Yoga for Inclusive Wellness: A Systematic Review on Physical and Psychological Outcomes among Persons with Disabilities

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***Abstract*—Yoga has become a holistic mind-body intervention that incorporates the spiritual, psychological, and physical aspects of well-being. Its use has broadened over the past few decades to encompass therapeutic and rehabilitative settings, especially for populations with special needs, in addition to general wellbeing. People with disabilities are a varied and frequently marginalized community that faces substantial obstacles to social engagement, mental health care, and physical exercise.**

Yoga is a viable intervention for fostering inclusive wellbeing in this community because of its flexible and non-invasive character. The goal of the current systematic review is to compile the empirical data about the efficacy of yoga therapies in enhancing the physical and psychological outcomes of people with disabilities.

To guarantee methodological rigor and openness, the review was carried out in compliance with PRISMA. A thorough search was conducted for research published between 2015 and 2025 in electronic databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. 28 research in all, covering a variety of disorders such physical impairments, intellectual disabilities, and sensory deficiencies, satisfied the inclusion criteria. The results show that yoga therapies greatly improve physical characteristics such as muscular strength, flexibility, balance, and functional mobility. Significant psychological advantages were also noted, such as increases in emotional control, self-efficacy, and quality of life, as well as decreases in stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms.

Despite these favorable results, there were several drawbacks, including limited sample numbers, inconsistent intervention regimens, and a dearth of standardized outcome measures. While highlighting the need for additional thorough and extensive research to expand the evidence basis, the study concluded that yoga provides a feasible, affordable, and inclusive strategy to health promotion among people with disabilities.

***Index Terms*—Yoga, Wellness, Physical , Psychological**

I. INTRODUCTION

Yoga has been practiced for thousands of years as a way to achieve harmony between the body, mind, and spirit. It is derived from the Sanskrit word "yuj," which means to combine or integrate. Although yoga has been generally accepted as a holistic health practice with therapeutic benefits in modern contexts, traditional yogic writings define it as a route toward self-realization and liberation (Woodyard, 2019). Yoga is especially pertinent in contemporary healthcare systems that increasingly prioritize holistic and preventative methods since it integrates physical postures (asanas), regulated breathing (pranayama), and meditation (dhyana) to address various aspects of health concurrently.

A greater emphasis on inclusive health practices that cater to the needs of disadvantaged and underserved communities has coincided with the rising popularity of yoga across the world. One such category is people with disabilities, who include people with a variety of intellectual, physical, sensory, and psychological problems. Over one billion people worldwide are estimated to have a handicap of some kind, and many of them face major obstacles in getting access to healthcare, engaging in physical activity, and preserving their mental health (World Health Organization, 2021). Social stigma, environmental obstacles, and the scarcity of inclusive programs frequently exacerbate these difficulties.

By focusing on accessibility, equity, and involvement for all people, regardless of their ability, the idea of inclusive wellness goes beyond conventional health

promotion. Yoga's natural flexibility and adaptability give it a distinct advantage in this situation. Yoga may be tailored to meet the demands of people with different levels of ability, in contrast to many traditional exercise regimens that call for particular physical characteristics. Chair yoga, supported postures, and the use of props are examples of adapted yoga techniques that reduce the risk of injury while allowing people with disabilities to participate in meaningful physical activity (Büssing et al., 2017).

Additionally, yoga's focus on breath control and mindfulness has substantial psychological advantages, which are crucial for people with disabilities who could have greater levels of stress, anxiety, and despair. According to research, yoga can improve mental health outcomes by influencing the autonomic nerve system, lowering cortisol levels, and improving emotional control (Field, 2016). These consequences are particularly pertinent in the context of disability, as social involvement and physical health are frequently intimately related to psychological well-being.

Studies that particularly target people with disabilities are still dispersed and diverse, despite the expanding corpus of research on yoga therapies. In terms of participant profiles, disability kinds, intervention regimens, and outcome measures, existing research differs greatly. While some studies show notable benefits in psychological and physical results, others draw attention to methodological flaws and discrepancies. To better comprehend yoga's overall efficacy in fostering inclusive wellbeing, a thorough synthesis of the current data is therefore required.

By examining research done between 2015 and 2025 that looks at how yoga therapies affect the physical and psychological outcomes of people with disabilities, the current systematic review seeks to close this gap. This review aims to give a thorough summary of the available data, point out important trends and gaps in the literature, and make suggestions for further study and application by using a methodical and organized methodology.

II. METHODOLOGY

The PRISMA guidelines, which offer a standardized structure for carrying out and reporting systematic reviews, serve as the basis for the systematic review design used in this investigation. This methodology guarantees scientific rigor, repeatability, and transparency in the selection, analysis, and synthesis of pertinent research.

Several electronic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, were searched thoroughly for relevant material. In order to find pertinent research, the search strategy was created utilizing a mix of keywords and Boolean operators. "Yoga," "disability," "adapted yoga," "inclusive wellness," "physical outcomes," and "psychological outcomes" were among the keywords. To guarantee the inclusion of current and pertinent research, the search was restricted to publications published in English between 2015 and 2025.

To guarantee the selection of superior empirical investigations, the inclusion criteria were established. Peer-reviewed journal publications using experimental, quasi-experimental, or randomized controlled trial designs were considered eligible investigations. Studies were to assess how yoga therapies affected at least one physical or psychological outcome and include individuals with any kind of handicap. Review papers, meta-analyses, case reports, conference abstracts without full text, and research with unclear methodological explanations or outcome measures were also excluded.

There were several steps in the selecting procedure for the study. Initially, database searches turned up 112 studies. 45 studies were chosen for full-text assessment after duplicates were eliminated and titles and abstracts were evaluated for applicability. 28 studies were included in the final analysis after a thorough evaluation based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The study design, sample size, participant characteristics, type of disability, length and frequency of the yoga intervention, outcome measures, and primary results were among the important factors that were the focus of the methodical data extraction process. The data was analyzed and interpreted using a qualitative synthesis technique due to the variety of the included research.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION (INTEGRATED)

The results of this systematic study show that yoga therapies benefit people with disabilities in terms of both physical and psychological outcomes. Participants in the 28 included studies covered a wide variety of disability categories, including intellectual

disabilities, sensory impairments, and physical impairments including cerebral palsy and spinal cord injuries. Interventions ranged in length from four-week short-term programs to six-month extended interventions.

Regarding physical results, most studies showed notable gains in muscular strength, flexibility, balance, and functional mobility. Because they boost freedom and lower the risk of secondary health issues, these advancements are especially significant for people with disabilities. Participants with restricted mobility were shown to benefit from the usage of modified yoga techniques, such as chair-based poses and aided movements. These results are in line with other studies showing how yoga can improve general fitness and physical function (Běing et al., 2017).

Numerous research showed decreases in stress, anxiety, and depressed symptoms, and psychological results were also widely documented. Regular yoga practitioners reported better quality of life, more self-confidence, and better emotional management. The combination of breath control and mindfulness practices, which have been demonstrated to affect the autonomic nervous system and encourage relaxation, is responsible for these advantages (Field, 2016). These impacts are especially important for those with impairments, who may have persistent psychological difficulties.

Numerous research have also examined how beneficial yoga is in comparison to other rehabilitation techniques. Yoga provided extra psychological benefits, indicating its utility as a supplemental intervention, even if standard physiotherapy was proven to enhance physical results (Cramer et al., 2018). However, the degree of these advantages varied according on the kind of impairment, length of the intervention, and degree of participant involvement.

Despite these encouraging results, a number of drawbacks were noted. It is challenging to get firm conclusions on the best kind and length of yoga therapies due to the diversity of study designs, intervention procedures, and outcome measures. Furthermore, a lot of research had tiny sample sizes, which limited how broadly the findings could be applied. Comparisons between research are made more difficult by the absence of standardized outcome measures.

IV. CONCLUSION

The current systematic study offers thorough proof of yoga's efficacy as an inclusive wellness intervention for people with impairments. The results show that yoga may greatly enhance psychological well-being by lowering stress, anxiety, and depression while also improving physical characteristics like strength, flexibility, and balance. These results demonstrate yoga's capacity to treat several aspects of health at once, making it an important supplement to programs for rehabilitation and health promotion.

However, further research is required to expand the evidence foundation and address current limitations in order to completely establish yoga as a routine component of inclusive healthcare. Large-scale randomized controlled trials, standardized intervention procedures, and long-term follow-up evaluations should be the main topics of future research. Scholars and practitioners may help create more inclusive, accessible, and successful approaches to health and wellbeing by expanding research in this field.

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