

# Yoga therapy for developing emotional intelligence in mid-life managers

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Business executives' lives have become a never-ending race against time, technology, and targets. This race creates tension, which leads to dissatisfaction and frustration and eventually manifests itself as psychological and physiological stress with mental and emotional drain. This modern lifestyle intensifies the stress leading to "excessive tension" and consequent deterioration in "executive efficiency."

**Objective:** To assess emotional intelligent quotient (EQ) in managers undergoing yoga-based Self Management of Excessive Tension (SMET) program.

**Materials and Methods:** 72 managers participated in this study which is of "single group pre-post design." The EQ test developed by Prof N. K. Chadha from University of Delhi was administered as pre and post the 5 days of SMET program.

**Statistical Analysis:** Means, standard deviations, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and Wilcoxon signed rank test were used to analyze the data.

**Results:** The data analysis showed 72.02% significant increase ( $P < 0.001$ ) in EQ.

**Conclusion:** The results suggest that participation in a SMET program was associated with improvement in EQ and may have implications for "executive efficiency."

**Key Words:** Executive efficiency, managers, self-management of excessive tension

## INTRODUCTION

Business executives' lives have become a never-ending race against time, technology, and targets. This race creates tension, which leads to dissatisfaction and frustration and eventually manifests itself as psychological and physiological stress with mental and emotional drain. This modern lifestyle intensifies the stress leading to "excessive tension" and consequent deterioration in "executive efficiency." Yoga does have the potential to provide physical, mental, and emotional health benefits to those who practice it with proper guidance.<sup>[1]</sup> A holistic and integrated stress management program called Self-Management of Excessive Tension (SMET) also called cyclic meditation has been investigated extensively to combat this modern lifestyle problem and thereby one can lead a holistic

way of living in health, harmony, and happiness.<sup>[2]</sup> Previous work on stress management educational program reported significant improvement in the subjective well being inventory (SUBI) scores of the 77 subjects within a period of 10 days as compared to controls. These observations suggest that a short lifestyle modification and stress management educational program can make an appreciable contribution to primary prevention as well as management of lifestyle diseases.<sup>[3]</sup> Previous study on SMET reported a decrease in occupational stress levels and baseline autonomic arousal in managers, suggesting significant reduction in sympathetic activity<sup>[4]</sup> and better emotional well-being in them.<sup>[5]</sup> No previous investigation has systematically evaluated the effect of SMET program (in a residential

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set-up program) on emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) in managers. Hence, we have designed the present study to assess the efficacy of 5 days SMET program on managers using EQ test.

### Objectives

To assess EQ in managers undergoing 5 days yoga-based SMET program.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Subjects

The subjects for the study were 72 managers (63 males and 9 females) with  $48.75 \pm 3.86$  years of mean age. They were selected from the groups of managers of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited based on the following criteria.

### Inclusion criteria

Age between 45 and 60 years (males and females), physically and mentally fit, normal health as declared by the physician.

### Exclusion criteria

Taking medication, using any other wellness strategy.

Routine clinical examinations showed that all of them were in normal health; none were using any other wellness strategy. All of them had high-fiber low-fat vegetarian diet and no caffeinated drinks, alcohol, or tobacco in any form during the 5 days residential SMET program. We got the participants'

**Table 1: Interpretation of scores**

Score	Percentile	Interpretations
285 and above	P-90	Extremely high E.Q.
250-274	P-75	High E.Q.
200-249	P-50	Moderate E.Q.
150-199	P-40	Low E.Q.
149 and below	P-15	Try some other day

**Table 2: The schedule of the self-management of excessive tension program**

Time	Activity	Time	Activity
05.00 AM	Ablution	03.00 PM	SMET lecture session 2
05.30 AM	Prayer (Prathasmaran)	04.00 PM	SMET practice (Cyclic meditation)
06.00 AM	Asana / Special yoga technique	05.00 PM	Tuning to nature
07.15 AM	Friendship meet (Maitri milan)- Gita sloka chanting and discourse (Satsang)	06.00 PM	Devotional session (Bhajan)
08.00 AM	Breakfast	06.45 PM	MSRT (Mind sound resonance technique)
09.30 AM	SMET lecture session 1	07.30 PM	Dinner
10.30 AM	SMET practice (Cyclic meditation)	08.30 PM	Happy assembly (yoga game session)/cultural program
11.30 AM	Milk or ayurvedic tea (Malt)	09.15 PM	Group discussion/self practice
12.05 PM	Special yoga techniques	10.00 PM	Lights off
01.00 PM	Lunch and rest		

signed consent after explaining to them the variables we would record and the design of the study. The Institutional Review Board had also approved the project.

### Design

A single group pre-post study.

### Assessments

In this study we have used the EQ questionnaire test developed by Prof N. K. Chadha.<sup>[6]</sup> The test has 15 real-life situations based on 5-point scale rating and then finally obtained scores that was converted into percentile score [Table 1].

This test is useful to measure emotional dimensions like emotional competency, emotional maturity, and emotional sensitivity. This test has been standardized for Indian population (professional managers, businessmen, bureaucrats, artists, and graduate students) and used widely in research and elsewhere. It has a reliability of 0.94 and validity of 0.92.

### Intervention

All the subjects participated in the SMET program for 5 days [Tables 2 and 3].

SMET combines “stimulating” and “calming” practices. It is based on an ancient yogic text, Mandukya Upanishad Karika, which suggests that this combination is the essence of all yoga practices, and would be helpful to release stress, achieve mental equilibrium and emotional balance.<sup>[2]</sup> The set of practices known as cyclic meditation (CM) is an integral component of SMET, consisting of cycles of yoga postures for providing stimulation at the grossest level followed by periods of supine rest-based relaxation.<sup>[7]</sup>

**Table 3: Lecture session during self-management of excessive tension program**

Day	Session 1	Session 2
1	Concept of stress	Stress-induced problems and management
2	Stimulation- Relaxations	Stress and its management according to yoga
3	Stress levels and its release	Recognition of stress is half the solution
4	Executive growth	Depth of perception and awareness
5	Group awareness	Progress in tune with nature

**Table 4: Data analysis**

Variable	Mean $\pm$ Standard deviation		Percentage change	P
	Before SMET (Pre)	After SMET (Pre)		
EQ	137.78 $\pm$ 36.24	237.01 $\pm$ 34.12	72.02	0.0001*

\*Significant at 0.001 level

### Data collection

The EQ data was collected before (pre) and after (post) the 5 days SMET program.

### Analysis

Statistical analysis was done with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences [SPSS]-16. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the data were not normally distributed. We used the Wilcoxon signed rank test to compare means of the data collected before (pre) and after (post) the SMET program [Table 4].

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis showed 72.02% significant increase ( $P < 0.001$ ) in EQ. Persons with high EQ may strike a balance between emotion and reason, are aware of their own feelings, show empathy and compassion for others, and have high self-esteem which may be instrumental in many situations in the workplace and can help achieve organizational effectiveness.<sup>[8]</sup>

Recent research has shown a positive relationship between EQ and workplace success.<sup>[9]</sup> Previous study on yoga reported enhanced EQ as a result of the practice of yoga way of life. The results indicate the importance of yoga as an integral element in improving managerial performance in organizations.<sup>[10]</sup> The present study is consistent with these findings, indicating that a systematic adoption of the SMET program can result in better EQ among managers for “executive efficiency,” thus paving

the way for their better performance as managers.

## CONCLUSION

The results from this study suggest that participation in the SMET program was associated with improvement in EQ and may have implications for “executive efficiency.” Because before and after designs limit inferences about intervention effects, further research is warranted to explore the effects of SMET program for stress management using a larger, randomized controlled trial.

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