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# Full-Length Research Article

# Effect of yoga training intervention on health-related physical fitness performance of U- 17 male football project players

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#### ABSTRACT

Yoga training can significantly improve multiple health-related aspects of physical fitness of female subjects. Previous research findings recommend the need to evaluate the impact of yoga in different age groups, components of fitness, and measurement tools, along with the other regular training. So this study was aimed to assess the effectiveness of yogic exercise on selected health-related physical fitness performance of U- 17 male football project players in Dilla Town. A quasi-experimental study design was carried out for 8 weeks. The study was done on 30 players by using a convenient sampling method. The measure of cardiovascular endurance, leg strength, and flexibility of each player was taken and recorded immediately before and shortly after the 8-week yogic training. The mean and standard deviation were determined by using paired sample T-test. Data were analyzed by Statistical Package for scientific solution (SPSS version 20.0). The level of statistical significance was set at P < 0.05. It was found that yoga exercise has a significant effect on cardiovascular endurance  $(10.73 \pm 1.1 \text{ and } 12.73 \pm 0.88 \text{ level})$  of the yogic group but, almost no change  $(10.60 \pm 1.183 \text{ and } 10.87 \pm 0.990)$  in a non-yoga group. Yoga exercise improves flexibility  $(3.30\pm0.643 \text{ and } 4.60\pm0.632 \text{ cm})$  of the yogic group but, almost no change in (3.34±0.83 and 3.68±0.60 centimeter) non-yogic group. It also improves leg strength (35.67±3.84 and 38.60±3.24 number) of the yogic group but, almost no change (37.67±3.28 and 37.87±3.38 number) in the non-yogic group. The results of this study showed that yoga exercise has a significant effect on the flexibility, strength, and cardiovascular endurance of football players. Therefore, yoga exercises can be installed in regular football training sessions.

Keywords: Yoga, football, physical fitness, and health

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

Football is a sport that involves various skills, strategies, tactics, and physical elements which are required for improving of a player's performance (Rosch *et al.*, 2000). Among those, physical fitness is one of the factors that could affect football players' performance (Rosch *et al.*, 2000) and Kadagadakai and Pradhan (2018). In football, aerobic and anaerobic abilities, speed, strength, and power are variables that significantly affects the effectiveness of worldwide football players (Turner *et al.*, 2011).

Different training methods like skill, tactic, physical, psychological, and fitness training should be included in the training session of football trainees (Reilly, 2007) and Reilly and Williams (2003). Aside from the necessary technical and tactical skills required, football players must also develop and retain a high level of aerobic and anaerobic conditioning, speed, agility, strength, and power (Turner and Stewart, 2014).

To attain maximum physical performance, the football-specific training program is used to improve selected physical fitness variables like speed, abdominal strength, leg explosive power agility, and flexibility (Sukuma, 2018). Among specific training programs, yogic practices are one of the football-specific training which is aimed at improving playing performances (Johnson and Mariayyah, 2007). Others study also shows that a 12-week yoga training intervention was connected with development in health related physical fitness ability in young healthy individuals. The yoga training program was connected with a significant decrease in relative body fat and an increase in hamstring flexibility and abdominal endurance of an individual (Shiraishi *et al.*, 2017). Study shows that yoga training significantly improves the measures of flexibility (Iftkher *et al.*, 2017). Yoga training play a significant role in improving strength, hamstring, hip, and back flexibility performance (Kumar *et al.*, 2013).

In yoga training program, the common activities include static stretching exercises, weight training, and running (Polsgrove *et al.*, 2016). If the static stretch is performed for 30 seconds at a frequency of 3 repeated stretches per single training session it is enough to enhance muscle length (Anoop *et al.*, 2016). The slow stretching; twisting, and bending movements leads flexibility to other joints and muscles of the arch and supply nutrients and oxygen to all the cells of the body (Khan *et al.*, 2016). Yoga training can improve muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and cardio-respiratory

endurance performance (Tran *et al.*, 2011). It is recommended that doing a static stretching routine at the end of the regular training program is appropriate, for best results in football players' performance (Rodiguez *et al.* (2016). Future studies are needed to investigate the impact of yoga intervention on specific components of fitness capacity of players in sport-specific tasks (Polsgrove *et al.*, 2016)]. For betterment in leg strength, agility, and endurance ability long period of time training program may be more effective (Khan et al., 2016). Future study is required to do on a large sample size with different age category, other port departments, other components of fitness, and measurement tools (Iftekher *et al.*, 2017). Taking these precedents into account the aim of this study was to examine the effect of yoga training on health-related physical performance among U- 17 male football project players in Dilla town, Southern Ethiopia.

# 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

# 2.1 Study Area

This study was conducted in Dilla town in Gedeo Zone, which is located in South Nations Nationalities and People Region States (SNNPRS), Ethiopia at a distance of 359 km from the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, on the way from Addis Ababa to Moyale. It is located at  $6^{\circ} 22'$  to  $6^{\circ} 42'$  N and  $38^{\circ} 21'$  to  $38^{\circ} 41'$  E longitude with an altitude of about 1476 m above sea level.

# 2.2 Study Design

In this study, a quasi-experimental study design was carried out from February 22, 2019, up to April 22, 2019, for 8 weeks.

# 2.3 Population and sample of the study

Selam hospital U-17 male football project players were taken as a source population. The project has 35 male football project players in the respective age category during the study period. Out of the 35 players, 30 players were selected by convenient sampling method, according to their availability and suitability guided by the coaches. To this end, samples were randomly assigned to the yogic group (n=15) and non-yoga group (n=15).

# 2.4 Variables of the study

In this study, the physical fitness components (cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, and flexibility) were considered as dependent variables whereas, the independent variable was, the duration of training intervention (8 weeks, 3 days per week, 18 minutes per training session, and 1 up to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  minute per a single activity) and pattern of yoga asana.

# 2.5 Eligibility criteria

All U-17 male football project players, who actively play during the study period, were included in the study while new players, none volunteered players, and injured players were excluded from the study.

# 2.6 Yoga asana training protocol

During the period of yoga trainings for 8 weeks, players of both yogic and non-yogic groups have also take part in the regularly pre planned program for carrying out a football-specific training. In addition to the regular training program, the yoga group took part in a 3 day yoga asana training sessions per week (Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday).

#### **2.7 Data collection instrument**

Testing and measurements are the means of collecting data upon which subsequent physical performance test and decisions are made. The data has been collected using the pre test and post test on which the tests were performed between 9 am and a couple of pm.

#### 2.8 Sequence of testing

All football-specific field tests were performed sequentially with increasing performance tests inducing fatigue. So a test began from highly skillful testing tasks to tests that are inducing fatigue so that the latter does not distort the results. Therefore this study performed a test beginning from sitting and reach to assess lower back and hamstring flexibility, sergeant jump test to assess elastic leg strength, to beep test to assess cardiovascular endurance (Turner *et al.*, 2011). The tests were performed on a natural grass football pitch.

# 2.9 Protocol of beep test

This test involves continuous running between 2 lines that were marked in a 20 m apart in time to record beeps. The players stood behind the starting line marks that face the 2<sup>nd</sup> line, and begin running when instructed by the recorded beeps. The speed at the tart is fairly slow. The players were continues running between the two lines, turning when signaled the recorded beeps. After about one minute, a beep sound indicates each minute. If the line is reached before the beep sounds, the players must wait until the beep sounds before continuing. If the road is not reached before the beep sound the individual is given a warning and must still to the road, then turn and check out to catch up with the pace within two more beeps. The subject was given a warning the first time they fail to reach the line (within 2 meters) and eliminate after the second warning (Wood, 2008).

# Sit and reach test

This study has employed this test to assess the lower back and hamstring flexibility of football project players [18]. The sit and reach test was carried out as follows. At the starting of a test the players were sitting on the ground with shoes removed, feet flat against the table, and legs straight. Then the players bend and reach forward and push the fingers along the table as far as possible. Then distance from their fingertips to the margin of the table represents the score for that player. It is important to possess several warm-up attempts first and to record the excellent score.

# Sergeant jump test

This study was assessing leg strength by sergeant jump test. The objective of this test is to assess leg strength performance. The test is conducted as follows: the players apply chalks at the end of their fingertips. Then stands side onto the wall, keeping both feet remaining on the ground, reaches up as high as possible with one hand, and ticks the wall with the tips of the fingers (T1). From a static position jumps as high as possible and ticks the wall with the chalk on his fingertips (T2). We measure the distance from T1 to T2. The test can be performed as many times as the player wishes.

#### Method of data analysis

The pre test and post test result was analyzed using a statistical package for scientific solution (SPSS) version 20.0 by paired sample T-test to compare means and statistical significance differences of the test. Statistical significance was declared at 95% confident interval with P-values p < 0.05.

# 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

# 3.1 Socio-demographic characteristics

A total of 30 U-17 football players were enrolled in this study. Out of the total respondents, all of the 30(100.0%) were aged 16 (see Table 1).

Table 1: socio-demographic characteristics of study subjects from February 22, 2019, up to April 22, (n=30)

| Variables | Category | Frequency (%) |  |
|-----------|----------|---------------|--|
|           | 16 years | 30(100.0)     |  |

# Analysis of pretest and posttest the control and experimental groups towards selected physical fitness variables.

Both the yoga and a non-yoga group of this study was an actively trained U- 17 football player. Although they were active enough, they were not undergone such a scientific approach to measure their physical fitness status. This study found out what their actual fitness level looks like through using a scientific fitness testing approach as it was used by previous researchers. After all, this study evaluated the player's physical fitness level of both the yogic group and non-yogic group and thus resulted as follows.

# Analysis of health-related physical fitness profile of U-17 male football players who underwent yoga training

There were 3 variables in the health-related fitness assessment of the players that had a P value of less than 0.05. The pre and post-test mean and SD scores of sit and reach test of the yoga group were  $3.30\pm0.643$  and  $4.60\pm0.632$  cm respectively, which was statistically significant(P <0.05, P=0.00). (See table 2). This indicates that two-month yoga training has caused an increase in the lower back and hamstring flexibility of the players. As shown in Table 2, the pre and post-test mean and SD scores of the beep test of the yogic group were  $10.73\pm1.1$  and  $12.73\pm0.88$  levels respectively, which was statistically significant(P=0.001). This indicates that yoga training improves the cardiovascular endurance of players. The pretest and post-test means scores of the sergeant jump test of the yogic group were  $35.67\pm3.84$  and  $38.60\pm3.24$  cm respectively, which was statistically significant (P=0.001). This indicates the leg strength of the players.

| Variables                                      | Group        | Test       |                  | P-Value |
|--|--------------|------------|------------------|---------|
|  |              | Pre-test   | Post-test        |         |
|  |              | Mean ± S.D | Mean ± S.D       |         |
| Flexibility (sit and reach in cm)              | Experimental | 3.30±0.643 | $4.60 \pm 0.632$ | 0.00    |
| Cardiovascular Endurance (beep test in level ) | Experimental | 10.73 ±1.1 | 12.73±0.88       | 0.000   |
| Leg Strength (sergeant jump test in cm)        | Experimental | 35.67±3.84 | 38.60±3.24       | 0.00    |

Table 2: Comparison of selected health-related physical fitness variables of experimental groups

# Analysis of health-related physical fitness profile of U-17 male football players who not underwent yoga training

The pre and post-test mean and SD scores of sit and reach test of the non-yoga group were  $3.34\pm0.83$  and  $3.68\pm0.60$  cm respectively. No significant difference (P=0.205) was found among the non-yoga group who performed the same test. This indicates that there is no improvement in the lower back and hamstring flexibility of the players having regular forms of football training but not yoga training (See Table 3). The pre and post-test mean and SD scores of the beep test of the non-yogic group were  $10.60\pm1.183$  and  $10.87\pm.990$  levels respectively, which was statistically insignificant (P=0.509). This indicates almost no changes in the cardiovascular endurance of players. The pretest and post-test mean scores of the sergeant jump test of the non-yogic group were  $37.67\pm3.28$  and  $37.87\pm3.38$ cm respectively, which was statistically insignificant (P=0.77). This indicates no change, in the leg strength of the players.

|                               |         | Test        |            | <b>P-Value</b> |
|-------------------------------|---------|-------------|------------|----------------|
| Variables                     | Group   | Pre-test    | Post-test  |                |
|                               |         | Mean ± S.D  | Mean ± S.D |                |
| Flexibility (sit and reach in | Control | 3.34±0.83   | 3.68±0.60  | 0.205          |
| cm)                           |         |             |            |                |
| Cardiovascular Endurance      | Control | 10.60±1.183 | 10.87±.990 | 0.509          |
| (beep test in level)          |         |             |            |                |
| Leg Strength (Squat in        | Control | 37.67±3.28  | 37.87±3.38 | 0.77           |
| number)                       |         |             |            |                |

Table 3: Comparison of selected fitness variables for the pre-test and post-test for non-yoga groups

# Discussion

Regular practice of yoga has numerous health benefits (McDermott *et al.* (2014) and Aktar et al. (2013). Yoga also brings positive changes in physical performance and well-being if practiced regularly (Ross and Thomas, 2010); Boehde *et al.*, 2005) by improving flexibility and balance (Johanson and Mariayyah, 2007; Polsgrove *et al.*, 2016) as well as cardiovascular functions (Polsgrove *et al.*, 2016; Bera and Rajapurkar, 1993). Moreover, yoga may have a direct link to improving the common elements of athletic performance. The findings of the present study have strongly indicated that yoga asana exercise of 8 weeks has shown significant improvement in cardiovascular endurance, leg strength, the flexibility of football players. The potential for hamstring injury during placekicking tasks about muscle length and range of motion. Joint flexibility is a crucial factor in soccer. Testing for limitations in the range of motion at a joint can be of benefit in screening for injury predisposition (Reilly and Williams, 2003).The pre-test and post-test mean of lower back and hamstring flexibility were 3.30 and 4.60 cm respectively in the yoga group has a significant improvement (P=0.001). In contrast, non-yoga group, there is no significant improvement in their performance. The pre-test and post test scores were $3.34\pm0.83$  and  $3.68\pm0.60$  cm respectively for a non-yoga group with (P=0.205).

This finding is consistent with studies conducted in different parts of the world. Our study finds similarities with other studies conducted for about 10 and above weeks of a yoga session in a similar setting, significantly higher improvement was seen in flexibility in Chicago: North America (Polsgrove *et al.*, 2016), and India (Swami and Patil, 2016; Yuvaraji, 2016). This might be due to the lower duration of training that our study was employed. Our study of lower back and hamstrings flexibility improvement was higher than in other studies conducted in India, [26], Bangladesh: Asia (Iftekhr *et al.*, 2017); Turkey (Kartal and Ergin, 2020). This might be due to variations in study duration, and demographic characteristics of participants of the study, those studies employed a lower duration of training less than or equal to 6 weeks.

However, this is inconsistent with other study conducted among Olympic weightlifters revealed that the 7 weeks of yoga training did not show significant differences between the yoga and non yoga groups of players in flexibility measures (Ernst and Jensen, 2016), which is not agreed with the finding of our research. A possible explanation may be that the research was assessed using an inappropriate sequence of fitness testing. Hence, excluding only evidence from one research, we can surely recommend including yoga asana sessions along with the regular training programs is important in increasing the players' performance.

Various field tests for aerobic capacity are trend-upwards that need the players to either cover a maximal distance during a set time or a distance having made a firm decision within short time possible. The beep test aimed at predicting aerobic capacity is often advised for football [29]. The pre test and post test mean scores of the beep test were 10.73 and 12.73 in level respectively for the yogic group which has a significant effect on (P=0.001) cardiovascular endurance of football players. In contrast, in non-yoga groups the pre test and post test mean of beep test are  $10.60\pm1.183$  and  $10.87\pm.990$  in level respectively, which has no significant effect (P=0.509) on the cardiovascular endurance of football players having regular forms of football training but not yoga training. Other studies also show that yoga training can increase the cardio-respiratory endurance of students (Yadav and Malik, 2015; Kaur, 2016; Yuvaraj, 2016; Dhokrat and Dhokrat, 2017). This indicates that 8-week yoga asana training is used to improve the cardiovascular endurance performance of football players.

Strength in the lower limbs is of obvious concern in soccer: the quadriceps and hamstrings must generate high forces for jumping, kicking, and tackling, turning, and changing pace [5]. Due to the predominance of the leg musculature during football we use the sergeant jump test to test leg strength. The pre and post-test mean scores of the sergeant jump test were  $35.67\pm3.84$  and  $38.60\pm3.24$  cm respectively, which has significant improvement (P <0.05, P=0.00) in leg strength. In contrast, in the non-yogic group the pre and post-test mean scores of the sergeant jump test were  $37.67\pm3.28$  and  $37.87\pm3.38$ cm respectively which have no significant difference (P> 0.05, P=0.77) in leg strength. This indicates that an 8-week yoga asana training intervention is used to improve the leg strength of football players. This is consistent with another study (Boss and Thomas, 2010; Yadav and Malik, 2015; Kartal and Ergim (2020), and Dhokrat and Dhokrat (2017) which they employed different testing tools to assess the leg strength of football players.

# 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the finding of this study, taking part in a yoga training session with regular football training methods can help to improve the physical performance of football players. Additionally, the results of this study showed that yogic practice has a significant effect on flexibility, strength, and cardiovascular endurance.

# Ethics approval and consent to participate

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of Dilla University. Adequate information was provided to the research participants and their parents, participation in the research was also freely volunteered, with the understanding that the participant can withdraw at any time, a consent with a clear language was given at a level that the child can understand and in addition, informed consent was obtained from their parents and guardians for the study participation. All participants were informed orally and in writing about the study's purpose, risks, and benefits, and signed a written informed consent before being allowed to participate in the intervention. The intervention protocol was checked and approved by research review committee of Sport Science department in Dilla University.

# **Consent for publication**

Not applicable.

# Availability of supporting data

All data supporting this study is available with a reasonable request from the corresponding author.

# **Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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The research is not funded.

# Authors' contributions

Conceptualization: Getahun, Formal analysis: Getahun and Elsabet Investigation: Getahun, Methodology: Getahun and Elsabet, Software: Getahun, Supervision: Getahun, Validation: Getahun, Elsabet, Roles/Writing original draft: Getahun, Writing -review & edit: Getahun, Elsabet.

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