



A Study of Awareness of Patanjali Yoga Sutra Among Certified Yoga Teachers of Iran

Ghazale Adampour¹ and Chinmay Pandya²

¹Yoga Teacher, Viveka Yoga Academy, Iran

²Pro Vice Chancellor, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya, Haridwar, India

Abstract. Yoga, with its roots in ancient Indian philosophy, has become a widely practiced discipline around the world. One of the most significant texts in the yoga tradition is the Patanjali Yoga Sutra, which outlines the philosophy, ethics, and techniques of yoga. Despite its historical and philosophical importance, the awareness and understanding of the Yoga Sutra among contemporary yoga instructors remain underexplored, particularly in regions like Iran, where yoga is a relatively new phenomenon. This study aims to investigate the level of awareness, understanding, and application of the Patanjali Yoga Sutra among certified yoga instructors in Iran. A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing a structured survey (16 questions) to assess the knowledge of key principles, philosophical teachings, and practices from the Yoga Sutra. The sample included 115 yoga practitioners who were certified by recognized institutions and had at least one year of teaching experience. A structured survey of 115 certified yoga instructors in Iran revealed a surprising familiarity with core concepts such as “Chitta Vritti Nirodha,” understood by 73% of participants, and “Ahimsa,” correctly identified by 92%. However, broader knowledge of the Yoga Sutras was notably lacking. For instance, 67.8% of participants were unable to distinguish the Sutras from other classical yoga texts, and 61.7% were unaware of the number of chapters in the text. These findings highlight that while certain foundational concepts have been well integrated into practice, a deeper understanding of the Sutras’ structure, broader topics, and historical context remains limited. The study underscores the importance of enhanced educational initiatives to equip yoga instructors with a more comprehensive grasp of Patanjali’s philosophy, enriching their teaching and practice.

Keywords. Patanjali Yoga Sutra, Certified Yoga Instructors, Iran, Yoga philosophy, Yoga education

CORRESPONDENCE

Ghazale Adampour, Yoga Teacher, Viveka Yoga Academy, Iran

Chinmay Pandya, Pro Vice Chancellor, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya, Haridwar, India
provce@dsvv.ac.in

PUBLISHED BY

Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya, Gayatrikunj-Shantikunj, Haridwar, India

OPEN ACCESS

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Introduction

Yoga, a discipline with roots in ancient Indian philosophy, has become a global practice with various interpretations and approaches. Among the most important texts in the tradition of yoga is the Patanjali Yoga Sutra, a classical treatise that outlines the philosophy, ethics, and techniques of yoga [1–3]. Despite its significance, the awareness and understanding of the Patanjali Yoga Sutra among yoga practitioners in modern contexts remain underexplored. This study aims to investigate the level of awareness, understanding, and application of the Patanjali Yoga Sutra among yoga practitioners in Iran, a region with a growing yoga community. The research will explore how this ancient text influences contemporary teaching and practice, especially in a country where yoga is a relatively new phenomenon.

Research Design

This research employs a quantitative design to examine the awareness and understanding of the Patanjali Yoga Sutra among yoga practitioners in Iran. A structured survey will be used to collect data on various aspects of the Yoga Sutra, including its key principles, practices, and philosophical teachings. By gathering responses from yoga practitioners, the study will provide valuable insights into how deeply these teachings are integrated into their professional practice and whether they are effectively communicating them to students.

Target Population and Sampling

The target population for this study consists of yoga practitioners in Iran who are currently teaching or practicing yoga. A purposive sampling method will be used to select participants, ensuring that only those who meet the inclusion criteria—certified by recognized yoga institutions and with at least one year of teaching experience—are surveyed. This approach will help gather data from experienced and qualified teachers. The sample size for this survey was 115 yoga practitioners (Figure 1).

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected through a structured survey questionnaire (listed as following) that assesses participants' knowledge and awareness of the Patanjali Yoga Sutra. The questionnaire included questions about the basic principles of yoga philosophy, their understanding of the Sutra's teachings, and their application of these teachings in their yoga practice and teaching methods. The questionnaire was distributed online via platforms such as Google Forms, ensuring that it reaches a diverse group of yoga practitioners across Iran. This method will allow for a wide geographical distribution of participants while maintaining ease of access and response.

- Which Generation do you belong to?
- What is your gender?
- How many years have you been teaching yoga?
- Which institution certified you as a yoga instructor? (multiple)
- What style of yoga do you teach?
- Have you ever participated in workshops or courses focused on yoga philosophy?
- Have you ever heard of Patanjali Yoga Sutra?
- How did you first learn about Patanjali Yoga Sutra?
- How familiar are you with the principles of Patanjali Yoga Sutras? (1: not familiar-10: very familiar)
- Patanjali Yoga Sutra is a part of Hatha Yoga Pradipika.
- How many chapters does Patanjali Yoga Sutra have?
- “Chitta Vritti Nirodha” refers to...
- How many principles are there in Yama?
- Which of the following refers to “Yama”?
- “Sthirasukhamasanam” refers to...
- What does “Ahimsa” mean?

Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the data collection process, and their voluntary participation. They were made aware that their participation or non-participation would not affect their professional standing or any relationship with their yoga certification institutions. An informed consent form was provided to each participant prior to survey completion. The data was anonymized, and no personal identifying information was included. Participants were assured that their responses would be used only for the purposes of the research.

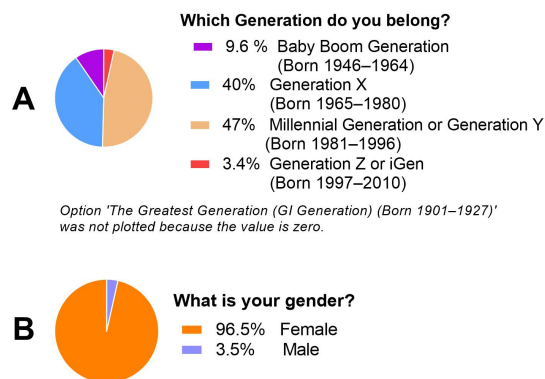


Figure 1: Generational Distribution (A) and Gender Distribution of Certified Yoga Instructors who participated in the survey (B); n=115.

Data Analysis

sections to comprehensively analyze their demographic characteristics, certification background, and knowledge of yoga, particularly the Patanjali Yoga Sutra. The participants' answers are illustrated in Figures 1 through 4:

Figure 1 is for demographic profile of yoga instructors in Iran, showing distribution by generational cohort, gender, and years of teaching experience. This figure provides insights into the age groups, gender balance, and professional experience of the surveyed participants.

Figure 2 is for certification background and teaching styles of yoga instructors illustrating their certifying institutions, the types of yoga they teach, and their participation in workshops or courses focused on yoga philosophy. This figure

highlights the professional training and specialization of the participants.

Figure 3 is for General knowledge of the Patanjali Yoga Sutra among yoga instructors, depicting their awareness of the text, initial sources of learning, and familiarity with its core principles. This figure provides an overview of their foundational understanding of the Patanjali Yoga Sutra.

Figure 4 is for Detailed knowledge of the Patanjali Yoga Sutra, including participants' understanding of key concepts such as "Chitta Vritti Nirodha," "Yama," and "Ahimsa," as well as the number of chapters and principles within the text. This figure showcases their in-depth comprehension of the ancient yoga philosophy.

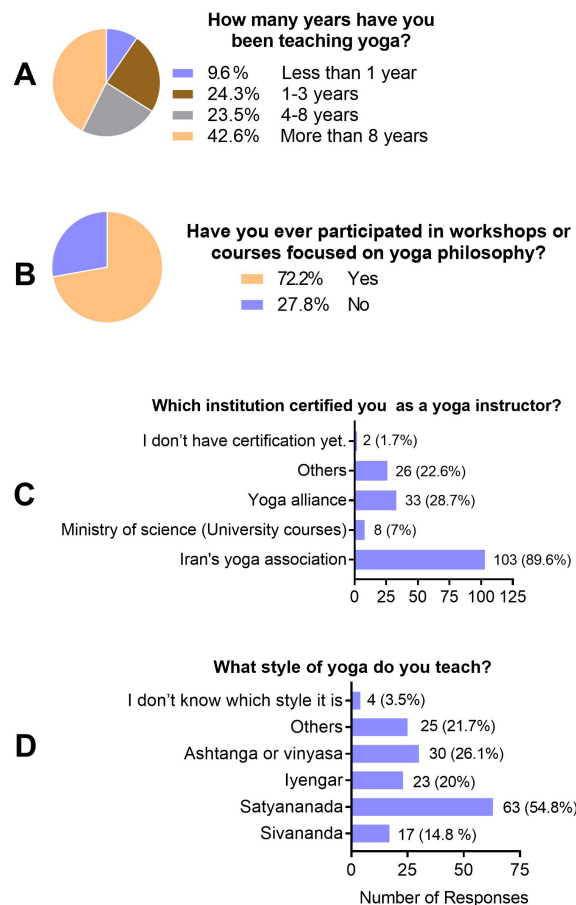


Figure 2: Certification and experience background of certified Yoga teachers in Iran: teaching experience (A), participation in workshops (B), certifying institutions (C), and yoga they teach (D); n=115

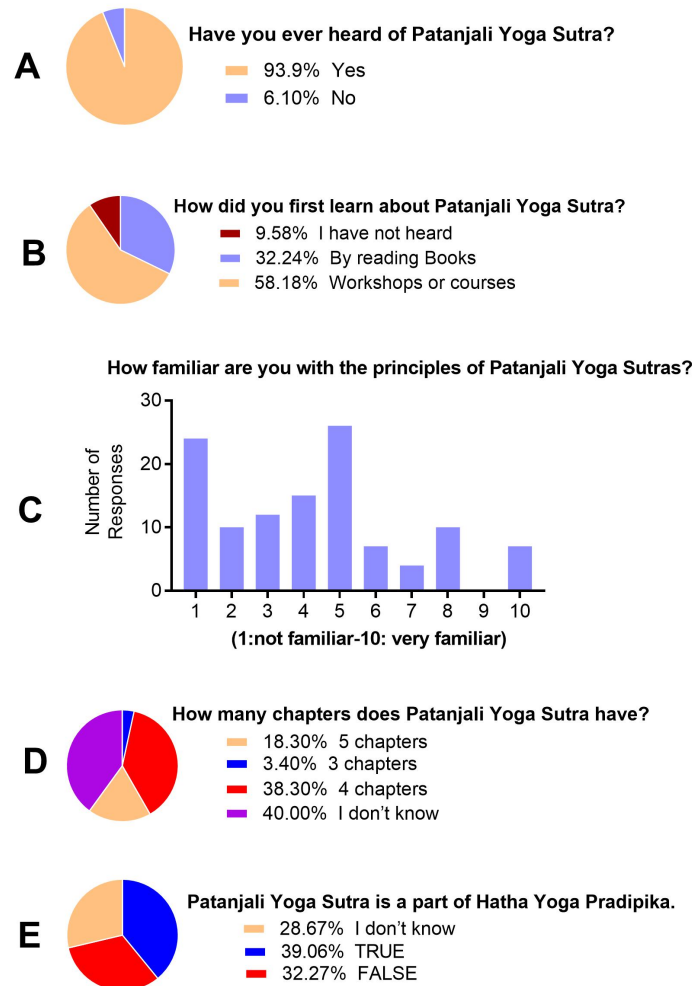


Figure 3: Basic knowledge of the Patanjali Yoga Sutra among yoga instructors: Awareness of the text (A), initial sources of learning (B), and familiarity with its core principles and fundamental understanding (C, D,E) of the Patanjali Yoga Sutra; n=115

Discussion and Conclusion

This study demonstrated that the awareness of yoga instructors in Iran regarding the "Patanjali Yoga Sutras" exists at different levels. The majority of participants in this survey belong to Generation X and the Millennials (Figure 1A). 42.6% of participants have more than eight years of experience in teaching yoga (Figure 2A). 72.2% have participated in the courses related to Yoga philosophy (Figure 2B). 6.1% have never heard about Patanjali Yoga Sutra (Figure 3A).

Despite the fact that many of the instructors participating in this survey reported hav-

ing attended courses on the philosophical aspect of Yoga (Figure 2B), and 47% of the participants rated their awareness of the text above 5 out of 10 (Figure 3C), 61.7% did not know how many chapters it has (Figure 3D), and 67.8% of the participants were unable to distinguish that the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali are not part of the Hatha Yoga Pradipika! (Figure 3E).

Although when we began asking about certain concepts from the Sutras, we observed a different situation. 73% answered correctly about the meaning of "Chitta Vritti Nirodha" (Figure 4A), 92% knew the meaning of Ahimsa (Figure

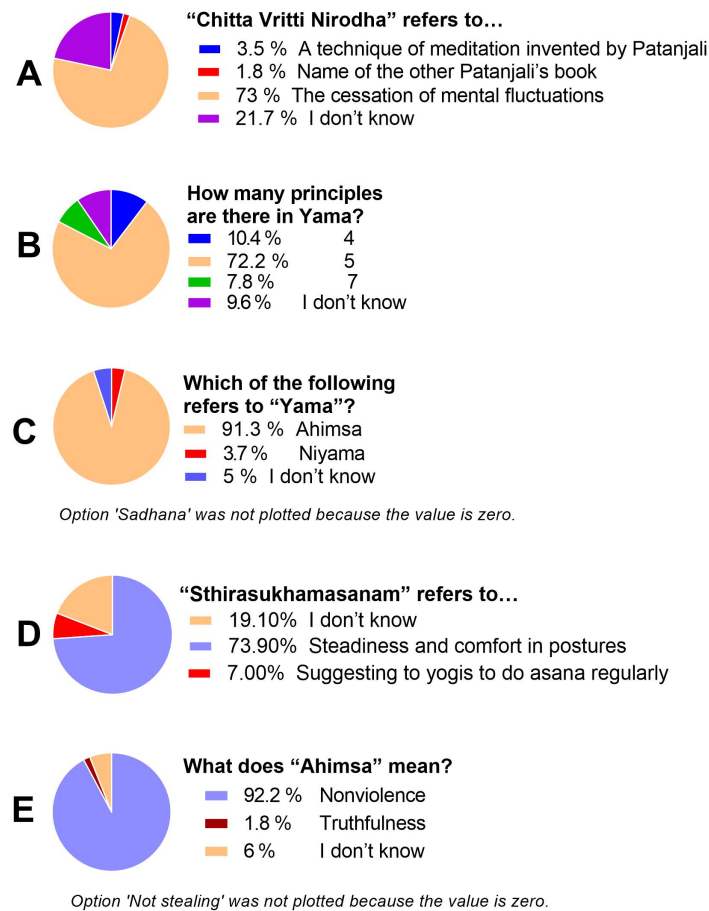


Figure 4: Detailed knowledge of the Patanjali Yoga Sutra; understanding of key concepts such as “Chitta Vritti Nirodha”, (A), “Yama” (B, C), “Sthirasukhamasanam” (D) and “Ahimsa” (E) This figure showcases their in-depth comprehension of the ancient yoga philosophy; n=115

4B-C, 4E), and around 74% knew the meaning of “Sthira Sukham Asanam” (Figure 4D).

It seems that some concepts from the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali have been well integrated among yoga instructors in Iran, but they don't know about broader topics and the historical context.

Compliance with ethical standards Refer 'Ethical Considerations' in Research Design.

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. **Financial support and sponsorship** None.

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