the generalizations of most participants. However, there were also some cases with divergent experiences and feelings which are included in this analysis. The theme relevant to this divergence is as stated below.

Theme 4 Some challenges experienced and overcome by participants in the intervention: Some participants were unable to participate and practice regularly and actively due to lack of clarity, some obstacles and worries. The women participants in particular and some males did not actively participate regularly because of subsuming emotional feelings and worries about their cases and being isolated from families. Some of them complained of physical body pains due to jail confinement which did not give them enough enthusiasm to participate in practice. Example quote is given here. *Mumtaj said... "I could participate only a few days. I was suffering from body pains and leg pains in Jail confinement. I could not sit or stand comfortably when I attempted to exercise. But what I found from my experience was doing breathing exercise occasionally; it is easy and helpful for more energy in the body and clear eyesight."*

DISCUSSION

We start this section with discussing the quantitative results of this study which was undertaken to establish the scientific validity of the improvements in psychological well-being and criminal attitude of under trial prisoners owing to YPV intervention of 3

months duration. The parameters measured were Psychological well-being (PWB) and Criminal Attitude Test (CATS). The statistical analysis of the PWB shows that the mean values of pre and posttest show an increase in the psychological wellbeing as a result of the YPV interventions. The statistical analysis shows that there is a statistically significant improvement in psychological wellbeing. This is a welcome sign which establishes acceptable evidence to introduce YPV program in prisons with expectations of improvements in the psychological well-being of prison inmates. In this study with PWB scale, the effect size might seem small and the main reason appears to be that YPV was not fully exploited by the participants throughout the duration of the intervention. It is noted that this scale, though based on Ryff's PWB scale,^[26] was modified and tested for validity in India using Indian samples.

Regarding the CATS test, comparing the mean values pre and posttest using descriptive statistics shows an improvement in the degree of criminality, which is an encouraging result. The statistical analysis using SPSS shows that there is a statistically significant change in the mean values. The CATS scale was developed and tested in the USA and to the best of the knowledge of the investigators; its use on Indian sample has not been tested yet. In the administration of this scale, the psychologist team had to interpret twice for language and comprehension to obtain responses from participants which are liable for errors in response recording. Another factor is the nature of CATS Scale which has questions that can provoke participants' minds to give erratic responses, not necessarily realistic responses. An emotionally disturbed inmate is likely to respond erratically. Despite these observations, there is strong evidence of an appreciable reduction in the degree of criminality of participants as a result of the YPV intervention of 3 months.

From Qualitative analysis, four themes emerged basing on the participants' experiences and perceptions of the YPV intervention. In the opinion of the investigators, the strongest theme is "YPV is a life-changing experience and easy to practice for most participants". Intention to sustain to continue practising further and being desirous of propagating to others are the other two

themes which support the main theme. The fourth theme arises from some challenges faced and overcome by the participants in the course of the intervention. From this, it is noted that some challenges were experienced by the participants in the course of the intervention but it did not deter them from accepting YPV's usefulness and feeling optimistic about taking it further into their lives. One important component of YPV, controlled vegetarian salt-free diet, could not be implemented in this intervention because the food arrangements for prisoners are constrained by administrative and Governmental rules governing this aspect.

In this study majority of the participants are youth in the age group 18 to 35 years. Youth are naturally high energy persons and prone to impulsiveness such that they get involved in law-breaking, intentionally or otherwise. Some studies in the USA found that nearly 70% of those detained on causes of breaking the law happen to be people with low literacy, as is also observed from this study.^[3] Youth are also quicker and eager to learn new concepts and adopt the same to brighten their lives, as is learned in this study.

CONCLUSION

From the qualitative analysis, we find that the major theme emerged is - "YPV is a positively Life-changing life-changing phenomenon, easy to practice daily" based on what most participants experienced and perceived it. The quantitative psychological well-being test also has shown that there is a statistically significant improvement in the psychological well-being with a reduction in criminal attitude as a result of YPV intervention. Exercise and breathing components of YPV enable improvements and maintenance of physical health. Superbrain Asana and meditation techniques of Forgiveness Sadhana and Planetary peace meditation help in psychological and emotional well-being. Thus YPV is an integrated system that causes holistic improvements in a person practising it. If it is possible to implement controlled salt-free YPV diet in prison experiment, soberer behaviours and a lesser degree of criminal attitude can be expected in the results. The investigators recommend that Government agencies and Social Workers may consider these findings for appropriate implementation

of YPV in their Prison reform efforts for reducing crime rate and recidivism.

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