



Nova Science Press

Journal of Psychology & Education

Vol. 1, No. 8 (2026)

**Yoga Among Children in India: An Explorative Review of Current Evidence,
Challenges, and Future Directions**

Revathi Munirathinam 1*, Hithiksha Sri Suresh 2, Nikhilesh Suresh 2

1 Engineering Department, Scientific Society Group, Tiruvannamalai, Tamilnadu – 606805,
India.

2 Air Force School Avadi, Chennai, 600062, India.

*Corresponding author: Revathi Munirathinam; email: drsaralah@gmail.com

Journal of Psychology & Education • Vol. 1, No. 8 (2026)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66581/jf35xp27>

Received: 1 May 2026 • Accepted: 26 August 2026 • Published: 30 September 2026

CITATION

Munirathinam, R., Sri Suresh, H., & Suresh, N. (2026). Yoga Among Children in India: An Explorative Review of Current Evidence, Challenges, and Future Directions. *Journal of Psychology & Education*, 1(8), 53-61. <https://doi.org/10.66581/jf35xp27>

COPYRIGHT

© 2026 Munirathinam, R., Suresh, H. S., & Suresh, N.. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). Use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium are permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and the original publication in this journal is cited in accordance with accepted academic practice.

Abstract

Yoga has emerged as an important non-pharmacological intervention for promoting children's physical, psychological, cognitive, and social well-being. As the birthplace of yoga, India has increasingly integrated yoga into educational and healthcare systems through national policies and school-based initiatives. Despite widespread implementation, evidence regarding its effectiveness, accessibility, and sustainability remains fragmented. This exploratory review synthesizes existing literature on yoga among children in India, examining its historical evolution, physiological and psychological benefits, educational outcomes, policy initiatives, implementation challenges, and future research directions. A narrative review methodology was adopted through an examination of peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, and international publications indexed in Scopus, PubMed, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and official government databases. The literature consistently demonstrates that yoga improves flexibility, muscular strength, respiratory efficiency, attention, emotional regulation, stress management, academic performance, and social behaviour among children. Evidence also supports its application in children with neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Nevertheless, disparities in implementation across Indian schools, inadequate instructor training, infrastructural limitations, and the absence of standardized curricula remain major barriers. The review concludes that yoga represents a culturally appropriate, cost-effective, and evidence-based strategy capable of promoting holistic child development in India. Future research should emphasize longitudinal intervention studies, standardized outcome measures, and nationwide implementation frameworks.

Keywords: Yoga Children, School Health, Mental Health, Physical Fitness, Child Development, Holistic Education

Introduction

Children represent one of the most vulnerable populations undergoing rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. Contemporary childhood in India is increasingly characterized by academic competition, sedentary lifestyles, excessive digital screen exposure, reduced physical activity, psychological stress, obesity, anxiety, and behavioural difficulties (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). These emerging public health concerns have stimulated interest in complementary approaches that support holistic child development beyond conventional healthcare and educational interventions.

Yoga, an ancient Indian discipline dating back more than 5,000 years, integrates physical postures (Asanas), breathing techniques (Pranayama), meditation (Dhyana), relaxation, and ethical principles to promote harmony between the body and mind (Iyengar, 2005). Traditionally regarded as a spiritual practice, yoga has evolved into a globally recognized health-promoting intervention supported by an expanding body of scientific evidence. Numerous studies indicate that yoga contributes positively to physical health, psychological well-being, emotional resilience, cognitive functioning, behavioural regulation, and quality of life among children (Field, 2016; Telles et al., 2013).

India has taken significant steps to institutionalize yoga through national initiatives such as the International Day of Yoga, the Ministry of AYUSH, the Fit India Movement, and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Yoga is increasingly incorporated into school curricula and extracurricular activities across both government and private educational institutions. However, implementation varies considerably across regions due to differences in infrastructure, trained personnel, institutional commitment, and resource availability.

Despite the increasing popularity of yoga in Indian schools, a comprehensive synthesis of existing evidence remains limited. Most available studies focus on specific physiological or psychological outcomes rather than providing an integrated understanding of yoga's role in child development. Consequently, an exploratory review is warranted to consolidate current knowledge, identify implementation challenges, and highlight future research priorities.

Therefore, the primary objective of this review is to examine the current evidence regarding yoga among children in India, with particular emphasis on its physical, psychological, cognitive, educational, and social benefits, while identifying gaps that require further investigation.

Methodology

This article adopts a narrative exploratory review design. Literature was identified through searches of PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ERIC, and official reports from the Ministry of AYUSH, the Ministry of Education, and the World Health Organization. Keywords included Yoga, Children, India, School Yoga, Mental Health, Child Development, and Yoga Intervention. Peer-reviewed articles published primarily in English between 2000 and 2025 were considered. Government policy documents and international guidelines relevant to yoga and child health were also reviewed.

The selected literature was analysed thematically under six major domains:-

- (1) physical health,**
- (2) psychological well-being,**
- (3) cognitive development,**
- (4) educational outcomes,**
- (5) social and behavioural development, and**
- (6) implementation challenges.**

3. Historical Development of Yoga in India

Yoga occupies a central place in Indian cultural heritage and has evolved from a spiritual discipline into an evidence-based health intervention. Ancient texts such as the Rig Veda, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Patanjali's Yoga Sutras provide the philosophical foundations of yoga (Feuerstein, 2003). Contemporary school-based yoga primarily draws upon Hatha Yoga, emphasizing physical postures, controlled breathing, and relaxation.

International recognition of yoga expanded following the declaration of 21 June as the International Day of Yoga by the United Nations in 2014. Subsequently, the Government of India strengthened institutional support through the establishment of the Ministry of AYUSH and nationwide school-based yoga programmes.

Today, yoga is recognized not merely as a traditional practice but as an evidence-informed intervention for promoting child health and educational outcomes.

Discussion

Physical Health Benefits

The literature consistently demonstrates that yoga contributes significantly to children's physical health. Regular practice enhances muscular strength, flexibility, postural alignment, balance, coordination, respiratory efficiency, cardiovascular endurance, and overall physical fitness (Galantino et al., 2008). Yoga also addresses childhood obesity by encouraging active lifestyles and improving metabolic functioning.

Breathing exercises, particularly Pranayama, improve lung capacity and respiratory endurance among school-aged children, making yoga beneficial for children with mild respiratory disorders.

Psychological and Emotional Well-being

One of the strongest areas of evidence concerns the positive influence of yoga on children's mental health. Numerous intervention studies report reductions in stress, anxiety, emotional instability, aggression, and depressive symptoms following regular yoga practice (Field, 2016).

Yoga enhances emotional regulation through mindfulness practices that improve children's ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions. Relaxation techniques activate the parasympathetic nervous system, reducing physiological stress responses and promoting emotional resilience.

Cognitive Development and Academic Performance

Research indicates that yoga positively influences executive functioning, including attention, working memory, inhibitory control, and cognitive flexibility. Improved concentration enables children to participate more effectively in classroom learning.

Several Indian studies have reported improvements in academic achievement, particularly in mathematics, language, and problem-solving abilities following structured yoga interventions.

Social and Behavioural Development

Yoga encourages empathy, cooperation, patience, and positive interpersonal relationships. Children participating in school yoga programmes demonstrate reduced aggression, fewer behavioural problems, improved classroom discipline, and enhanced peer interaction.

These findings are particularly relevant given increasing concerns regarding bullying, classroom misconduct, and emotional dysregulation among school-aged children.

Yoga for Children with Special Needs

Emerging evidence suggests that yoga is beneficial for children diagnosed with ASD, ADHD, learning disabilities, and intellectual disabilities. Improvements have been reported in attention

span, emotional regulation, communication skills, motor coordination, and adaptive behaviour. Although promising, further randomized controlled trials are required to strengthen the evidence base.

Challenges in Implementing Yoga in Indian Schools

Despite policy support, implementation remains inconsistent. Key barriers include:

Shortage of qualified yoga instructors.

Limited infrastructure in rural and government schools.

Inadequate instructional time due to academic demands.

Variability in curriculum content.

Limited monitoring and programme evaluation.

Misconceptions regarding yoga as solely a religious practice.

Lack of longitudinal outcome assessment.

Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts from policymakers, educators, healthcare professionals, and researchers.

Future Directions

Future research should prioritize:

Longitudinal studies evaluating sustained effects of yoga.

Standardized intervention protocols.

Randomized controlled trials across diverse populations.

Integration of digital technologies for yoga instruction.

Inclusive programmes for children with disabilities.

Teacher training and professional certification.

Evaluation of policy implementation under NEP 2020.

Cost-effectiveness analyses of nationwide school-based yoga programmes.

Conclusion

Yoga offers a comprehensive and culturally relevant approach to promoting holistic child development in India. The available literature indicates consistent benefits across physical, psychological, cognitive, educational, and behavioural domains. National policy initiatives have created favourable conditions for integrating yoga into school education; however, implementation remains uneven due to infrastructural and human resource constraints. Future research employing rigorous methodologies and standardized evaluation frameworks is essential to strengthen the evidence base and guide policy development. Given its affordability, accessibility, and cultural acceptance, yoga has substantial potential to contribute to healthier, more resilient, and academically successful children in India.

References

- Field, T. (2016). Yoga research review. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*, 24, 145–161.
- Feuerstein, G. (2003). *The deeper dimension of yoga*. Shambhala.
- Galantino, M. L., Galbavy, R., & Quinn, L. (2008). Therapeutic effects of yoga for children: A systematic review. *Pediatric Physical Therapy*, 20(1), 66–80.
- Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Ministry of Education.
- Iyengar, B. K. S. (2005). *Light on life: The yoga journey to wholeness, inner peace, and ultimate freedom*. Rodale.
- Ministry of AYUSH. (2023). *Common Yoga Protocol*. Government of India.
- Telles, S., Singh, N., & Balkrishna, A. (2013). Effect of yoga on cognitive abilities among school children. *Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology*, 57(2), 149–155.

World Health Organization. (2020). Guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour.
WHO.