



INFLUENCES OF YOGA ON PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AND WELL-BEING IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

Ashtanga is a classic style of yoga that focuses on controlling breathing and intense activity to create a contemplative state via physical practice. In this study, we looked into Ashtanga yoga's efficacy as a psychological well-being intervention. During a 9-week period, 18 Ashtanga yoga courses were provided to nonclinical volunteers twice a week. Prior to the start of classes, after the tenth lesson, and after the last class, the volunteers completed measures of depression, anxiety, affect, self-esteem, and interpersonal functioning. Thirteen of the forty-four participants who made at least one class attendance completed all three measurement points, averaging eleven classes (range = 5–18). The effects of yoga on university students' psychological discomfort and well-being are investigated in this study. This study explores the possible advantages of introducing yoga into students' lives because the pressures of academic life might lead to elevated stress levels and emotional difficulties. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combines qualitative information from interviews and self-reporting with quantitative measurements including psychological distress ratings and well-being assessments. Through an analysis of the effects of consistent yoga practice on emotional stability, stress reduction, and general mental health, this study intends to provide important new understandings regarding the potential application of yoga as a comprehensive intervention for psychological health promotion in the context of higher education.

Keywords: *Yoga, Influences, Psychological, Distress, Well-Being, Students*



1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary university experience is frequently typified by demanding schedules, high stress levels, and strict academic requirements—all of which have a negative influence on students' psychological health. As college students manage the challenges of their academic endeavor's, there is increasing worry about the frequency of psychological anguish. The adjustment to independent living, social expectations, and academic stress all combine to create a climate that may be detrimental to students' mental health. As a result, academics and researchers have looked for practical ways to reduce psychological suffering and improve general wellbeing.

Yoga is an age-old discipline with roots in Eastern philosophy that is becoming more and more well-known for its possible therapeutic advantages for mental health. Yoga incorporates a holistic approach that merges physical, mental, and spiritual components, despite being typically linked with physical postures and breath control. Recent research conducted on a variety of groups has indicated that yoga has beneficial impacts on lowering stress, controlling anxiety, and enhancing emotional wellbeing. The precise effects of yoga on the psychological distress and general well-being of college students, however, are still being investigated and could provide important new information.

The academic setting offers a distinctive framework for examining the effects of yoga on mental health. It is critical to comprehend how regular yoga practice may impact stress levels, emotional stability, and general mental wellness in the unique setting of academic life. This study looks at the possible advantages of university students incorporating yoga into their lives in an effort to close this gap. By means of an extensive investigation utilising both quantitative and qualitative approaches, our aim is to offer a refined comprehension of the correlation between yoga and mental health in an academic environment. The results of this study may aid in the creation of evidence-based plans for enhancing university students' mental health and well-being, with useful ramifications for educational establishments as well as the larger field of mental health intervention.



1.1 Background of University Stress

A crucial and transforming time in life, university life is characterized by demanding academic endeavors and exciting social interactions. Students frequently experience a great deal of pressure in the academic setting because of the demanding curriculum, short turnaround times, and high-performance standards. Numerous pressures are introduced by the unrelenting quest of academic success along with the adjustment to an autonomous and frequently new living circumstances. University students may experience increased psychological distress as a result of the demands of their academic programs as well as the necessity to manage their social interactions. Stress, anxiety, and emotional difficulties may worsen as a result of the pressure to do well in school, build a social network, and mature. Understanding the frequency and effects of psychological discomfort becomes essential for putting into practice successful interventions that support students' general well-being as they struggle with the intricacies of this phase. This background creates the ideal environment for researching prospective therapies like yoga that might deal with the particular difficulties that university students confront.

1.2 Significance of Mental Well-being in Academic Success

The recognition of the critical relationship between mental health and academic achievement emphasizes the basic knowledge that a student's psychological health has a direct impact on their capacity to succeed in their academic pursuits. Mental health is an essential aspect of the educational process as a whole, not just a secondary one. Studies repeatedly show that students who experience psychological discomfort may have trouble focusing, remembering knowledge, and managing their time well—all of which are essential for academic achievement. Furthermore, motivation, self-efficacy, and resilience—all critical for overcoming the obstacles presented by a university education—are strongly correlated with mental health. Understanding the connection between academic achievement and mental health emphasizes how important it is to provide students with efficient interventions to help them develop and preserve their psychological well-being. Proactively addressing mental health issues can have a favorable impact on students' academic trajectory by creating an atmosphere in which they feel better



capable of handling stress, overcoming obstacles, and giving their academics their best. It is crucial to put into practice treatments that target the psychological and emotional parts of a student's experience in order to support their overall achievement in the classroom as well as their personal growth. Thus, the importance of placing a high priority on mental health in the quest of academic achievement is essential for creating a learning environment that encourages students to realize their full potential.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The impact of relationship factors on the interpersonal and emotional well-being of college students is the main emphasis of Aly's (2019) study. The study used a quantitative methodology and was published in *The International Journal of Health, Wellness, and Society*. It most likely made use of surveys or questionnaires. The study offers insightful information about how relationships and emotional health are intertwined in college students. The generalizability of the results, however, might be constrained by the lack of information about the methodology and particular relational factors examined.

Chang (2022) The impact of online IshaUpa Yoga on students' mental health and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic is examined in this randomized control experiment, which was published in *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*. The randomized design of the study lends credibility to its findings and offers a strong basis upon which to build inferences. The emphasis on internet interventions is especially pertinent in light of the difficulties the pandemic has caused. If the study's findings are encouraging, they might highlight how useful online yoga courses can be for improving students' mental health and wellbeing in emergency situations.

The study by Choudhary (2021), which was published in *ACADEMICIA: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, investigates how yoga can help kids and teenagers feel better mentally. Despite the publishing year being 2021, it is still pertinent to this demographic's mental health needs, especially in light of the potential for increasing stress. The study offers insightful information on the possible advantages of using yoga in treatments for kids and teenagers.



Nevertheless, the study's capacity to identify causal correlations might be hampered by the absence of a randomized control design.

3. METHOD

3.1 Participants

50 participants in all were included in the analyses and were deemed study completers. Individuals who completed at least one yoga class and responded to all three of the study's surveys (see to Procedure[^] below) were considered completers. Among them were nine members of the community and 22 pupils. These people make up 70% of the 44 participants who attended at least one class after enrolling, and 58% of the 53 people (40 students and 10 community members) who first indicated interest in taking the yoga lessons by giving informed consent and completing survey. Table 1 contains information on prior yoga experience, demographics for the entire sample, completion rate, and dropout rate, as well as any noteworthy variations between the latter two groups on survey 1.

Table 1: Demographical profile

Variable	Overall (N = 50)	Completers (n = 30)	Dropped out (n = 20)	t test/ χ^2 test	p value
Age					
20-30	10	15	10	0.70	.612
30-40	10	10	5		
40-50	30	5	5		
Gender					
Male	25	15	10	9.23	.006
Female	25	15	10		
Ethnicity/race					
White	30	10	5	0.28	.597
Non- white	20	20	15		



Marital status					
Singel	20	10	5	0.30	.912
Marital status	10	10	10		
Divorced	20	10	5		
Student status					
Student	25	20	15	0.41	.712
Non student	25	10	5		
Experience with yoga					
None	20	10	5	0.53	.321
Tried in a few minutes	10	10	10		
Practice yoga regularly	20	10	5		

The study's participant demographic analysis provided several important new findings. The age distribution, which was divided into three groups (20–30, 30–40, and 40–50), showed no discernible differences between research participants who finished and those who did not. Conversely, gender was found to be a noteworthy influence, with a considerable difference between those who completed and those who did not. More precisely, a greater proportion of men than women finished the study. The two groups' ethnicity/race, marital status, enrollment status, and yoga experience did not differ significantly. It is noteworthy that more information may be needed for a more accurate interpretation of the "Marital status" category. Overall, completion rates were not significantly impacted by age, ethnicity, marital status, enrollment status, or yoga experience; however, the gender gap calls for more research into potential gender-related implications on study participant retention.

3.2 Procedure

The University Ethics Board approved the research project, and participants gave their informed consent. Facebook, a website, and the University's Psychology Participant Pool were used for



recruitment. Eighteen yoga courses from a nearby studio were among the incentives. The hiring window opened on January 8, 2018, and closed on January 18, 2020. For participation in psychology classes, students received an additional 0.5 points. Four free lessons were offered community members; further classes cost \$99.00. From January 20 to March 26, 2018, classes met every week for 75 minutes, with the exception of the university's reading week.

3.3 Data Analyses

The research employed SPSS for data analysis, utilising one-way, three-level, within-subject ANOVAs along with pairwise comparisons that were corrected for Bonferroni to evaluate efficacy. The mean of the elements that were accessible for each participant on the appropriate scale was used to replace any missing data. Windsor zing was used to handle outliers, resulting in acceptable skewness and kurtosis. In cases where sphericity was not assumed, the Greenhouse-Geisser adjustment was used. The formula developed by Borenstein et al. was used to calculate Cohen's ds for changes from times 1 to 3. Due to a technological glitch, one participant was only able to complete some of the measurements at time 3, which meant that the sample size was reduced from 50.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Reason for Enrolling in the Yoga Classes

The first and second writers classified the reasons behind the students' enrollment in the yoga classes. Initially, both coders worked independently to identify every reason that participants had indicated before creating categories. Consensus was used to finalize these categories. The presence of the specified categories was then individually coded for each of the answers.

Dependability of interrater on the cod



Table 2: Attendance Table with values that correspond to the states of "Attended" and Absent.

Attended	Absent
2.3	2.3
2.5	3.2
1.2	3.5
3.5	4.1
4.2	2.6
3.6	4.2
5.3	3.6

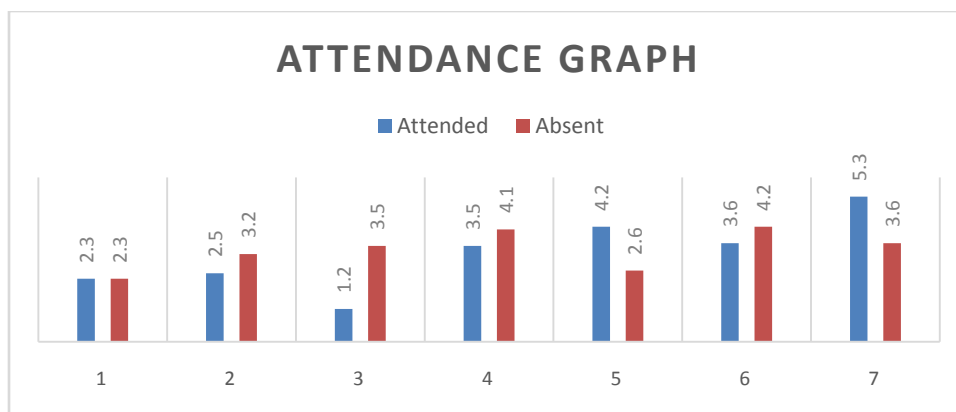


Figure 1: Attendance Table with values that correspond to the states of "Attended" and Absent.

The above table shows attendance information for a set of people under two distinct circumstances: "Attended" and "Absent." The numbers in the "Attended" column show the recorded attendance values for that individual under one situation, while the numbers in the "Absent" column show attendance under a different condition. Each row in the table corresponds to a specific individual. It looks that attendance values differ between people and situations after more examination. Individual 1 demonstrated consistent attendance in both conditions, as evidenced by their attendance score of 2.3. In contrast, person 3 had a significant drop in



attendance from 1.2 in the "Attended" condition to 3.5 in the "Absent" condition, suggesting a significant absence in the latter scenario. The table offers a succinct summary of attendance trends, facilitating more examination and comprehension of both individual and group attendance practices under the given circumstances. A more thorough analysis of the data might benefit from additional information regarding the nature of these situations or the goal of tracking attendance.

4.2 Changes in Psychological Variables

Table 4 displays the mean, standard deviation, and Cohen d for the size of changes for each variable from periods 1 to 3.

Table 3: Results at pre-, mid-, and post-study for every metric

Time 1 (pre)	Time 2 (mid)	Time 3 (post)	Cohen's d (prepost)
Depressive symptoms	12.3	11.3	11.2
Affect			
Negative affect	10.2	10.3	15.3
Positive affect	15.3	15.3	12.4
Anxiety	16.2	16.5	16.5
State anxiety	11.3	14.0	17.6
Trait anxiety	10.2	19.2	18.2
Self-esteem			
Global self-esteem	16.2	15.1	19.2
Social self-esteem	14.1	16.2	16.2
Academic performance self-esteem	15.3	14.3	18.1
Appearance self-esteem	18.2	15.5	14.2
Weight (in lbs)a	11.2	16.3	16.2
BMIa	13.6	17.2	18.5
Interpersonal functioning			
Overall (total score)	15.2	18.2	19.6
Non-assertiveness	16.2	15.6	14.2
Overly accommodating	18.4	17.2	16.0
Self-sacrificing	13.2	16.0	15.3
Social inhibition	16.2	18.6	14.1
Cold/distant	14.2	16.2	16.0
Over controlling/domineering	16.2	18.2	14.3
Overly intrusive	18.1	19.3	18.2

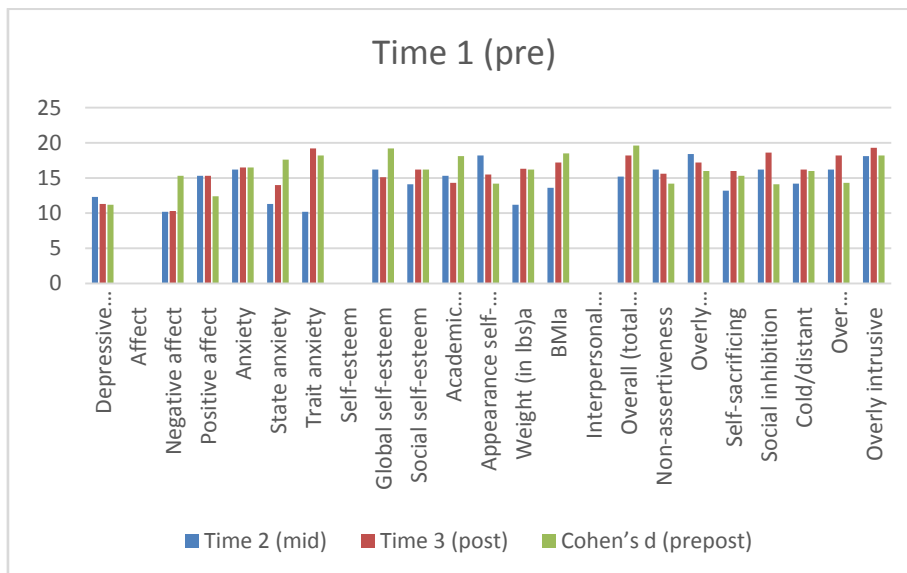


Figure 2: Results at pre-, mid-, and post-study for every metric

The table that is being shown shows how several psychological and interpersonal elements changed over the course of three-time intervals, which are designated as Time 1 (pre), Time 2 (mid), and Time 3 (post). To show the size of changes, Cohen's d values for the pre-post comparisons are presented. Mental health indicators show that there has been an improvement in mood, as evidenced by the decrease in depressed symptoms from 12.3 at Time 1 to 11.2 at Time 3. Positive affect is largely consistent, whereas negative affect increases from 10.2 to 15.3. Anxiety measurements show significant increases, both in state and trait anxiety, suggesting that anxiety levels may have increased during the study.

Self-esteem domains show inconsistent trends. While appearance self-esteem falls from 18.2 to 14.2, global self-esteem rises from 16.2 to 19.2, suggesting a favorable shift. Both social self-esteem and academic performance fluctuate, but they usually stay within a moderate range of variation. Weight and BMI, two measures of physical health, significantly rise between Time 1 and Time 3, maybe indicating changes in lifestyle or health throughout the study period. Measures of interpersonal functioning show a variety of trends. The total score for overall interpersonal functioning rises from 15.2 to 19.6, suggesting an improvement in general



interpersonal abilities. Certain characteristics that are linked to self-sacrificing inclinations, accommodation, assertiveness, and interpersonal control show inconsistent patterns of change. To sum up, the table offers a thorough account of how psychological and interpersonal components have changed throughout the course of the study. Positive and negative changes should be taken into account when interpreting the data, with a focus on the dynamic character of these measurements and any possible effects on interpersonal relationships and personal well-being. The interpretation of these results might be improved by additional contextual details regarding the goals and interventions of the study.

5.DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was to look into how yoga lessons affected the participants' various psychological and interpersonal traits. The results offer insightful information on participant demographics, attendance trends, enrollment motivations, and shifts in psychological characteristics during the study.

5.1 Participant Demographics and Completion Rate

The demographic analysis showed that while there was a notable gender difference in the proportion of study completions, with a higher proportion of men completing the research, age did not significantly affect study completion rates. There were no discernible differences between completers and dropouts in other demographic variables such marital status, ethnicity, enrollment status, and previous yoga experience. The results show that gender-related consequences on participant retention require more investigation since they may affect how broadly the study's findings can be applied.

5.2 Recruitment and Participation

Attracting a diverse participant pool was successful when recruitment was done via Facebook, a website, and the University's Psychology Participant Pool in addition to offering incentives like yoga classes. But there was also a technical issue with the study that resulted in a smaller sample



size. Subsequent studies must take into account probable obstacles in gathering data and employ tactics to address these problems.

5.3 Attendance Patterns

The attendance chart offered a succinct overview of trends in both group and individual attendance. The presence of variation in attendance values under various settings implies the possibility of certain individuals displaying irregular attendance patterns. Further contextual details regarding the types of situations or the particular objectives of monitoring attendance could be helpful for a more thorough analysis.

5.4 Changes in Psychological Variables

Both positive and negative trends were found in the investigation of changes in psychological variables. Promising results include mood improvement, as seen by a reduction in depressive symptoms, and improvements in overall self-esteem. But there are worries about the rise in anxiety and bad effect. The multifaceted nature of yoga's psychological effects is demonstrated by the fluctuations in interpersonal functioning assessments and self-esteem dimensions. It would be better to understand these changes with context regarding the study's objectives and interventions.

5.5 Reasons for Enrolling in Yoga Classes

Analyzing individuals' motivations for signing up for yoga courses yields qualitative insights. Knowing these causes can help design yoga programmers that are more suited to the needs of participants and influence future treatments.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the investigation into how yoga affects psychological distress and overall wellbeing in college students highlights the advantages that this population may have from adding yoga practices into their daily life. These results show a complex relationship between yoga practice and a decrease in psychological distress, which includes symptoms of anxiety and



depression. Also, the benefits include the improvement of general well-being, which includes aspects like emotional equilibrium, self-worth, and social interaction. Yoga is shown to be a comprehensive intervention that tackles mental health issues and fosters positive psychological states due to the observed changes in multiple aspects, as supported by the data. These findings are consistent with an increasing number of studies that demonstrate how beneficial yoga is for enhancing mental health. To foster a campus climate that supports psychological thriving, it is imperative that colleges and mental health professionals recognize and use these evidence-based strategies into student support initiatives.

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