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Young children's experiences with yoga in an early childhood setting

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ABSTRACT

School-based yoga programmes have been implemented in schools across the United States with promising results. However, the majority of research on yoga programmes has occurred within the K-12 setting. Much less is known about the benefits of yoga with young children. The current body of research on yoga and young children has been quantitative and aimed at measurable results. Conversely, the purpose of this study was to investigate young children's experiences with yoga through a qualitative approach. Observations of yoga classes and group interviews with 34 preschool children were conducted. Participants were encouraged to be active agents in the research through language, creative art, and movement. This became data for qualitative analysis to 'visualize children's voice'. The findings indicated that children's perceptions of yoga were overwhelmingly positive and that they would continue yoga if given the opportunity.

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KEYWORDS

Yoga; early childhood development; self-regulation; children's voice

Introduction

Studies are reporting higher levels of stress and anxiety at younger ages than ever before (Twenge, 2015). When young children are exposed to stress and are unable to cope, or meet the demands of stressful situations, it can cause emotional, behavioural, and cognitive interference (Teicher, Andersen, Polcari, Anderson, & Navalta, 2002). This can result in an adverse effect on a person's overall well-being (McCance, Forshee, & Shelby, 2006). Additionally, interference may disable children from employing self-regulation skills, which are noted as critical for success in school (Galinsky, 2010). To combat these issues, a growing number of middle and high schools are using mindfulness and yoga programmes to help children manage the stress of their daily lives and reduce cognitive interference. These interventions have had many successes in older grades (Butzer et al., 2017; Mendelson et al., 2010). Benefits from such studies include improved behaviour, academic performance, and emotional regulation (Mendelson et al., 2010). Only in recent years have mindfulness yoga interventions been studied in preschool and early-elementary-age children (Birdee et al., 2009; Galantino, Galbavy, & Quinn, 2008). Yet, children as young as two years of age are already developing habits for how they will react to and manage stress. It is the hope that children who are afforded the opportunity to engage in yoga at a young age will benefit emotionally, cognitively, and behaviourally throughout their lives.

Background

Gilliam and Shahar's (2006) landmark study brought to light that preschoolers were being expelled at a rate more than three times that of children in grades K-12. Even though rates have decreased over

the past decade and some states have banned expulsion in preschools altogether, children are still being asked to leave their private and public early childhood programmes because their behaviours are deemed out-of-control. A survey conducted by the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2014) determined that 6743 children were expelled during the 2013–2014 school year in public preschool programmes across the United States. Furthermore, Head Start teachers reported that at least 25% of their students have difficulties with self-control and exhibit violent behaviours on a regular basis (Pianta, Kraft-Sayre, Rimm-Kaufman, Gercke, & Higgins, 2001). Kindergarten teachers listed difficulty following directions as their most arduous problem with today's children (Pianta et al., 2001). Qi and Kaiser (2003) also noted that approximately 30% of preschool children are at risk for emotional and behavioural disorders. These statistics are troubling in light of recent studies that indicate self-regulation skills predict academic achievement more reliably than I.Q. tests (Duckworth & Carlson, 2013). The ability of young children to control their emotional and cognitive impulses are also strong indicators of short-term and long-term academic and social success.

Importance of self-regulation

Self-regulation skills are defined as a set of behavioural skills that include working memory, inhibitory control, and attention, and can be first traced back to theorist Vygotsky (Vygotsky 1978). Children who are able to regulate their feelings and behaviours appropriately and are able to make good decisions about daily challenges are headed on a pathway towards success in school and later life (Payton et al., 2008). Considered a critical component of school readiness, self-regulation skills help facilitate positive social interactions, peer acceptance, and academic success (Raver, 2004). Research overwhelmingly supports the notion that children need to work on self-regulation.

Development and approaches to self-regulation

The development of self-regulation skills occurs through the preschool years and can begin as early as age two. During these years, children begin acquiring internal regulatory skills. These children are transitioning from being 'other-regulated' to 'self-regulated'. While most agree that this transition is extremely important, and is the foundation for later success, few agreed on the interventions educators should implement to help children obtain more self-regulation. The most common approach has been direct teacher instruction that utilizes specific curriculum such as tools of the mind and the verbal plan and evaluation programme. While these strategies have shown promise, critics argue that once young children enter elementary school they may not be able to retain such levels of self-control when the classroom supports are removed (Raver, 2012).

Another approach has emerged in multiple studies in elementary schools that support mindfulness-based yoga interventions. Such interventions promote breathing, attention, focus, and behavioural aspects of wellness (Biegel & Brown, 2012; Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005; Semple, Lee, Rosa, & Miller, 2009). A 12-week study concluded that a school-based yoga programme reduced the levels of stress in fourth and fifth graders living in a U.S. urban setting (Mendelson et al., 2010). Flook et al. (2010) found that executive functions significantly improved in second and third graders after an eight-week mindfulness awareness programme was implemented. Similar results were found in a five-week study where yoga interventions led to positive results on attention and social skills of second and third graders (Biegel & Brown, 2012).

Very few studies have been adapted for preschool-age children. One such study examined a mindfulness-based yoga intervention in an effort to promote self-regulation among preschool children (age: three to five years). The study investigated 29 children (16 intervention and 13 control) who took part in an experimental pre-test/post-test treatment and control design for one year. Results showed significant benefits in attention and self-regulation from the intervention (Razza, Bergen-Cico, & Raymond, 2015). While these results suggest positive benefits, further research is needed to determine the potential benefits of yoga for preschool-age children.

Study aims

This study explored children's perceptions of how yoga influenced their feelings, self-regulation, cognition, and creativity through small group sessions with three-, four-, and five-year-old children in an early childhood setting. The current body of research on yoga and young children is limited and utilizes quantitative methodologies aimed at producing measureable results. A majority of the aforementioned research has been done 'about children' and not 'with' them. In contrast, this study examined yoga's impact on children's feelings, self-regulation, cognition, and creativity from a child's perspective. The aim of this research was to not only garner new insights into the practice of yoga in a preschool environment, but also to theorize new possibilities and imaginings for how we can approach young children as collaborators in the process. Thus, the following key questions guided our study: (1) What emotional, cognitive, and physical benefits do young children perceive from participating in yoga? (2) To what extent are young children able to verbally, physical, and artistically express their perceptions about yoga?

Theoretical framework

Underpinning this study is the postmodern assumption that children are competent and active agents who are capable of contributing to research as they are the experts of their own perceptions and lived experiences (Bruner, 1996; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). This view acknowledges that childhood is a social construction (Cannella, 1997) and one that too often is used to control, limit and 'other' children. Othering has been defined in this case as the separating or differentiation between one's self and another group or individual in order to hold the 'other' to a different set of morals or standards (Pickering, 2001).

For many years, researchers doubted young children's ability to make meaningful contributions to research. Qualitative researchers in the fields of sociology and early childhood studies have pioneered diverse methods for working with young children (Einarsdóttir, 2007). These methods aim to challenge the assumption that children cannot speak for themselves. Rather, they recognize that children are different from adults in some ways, but have a right to speak for themselves.

Methods

This study used a variety of qualitative research methods to obtain information about children's perceptions of their yoga experiences. These methods included group interviews, children's artwork, physical movement, and observations of weekly yoga classes. The study took place within two preschool classrooms and an outdoor space over the course of five months, from January to May 2017, in Northwest Mississippi. Participants were inclusive of 34 preschool children (age: three to five years). One of the preschool classrooms consisted of three-year-old students and one of the classrooms consisted of four- and five-year-old students. Demographics in the two classrooms were 54% female and 46% male. The ethnicities were 80% Caucasian, 9% Asian, 6% African-American, and 3% Hispanic, and 3% Native American. A certified children's yoga teacher utilized *yogaasanas*, or 'yoga positions', which can be identified with the *Ashtanga Vinyasa* method of yoga, to teach young children during their weekly sessions. Each class attended yoga once a week for 45 minutes.

Group interviews

In this study, group interviews were conducted in settings that were already familiar to the children (i.e. the classroom and the playground). This allowed children to feel more comfortable and less intimidated by the process. Interviews were informal and conversational, and while the interviewer had questions in mind, they followed the children's lead. We conducted six group interview sessions, alternating between the two preschool classes. During each interview session, data were collected

while children were interviewed in groups of two or three. This was done deliberately, as several qualitative studies have suggested this ratio for children to feel more at ease (Einarsdóttir, 2007; Grau & Walsh, 1998; Mayall, 2000). Time for interviews ranged from as short as three minutes to twenty minutes. Both researchers interviewed children during all six sessions. Approximately six to eight children were interviewed by the researchers during each of the six sessions to ensure that the researchers included all of the children in the interview process.

Group interviews were also utilized as a means of minimizing the power differential between adult researcher and child participant. The interview has been critiqued as imbalanced because often the interviewer is viewed as the expert, the one with all of the questions who controls the situation (Viruru & Cannella, 2006). This power-imbalance is exasperated when the researcher is an adult and the participant is a child. Group interviews also allowed for increased interactions between children and gave them opportunities to discuss their ideas with their friends. Furthermore, this approach encouraged children to open up quicker than they may have with interviewers who were not as familiar. This was also done deliberately, as it can take vast amounts of time to build rapport with young children.

Throughout the group interview sessions, children were given a variety of props (yoga mats, mirrors) and art materials (paper, crayons, playdough) with which to interact. This approach allowed children to engage actively while communicating and has been suggested by other researchers who work with young children in research (Einarsdóttir, 2003; Parkinson, 2001). Children were asked to describe their yoga experiences, asked about how yoga made them feel, and asked what they liked least and most about yoga.

Puppets, drawings, playdough, and photographs

In an effort to set children at ease during the first group interview, the researchers used puppets to introduce the children to the research and ask research-related questions. This method was very successful in capturing the children's attention. For example, on the first day of group interviews, Katie the Cow was used to ask children to tell her about yoga. Children were so excited to open up to Katie that they freely talked with her, wanted to hug her, and pet her. Using the puppets clearly added excitement for the children and allowed them to be fully immersed during the interviews. One of the disadvantages was that during the first group interview session, children were also asked to draw a picture about their yoga experience and talk about it. Some children displayed so much excitement about the puppet that they drew Katie the Cow rather than anything related to yoga (see Figure 1).

As aforementioned, during the first group interview, children were given paper and crayons and asked to draw pictures related to yoga. During the second interview, children were given playdough and again asked to create a sculpture related to yoga. Children's art was used to explore their views, perceptions, and experiences about yoga. In addition to providing non-verbal opportunities for children to express their ideas about yoga, the drawing and playdough enabled children to be actively involved during the group interview in a non-threatening and familiar manner. An emphasis was placed on listening to the children talk about yoga while they created their drawing and sculptures and explained their creations to the researchers. The explanations of the children's work, along with the art, became data. At no time during analysis was the art itself analysed, rather, the children's explanations of their art were the foci and provided a more accurate view of a child's vision (Clark, 2005; Einarsdóttir, 2007; Veale, 2005).

During the final group interviews, children were moved outdoors into the area in which they regularly practise yoga. Yoga mats, yoga music, and mirrors were set up in order to inspire children to physically demonstrate their favourite poses and breathing practices they had learned in yoga. Children were encouraged to demonstrate with their own bodies some of their favourite poses and/or share what they remembered from yoga class. During this interview, children were video-taped



Figure 1. Puppets drawn by a child when interviewed and asked about her yoga experience.

and photographed and these images of their poses and breathing techniques were used as an additional source of data.

Observations

In addition to interviews, one researcher conducted weekly observations of yoga sessions for a period of three months from February 2017 to April 2017. The method of observation was participant observation, as the researcher participated in the yoga classes alongside the participants. While observing the children participate in yoga classes, the focus was to become familiar with the format of the yoga class. In addition to participant observation, several yoga sessions were video-taped. Notes were taken from the researcher's point of view and specific quotes from the children were recorded in a journal to develop an idea of what transpired during yoga sessions. Based upon these notes, the researchers sought to identify any connections between yoga class and the information that participants shared in their group interviews and/or artwork.

Analyses

Each group interview session was audiotaped with the verbal permission of children and parental consent. Photographs were taken of children's art work, their yoga poses, and other artefacts. The interview transcripts were read three times by two faculty members and a graduate assistant. Data were then unitized by each faculty member separately. After analysis, the two faculty members met to compare and contrast their findings. Next, final unitizing was completed. Unitizing, as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), is the smallest part of information about something that can stand-alone. This not only facilitated analysis, but also assisted in the organization of large amounts of data into sizable chunks. Each chunk of data was read and, using a pencil, a bracket was drawn around each section to indicate that it was a unit. The units were identified and put into a spreadsheet. Each unit was coded in order to make referencing the original interview transcript

possible. All units were then coded, and the emerging themes were compared with each other, looking for discursive themes and categories. This process is referred to as ‘constant comparison’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 341).

During the analytical phase, memos were recorded in a journal after the transcription, coding, and unitizing of interviews. The memos within the journal included (1) reaction(s) to a particular interview or piece of data, (2) a thought regarding the data’s relation to the theoretical lens, (3) a shift or problem with the methodology, and (4) emphasis or thoughts on particular data that directly answered specific research questions. New and emerging themes were compared to the existing ones. When no new themes emerged, it was assumed that the data had met the saturation point and the themes were identified (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as patterns, categories, or themes that pertained to yoga and young children, along with subcategories, which enabled deeper analysis.

Results and discussion

While yoga is being offered to older children, the lack of yoga programming for young children may rest on an assumption that very young children (ages 3–5) are too young to practise yoga. On the contrary, our findings suggest that any such assumptions about very young children’s ability to process, demonstrate, and perform yoga poses and their capacity to pay attention during yoga class are inaccurate. Throughout this study, children surprised the researchers with their ability to recall, demonstrate, and verbalize the yoga poses and deep breathing techniques they had learned during yoga class. The children were also able to accurately describe their knowledge about yoga’s health and relaxation benefits. During the last outdoor interview session, three-year-old Avery stated, ‘yoga makes me strong’ and four-year-old Davenport said ‘yoga gives me exercise!’ Based on the findings that emerged in analysis, four themes were most prominent to the discussion of children’s perspectives of practicing yoga: (1) children’s positive affect about yoga; (2) motivation and self-regulation skills; (3) children’s knowledge of yoga, memory, and skill; (4) children’s imagination, representation and creativity.

Children’s positive affect

When the researchers asked how yoga made the children feel, the vast majority of children responded with positive remarks. See examples below:

- Jack: I feel good.
- Jane: I like to get my energy up.
- Oliver: I like to exercise my body!
- John: I like the way it makes my body feel.
- Kia: Happy!!!
- Skyler: Really happy!
- Margie: It makes me strong.
- Will: It makes me calm and makes me wanna stretch.

In addition to describing positive affect regarding yoga, children drew pictures of their yoga practice and included large smiling faces (see [Figure 2](#)). These positive visual representations adhere to the notion that yoga can be a useful strategy for reducing stress and creating a positive mindset in children. The positive statements about yoga from young children during this study also align with previous research that suggests young children are naturally active in almost any environment and that their perceived positive thoughts about physical activity at an early age will carry into adolescence and adulthood (Dunton et al., 2014; Schneider, Dunn, & Cooper, 2009).

Motivation and self-regulation

Children were also asked what they liked and did not like about yoga during interview sessions. Jim and Abby’s favourite thing about yoga was listening to the music. Beth liked going on adventures and

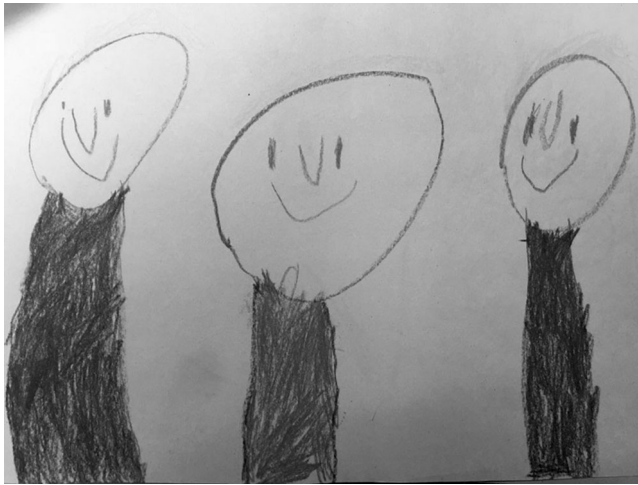


Figure 2. Drawing that represents a happy feeling after practising yoga.

Lex liked that ‘we take deep breaths’. Sarah stated, ‘I love everything about it. There’s nothing I don’t like about yoga.’ Some children liked Ms. T., the yoga instructor and a few others liked stretching and mats. Danny liked laying down and closing his eyes. Several others expressed that yoga helped them to stay calm and relax. These data align with previous research that indicates yoga promotes self-regulation in children. Ultimately, this psychological benefit is reflected in the classroom, as students who are calmer have the ability to pay more attention and complete tasks (Eggleston, 2015). April expanded on this idea in her interview below.

- Interviewer: Can you show me how you breathe during yoga?
 April: Laying down on the mat.
 Interviewer: How does it make you feel when you’re breathing?
 April: It makes me feel good.
 Interviewer: Why does it make you feel good?
 April: Because that’s how I calm down.
 Interviewer: Why do you need to calm down?
 April: You have to keep your head up and close your eyes.
 Interviewer: You have to keep your head up and close your eyes?
 April: And you say I AM STRONG.
 Interviewer: Why do you say I am strong?
 Lisa: You say I am wise!
 Interviewer: I am strong. I am wise. Why do you say that April?
 April: Because you are strong and wise.
 Interviewer: How does it make you feel when you say that?
 April: It makes me strong.

Several children answered that the thing they like about yoga is ‘you get a sticker!’ (see [Figure 3](#)). During observations, the researcher noticed that at the very end of yoga class when all of the children were laying on their mats and had their eyes closed, Ms. T. walked around and awarded stickers to a child or children who had listened and followed directions. While some of the children were able to close their eyes and wait their turn, many of the children were anxious and excited during this time, nervously anticipating the decision of Ms. T. This exercise of laying still is one that is practised throughout the world and is called the final pose. It is often referred to as the corpse pose, or *savasana* in Sanskrit. It has been called the most difficult pose, because the purpose is to completely relax, and free your mind from distractions. Participants are asked to breathe, lay completely still and absorb the benefits of being still. Ironically, this was arguably the time that children in Ms. T’s yoga class were most anxious.

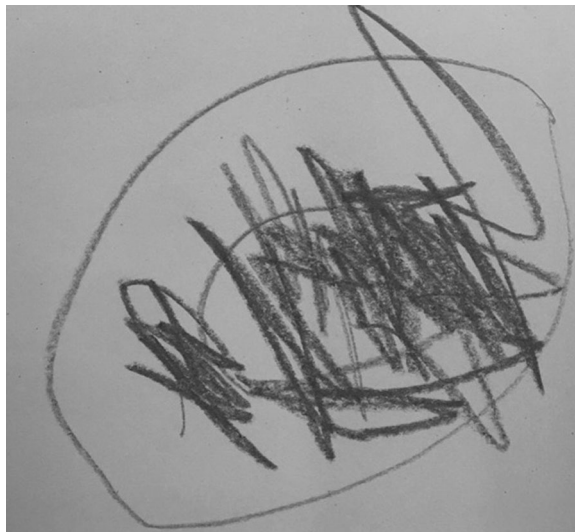


Figure 3. Drawing of a sticker rewarded after each yoga session in response to what the child liked about yoga.

Studies have noted that yoga can play a large role in helping children learn self-regulation skills (Razza et al., 2015). However, the emphasis on the sticker was a recurring theme throughout the study that distracted from this practice. It was noted that the teachers and assistant teachers were often the ones who enforced behaviour during yoga class. They would circulate the yoga area and make eye contact with children who were considered 'off task' or 'distracting'. Overall, there were very few children who needed redirection during the yoga session. Thus, this practice seemed unnecessary, given that the children expressed excitement and were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences with yoga class. What is known from exercise research is that if a person has positive experiences with an exercise, they will continue to practice it into the future. However, if a person deems something a 'chore' that they are rewarded for, they are less likely to continue with that exercise later if they are not rewarded. Conversely, focusing on the enjoyability of an activity is more likely to increase intrinsic motivation (Higgins & Trope, 1990). This activity engagement theory implies that children who focus on the stickers may be less likely to continue practising yoga later in life when they are not rewarded or required to do it. Rather, children who focus on the positive affect they felt while practicing yoga may be more likely to continue to practise it later in life.

Children's knowledge, memory, and skill

The focus of the majority of the children's artwork and their recall of yoga experiences tended to centre around the physical setup of the yoga class and the yoga mats. In this playdough recreation (see Figure 4), four-year-old Allie recreated the class' setup – mats are arranged in a circle and the music box (Ms. T's MP3 player) is represented in the centre.

In addition to the setup of the yoga classroom, most of the children were able to recall and demonstrate at least one or two yoga poses, and some children were able to demonstrate as many as six. When children forgot the names of the poses, they enjoyed reminding each other. The most common poses were downward facing dog, tree pose, surfer (warrior pose), and cat pose (see Figures 5 and 6).

Children's imagination, representation, and creativity

To complement the yoga classes and invoke the creative process, storytelling was utilized on many occasions. By providing a story as a beginning to a yoga sequence, the teacher added a mental



Figure 4. Playdough recreation of yoga class setup.

picture to the cognitive process. This enabled the children to become comfortable as they creatively explored physical representations of objects, places, or things during yoga. Below, four-year-old Bailey described her experience with storytelling.

- Interviewer: Can you tell me something about yoga Bailey?
 Bailey: Yeah!
 Interviewer: What can you tell me?
 Bailey: Ms. T. is super super fun.
 Interviewer: What do you like about Ms. T.?
 Bailey: Because she lets us go on fake trips and walk around the mat.
 Interviewer: What do you mean 'fake trips'?
 Bailey: Like we walk around the mats and it's just really fun.

These 'fake trips' are actually Ms. T's yoga class incorporating storytelling that prompts active imagination. Oftentimes these stories coincided with a holiday or season. The school had recently celebrated the Chinese New Year and Miss T's class had gone on an adventure the past week. In this adventure, the class had to sneak past a resting dragon and try not to wake it. When it woke, they had to blow out the fire coming from its mouth. Ms. T. instructed the children to take 'big belly breathes to extinguish the fire'. In [Figure 7](#), this child is sharing a dragon that she created from the previous week's yoga class.

Another imaginary trip that Ms. T. took the children on occurred during the winter. Children were asked to imagine what they would pack during their winter trip. While exploring with playdough, four-year-old Avery stated that she would 'take hot dogs and cookies'. She also explained that Ms. T. had them all become skiers during the day and then sit around a campfire at night. When the researcher asked her what happened at the campfire, she recalled that she brought marshmallows and hot chocolate. Providing an environment that fosters creative thinking skills, such as taking 'fake trips', is essential to a child's development. Eckhoff and Urbach (2008) argue that Vygotsky's principles of creativity provide a viewpoint wherein imagination is both cognitive and affective and essential to their daily lives.

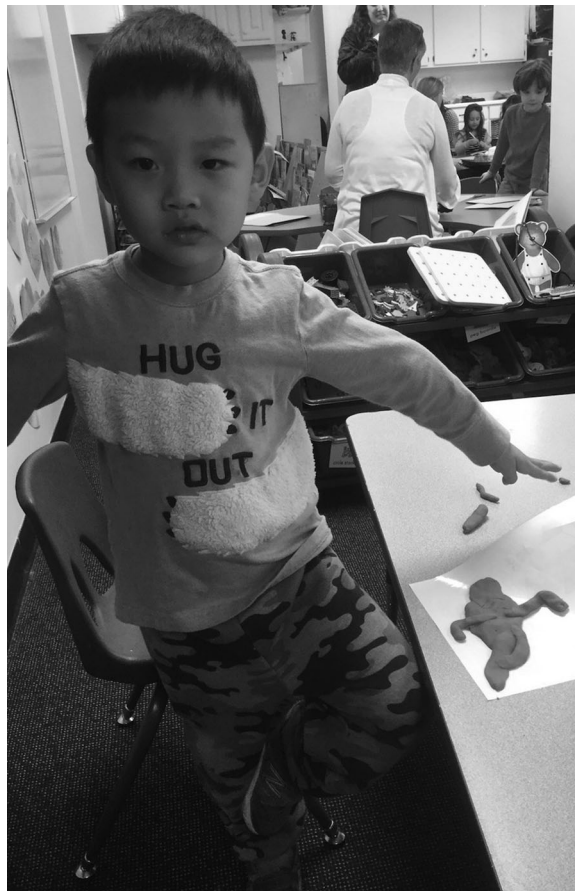


Figure 5. Child demonstrating tree pose.

Limitations

The present study does not make any assertions in regard to the different types of yoga programmes or curricula implemented within preschool settings. On the contrary, this study aimed to seek children's perspectives and perceived benefits of participating in a yoga programme. The researchers advise against inferring that the findings of this study would be the same across all preschool yoga programmes.

One of the limitations of this study was the proportionately small sample size. Thus, it is plausible that the magnitude of the outcomes reported may not provide the most reliable impact that yoga has on children's perceived positive affect, cognition, motivation, self-regulation, and creativity. Another limitation were the two different environments (classroom and outside space) and times during which the interview sessions occurred. The more structured environment of the classroom tended to be more distracting for students with an abundance of noise versus the outside unstructured environment with less distractions. A difference in environmental constructs during interviews could have elicited different emotions and thus produced divergent responses from the children. Time constraints and the daily preschool schedule also inhibited the interview sessions from occurring at the same time and/or on the same days of the week. Most students were very anxious to engage with the researchers during the morning hours when the interview sessions occurred. However, if interview sessions had taken place at a later time in the day, the study may have yielded different results. Furthermore, the geographic location of the study school (Southeastern United States) and the demographics



Figure 6. Child's sculpture representing himself standing in tree pose.

of the study school could also be considered a limitation. The researchers also obtained data from three different age groups: three-, four-, and five-year-olds. Themes that were determined from the data may have varied if only one age group had been observed and interviewed. Lastly, the yoga instructor in the present study was highly qualified. Results may have been dissimilar if the yoga instructor had not been certified or did not adhere to the same curriculum.

Conclusions and implications of the study

Few studies have focused on the effects of yoga in an early childhood setting. The present study provides evidence of the potential benefits that yoga affords preschool-age children. While there are many studies that focus on the individual outcomes of yoga (Ballad, 2016; Morgan, 2011; Raza, Bergen-Cico & Raymond 2013), this study aimed to analyse the perceived emotional, cognitive, and physical benefits that came from participating in weekly yoga as described through 'children's voice'. A limited number of studies move emotional regulation, cognitive function, and physical abilities along the developmental timeline concurrently (Pandit & Satish, 2013). Interview sessions during this study indicated that all three were functioning together as indicated by the themes that arose from the interview sessions with children. Thus, this study imparts new evidence that yoga's benefits can span across the general education population in a preschool setting and provide emotional, cognitive, and physical benefits simultaneously.

Beyond examining the benefits of yoga, this study aimed to expand what we know about doing research with young children. Children's ability to express their own opinions about the benefits of yoga were evident throughout this study. Participants demonstrated that they are capable, knowledgeable, and willing to share their ideas, feelings, and experiences as active agents in the research process. While doing research with young children does bring with it specific limitations, challenges, and ethical concerns, we should not overlook children's potential to speak for themselves about their own experiences. Children are the experts regarding their own minds and bodies.



Figure 7. Child creating a dragon from playdough.

In summary, this study adds to the small, albeit, growing body of knowledge that supports the benefits of yoga with young children. To our knowledge, it is the only study that has asked young children to describe their own experience with practising yoga and the benefits that they felt from participating in a yoga programme. While our findings demonstrated that young children's perceptions of yoga positively affect physical, cognitive, and social domains, it was limited in size and scope. This study did not allow for follow up with children to determine if these benefits were short-term or if they followed the children as they transitioned into elementary school and beyond. Furthermore, it did not include data from their teachers or parents who may be able to provide additional information on the impact yoga has had on their child's behaviour and development. Therefore, our findings leave us with more questions that need to be answered and compel us onward towards future investigations into the benefits of yoga practice with young children.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Alicia Cooper Stapp is an Assistant Professor of Health and Physical Education within the School of Education at the University of Mississippi. Dr Stapp developed and now coordinates a Wellness and Physical Activity endorsement programme for education majors at the University of Mississippi.

Kenya Wolff is an Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education within the School of Education at the University of Mississippi. Dr. Wolff's research utilizes critical qualitative methodologies and focuses on social justice across various contexts of childhood.

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