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Original Article

Examining the Effect of Lactation Yoga on Anxiety in Breastfeeding Mothers

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ABSTRACT

Background: Anxiety in breastfeeding mothers can inhibit the let-down reflex due to increased adrenaline and cortisol, leading to vasoconstriction in alveolar blood vessels. Non-pharmacological interventions, such as lactation yoga, may help alleviate this condition. Lactatio yoga is a gentle exercise that breastfeeding mothers can perform to relax the body while breastfeeding. Our objective is to assess the impact of lactation yoga on anxiety levels among breastfeeding mothers in the Kebong Public Health Center, Sintang Regency.
Method: This study employed a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design. Lactation yoga intervention was provided only to breastfeeding mothers aged 6 weeks to 6 months; the sample comprised 21 participants, selected through total sampling. Data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon test.
Result: Post-intervention anxiety scores were significantly lower than pre-intervention scores (p= 0.001, p <0.005).
Conclusion: Lactation yoga significantly reduces anxiety in breastfeeding mothers. Recommendation: Incorporating lactation yoga into maternal health programs may help decrease anxiety and promote the success of exclusive breastfeeding.

INTRODUCTION

Giving a newborn breast milk straight from the mother's breast is known as breastfeeding (Nora, 2024; Salat & Suprayitno, 2019) The United Nations International Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) advise exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months following delivery. Breastfeeding exclusively can shield babies from chronic and viral disorders while also enhancing their sensory and cognitive development.

The 2023 Indonesian Health Survey (SKI) found that 55.5% of newborns between the ages of 0 and 6 months were exclusively breastfed, falling well short of the 80% government goal. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics' (BPS) 2023 survey, 72.93% of women in West Kalimantan were exclusively nursing. Although this coverage rose frowatm 72.66% in 2022, it still falls short of the national goal. According to the West Kalimantan Province Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team

Report by Riwayati, A., (2024), Pontianak has a 61.3% exclusive breastfeeding coverage rate, whereas Kebong Health Center only has a 42.7% coverage rate in 2024, far below the national goal.

Peace of mind and thought have an impact on the production of breast milk (Citrawati, Gede, & Dharma, 2023; Farista & Jaga, 2026; Greenthal & Spatz, 2023; Septianingrum, Hatmanti, & Fitriasari, 2020). The ducts or cells that create breast milk and press it out will not operate properly when the mother is worried because the signals from the hormones prolactin and oxytocin will not reach the alveolar cells and myoepithelial cells. As a result, emotional tension of any kind, including melancholy, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, will decrease the amount of breast milk produced and possibly stop it altogether (Salat & Suprayitno, 2019).

Exercise or physical activity is one strategy for helping nursing moms deal with their anxiety. Exercise during nursing has been shown to increase energy, encourage deeper sleep, elevate mood, and lessen anxiety (Saeed et al., 2019).

According to (Astutik, Pramono, Susanto, & Kartasurya,2024; Boybay Koyuncu & Yayan, 2022; Kusumastuti, Indriyastuti, & Na'mah, 2021) Research teaching mothers to do yoga has a positive effect on breastfeeding and maternal bonding during the postpartum period, as well as the physical and mental health of both the mother and the child. This is consistent with the research as well (Ariyanti et al., 2023; Winarni et al., 2020) which claims that yoga exercises have an impact on nursing moms' stress levels. Based on this research, it can be said that yoga practice has an impact on nursing moms' stress levels.

The researcher wants to investigate the impact of lactation yoga on anxiety in nursing moms by undertaking an intervention based on prior studies. In contrast to regular yoga, lactation yoga incorporates breathing exercises, relaxation, and gentle movements that are done with the infant to strengthen the link. It is thought that exclusive breastfeeding can be sustained by lowering anxiety in nursing moms.

METHODS

A pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design was employed in this investigation. All breastfeeding mothers who meet the inclusion criteria—children between the ages of 6 weeks and 6 months who have mild-to-moderate anxiety, do not have mastitis or breast engorgement, have had a C-section at least three months ago, and are exclusively breastfeeding—make up the study's population. Since complete sampling is employed, the sample comprises all 21 respondents, i.e., the entire population. From February 10 to March 7, 2025, this study was conducted at the Kebong Health Center's operational site in Sintang Regency.

The Postpartum Specific Anxiety Scale (PSAS) was used to collect data. The researcher then gathers, processes, and analyzes all of the acquired data using the Wilcoxon test. The intervention provided was lactation yoga, a modified form of yoga that is tailored to the physiological conditions of breastfeeding mothers. Yoga sessions lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, two to three times a week, for four consecutive weeks. An instructor led each session. A series of lactation yoga movements includes: Warm-up (5–10 minutes) Deep breathing exercises, light stretches for the neck, shoulders, and upper back, core movements (20–25 minutes), neck and shoulder stretches to reduce tension while breastfeeding cat-Cow pose (Marjaryasana-Bitilasana) to improve circulation and reduce back pain Child's Pose (Balasana) for relaxation and calming the mind Light Cobra Pose (Bhujangasana) to open the chest area and facilitate breathing Chest and shoulder stretches to help facilitate milk flow Cool-down and relaxation (5–10 minutes) avasana with guided relaxation techniques positive affirmation exercises for breastfeeding mothers. The KEPK Poltekkes Kemenkes Pontianak No.024/KEPK-PK.PKP/II/2025.

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RESULTS

The results of data processing and analysis were presented in the following table:

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents (n=21)

Characteristics	n	%
Age (years)		
<20	2	9.6
20-35	15	71.4
>35	4	19.0
Occupation		
Unemployed	17	81.0
Employed	4	19.0
Educational Level		
Primary Education	4	19.0
Secondary Education	11	52.4
Higher Education	6	28.6
Parity		
Primiparous	7	33.3
Multiparous	14	66.7

Based on the frequency distribution table above, which is categorized by age, occupation, education level, and parity, the total number of respondents was 21. The majority of respondents were aged 20–35 years, comprising 15 individuals (71.4%). Almost all respondents were unemployed, accounting for 17 individuals (81%). Most respondents had completed secondary education (11; 52.4%). By parity, the majority of mothers were multiparous (14; 66.7%), whereas nearly half (7; 33.3%) were primiparous.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Anxiety Levels Among Breastfeeding Mothers Before and After Lactation Yoga Intervention

Anxiety Level	Before Intervention		After Intervention	
	n	%	n	%
No anxiety	0	0	9	42.0
Mild	14	67.0	10	48.0
Moderate	7	33.0	2	10.0
Severe	0	0	0	0

The results of the univariate analysis in the table above, based on the lactation yoga intervention on breastfeeding mothers' anxiety, show that before the lactation yoga was conducted, the majority of respondents experienced mild anxiety (67%), and nearly half experienced moderate anxiety (33%). After the lactation yoga intervention, the results showed that nearly half of the respondents (42%) did not experience anxiety, while almost half (48%) experienced mild anxiety, and a small proportion (10%) experienced moderate anxiety.

Table 3. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results for Differences in Anxiety Scores Among Breastfeeding Mothers Before and After the Lactation Yoga Intervention

Variable	Median	Minimum	Maximum	*p-value*
Lactation Yoga				
Pre-Test	85	71	107	0.001
Post-Test	71	60	95	

Based on the table above, before the lactation yoga intervention was administered, the anxiety scores of breastfeeding mothers at the pre-test showed a minimum score of 71 and a maximum score of 107, with a median value of 85. After the lactation yoga intervention, the median, minimum, and maximum scores decreased. The significance value from the statistical analysis using the Wilcoxon test before and after the lactation yoga intervention was $p = 0.001 < 0.05$. These results indicate that the lactation yoga intervention had a significant effect on reducing anxiety levels among breastfeeding mothers aged 6 weeks to 6 months

DISCUSSION

The results of the above analysis indicate that the lactation yoga intervention performed had an effect on reducing anxiety scores in breastfeeding mothers aged 6 weeks to 6 months. This research is supported by Ariyanti, Zakiah, Pemayun, & Wisnawa (2023), who states that yoga can help mothers increase energy and endurance, release stress and anxiety, improve sleep quality, and reduce muscle tension and other physical complaints such as back pain, pain around the thighs, and waist. This statement aligns with the results of the research that has been conducted, and is consistent with the study by Nabilla et al., (2022), which showed that there was an effect of yoga exercise on anxiety during pregnancy and depression postpartum.

According to Huda, Haryati, & Aziz, (2026); Nurhasanah, Yunita Nugrahini, Kasiati, & Islamiah, (2023), The symptoms of anxiety in breastfeeding mothers are influenced by various factors, including age. Healthy reproductive age is 20-35 years old, and in this study, the majority of mothers were aged 20-35 years (71.4%), which is considered young, many mothers still experience anxiety and worry. Essentially, as the mother ages, the experience gained from her own experiences and those of others also increases. Supported by the educational factors that influence a person's behavior, the higher the education, the better their adjustment in facing new phases. However, even a high level of education does not guarantee that mothers will not experience anxiety (Septianingrum et al., 2020).

According to Istiqomah, Viandika, & Khoirun Nisa, (2021); Pratiwi, Rejeki, & Juniarto, (2021); Wafiah, Ariani, & Bhekti, (2022) research primiparous mothers experience higher levels of anxiety compared to multiparous mothers. Primiparous mothers are typically concerned about the life they will face when caring for their babies, so they still need time to adapt to the situation after childbirth. In contrast, multiparous mothers are already accustomed to the presence of a new family member because they have previous experience.

Based on research conducted by Astutik et al., (2024); Kusumastuti et al., (2021); Munns, Spark, Crossland, & Preston, (2024) On the effects of yoga on stress levels in breastfeeding mothers, it was found that yoga therapy performed twice a week showed a significant difference in results with a p-value of 0.02. This indicates that yoga is effective in reducing stress levels in breastfeeding mothers. This research is also consistent with the study conducted by (Tunjung Fitriani et al., 2022), where the yoga group experienced significant changes in depression, anxiety, and HRQOL levels, with 78% of women in the yoga group showing clinically significant changes.

The results of this study are supported by (Boybay Koyuncu & Yayan, 2022) regarding the effect of postpartum yoga on breastfeeding self-efficacy and attachment in primiparous mothers, which was conducted using a quasi-experimental method with pretest and posttest control. The experimental group was given 60-minute postpartum yoga exercises twice a week for 8 weeks. After yoga practice, there was a statistically significant increase in breastfeeding self-efficacy and an increase in maternal attachment with a p-value <0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that yoga is beneficial for the physical and psychological health of both mother and baby if healthcare professionals teach mothers how to practice yoga, which will positively influence breastfeeding and maternal bonding in the postpartum period.

Lactation yoga can affect the reduction of anxiety in breastfeeding mothers, as evidenced by the results of a study conducted with yoga twice a week for 2 weeks, showing a median score decrease from 85 to 71 with a p-value of 0.001 (<0.005). In reducing anxiety, lactation yoga movements can make mothers more relaxed and calm, thus stimulating the release of endorphins and oxytocin, which will suppress cortisol production. The process of performing lactation yoga also involves movements with the baby, which can strengthen the bond between mother and baby, making the atmosphere more enjoyable(Fatmawati et al., 2024). Reducing anxiety in breastfeeding mothers will promote milk production and increase the achievement of exclusive breastfeeding(Intiful et al., 2025; Kerimoglu Yildiz et al., 2025). In line with Hidayati (2017), who stated that early bonding and attachment, besides being beneficial for increasing oxytocin release, which can prevent postpartum hemorrhage, and increasing breast milk production, also reduces anxiety in mothers and increases their participation in providing care for their babies.

This study has several limitations, including a small sample size, as the total number of respondents was only 21. The limited sample size was due to the study being conducted in remote border and island areas, where access to respondents was restricted, and the number of breastfeeding mothers who met the inclusion criteria was limited. Therefore, the generalizability of the study findings to a broader population remains limited. The absence of a control group in the pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design means that no comparison group was used. This implies that the researchers cannot fully confirm that the reduction in anxiety levels was solely caused by the lactation yoga intervention, as other factors such as family support, natural postpartum adaptation, or environmental influences may also have contributed. Theoretically, the reduction in anxiety levels among breastfeeding mothers after the lactation yoga intervention can be explained through the relaxation response theory introduced by Herbert Benson. This theory explains that relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, and controlled body movements can activate the parasympathetic nervous system while suppressing sympathetic nervous system activity. Activation of the relaxation response decreases heart rate, blood pressure, respiratory rate, and stress hormone levels such as cortisol and adrenaline, leading individuals to experience calmness and reduced anxiety Mu'alimah, Kartikasari, et al (2022). Yoga, including lactation yoga, combines breathing techniques (*pranayama*), stretching, and mental focus that physiologically trigger the relaxation response. From a neuroendocrine perspective, yoga practice can increase the activity of neurotransmitters such as gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), which plays an important role in anxiety regulation (Mu'alimah et al., 2022).

This study supports findings by Fallon, Davies, Christiansen, Harrold, & Silverio (2022); Istiqomah et al., (2021); Munns et al. (2024); Pratiwi et al., (2021), showing that yoga-based interventions positively impact maternal psychological well-being, particularly by reducing postpartum and perinatal anxiety and stress. Recent systematic reviews also indicate that yoga generally benefits mental health, including postnatal anxiety. Prior studies reported significant anxiety reduction in pregnant women through yoga and relaxation, influenced by physiological and psychological changes during and after pregnancy (Ningsi & Ainiyah, 2025). Unlike previous research using randomized controlled trials or larger samples, this study employed a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design. Differences in study design, intervention duration, session frequency,

and participant characteristics may account for variations in outcomes. Furthermore, while earlier studies often targeted postpartum depression or general pregnancy-related anxiety, this study specifically assessed postpartum anxiety using the Postpartum Specific Anxiety Scale (PSAS), enhancing the relevance of findings for breastfeeding mothers in primary healthcare settings. Overall, the results reinforce evidence that yoga-based interventions improve maternal mental health, notably by reducing postpartum anxiety, and provide context-specific insights into lactation yoga for breastfeeding mothers in primary care(Hidayati, 2017; Ningsi & Ainiyah, 2025).

This study has several limitations, such as a small sample size, because the respondents was only 21, so the generalizability of the study results to a wider population is still limited. No control group. The pre-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest did not use a comparison group. This means the researchers cannot fully confirm that the decrease in anxiety was solely due to the lactation yoga intervention, as other factors, such as family support, natural postpartum adaptation, or environmental factors, may also be at play.

Future studies should explore the integration of lactation yoga into structured postpartum and breastfeeding programs at primary healthcare centers. Lactation yoga may be implemented alongside exclusive breastfeeding education to provide combined physical and psychological benefits for breastfeeding mothers. Training midwives and healthcare providers in basic lactation yoga techniques is recommended to ensure safe and effective implementation. Given its low-cost and minimal infrastructure requirements, community-based research is needed to assess the feasibility of lactation yoga in primary healthcare settings. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to evaluate the long-term effects of regular and sustained lactation yoga programs on maternal anxiety and overall well-being.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted, there was a difference in anxiety scores among breastfeeding mothers before and after the lactation yoga intervention. Before the intervention, most mothers experienced mild anxiety (67%), and almost half experienced moderate anxiety (33%). After the lactation yoga intervention, almost half were not anxious (42%), almost half experienced mild anxiety (48%), and a small portion experienced moderate anxiety (10%). This study also shows a significant effect of lactation yoga on the anxiety score of breastfeeding mothers in the Kebong Health Center working area, Sintang Regency (p-value = 0.001).

Lactation yoga activities can be integrated into postpartum and breastfeeding classes. Lactation yoga can be included as a practical component in postpartum classes at community health centers. Activities can be scheduled in conjunction with exclusive breastfeeding education programs so that mothers simultaneously benefit physically and psychologically. Training for midwives and basic training in postpartum/lactation yoga techniques is essential to ensure safe interventions and adherence to the physiological principles of breastfeeding. Providing simple facilities and infrastructure. A comfortable, well-ventilated room, a mat, and a calm atmosphere are sufficient for lactation yoga. This program does not require expensive equipment, making it suitable for implementation in primary health care settings. Implementation should be scheduled and ongoing. Lactation yoga should be a regular weekly program, not just an occasional activity, to maximize its benefits in reducing anxiety.

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