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Effect of short term Shavasan practice on anxiety scores in young adults

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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken to find out the effect of short term Shavasan practice on anxiety scores in young medical students . A sample of 82 medical students, was drawn from the I MBBS batches and they were tested for subjective anxiety scores by using Rastogi's Self-evaluation scale for anxiety which measured three types of anxiety scores, state(ASS), trait(ATS) and free-floating anxiety(AFS). 42 students of study group were trained to perform Shavasan, a relaxation technique, for half an hour everyday for a period of twelve weeks. The

KEYWORDS : Anxiety score, Shavasan practice

Introduction:

The present age is an age of anxiety and stress. With advancement of knowledge, the need to learn more and retain more in a limited life-span has gained importance. This limitation of time has given rise to more anxiety. Therefore the need to study anxiety and all factors associated with it.

"Anxiety is the individual's reaction to the invasion of his conscious mind by irrational forces and images from the collective unconscious which serve as a threat to the orderly, stable existence of the individual", said Jung(1956)[1] in his definition of anxiety.

Giving importance to the stimulus of drive and considering its energizing function in their theory, some psychologists conducted studies relating anxiety with academic performance. They found that high anxiety groups are clearly superior in academic performance to the low anxiety groups.[2,3]

In today's cut-throat competition this theory holds great relevance for those individuals who strive for success. Anxiety for them acts as a driving force to better their performance.

Viewing both schools of thought the logical conclusion one can draw is that anxiety within reasonable limits inspires and drives the individual to reach the heights of excellence but once it exceeds these limits its unpleasant influence acts as a deterrent to the progress.

Since Freud's conceptualization of anxiety in 1894,clinical studies on anxiety have been conducted with increasing regularity[4]. There are two distinct aspects to the measurement of anxiety. Psychological tests are used with statements based on symptoms experienced during anxious states. These measure self-estimated subjective anxiety scores.

Anxiety being such an intense emotion is accompanied by a rise in arousal level and stimulation of the autonomic nervous system. As a result there is change in physiological parameters. These changes indicate the person's reactivity to stressful conditions. Examples of such parameters are changes in blood pressure, cardiac output, forearm blood flow, pulse volume and rate, heart rate, respiratory rate, Galvanic skin resistance, palmar sweat index, Electroecephalography, papillary reactivity, cold pressor test, stomach acid output and salivary secretion.[5]

As a result of extensive studies and research work a lot of thought is now being given to find effective means for reducing the tension and discomfort arising from anxiety. Physiologists, psychologists and even the common man today is aware that stress cannot be avoided since it is a part of living in a race against time. The only solution to reduction of anxiety is relaxation techniques which reduce the reactions to stress by preventing anxiety from reaching abnormally high levels.

Ancient Indian literature has described various methods of meditation. Among them yoga and transcendental meditation are popular. Biofeedback relaxation techniques are successful too. Regardless of the technique, all relaxation methods have one common goal; reduction of the response of the autonomic nervous system to stressful situations. These techniques train the individual to reduce the anxiety arising from the stress and strain of modern living.[6-9]

Medical students form a group that is required to perform at high levels of mental competence. They are required to take tough tests to gain admission to the course and are then subject to the unrelenting task of learning innumerable facts and to recall them at a moment's notice. Hence they are ideal to study the subjective anxiety scores and find effective means to reduce anxiety by practicing relaxation techniques like Shavasan.

To measure the anxiety scores, anxiety state score (ASS), anxiety trait score (ATS) and free-floating anxiety score (AFS) and to study the effect of short term practice of Shavasan on them.

Materials and Methods

The present study was undertaken in the Department of Physiology, Government Medical College, Jabalpur. A sample of 82 medical students, 42 males and 40 females, between the ages of 17 and 20 years was drawn from the I MBBS batches. The students were given the Anxiety tests.

For Anxiety tests Rastogi's self-evealuation scale for anxiety state, anxiety trait and free floating anxiety levels was used[10]. This test had three sections - Anxiety state score (ASS) : This part of the test had 20 statements pertaining to the transitory emotional state of the individual at the time of performance of the test. Anxiety trait score (ATS) : There were 28 statements in this section which were based on relatively stable personality disposition of the individual. Free-floating anxiety score (AFS): This section had 24 items which presented symptoms encountered in anxious patients that were "objectless" or "free-floating".

Scoring of the test: All the sections had some statements that were positive for anxiety, showing the subject to be anxious. Some statements were negative for anxiety showing the subject to be devoid of anxiety and in a relaxed state of mind. There were five response categories against each statement and were numbered serially from 1 to 5. The subject chose only one response to each item. In case of items positive for anxiety the weights assigned were the same as the numerals of the responses whereas in case of statements negative for anxiety, the weights assigned were the reverse of the numerals.

The final scores of each section were obtained by the sum of the weights given to each item. For a meaningful interpretation of the scores, the subjects were divided into five groups on the basis of the tables provided for each section of the test. The five groups were "average", "high", "very high", "low" and "very low". For the purpose of this study high and very high anxiety groups were grouped as "high" and low and very low anxiety groups were grouped as "low" thus forming three continuous groups of high, average and low anxiety levels.

After the above test 42 subjects were trained to perform Shavasan regularly for half an hour daily for a period of 12 weeks. The technique of

Shavasan is described as follows:

Technique of Shavasan :

The subject lies on the mat with arms and legs comfortably apart with eyes closed. Then he relaxes the different parts of the body by auto-suggestion. He remains in a relaxed state with eyes closed for half an hour. During this half an hour the subject dedicates himself and all his actions to the higher power and practices meditation. At the end of half an hour he slowly starts moving his fingers and toes and then hands and feet and opens his eyes then turns to the left lateral position before getting up. This is Datey's technique of Shavasan.[11]

40 students of control group were not given any training for Shavasan. Their anxiety scores were measured initially and then again after a period of 12 weeks.

Results:

Table no : 1 showing Anxiety scores after short term Shavasan practice in study group

Sr no	Observation	Mean	SD +/-	t Value	Sig
1.	Anxiety state score	45.12 41.21	12.29	2.06	Sig**
2.	Anxiety trait score	71.17 61.12	18.94	3.44	Highly Sig**
3,	Free-floating anxiety score	47.95 43.29	10.44	2.90	Highly Sig**

Table showed that all the Anxiety scores are reduced after short term Shavasan practice and the reduction is significant statistically.

Table no 2 showing Anxiety scores in control group

Sr no	Observation	Mean	SD +/-	t Value	Sig
1.	Anxiety state score	46.33 45.67	13.44	0.334	NS
2.	Anxiety trait score	70.25 70.78	12.32	0.665	NS
3,	Free-floating anxiety score	46.32 47.01	11.34	0.433	NS

Table showed that in control group, the change in anxiety scores after 12 weeks is not significant statistically.

Discussion

Anxiety of an individual has three facets to it. First is the anxiety state which denotes the existing anxiety level of the individual while he is undertaking a task in hand. This form of anxiety is likely to affect his performance while doing the task. Second is anxiety trait that is the habit of being anxious in general. This type of anxiety prepares the individual to undertake the given task with alertness and to avoid pitfalls while doing the task. Third is the free-floating anxiety which represents anxiety at a given moment but unrelated to the given task. A person maybe distracted because of the anxiety or may not be able to disregard the cause of anxiety while doing the given task. Of the three types of anxiety, the anxiety trait is likely to be the most important factor which will decide a person's overall performance.[12]

Results (Table 1,2)showed that all the three anxiety scores, anxiety state score, anxiety trait score and free-floating anxiety scores were reduced after short term practice of Shavasan in subjects of the study group, and the reduction was significant statistically. In subjects of the control group the change in anxiety scores after 12 weeks was not significant statistically. Hence subjective anxiety decreases after 12 weeks of Shavasan practice. These results are in agreement with other studies.

Zaichkowsky [7] evaluated the effect of 6 weeks relaxation program on state anxiety level and demonstrated a significant change in the experimental group as opposed to the control group.

Vishal et al[8] examined the effect of yogic practice on anxiety measured by psychological tests. After 6 months of yoga training there was a significant reduction in anxiety scores.

Jangid et al[9] studied the effect of 6 weeks practice of transcendental meditation on anxiety of normal individuals and found a significant decrease in anxiety scores.

The anxiety levels measured by Rastogi's Self-evaluation scale for anxiety state, trait and free-floating anxiety in male and female subjects are similar hence these two populations can be regarded as one with respect to anxiety. The reduction in anxiety levels after short term practice of Shavasan is also similar in males and females.

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