

Effectiveness of Hatha Yoga for Recovery After Bullying-Related Trauma

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Bullying has a serious impact on the mental health of children and adolescents, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, and decreased self-esteem. Mind-body interventions such as Hatha Yoga are considered effective in supporting recovery by strengthening emotional regulation and psychological balance. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of Hatha Yoga in the recovery of bullying victims through a literature review using the PEOS framework. The search was conducted through PubMed with the keywords “Yoga” and “Mental Health,” covering publications from the last five years with clinical trial and randomized controlled trial designs. The studies also confirm the feasibility and acceptability of yoga as a non-pharmacological intervention for adolescents and university students. Given its feasible, acceptable, and low-risk nature, Hatha Yoga can be integrated into school and community programs as both a preventive and curative strategy. Further randomized controlled trials specifically targeting bullying victims are required to strengthen the empirical evidence

Keywords: Hatha Yoga; bullying; mental health; emotional regulation; resilience; education; trauma-aware intervention

INTRODUCTION

The recovery of bullying victims requires a comprehensive and holistic approach that addresses not only psychological aspects but also physical and spiritual well-being. Mind-body interventions are considered relevant because they bridge the physiological and emotional dimensions of healing. In this context, Hatha Yoga combined with sound healing offers potential as an integrative recovery strategy. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of Hatha Yoga combined with sound healing in reducing stress, anxiety, and psychosomatic complaints, while enhancing the spiritual well-being of bullying victims. Moreover, this research seeks to fill a gap in the literature, particularly within the Indonesian context, where yoga-based interventions have rarely been systematically explored as trauma recovery strategies.

Bullying remains a serious issue in educational settings, exerting multidimensional impacts on the psychosocial development of children and adolescents. (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017) define bullying as deliberate, repeated aggressive behavior that involves a power imbalance between perpetrator and victim. Forms of bullying include physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying, with the latter increasing alongside advances in communication technology. A meta-analysis by (Modecki et al., 2014) found that the global prevalence of bullying remains high in both traditional and online forms, with strong correlations to heightened anxiety and depression. In Indonesia, (Lestari, 2023) reported that bullying among adolescents is closely associated with declines in health-related quality of life (HRQoL), encompassing physical, psychological, and social dimensions.

The psychological impacts experienced by bullying victims often include chronic anxiety, depression, social isolation, and post-traumatic stress symptoms. (West, Liang, Spinazzola, 2015) emphasized that survivors of interpersonal violence frequently struggle with emotional dysregulation and distorted body perception, which impede recovery. Therefore, effective interventions must not only target cognitive aspects but also restore victims' bodily connection and rebalance their physiological stress responses.

Over the past decade, Hatha Yoga has gained increasing attention as a trauma recovery strategy. This form of yoga integrates physical postures (asana), breathing techniques (pranayama), and meditation to enhance interoceptive awareness, reduce physiological hyper-arousal, and strengthen self-regulation. (Seki Öz & Çiriş, 2022) demonstrated that an eight-week Hatha Yoga program effectively reduced stress, improved life satisfaction, and enhanced quality of life among nursing students. Similarly, (West, Liang, Spinazzola, 2015) found that trauma-sensitive yoga can create a sense of bodily safety and empower participants through the freedom to choose movements and intensity levels.

In addition, sound healing using instruments such as singing bowls has been shown to promote relaxation by influencing brainwave activity and inducing deep meditative states (Goldsby et al., 2017). While (Cramer et al., 2018) focused on conventional yoga for general health benefits, the integration of Hatha Yoga and sound healing has rarely been investigated, particularly in relation to bullying victims in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, prevention programs such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program have proven effective in reducing the prevalence of bullying in schools (Olweus & Limber, 2010). However, post-incident recovery requires additional interventions that emphasize holistic healing at the individual level. The integration of Hatha Yoga and sound healing offers potential to complement prevention strategies by addressing psychological, physiological, and spiritual dimensions in victim recovery.

Accordingly, this study has three objectives: (1) to evaluate the effectiveness of Hatha Yoga combined with sound healing in the recovery of bullying victims, (2) to fill the research gap on integrative mind–body interventions in the Indonesian context, and (3) to provide practical contributions for the development of school- and community-based recovery programs. The novelty of this study lies in applying a trauma-sensitive approach that combines Hatha Yoga and sound healing, which has rarely been tested among bullying victims, thereby enriching the repertoire of culturally grounded and evidence-based trauma recovery interventions.

Previous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of yoga on stress and anxiety reduction, but limited research has specifically focused on its role in recovering from bullying-related trauma among adolescents. Therefore, this study aims to synthesize recent empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Hatha Yoga as a recovery intervention for individuals who have experienced bullying, contributing to the growing literature on non-pharmacological, mindfulness-based mental health practices

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bullying is a form of psychosocial violence that has multidimensional impacts on the development of children and adolescents. Numerous studies have shown that the experience of being a bullying victim is correlated with an increased risk of depression, anxiety, decreased health-related quality of life, and emotional regulation difficulties (Moore et al., 2017; Lestari, 2023). From a trauma-informed care perspective, the recovery of victims of interpersonal violence such as bullying requires interventions that emphasize safety, a sense of control, and the restoration of bodily connection (West, Liang, Spinazzola, 2015).

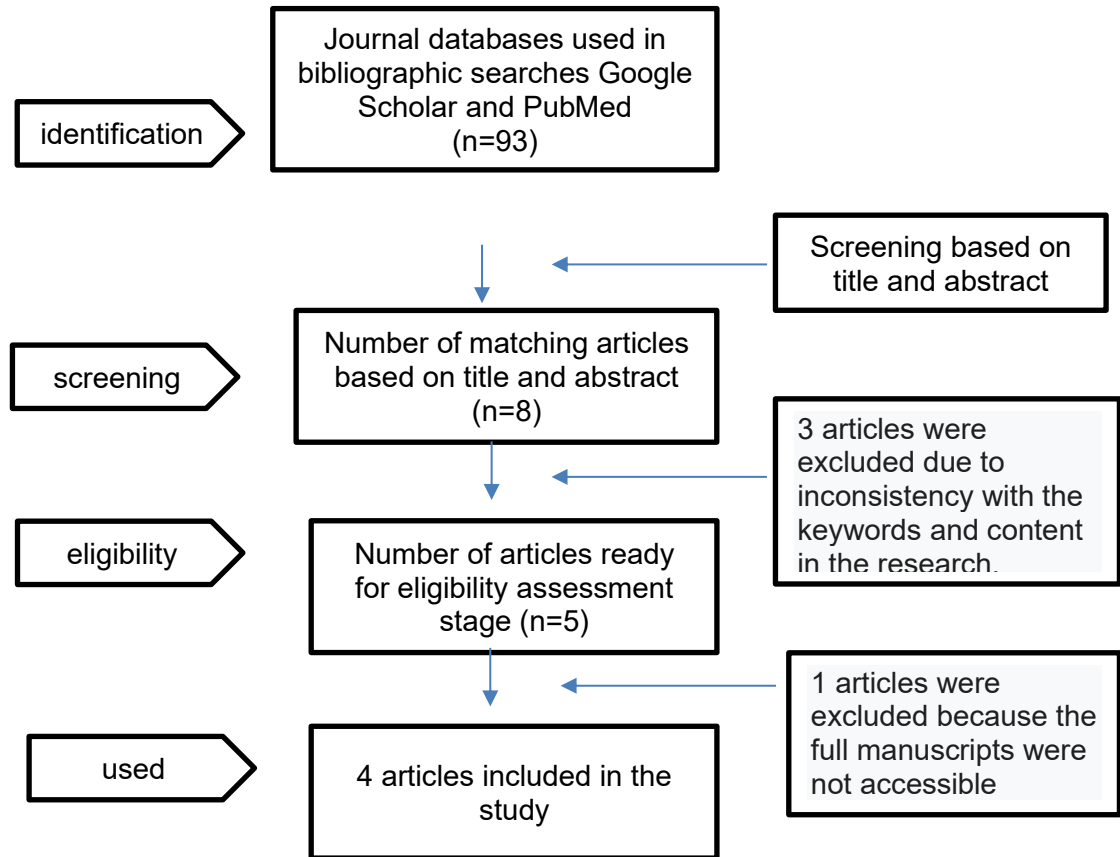
Hatha Yoga, as a mind–body intervention, has gained considerable attention in trauma research because it integrates asana (physical postures), pranayama (breathing techniques), and meditation. Unlike cognitive therapy alone, yoga operates at the physiological level by normalizing stress responses through the activation of the parasympathetic nervous system and the reduction of hyper-arousal (Pascoe & Bauer, 2015). The polyvagal theory (Porges, 2011) provides an additional framework, suggesting that slow breathing techniques and interoceptive focus in yoga can shift psychophysiological states from a fight-or-flight mode to the social engagement system, which is crucial for relational trauma recovery.

Recent meta-analyses support the effectiveness of yoga for children and adolescents in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety, while also enhancing self-esteem and resilience (Khunti, 2022; Narain, 2023). School-based yoga interventions have even been shown to improve cognitive functioning, emotional well-being, and social relationships (Sinha & Kumari, 2021).

Based on the existing body of literature, it is evident that Hatha Yoga holds significant potential as a trauma-informed intervention for improving psychological and emotional well-being among adolescents and young adults. However, specific evidence regarding its application to bullying victims remains scarce. To systematically address this gap, the present study adopts a literature review approach guided by the PEOS framework (Patient/Population/Problem, Exposure, Outcome, and Study Design). Furthermore, to ensure methodological rigor, the article selection process was structured according to the PRISMA flow diagram, which outlines identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion steps. This methodological framework allows for a critical synthesis of current

evidence while maintaining transparency and reproducibility in the review process. The PRISMA diagram is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Article Search and Selection Scheme



Four research articles that met the search criteria and were available in full-text form were further reviewed. The summarized data are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Reviewed Studies on the Effects of Yoga Interventions on Adolescent and Student Mental Health

Author, Year	Title	Method	Findings
(Bazzano et al., 2022)	Effect of Yoga and Mindfulness Intervention on Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression in Young Adolescents Attending Middle School: A Pragmatic Community-Based Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial	Design: Quasi-experimental (cluster randomized) Sample: 86 junior high school students (aged 11–14 years) Variables: Mental health symptoms (anxiety and depression) Instruments: Anxiety & depression symptom questionnaires, yoga session observations	The findings of this study indicate that yoga and mindfulness interventions have a positive effect in reducing mental health symptoms, such as anxiety and depression, among participants. The study highlights the importance of alternative approaches in supporting mental health, particularly in

	in a Racially Diverse Urban Setting	Evaluation: Comparison of pre-test & post-test over 5 months	the context of crises exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The results show that these practices can significantly enhance participants' mental well-being.
Castellote-Caballero et al. (2024)	Yoga as a therapeutic approach to mental health in university students: a randomized controlled trial.	Design: Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) Sample: 129 university students (yoga group vs. control group) Variables: Perceived Stress (Perceived Stress Scale / PSS), Emotional Wellbeing (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale / WEMWBS), State Anxiety (STAI – State), Trait Anxiety (STAI – Trait) Instruments: PSS (stress), WEMWBS (emotional wellbeing), STAI (anxiety) Evaluation: Effectiveness of yoga on students' mental health	These findings affirm that yoga is effective as a therapeutic strategy to reduce stress and anxiety while enhancing students' emotional well-being. This effect is presumed to be related to the regulation of the autonomic nervous system, reduction of stress hormones, and the increase of neurotransmitters that influence mood. Yoga has been proven effective as a complementary therapy for students' mental health, particularly in reducing stress and anxiety and improving emotional well-being. This article recommends the integration of yoga programs into academic settings to support students' mental health.
(Szaszko et al., 2023)	The influence of hatha yoga on stress, anxiety, and suppression: A randomized controlled trial	Design: Experimental (pre-test post-test control group) Sample: 54 university students (27 male, 27 female) Variables: Participation in Hatha Yoga practice; Stress level, Anxiety level, Aggressiveness level / suppression of aggressive behavior Instruments: STAI	Students who participated in the Hatha Yoga program showed a significant reduction in stress levels compared to the control group. Both state anxiety and trait anxiety decreased significantly in the yoga group. The yoga program also had an impact on reducing

		(anxiety), PSS (stress), BPAQ (aggressiveness) Evaluation: Differences between yoga and control groups after a short- term intervention	aggressive behavioral tendencies. Hatha Yoga is effective as a non- pharmacological psychotherapeutic approach for university students, helping to reduce stress and anxiety while also regulating aggressive behavior.
(Uebelacker et al., 2023)	Assessing feasibility and acceptability of yoga and group CBT for adolescents with depression: a pilot randomized clinical trial	Design: Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) Sample: 32 adolescents with depression (yoga group vs. CBT group) Variables: Type of intervention (Yoga vs. group CBT) Instruments: CDI (depression), SCARED (anxiety), satisfaction & engagement questionnaires Evaluation: Feasibility and acceptability of the intervention	Both interventions (Yoga and CBT) were found to be feasible and acceptable for adolescents with depression, with high engagement rates and low drop-out rates. Preliminary effectiveness: Yoga showed reductions in depressive and anxiety symptoms comparable to CBT. CBT was superior in enhancing cognitive-emotional regulation. Yoga was superior in promoting physical relaxation and reducing tension. Yoga has the potential to serve as a viable alternative or complementary intervention for adolescents with depression, with effectiveness comparable to CBT in the short term.

Overall, the reviewed literature supports the integration of bullying prevention measures alongside the promotion of accessible holistic interventions within community and educational contexts, as part of a comprehensive strategy to enhance mental health and well-being.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a literature review method using the PEOS framework (Patient/Population/Problem, Exposure, Outcome, Study Design), focusing on clinical

trial and randomized controlled trial articles. The keywords used included “Yoga” and “Mental Health”. Literature searches were conducted through PubMed, covering publications from the last five years.

The article selection process consisted of: (1) identifying articles using the predetermined keywords, (2) screening based on abstracts, and (3) assessing content eligibility according to the inclusion criteria, namely: original research articles, involving yoga as an intervention, published within the last five years, designed as clinical trials or randomized controlled trials, available in full-text form, and explicitly reporting effectiveness outcomes. Articles not meeting these criteria were excluded from the analysis.

Data from the selected studies were extracted based on the author’s name, year of publication, research method, and research findings, then presented in tabular form.

RESULTS

This study employed a literature review method using the PEOS framework, which includes four key elements: Patient/Population/Problem, Exposure, Outcome, and Study Design. The process of article selection followed the PRISMA protocol, consisting of identification, screening, and eligibility assessment. Through the PubMed database search, a total of four research articles met the inclusion criteria. The selected articles fulfilled the following requirements: (1) original empirical studies, (2) used yoga as the main intervention, (3) adopted experimental or randomized controlled trial (RCT) designs, (4) published within the last five years, (5) accessible in full-text form, and (6) explicitly reported outcomes related to the effectiveness of yoga interventions on psychological well-being.

The four eligible studies were then analyzed according to the author, publication year, research method, and main findings. Overall, the results showed consistent evidence that yoga particularly Hatha Yoga was effective in improving mental health outcomes across various populations, including adolescents and university students. The synthesized results from these studies are summarized in [Table 1](#)

The study by ([Bazzano et al., 2022](#)) showed that yoga and mindfulness interventions were effective in reducing anxiety and depression symptoms among middle school students. These positive effects are highly relevant in the context of recovery for bullying victims, who often experience psychological distress such as social anxiety and depression.

Next, ([Castellote-Caballero et al., 2024](#)) demonstrated that yoga effectively reduced stress and improved emotional well-being among university students. This reinforces the understanding that yoga can help bullying victims rebuild emotional resilience and achieve better quality of life.

The research conducted by ([Szaszko et al., 2023](#)) added an important finding, namely that Hatha Yoga not only reduced stress and anxiety but also helped control aggressive tendencies. This is particularly significant for bullying victims, as it may assist them in managing negative emotions while preventing cycles of violence or retaliatory behavior.

Meanwhile, ([Uebelacker et al., 2023](#)) emphasized that yoga is both feasible and acceptable as an intervention for adolescents with depressive symptoms. Yoga showed preliminary effectiveness comparable to cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), with advantages in terms of physical relaxation and tension reduction. This indicates that

yoga can serve as a suitable alternative or complementary therapy for bullying victims, with high participant engagement and low drop-out rates.

Overall, the results of this literature review indicate that Hatha Yoga consistently contributes to the recovery process of individuals who have experienced bullying-related trauma. The practice supports recovery through the reduction of stress, anxiety, and depression; enhancement of emotional regulation and psychological well-being; and mitigation of aggressive or maladaptive responses. Due to its feasibility, acceptability, and minimal adverse effects, yoga can be effectively integrated into school- and community-based recovery programs as part of comprehensive mental health promotion and bullying-prevention strategies.

DISCUSSION

This literature review affirms that Hatha Yoga consistently provides significant benefits for mental health recovery, particularly among adolescents and university students. These findings are highly relevant to the psychological profile of bullying victims, who commonly exhibit heightened anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, and dysfunctional emotion regulation (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Moore et al., 2017).

The study by (Bazzano et al., 2022) demonstrated that yoga and mindfulness interventions significantly reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression among middle school students. These findings are particularly relevant to the context of recovery among bullying victims, who commonly experience social withdrawal, emotional distress, and depressive symptoms as psychological consequences of victimization.

The findings of (Castellote-Caballero et al., 2024) further reinforce the effectiveness of yoga in lowering stress and enhancing emotional well-being among university students. These effects can be explained through decreased cortisol levels and increased mood-related neurotransmitters, making yoga a potential strategy to address the psychosocial pressures experienced by bullying victims in academic settings.

The study by (Szaszko et al., 2023) provided additional insights, revealing that Hatha Yoga not only reduced stress and anxiety but also helped regulate aggressive behavioral tendencies. This outcome is significant because victims of bullying often struggle with anger management and emotional suppression, and yoga practices can serve as a safe channel for releasing tension and preventing retaliatory behaviors.

Furthermore, (Uebelacker et al., 2023) found that yoga is both feasible and acceptable as a therapeutic approach for adolescents experiencing depression. The intervention demonstrated preliminary effectiveness comparable to cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), showing superior benefits in physical relaxation and tension reduction. These results indicate that yoga can be a viable alternative or complementary therapy to conventional psychological treatments, especially for young individuals dealing with trauma-related anxiety and depressive symptoms.

Mechanistically, the effectiveness of yoga in the recovery of bullying victims can be explained through two primary pathways. First, the physiological pathway, namely regulation of the autonomic nervous system and the HPA axis, which leads to reductions in hyperarousal and somatic symptoms (Pascoe & Bauer, 2015). Second, the psychological pathway, involving enhanced self-awareness and self-compassion, which function as protective factors against psychosocial trauma (Neff & Germer, 2013). Thus, yoga not only provides short-term benefits in symptom reduction but also strengthens long-term resilience in victims.

Nevertheless, certain limitations should be acknowledged. None of the reviewed studies directly targeted bullying victims as the primary population. Most focused on groups with depressive or stress symptoms, meaning that the generalization of these findings to bullying victims remains inferential. Future research should design randomized clinical trials specifically recruiting bullying victims, with adequate sample sizes and multidimensional measures (psychological symptoms, stress biomarkers, and quality of life).

Practically, the integration of Hatha Yoga into school and community programs can serve as both a trauma recovery strategy and a form of sustained prevention. Yoga not only aids victims but also fosters a healthier, more inclusive, and trauma-aware learning environment. Accordingly, yoga can be positioned as part of a comprehensive educational strategy oriented toward mental health.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that Hatha Yoga has significant effectiveness in the recovery of bullying victims, particularly in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression, while enhancing emotional well-being, self-regulation, and resilience. The effectiveness of yoga can be explained through physiological mechanisms (regulation of the autonomic nervous system and reduction of stress hormones) as well as psychological mechanisms (increased self-awareness and self-compassion). These findings position yoga as a complementary intervention that is feasible to integrate into school- and community-based recovery programs.

However, a limitation of this study lies in the lack of clinical trials directly targeting bullying victims. The studies analyzed predominantly involved adolescents with depression or university students experiencing high levels of stress, making the generalization to bullying victims indirect. Future research should explicitly involve samples of bullying victims, using randomized controlled trial designs with larger sample sizes.

Practically, the integration of Hatha Yoga into school curricula and community programs is not only beneficial for victim recovery but also serves as a preventive strategy that supports the creation of a healthy, inclusive, and trauma-aware learning environment.

LIMITATION

In this section, the author writes down the major flaws and or limitations of the research. Limitations require critical judgment and interpretation of the impact of the research. The author should state whether the research limitation occurs because of an error, the method selected the validity, or others.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the study, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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