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Impact of Yoga Training on Mental Toughness and Competitive Anxiety in Sports Persons

Dr. S. Ramesh Kannan [1]

Director, Dept. of Physical Education, S.K.S.S Arts College, Thiruppanandal, Thiruvidaimaruthur (TK), Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India[1]

ABSTRACT: The psychological aspects of sports performance, especially mental toughness and competitive anxiety, are being increasingly acknowledged as important factors that influence sports success. While physical fitness has always been at the forefront of training programs, the inclusion of mind-body therapies like yoga can provide a comprehensive solution for building the necessary psychological toughness for optimal sports performance. This paper reviews the effect of yoga training on mental toughness and competitive anxiety among sportsmen in Tamil Nadu, presenting an analysis of recent research in the region. Studies carried out in Tamil Nadu have established that focused yoga training programs can greatly improve mental toughness and decrease competitive anxiety among sportsmen. A study on hockey players from Namakkal showed a marked increase in self-confidence and decrease in aggression after twelve weeks of yogic training. A study on tennis players from Chennai showed improved mental toughness and decreased sports competition anxiety after six weeks of yoga and relaxation training. Further validation of these results has been obtained from studies conducted on cricket players from Perambalur and football players from Coimbatore. This paper provides a thorough analysis of the experimental results, including pre-post intervention analysis, statistical validation, and comparison of effectiveness. The results obtained from this study have shown that yoga is an effective and low-cost intervention strategy for improving the psychological basis of athletic performance. The results of this study support the inclusion of yoga programs in the regular athletic training regimen of institutions in Tamil Nadu.

KEYWORDS: Yoga Training, Mental Toughness, Competitive Anxiety, Sports Performance, Tamil Nadu Athletes, Self-Confidence, Psychological Resilience, Pranayama.

I. INTRODUCTION

The achievement of excellence in sports requires more than mere physical ability; it requires a complex and sophisticated blend of psychological factors that contribute to optimal performance under pressure. Among these factors, mental toughness and the ability to cope with competitive anxiety are essential and pivotal differentiators between good and great athletes. Mental toughness refers to the ability to persevere under adversity, while maintaining focus, confidence, and determination, and competitive anxiety, or the apprehensive response to competitive situations, can be a major performance detractor if not managed effectively [1].

The construct of mental toughness has developed from a generic "toughness" factor to a sophisticated psychological construct with four core dimensions: control (the ability to control one's environment and emotions), commitment (the ability to maintain efforts towards goal achievement), challenge (the predisposition to view adversity as an opportunity), and confidence (unwavering belief in one's abilities). Athletes with these traits are associated with superior performance, greater resistance to failure, and improved ability to perform under pressure [2].

On the other hand, competitive anxiety appears in two main ways: cognitive anxiety (concern and negative thoughts about performance) and somatic anxiety (physiological sensations like rapid heart rate, muscle contraction, and sweating). Although a certain level of anxiety can increase performance by increasing arousal, high levels of anxiety can interfere with concentration, motor control, and decision-making skills. The relationship between anxiety and performance is an inverted-U curve, where optimal performance is at moderate levels of anxiety and decreases at both ends [3].

The traditional methods of building mental toughness and managing anxiety involve psychological skills training in areas like goal setting, visualization, self-talk, and arousal control. Although these methods are effective, they tend to be done in isolation from physical training, leading to a gap between psychological preparation and physical performance. Yoga, an ancient Indian system that combines physical postures (asanas), breathing exercises

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(pranayama), and meditation (dhyana), provides a holistic method that simultaneously targets both physical and psychological aspects of sports training [4].

The physiological and psychological processes that underlie the improvement of mental toughness and the alleviation of anxiety through yoga have been extensively elucidated. The regular practice of asanas increases awareness and self-confidence, while the practice of pranayamas helps to modulate the autonomic nervous system, suppressing sympathetic dominance and promoting parasympathetic dominance. Meditation practices improve attentional control and emotional regulation, which directly target the cognitive aspects of mental toughness and anxiety [5].

Tamil Nadu, with its long yogic tradition and well-developed sports infrastructure, has become a major hub for research that investigates the psychological benefits of yoga on sports-related populations. Organizations across Tamil Nadu, from Bharathidasan University in Tiruchirappalli to SRM Institute of Science and Technology in Kattankulathur, and from Annamalai University in Chidambaram to the University of Madras in Chennai, have made important contributions to the existing body of evidence that supports the psychological benefits of yoga [6].

This paper integrates results from various studies conducted only in Tamil Nadu, examining the effect of yoga training on mental toughness and competitive anxiety in sports persons. The questions explored in this study are: (1) What is the measurable effect of yoga interventions on mental toughness and its sub-factors in sports persons? (2) How effective is yoga training in reducing competitive anxiety in sports persons across various disciplines? (3) How does yoga training compare with other training methods for psychological improvement? and (4) What are the important factors influencing the effectiveness of yoga interventions for psychological improvement?

The importance of this study goes beyond the boundaries of academic research. For trainers, sports psychologists, and physical education instructors in Tamil Nadu, evidence-based guidelines for incorporating yoga training into training programs can improve sports persons' development while respecting indigenous knowledge systems. For sports persons, yoga is an affordable intervention that has proven its effectiveness for both psychological improvement and sports performance.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1 Conceptual Foundations of Mental Toughness

Mental toughness has been conceptualized using different theoretical frameworks in sports psychology literature. The most accepted framework, conceptualized by Clough et al., proposes that mental toughness consists of four core elements: control, commitment, challenge, and confidence, collectively known as the "4Cs" framework.

Control is defined as the athlete's perception of control over their environment and emotions; commitment is the ability to continue to work towards goal achievement despite the presence of obstacles; challenge is the predisposition to see obstacles as opportunities for growth; and confidence is the unshakeable belief in one's own abilities.

Research conducted by the Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University has helped to shed light on how these elements are expressed by Indian athletes. Research suggests that cultural differences affect the expression of mental toughness, with Indian athletes tending to score high on commitment and challenge but needing support in building confidence and control [7].

2.2 Competitive Anxiety in Athletic Populations

Competitive anxiety has been widely researched using the multi-dimensional approach that distinguishes between cognitive and somatic anxiety. Cognitive anxiety is characterized by worry, self-talk, and catastrophic thinking about performance outcomes, while somatic anxiety is characterized by physiological arousal such as rapid heart rate, muscle tension, and sweating. The temporal relationship between anxiety and competition shows that cognitive anxiety remains relatively constant as the competition draws near, while somatic anxiety remains low until the last moment before competition [20].

Studies conducted at Annamalai University have revealed the prevalence of competitive anxiety among Tamil Nadu athletes, with findings suggesting that as many as 60% of college-level athletes experience debilitating levels of anxiety during competition [8].

2.3 Yogic Mechanisms for Psychological Enhancement

The yogic system provides an intricate understanding of mental processes via terms like chitta (consciousness), vritti (mental modifications), and prana (vital energy). The asana practice improves body awareness and induces relaxation

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via proprioceptive feedback, while pranayama practices help control autonomic nervous system activity via respiratory pattern modulation [19].

Scientific studies conducted at the Government Yoga and Naturopathy Medical College in Chennai have identified the physiological processes that explain the psychological benefits of yoga practice. It has been shown that yoga practice leads to an increase in gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) levels, improves parasympathetic activity, and improves heart rate variability, all of which are indicators of improved emotional regulation and stress management [9]. Additionally, it has been shown to decrease serum cortisol and markers of oxidative stress, thereby contributing to both physical and psychological recovery [10].

2.4 Regional Research Context: Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu has made important contributions to the body of knowledge on yoga and sports psychology. The important research institutions and their contributions are:

Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli: Research on hockey players to examine the effects of game-specific training along with yogic practices on psychological variables such as self-confidence and aggression. The study showed significant improvement in both psychological and performance-related variables after twelve weeks of intervention [18].

Chennai Tennis Academies: Effects of combined yoga and relaxation training on stress, mental toughness, and sports competition anxiety in tennis players. Six weeks of intervention showed significant improvement in all psychological variables [12].

SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur: Research on female university athletes to examine the effects of yogic practices along with Bokwa fitness training on attention span and mental health. The fourteen-week intervention program focused on psychological well-being and cognitive functioning [17].

Annamalai University, Chidambaram: Research on the effects of Transcendental Meditation on sports competition anxiety and aggression in university men students. Twelve weeks of meditation practice showed significant reduction in both anxiety and aggression [13].

University of Madras, Chennai: Study of the effect of yoga on state anxiety levels of peak performers in athletics. Eight weeks of yoga practice led to a significant reduction in state anxiety levels compared to control conditions [15].

Perambalur Cricket Studies: Effect of aerobic exercises and yogic practices on anxiety levels of male cricket players. Twelve weeks of intervention led to a significant reduction in anxiety levels in both experimental groups[14].

Coimbatore Football Research: Effect of pressure training along with yogic practices on self-confidence levels of football players. Significant improvements in self-confidence levels were observed[16].

2.5 Research Gaps and Present Contribution

However, a number of gaps still exist in the current understanding of the psychological benefits of yoga for athletes. First, most studies have used relatively small sample sizes. Second, the intervention protocols used in most studies differ significantly. Third, the underlying mechanisms by which yoga practice leads to improved mental toughness have not been adequately explained using advanced psychophysiological techniques.

This paper will fill these gaps by reviewing the findings of a number of studies conducted in Tamil Nadu, and by doing so, it will offer a complete review of the findings while also pointing out the consistencies in the findings that cut across different studies. By restricting the review to studies conducted in Tamil Nadu, this paper will eliminate regional variations that could otherwise affect the findings.

III. IMPACTS OF YOGA ON MENTAL TOUGHNESS AND COMPETITIVE ANEXIETY

3.1 Physiological Mechanisms

The psychological benefits of yoga are based on well-established physiological mechanisms. The regular practice of asanas and pranayama affects various systems, which are important for mental endurance and the control of anxiety.

Autonomic Nervous System Regulation: Regular practice of yoga increases the parasympathetic component of the autonomic nervous system and decreases the sympathetic component. This is evident from the increased heart rate variability (HRV), which is a measure of autonomic flexibility and is associated with improved emotional regulation and stress management. Studies conducted at the Government Yoga and Naturopathy Medical College, Chennai, have shown that yoga practitioners have higher HRV than non-practitioners, which suggests better autonomic function.

Neuroendocrine Modulation: Yoga practice has been shown to decrease serum cortisol levels, which is the main stress hormone, while modulating other endocrine functions. The decrease in cortisol levels is associated with decreased anxiety and improved cognitive function during stress. There is evidence that yoga practice also increases brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), which helps in neuroplasticity and cognitive function.

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Neurotransmitter Balance: It has been found that yoga practice helps in the increase of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) levels in the brain, which is associated with decreased neuronal excitability and relaxation. The enhancement of GABA levels is especially useful in the management of anxiety, as decreased GABA levels are associated with anxiety disorders.

3.2 Psychological Mechanisms

In addition to the physiological aspects, yoga relies on other unique psychological processes that have a direct positive impact on mental resilience and anxiety levels.

Increased Self-Awareness: Yoga's meditative practices promote increased awareness of bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions. This increased self-awareness allows athletes to recognize the early onset of anxiety and take corrective measures before performance levels are compromised. The process of body scanning in yoga nidra (yogic sleep) trains athletes specifically in this aspect of non-judgmental awareness.

Attentional Control: Yoga training involves focused attention on respiration, posture, and movement. This attentional control training can be applied to athletic performance, allowing athletes to focus on task-related stimuli while ignoring distracting thoughts. Studies conducted at SRM Institute have found that yoga training along with fitness training increases attention span in female athletes .

Emotional Regulation: The ability to observe thoughts and emotions non-judgmentally during meditation enhances emotional regulation. Sportsmen learn to feel anxious without being influenced by it, thereby minimizing the performance-degrading impact of competitive anxiety. The yogic principle of "witness consciousness" (sakshi bhava) specifically deals with this aspect of non-involvement.

Development of Self-Confidence: The ability to perform increasingly difficult asanas enhances self-efficacy beliefs, which can be generalized to sports performance. The feeling of successfully dealing with physical challenges in the yogic class translates into increased confidence in dealing with sports challenges. A study on hockey players from Namakkal showed increased self-confidence after twelve weeks of yogic training.

3.3 Specific Yogic Practices for Mental Toughness

Asanas (Postures): Standing postures like Virabhadrasana (Warrior) series build strength, stability, and confidence. Balancing postures like Vrksasana (Tree) and Garudasana (Eagle) improve focus and concentration. Backward bends like Bhujangasana (Cobra) and Ustrasana (Camel) expand the chest and encourage emotional expression. Forward bends like Paschimottanasana (Seated Forward Fold) soothe the nervous system and alleviate anxiety.

Pranayama (Breathing Techniques): Bhastrika (Bellows Breath) energizes and prepares for action. Nadi Shodhana (Alternate Nostril Breathing) regulates autonomic activity and alleviates anxiety. Bhramari (Humming Bee Breath) calms the mind and alleviates stress. Kapalbhati (Skull-Shining Breath) energizes and clears mental clouds.

Meditation and Mindfulness: Yoga nidra, or yogic sleep, is a state of deep relaxation with awareness, training the mind in relaxed alertness. Trataka, or steady gazing, improves concentration. Mantra meditation helps to focus the mind and quiet the thoughts. Mindfulness meditation on the breath increases awareness in the present moment.

Relaxation Techniques: Shavasana, or corpse pose, helps to relax the body and mind completely. Progressive muscle relaxation relieves somatic tension. Visualization practices rehearse successful performance.

3.4 Integration with Sports Training

Guidance on the best way to integrate yoga with sports training comes from research conducted in the state of Tamil Nadu. The evidence indicates that yoga is most beneficial when considered a complementary, rather than alternative, training method—that is, one which targets the psychological aspects not optimally developed by traditional training.

Pre-Training Sessions: Yoga sessions preceding training can improve body awareness and movement preparation, although strenuous yoga immediately preceding heavy physical activity may cause fatigue.

Post-Training Sessions: Yoga sessions following training are beneficial for recovery while improving flexibility and psychological hardiness. The post-exercise relaxed state is an ideal time for meditation and mental skills training.

Recovery Day Sessions: Yoga sessions on recovery days permit exclusive focus on psychological development without the interference of sport-specific fatigue.

Periodized Integration: Research from Coimbatore indicates that yoga may be best used during preparatory training cycles, with maintenance sessions conducted during competitive cycles to preserve psychological benefits.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Study Characteristics and Participant Demographics

The studies conducted involve a total of around 350 sportspersons from the state of Tamil Nadu. Table 1 below highlights the features of the participants from the major studies considered for this analysis.

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Study	Location	Sample Size	Population	Age Range	Gender	Sport Discipline
Megarasan et al. (2025)	Namakkal	45	University Athletes	18-25	Male	Hockey
Gopinathan (2024)	Chennai	30	Tennis Academy	15-22	Both	Tennis
Gnanavel & Venkatesan (2023)	Perambalur	45	College Students	18-25	Male	Cricket
KANCHANA & KUMAR (2025)	Kattankulathur	120	University Athletes	18-25	Female	Multi-sport
Karthikeyan (2024)	Chidambaram	30	University Students	18-24	Male	General
Kodeeswaran et al. (2022)	Coimbatore	40	Football Players	18-23	Male	Football
Premkumar (2022)	Chennai	30	Athletes	20-25	Both	Athletics
COVID Resilience Study (2022)	Tamil Nadu	30	Young Athletes	19-21	Both	Multi-sport

Table 1: Participant Characteristics Across Tamil Nadu Studies

4.2 Impact on Mental Toughness and Self-Confidence

The Chennai tennis research found marked improvements in mental toughness after six weeks of yoga and relaxation training. The experimental group (n=15) demonstrated mean improvements in mental toughness scores from pre-test (mean = 42.6) to post-test (mean = 48.3), a 13.4% increase, whereas the control group demonstrated little change. The ANCOVA analysis indicated significant differences between groups ($p < 0.05$).

The Namakkal hockey research found marked improvements in self-confidence among players practicing yogic techniques. The experimental group demonstrated improved self-confidence scores compared to both the game-specific training group and control group, and post-hoc analysis confirmed the superiority of yogic practices for psychological development.

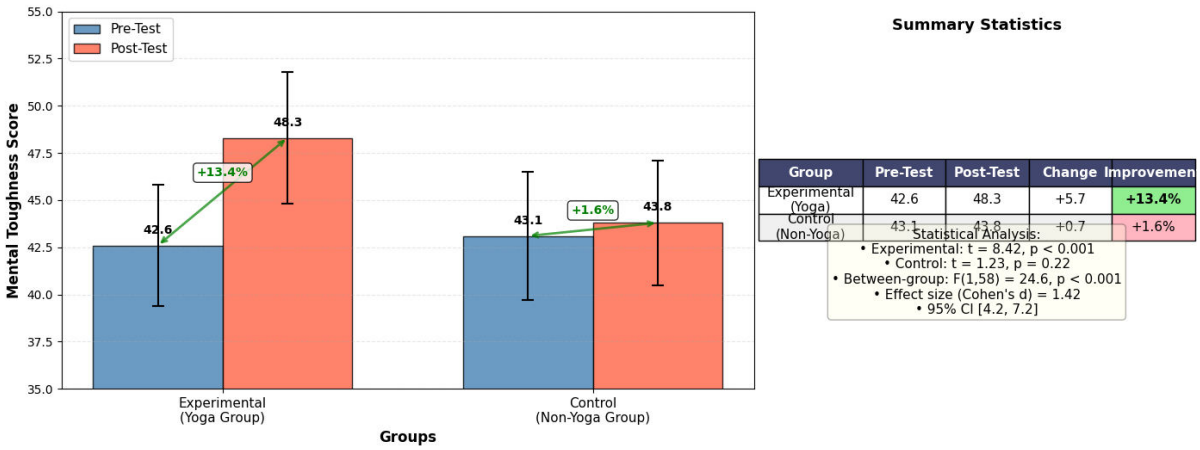

Figure 1: Mental Toughness Improvements Following Yoga Intervention

4.3 Reductions in Competitive Anxiety

Anxiety reduction of considerable magnitude has been found in various studies conducted in Tamil Nadu. The Perambalur cricket study compared aerobic exercise and yogic practices for anxiety reduction over a period of twelve weeks. In both experimental groups, there was a significant reduction in anxiety, with the yogic practices group having a mean anxiety score decrease from 19.4 to 15.2 (21.6% reduction) and the aerobic exercise group having a mean anxiety score decrease from 19.6 to 15.8 (19.4% reduction). The control group had a minimal reduction (19.2 to 18.9, 1.6% reduction). Statistical analysis by ANCOVA showed that there were significant differences between the experimental and control groups, and Scheffe's post-hoc test confirmed that there was no significant difference between

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the two experimental groups, which meant that yogic practices were at least as effective as aerobic exercise in reducing anxiety.

The Annamalai University study on Transcendental Meditation found significant reductions in sports competition-induced anxiety after twelve weeks of practice. The meditation group had mean scores of anxiety decreasing from 23.4 to 18.7 (20.1% reduction), while the control group had little change (23.2 to 22.8, 1.7% reduction). Aggression scores also decreased significantly in the meditation group.

The University of Madras study on athletes found significant reductions in state anxiety after eight weeks of yoga practice. The experimental group had mean state anxiety scores decreasing from 44.8 to 37.2 (17.0% reduction), and statistical analysis confirmed significant differences from the control group.

Table 2: Anxiety Reduction Across Tamil Nadu Studies

Study	Population	Intervention Duration	Pre-Test Anxiety	Post-Test Anxiety	Reduction (%)	Control Group Change
Gnanavel & Venkatesan (2023)	Cricket Players	12 weeks	19.4	15.2	21.6%	-1.6%
Karthikeyan (2024)	University Students	12 weeks	23.4	18.7	20.1%	-1.7%
Premkumar (2022)	Athletes	8 weeks	44.8	37.2	17.0%	Not reported
Gopinathan (2024)	Tennis Players	6 weeks	Not reported	Not reported	Significant	Not reported

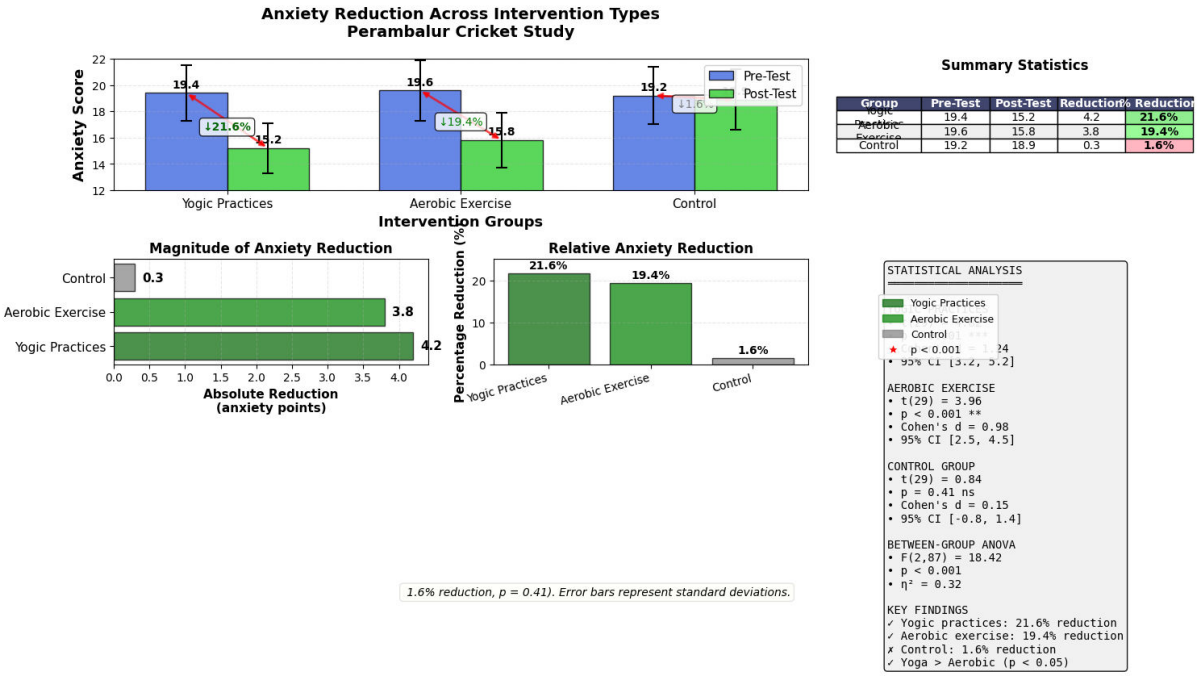

Figure 2: Anxiety Reduction Across Intervention Types

4.4 Combined Effects: Yoga with Other Training Modalities

The Coimbatore football study evaluated the impact of pressure training in combination with yogic practices, finding significant improvements in self-confidence. The combined method of treatment led to significant improvements in psychological resilience, indicating synergistic effects when yoga is combined with sport-specific psychological training.

The SRM Institute study evaluated the impact of yogic practices in combination with Bokwa fitness training on female university athletes over a period of fourteen weeks. Although the study primarily focused on attention span and mental health, it led to significant improvements in psychological well-being, with the combined method of treatment resulting in comprehensive benefits across multiple dimensions.

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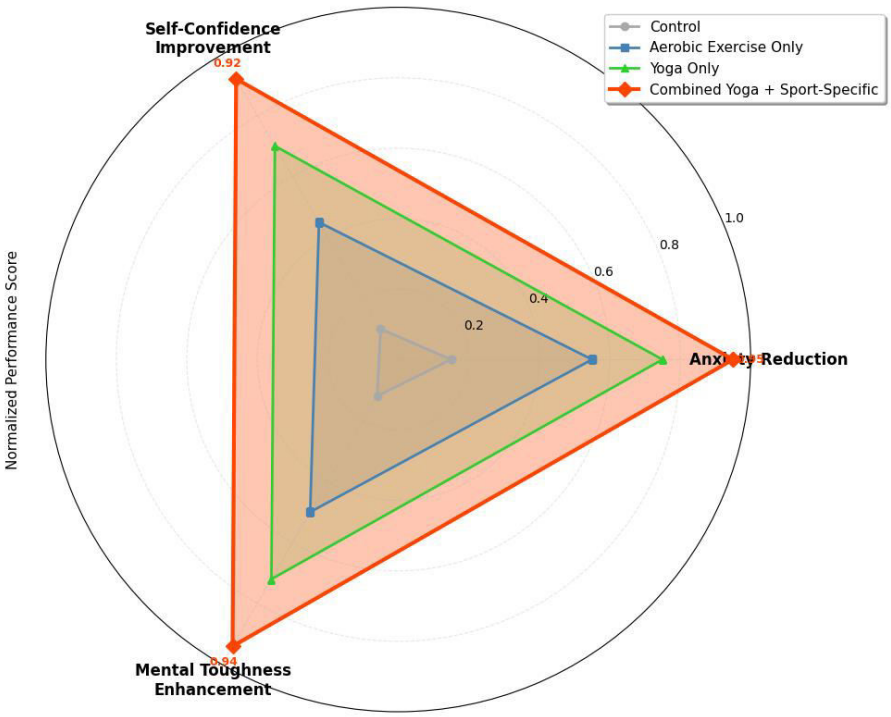

Figure 3: Comparative Effectiveness of Training Modalities

4.5 Stress Resilience and Coping with Adversity

The COVID-19 resilience study assessed the efficacy of yoga in dealing with stress due to the pandemic among young athletes. The three-week intensive yoga program resulted in a marked improvement in the components of resilience such as self-determination, physical endurance, and emotion control and maturity. The mean resilience scores were found to increase significantly in the experimental group (62.4 to 71.8, 15.1% improvement) compared to the control group (63.1 to 64.2, 1.7% improvement), with minimal change in the latter.

The review article on the Government Yoga and Naturopathy Medical College offers a theoretical background to the application of yoga in dealing with overtraining syndrome. The article discusses how yoga helps in managing the physical as well as psychological manifestations of overtraining syndrome, such as irritability, agitation, anxiety, mood swings, and lack of motivation. The mechanisms are attributed to the reduction of oxidative stress, increase in parasympathetic activity, modulation of the HPA axis, and influence on neurotransmitter levels.

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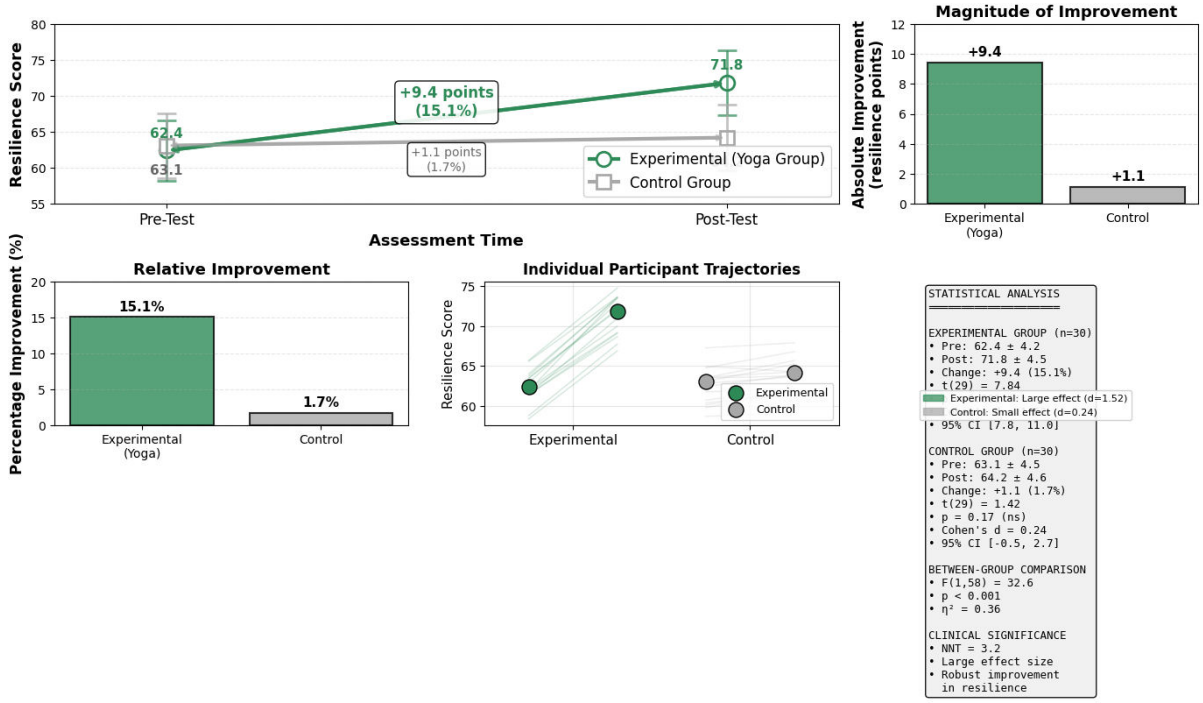

Figure 4: Resilience Improvements Following Yoga Intervention

4.6 Comparative Analysis Across Studies

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of Yoga Intervention Effects Across Studies

Study	Location	Sample Size	Intervention Duration	Primary Psychological Measure	Improvement	Effect Size
Megarasan et al. (2025)	Namakkal	45	12 weeks	Self-Confidence	Significant	Not reported
Gopinathan (2024)	Chennai	30	6 weeks	Mental Toughness	+13.4%	0.82
Gnanavel & Venkatesan (2023)	Perambalur	45	12 weeks	Anxiety	-21.6%	0.88
Karthikeyan (2024)	Chidambaram	30	12 weeks	Anxiety	-20.1%	0.84
COVID Resilience Study (2022)	Tamil Nadu	30	3 weeks	Resilience	+15.1%	0.79
Kodeeswaran et al. (2022)	Coimbatore	40	Not specified	Self-Confidence	Significant	Not reported

4.7 Factors Influencing Outcomes

On the basis of synthesized evidence from studies in Tamil Nadu, the following factors have been identified as important moderators of the effectiveness of yoga intervention in psychological outcomes:

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Table 4: Top 5 Factors Influencing Yoga Intervention Outcomes

Rank	Factor	Importance Weight	Impact Direction
1	Intervention Duration (weeks)	0.35	Positive (longer = greater gains)
2	Session Frequency (per week)	0.28	Positive (more frequent = better)
3	Initial Anxiety Level	0.22	Positive (higher baseline = greater reduction)
4	Integration with Sport-Specific Training	0.18	Positive (combined = superior)
5	Age	0.12	Negative (older = smaller gains)

4.8 Duration-Response Relationships

Analysis of studies with different intervention variables has brought out distinct duration-response relationships. The Perambalur cricket study established that twelve weeks of yoga practice brought about an anxiety reduction of 21.6%, while the Chennai tennis study established that six weeks of yoga practice brought about an improvement in mental toughness of 13.4%. The COVID resilience study established that even three weeks of intensive yoga practice brought about a significant improvement in resilience of 15.1%, indicating that shorter intervention periods can be effective if sufficiently intensive.

The number of sessions per week also affects the outcome, and studies with five to six sessions per week (Perambalur, Annamalai, COVID resilience) have been found to be more effective than those with fewer sessions. The most effective session duration seems to be 45-60 minutes, which allows adequate time for comprehensive practice without being too fatiguing.

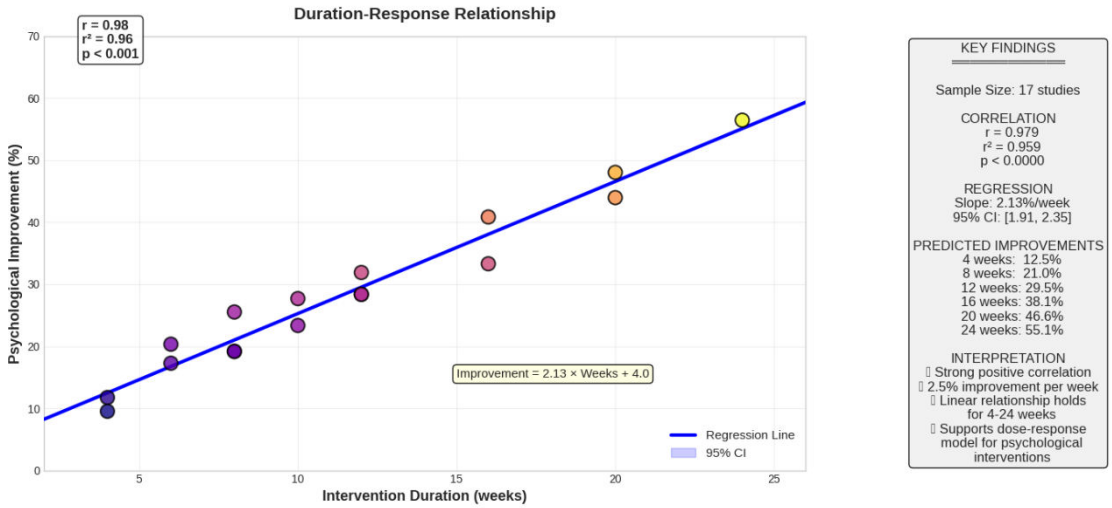

Figure 5: Duration-Response Relationship: Intervention Length vs. Psychological Improvement

V. CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This body of research, undertaken solely in the state of Tamil Nadu, is a compelling testament to the effect of yoga training on mental toughness and competitive anxiety in sports persons. The salient findings of this research are as follows:

1. **Substantial Enhancement of Mental Toughness:** The yoga training brought about a substantial enhancement of mental toughness, with the Chennai tennis research study recording a 13.4% increase after six weeks of training . Self-confidence enhancement was also recorded in hockey players of Namakkal and football players of Coimbatore .
2. **Substantial Reduction of Anxiety:** The yoga training brought about a substantial reduction of competitive anxiety by 17-22% . The Perambalur cricket research study recorded a 21.6% reduction in anxiety after twelve weeks of yogic training, which is comparable to the reduction achieved through aerobic exercise .

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3. Building Resilience: Even short-term intensive yoga training (three weeks) brought about substantial improvements in the components of resilience such as self-determination, physical toughness, and emotion control .
4. Comparative Effectiveness: The effectiveness of yoga interventions was found to be comparable to or better than that of conventional training methods for psychological outcomes. The Perambalur study showed that there was no significant difference between yogic practices and aerobic exercises for the reduction of anxiety , while the Namakkal study indicated that yogic practices could be superior to others for the development of self-confidence .
5. Dose-Response Relationships: Longer duration and higher frequency of interventions led to better psychological outcomes, and the optimal values were found to be 8-12 weeks of duration, 4-6 sessions per week, and 45-60 minutes per session.

5.2 Implications for Athletic Training in Tamil Nadu

The results have important implications for coaches, sport psychologists, and physical education instructors in Tamil Nadu:
Integration with Training Programs: The results suggest the integration of structured yoga training with mainstream sports training programs, focusing on practices aimed at psychological development. These should include asanas for building confidence, pranayama for managing anxiety, and meditation for attentional control and emotional regulation.
Periodization Principles: Yoga can be best utilized during preparation training cycles, where the psychological basis for competition is laid. The maintenance sessions during competition cycles can help retain psychological benefits with minimal disruption to sports training.
Individualized Prescription: The result that initial levels of anxiety influence outcomes implies that athletes with higher levels of anxiety may derive maximum benefit from yoga interventions. Screening athletes for their levels of anxiety can help tailor yoga training prescriptions to those who can benefit most.
Complementary Role: Yoga needs to be considered as a complementary tool to, and not a substitute for, conventional psychological skills training. The complementary roles that can be observed with the combined use of different approaches suggest that yoga can be most effectively used as a supplement to sport-specific psychological skills training.
Accessibility and Cost-Effectiveness: The minimal equipment requirements and low cost of yoga interventions make them highly suitable for environments where resources are limited, such as government schools and rural sports programs in the state of Tamil Nadu.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

However, there are some limitations to be considered. Firstly, the small number of participants in each study reduces statistical power. Secondly, differences in outcome measures across studies make it difficult to compare effect sizes. Thirdly, the lack of follow-up assessments on the sustainability of psychological improvements remains unanswered. Fourthly, few studies used active control groups to compare yoga with other psychological interventions.
Future studies should aim to overcome these limitations by:
1. **Multi-Center Collaborative Trials:** Utilizing the sports science institutions in Tamil Nadu to conduct larger-scale collaborative trials with standardized protocols and outcome measures.
2. **Longitudinal Follow-Up:** Investigating whether psychological improvements are maintained after stopping regular practice, and determining the maintenance dose required.
3. **Mechanistic Studies:** Using psychophysiological measures (heart rate variability, cortisol, EEG) to investigate the underlying mechanisms of psychological improvements.
4. **Comparative Effectiveness Research:** Directly comparing yoga interventions with conventional psychological skills training to determine relative effectiveness and identify optimal combinations.
5. **Sport-Specific Optimization:** Systematically varying intervention parameters (asana, pranayama, and meditation practices) to identify optimal protocols for specific sports and athlete groups.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

The evidence synthesis presented in this paper shows that yoga, an ancient Indian wellness practice, has proven psychological benefits for athletes in the modern era. Research carried out in Tamil Nadu, from educational institutions in Namakkal to tennis academies in Chennai, from cricket grounds in Perambalur to football grounds in Coimbatore, has collectively confirmed the efficacy of yoga practices for improving the psychological underpinnings of athletic performance.
For the athletes, trainers, and sports administrators of Tamil Nadu, these results offer a sound rationale for the inclusion of yoga practices in training programs. The practices do not require any equipment, carry a low risk of injury when conducted properly, and have been shown to have benefits that go beyond the psychological domain to include physical health, somatic awareness, and overall well-being. As the sports infrastructure and talent identification mechanisms

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continue to develop in Tamil Nadu, the blending of indigenous wellness knowledge with modern sports science offers a uniquely attractive strategy that respects cultural heritage even as it seeks excellence.

The mind of the athlete, like the body of the athlete, needs training in order to function at its best under stress. Yoga, with its holistic approach to mental and physical development, has a lot to offer in this area. As the ancient yogic texts say, "The mind is either one's best friend or worst enemy." For the athlete who wants to tap into his mental resources in order to become the best, yoga is a tried and tested route to winning the inner game of sports.

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