



Balancing body and mind: Therapeutic impact of yogic practices in the classroom context

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Abstract

Yoga is one of the ancient practices rooted in Indian philosophy. It has become very popular in today's world due to its effectiveness in promoting both physical and psychological health. In this study, the effect of yoga on wellness will be analysed from traditional and contemporary perspectives. Through an integrative review of existing literature, the study explores how yoga practices—including postures, breath regulation, and meditation—contribute to physiological balance, stress regulation, emotional stability, and overall quality of life. The paper discusses some of the processes involved, including modulation of the autonomic nervous system, neuroendocrinology, neuroplasticity, and mindfulness awareness. There is a strong indication that yoga is quite an important factor in the management of chronic health conditions and psychological distress amid today's stressful and sedentary life. Despite methodological challenges in yoga research, findings support its effectiveness as a low-cost, accessible, and non-invasive therapeutic modality. The paper ends by emphasising the significance of yoga in integrative medicine systems and Indian Knowledge Systems, and draws attention to the need for more research to facilitate its use in health care settings.

Keywords: Yoga, physical wellness, mental wellness, mind-body balance, indian knowledge systems, holistic health

Introduction

However, in recent years, there have been dramatic changes in higher education teaching due to technological advances, competition, and intensified emotional challenges. There is no doubt that the availability of information has increased drastically, but students' ability to stay focused and calm, physically and emotionally, during long periods of study has decreased. The research shows that the increased levels of stress and anxiety are evident among college students and raise the question regarding the effectiveness of established approaches to teaching. [ACHA], 2022).

Higher education has usually focused on what students know and understand, rather than how they feel or experience learning. Today, learning is more than just academic—it also involves how students sit, breathe, and focus. If students come to class feeling emotional, it can be much harder for them to listen, think, and analyse. This shows the need for teaching techniques that see students as whole people, not simply as receivers of information. Yoga comes from ancient Indian traditions and brings together the body, mind, and consciousness. It is traditionally regarded as a way to calm the mind (Patañjali, as cited in Feuerstein, 2012)^[2], and it focuses on balance, self-awareness, and self-control. Today, yoga is well known for helping reduce stress, improve focus, and aid emotional health.

Bringing yoga into the classroom can change how students learn. Instead of being just part of physical education or after-school activities, yoga can be included in regular lessons as a way to reflect before or after class. This study considers how yoga in college classrooms can improve students' mental health and academic performance. It argues that teaching yoga promotes a more holistic, wellness-focused approach to education.

Review of Literature

Yoga and Psychological Health

Practising yoga can boost self-esteem, reduce overthinking, and improve mood (Gard *et al.*, 2014)^[3]. These data suggest that yoga helps with both instant stress relief and long-term emotional development. Studies show that yoga is effective for managing emotional problems, stress, and anxiety. According to Streeter, “yoga exercises have a beneficial effect on students' activity levels, encouraging emotional stability and relaxation” (2012). Being able to control the body in this way is important for reducing ongoing stress, especially in children.

Khalsa and Butzer (2016)^[4] point out that yoga's benefits go beyond simply physical poses—they also include mindfulness and breath control. These aspects help people become more self-aware and emotionally strong, so they can manage challenges with calmness and clarity. This kind of self-control is especially important for teenagers who are juggling schoolwork. Mindfulness-based yoga is also associated with higher self-esteem, reduced overthinking, and better mood (Gard *et al.*, 2014)^[3]. The results show that yoga supports both quick stress relief and long-term emotional growth.

Yoga in Educational Settings

Adding yoga to classrooms has become popular in both schools and colleges. Butzer *et al.* (2016)^[4] found that in-class yoga programs help students become more involved, behave better, and pay attention longer. Yoga encourages students to focus inward and be more aware, which is especially helpful in academic settings compared to typical physical activities. In colleges and universities, yoga has been linked to lower test anxiety and heightened academic confidence. Students who participate in yoga sessions often

report thinking more clearly and handling school challenges better (Khalsa & Butzer, 2016) [4]. These results suggest that yoga can be a useful teaching tool, not just a separate wellness activity.

Neurocognitive Perspectives

From a brain science perspective, yoga affects brain regions that control attention, memory, and emotions. Gard *et al.* (2014) [3] found that yoga helps people focus better and remember more, which supports learning. Breathing exercises, in particular, help keep the mind calm by affecting the brain's stress response. These brain benefits are especially important in schools, where students need to focus and think critically. Practising yoga can help students be better prepared to learn and better equipped to handle challenging academic material.

Indian Knowledge Systems and Holistic Education

In Indian Knowledge Systems, education is seen as more than just sharing information—it is concerned with personal growth from within. Yogic philosophy highlights self-control, moral awareness, and balance with the environment. This broad approach matches modern education, which focuses on the student and values. Bringing yoga into the classroom combines traditional wisdom with today's higher education, supplying a culturally rooted way to address current challenges in schools.

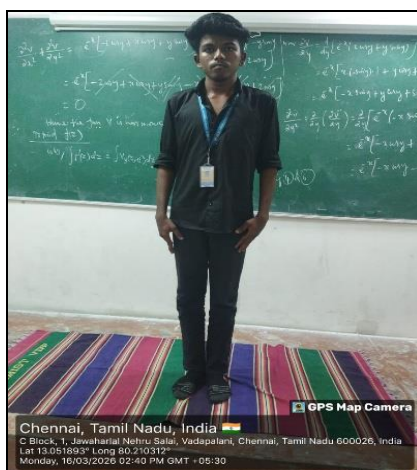
Methodology

This research employs a qualitative, reflective method that involves classroom observations and learning through experience. The participants include undergraduate students with varied academic disciplines. Yoga is progressively introduced into the class through various sessions. The first stage involves short breathwork, followed by basic yoga postures. At the end of the sessions, the students spend some time reflecting or resting. All the activities are tailored to meet the needs of the classroom. Participation is entirely optional.

Information is collected through reflective journals, group discussions, anonymous student feedback, and classroom observations. Such sources help demonstrate the impact of yoga on students. Students are guaranteed that participation in such exercises will not affect their academic performance.

Yogic Practices Implemented in the Classroom

Tadasana (Standing Pose)



The practice of Tadasana takes place at the start of each class because it is a beginner's posture. The instructor makes sure that the students are standing correctly and paying attention to their posture and breath. Though this posture is easy to perform, it helps students concentrate. There have been many cases in which students have reported feeling more alert and well-balanced after Tadasana.

Vrikshasana (Tree Pose)



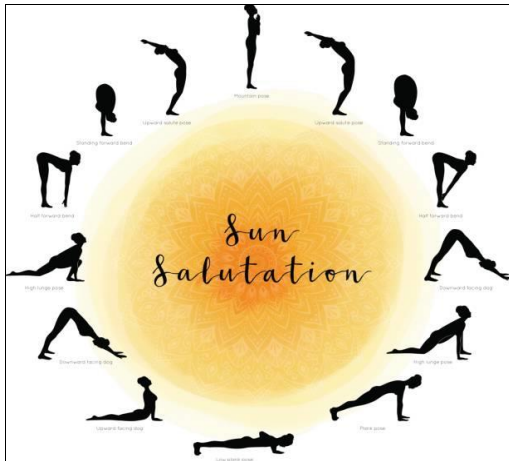
The practice of the Vrikshasana pose develops students' balancing and concentration skills. It requires a certain level of concentration and breath control during the pose. Moreover, it can serve as an example of balance in students' academic activities.

Sukhasana with Pranayama



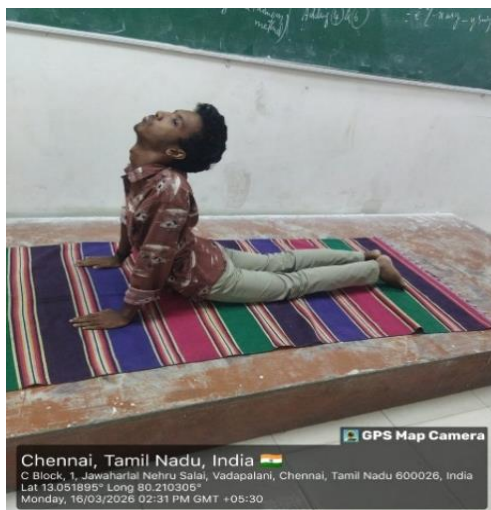
Sitting in Sukhasana while doing breathing exercises is another critical aspect of reflection. The students are supposed to conduct themselves slowly, which helps ease their stress.

Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation)



Surya Namaskar is often used to boost students' energy during long classes. Moving and breathing together in this sequence helps students become more flexible and alert, giving them a fresh burst of energy.

Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose)



Bhujangasana is primarily intended to help with the problems caused by prolonged sitting and slouching, which many college students experience. When done gently and with attention to breathing, this pose helps open the chest, stretch the spine, and release tension in the upper back and shoulders. Many students say they feel lighter and more energised after practising Bhujangasana, especially during long lectures. This pose also supports spinal health and better breathing, which helps students stay alert and think clearly. Research shows that back-bending poses improve circulation and stimulate the nervous system, which supports learning (Feuerstein, 2012) [2].

Balasana (Child's Pose)



Balasana is performed as a restorative pose, particularly during periods of emotional tiredness or mental fatigue. Students are advised to perform this posture as a means of resting rather than demonstrating their abilities. This posture offered the class members a sense of security and internalisation by helping them detach themselves from the outside world. Some students mentioned that this posture helped them reconnect with their emotions and think more clearly. In the classroom, this posture serves as a reminder that rest is a necessary part of learning. (Gard *et al.*, 2014) [3].

Setu Bandhasana (Bridge Pose)



Setu Bandhasana is used in order to increase spinal flexibility and maintain emotional stability. Movement and breathing go together in this position, allowing students to concentrate and stay in touch with their bodies. Setu Bandhasana is believed to help many people relieve lower back pain from long hours of sitting and increase blood flow. Besides, it is regarded as the bridge between body awareness and mind alertness.

Anulom Vilom Pranayama (Alternate Nostril Breathing)



Anulom Vilom is described as an easy yet effective breathing technique that can be used to control emotions and increase concentration. This technique, when practised for a couple of minutes at the beginning or end of classes, helps students restore balance in their nervous systems and reduce mental restlessness. It is common for students to feel calmer and more concentrated after practising Anulom Vilom, especially before tests or speeches. (Streeter *et al.*, 2012) [5].

Findings and Discussion

Both individual learners' behaviour and the functioning of the classroom as a whole underwent discernible changes when yoga practices became a regular part of the

curriculum. At the start of lectures, the students seemed more at ease, less agitated, and more focused. These findings are consistent with studies that show yoga improves focus and self-regulation (Gard *et al.*, 2014) ^[3]. Students admitted feeling more emotionally at ease and better able to manage academic pressure.

Through breathing exercises, they were able to control their reactions and remain calm in the face of trying circumstances. Peer interaction has been positively impacted by this emotional control. From a pedagogical perspective, the classroom environment has changed to become a more participatory and empathetic space. Yoga sessions have improved the interaction between teachers and students by developing a sense of shared experience. These results reveal that yoga helps both teachers and students.

Teaching Implications

The research findings are highly relevant to modern academic learning methods. First, the conventional division between academic learning and students' welfare is called into question by the incorporation of yoga activities. Yoga shows that physical comfort, emotional control, and cognitive focus are essential components of successful learning rather than incidental issues. Students' ability to interact with challenging subject matter significantly improves when they feel physically comfortable, settled, and calm (Khalsa & Butzer, 2016) ^[4].

Second, yoga encourages integrated and experiential learning. Yoga encourages learners to learn through personal physical experience, rather than exclusively cognitive teaching methods. Constructive teaching techniques that prioritise introspection, self-awareness, and active engagement align with this experiential component. Yoga helps bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-life experience by engaging students in a comprehensive way.

Third, incorporating yoga into the classroom creates a welcoming and caring atmosphere. Yoga fosters a sense of group engagement by lowering structural barriers between instructors and students. This change encourages more sympathetic peer contact and better teacher-student relationships. These relational aspects of learning are especially beneficial in schools that are focused on the humanities and multidisciplinary subjects.

Lastly, from a policy standpoint, including yoga in classroom instruction aligns with national and international educational systems that prioritise mental well-being, holistic development, and tradition-based habits. Yoga-inspired teaching is highly compatible with Indian Knowledge Systems and the goals of value-based instruction in the Indian setting. Yoga is an affordable, flexible, and simple treatment that can be used across a variety of fields without requiring significant infrastructure changes.

Limitations of the Study

Considering the encouraging results, it is important to recognise the limitations of this study. Based on students' personal experiences and teachers' observations, the study employs a largely qualitative, analytic design. Although these findings provide important background, they may be influenced by individual biases and variations in how students perceive them. Furthermore, the short duration of the yoga session limits the ability to evaluate its lasting

effects on behavioural change, psychological well-being, and academic achievement.

The findings can be generalised, but are further limited by the lack of quantitative measures, such as regular assessments of anxiety or attentiveness. Additionally, the study was conducted in a specific academic and cultural environment, which may affect students' openness to traditional yoga methods. Additional research into the feasibility of yoga-based teaching across multiple educational settings should consider diverse cultures and multidisciplinary perspectives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study illustrates the revolutionary power of using yoga exercises in college classrooms. Yoga is a culturally rich practice that helps deal with the increasing problem of college students' anxieties, apathy, and depression in today's educational setting. The results make it evident that even simple yoga exercises can enhance learners' focus, mental equilibrium, physical well-being, and overall participation in class.

Besides being a form of therapy, yoga is an important instructional tool that enriches education. Yoga aids in creating attentive, empathetic, and mentally stimulating educational environments by addressing the experiential dimension of learning. Yogic instruction design originates from the traditions of Indian knowledge systems and affirms the importance of traditional expertise in contemporary learning contexts. The integration of yoga into educational processes needs further exploration as educational institutions move towards health-promoting, student-centred approaches.

To further explore the contribution of yoga to improving students' academic success and overall well-being, future studies should go beyond this investigation by employing diverse approaches and conducting longitudinal research. Ultimately, achieving physical and mental balance during educational activities may be necessary for the development of resilient, self- and socially aware learners.

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