

Investigating the effects of an 8-Week Hatha Yoga Pilot Intervention for University Employees

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Introduction

Yoga interventions have received growing attention as effective health promotion programs (Della Valle et al., 2020; Puerto Valencia et al., 2019) but are not as well represented in University employee health research. Therefore this study determined if an eight-week worksite yoga pilot intervention could improve university employees' health-related quality of life (HRQOL), psychological well-being (PWB), perceived stress (PS), and physical activity (PA). The effects of in person versus online yoga classes were also investigated, reflecting the current COVID-19 pandemic. The secondary aim addressed yoga dose-outcome.

Methods

University employees (n = 27; 88.9% female; 77.4% < 40 years old; 51.9% full-time) were randomly assigned to intervention (n = 13) or wait-list control (n = 14). The intervention comprised a two-month certified instructor led weekly 60-minute Hatha Yoga. Baseline (week 0), post (week 8), and follow-up (week 12) questionnaires included the Short-Form Health Survey, Brief Inventory of Thriving, Perceived Stress Scale and Godin's PA survey. Due to sample size, effect size of .01 (small), .06 (medium), and .14 (large) guided interpretation.

Results

The intervention increased HRQOL ($F(1, 26) = 2.08$, partial $\eta^2 = .09$), PWB ($F(1, 26) = .72$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$), and decreased PS ($F(1, 27) = 1.21$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$), but not PA, post and at follow-up versus control. Both in-person (n = 7) and online (n = 6) reported a positive effect, but the in-person showed greater results than the online (partial $\eta^2 = .24$; .14; and .09, respectively). Participants who attended the eight yoga classes showed greater health benefits than those who attended less (partial $\eta^2 = .13$; .07; and .08, respectively).

Discussion

Replicating and extending previous research, worksite yoga interventions can promote university employees' health, especially with regular yoga class attendance. Contrary to some previous research, attending in person has a greater health effect versus online. Somewhat surprisingly, this yoga intervention did not positively impact PA. The small sample limits generalizability. However, these results support feasibility, acceptance, and effectiveness of online and especially in-person yoga interventions promoting university employees' health.

References

- Della Valle, E., et al. (2020). Effectiveness of workplace yoga interventions to reduce perceived stress in employees: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Functional Morphology and Kinesiology*, 5(2), 1–16.
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