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Mindfulness Yoga as an Alternative Method for Promoting Physical Activity and Well-Being in Older Adults: A Community-Based Intervention

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Abstract

Aging is associated with a natural decline in physical activity, leading to various health issues, including hypertension and decreased overall well-being.This community service project aimed to promote the importance of physical activity among older adults through mindfulness yoga and educational sessions in Desa Senggreng, Kabupaten Malang. The intervention was designed to encourage sustainable physical activity practices that can be continued independently at home.The intervention included educational sessions on the benefits of physical activity for older adults and yoga practice sessions tailored to their physical capabilities, then participants were provided with yoga instructional videos for continued practice at home. The blood pressure data indicated that 13 participants (32.5%) had hypotension, 17 participants (42.5%) had hypertension, and 10 participants (25%) had normal blood pressure. The intervention successfully increased awareness about the importance of physical activity in the aging population, and the provision of yoga videos empowered participants to continue practicing at home. The conclusion The mindfulness yoga intervention for older adults illustrates that yoga can be an effective alternative to promote physical activity, enhance health awareness, and support overall well-being in the elderly community.

Keywords: *mindfulness, older adults, physical exercise, well-being, yoga*

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Introduction

As populations worldwide age, there is a growing focus on improving the quality of life for older adults, particularly in rural communities. Older adults often face numerous challenges, including physical decline, social isolation, and mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression (Donovan & Blazer, 2020). These problems can lead to a decrease in overall well-being, which negatively impacts their ability to maintain an independent and fulfilling life. There is a critical need for effective, community-based interventions that can address both the physical and mental health needs of elderly individuals.

Aging population, or the era of older-aged populations, refers to the phenomenon where the proportion of elderly individuals increases progressively, including in Indonesia (Pudatin Kemenkes, 2022). In Kabupaten Malang, the proportion of older adults rose from 13.30% in 2018 to 14.20% in 2020. This indicates that Kabupaten Malang is heading towards becoming an older population in the near future (Badan Pusat Statistika Provinsi Jawa Timur, 2024). This challenge has prompted the Indonesian government to adopt recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO) by designing the Active Ageing program. The program aims to ensure that the elderly can age with optimal physical, social, and mental health, allowing them to live fulfilling lives and continue contributing to improving the quality of life within their communities (Kalache & Gatti, 2003; Rudnicka et al., 2020).

Mindfulness yoga, which integrates physical postures with mindful breathing and meditation, has gained attention as a holistic approach that can enhance both physical and mental health outcomes (Kukihara et al., 2020; Roychowdhury, 2021). Research suggests that regular participation in mindfulness practices can help reduce stress, improve mood, and increase physical balance and flexibility, which are crucial for maintaining independence in later life (Creswell, 2017). Given these potential benefits, introducing mindfulness yoga into elderly communities may provide a practical and accessible strategy for promoting well-being among older adults.

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Empowering the elderly through mindfulness yoga can offer a structured and supportive environment where they can improve both their physical health and mental resilience. Moreover, community-based interventions are known to foster social connections, which are essential for reducing feelings of isolation and improving quality of life in older age (Bhattacharyya et al., 2021; Kukihara et al., 2020). Promotion of physical activity through yoga classes has previously been implemented among working women to enhance physical activity levels and well-being (Kusumasari & Gamagitta, 2024), as well as among older adults to reduce blood pressure (Yusuf et al., 2023)

The objective of this community service project is to promote the importance of physical activity for older adults by organizing yoga classes and delivering educational sessions through elderly classes for the Lansia Usila Mandiri community in Desa Senggreng, Kabupaten Malang. Rural communities, such as Desa Senggreng, often lack access to structured health-promoting activities tailored to the elderly population. Through these yoga classes and educational efforts, the elderly can not only engage in physical activity but also gain a deeper understanding of the significance of regular exercise in maintaining their health and well-being. Additionally, this project aims to empower the elderly to continue practicing these activities at home, promoting long-term benefits for their physical and mental health.

Material and Method

The intervention targeted a sample population of 30 older adults, who are members of the Lansia USILA MANDIRI Elderly School in Senggreng village, Malang Regency, Indonesia. The method used in this community service involved educating participants about the importance of physical activity for the elderly and conducting yoga movement practice sessions. The yoga practice was delivered through music synchronized with the yoga movements. The analysis conducted was a descriptive analysis based on data from the blood pressure measurements of the elderly. The intervention was delivered in a multi-step approach, as detailed below :

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1) Designing a specific yoga program for elderly women by a Certified Yoga Teacher
2) Coordinating with the head of the Lansia Usila Mandiri Elderly School.
3) Publishing community service posters to attract potential participants and raise awareness about the importance of physical activity interventions for older adults.
4) Conducting blood pressure checks prior to the exercise sessions.
5) Facilitating yoga sessions for the elderly by a certified yoga instructor. These sessions incorporated various yoga postures (asanas), breathing exercises (pranayama), and relaxation techniques. The instructor ensured a safe and inclusive environment, providing modifications to accommodate different levels of physical ability and experience, according to the participants' conditions.
6) Delivering educational sessions on the importance of physical activity for older adults.
7) Providing yoga movement videos for older adults, which can be practiced at home

Result and Discussion

This community service was conducted on July 30, 2024, in Senggreng village, Sumberpucung District, Malang Regency, East Java, Indonesia in collaboration with the USILA MANDIRI Elderly School in Desa Senggreng. The yoga class for the elderly was attended by 40 healthy older adults. The outputs of this community service activity are as follows:

1. The yoga class for older adults is expected to motivate the elderly to remain physically active, thereby enhancing their well-being and increasing the amount of weekly physical activity.
2. Through this community service activity, the elderly group in Desa Senggreng gained a deeper understanding of the importance of physical activity in old age.

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3. By providing yoga movement videos, the USILA MANDIRI elderly group is expected to be able to practice the movements independently.

A total of 40 older adults participated in this community service project, where they engaged in yoga sessions and had their blood pressure measured before the intervention. The blood pressure data collected were classified into three categories based on established guidelines: hypotension, normal blood pressure, and hypertension. Of the 40 participants, 13 older adults (32.5%) were identified as having hypotension, with systolic readings below 90 mmHg and diastolic readings below 60 mmHg, 17 older adults (42.5%) were found to have hypertension, with systolic readings of 130 mmHg or higher, or diastolic readings of 80 mmHg or higher. The remaining 10 participants (25%) had normal blood pressure, with systolic readings between 90–120 mmHg and diastolic readings between 60–80 mmHg.

These results highlight that a significant proportion of the elderly participants have abnormal blood pressure levels, either in the form of hypotension or hypertension. This underscores the importance of promoting physical activities like yoga, which may contribute to better management of blood pressure and improve overall health in this population.

Figure 1 Yoga Exercise for Elderly Community

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Figure 2 Physical Activity Education for Elderly Community

Figure 3 “Usila Mandiri” Community after Yoga

The implementation of mindfulness yoga classes in Desa Senggreng, in collaboration with the USILA MANDIRI Elderly School, has demonstrated positive potential in promoting physical activity and improving the well-being of older adults. The primary goal of this community service project was to encourage sustained physical activity among elderly participants while increasing their awareness of the significance of regular exercise for maintaining both physical and mental health.

One of the key outcomes of this intervention was its ability to motivate older adults to engage in physical activity. This is critical, as the aging process often leads to a natural decline in physical activity, which can further contribute to diminished

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health outcomes, including increased susceptibility to chronic diseases (World Health Organization, 2018). By providing yoga classes tailored to the elderly population, this intervention successfully introduced a form of low-impact exercise that can be easily integrated into their daily lives, potentially leading to an increase in their weekly physical activity levels. Studies show that consistent engagement in yoga and other forms of physical activity helps older adults maintain flexibility, balance, and cardiovascular health (Hoy et al., 2021; Langhammer et al., 2018; Marquez et al., 2020)

In addition, this project contributed to an enhanced understanding among the elderly population of Senggreng village about the importance of physical activity during aging. The educational sessions provided a foundation of knowledge for the participants, equipping them with the necessary information to better appreciate the long-term benefits of physical activity. Previous research indicates that older adults who are more informed about the benefits of physical activity are more likely to engage in regular exercise (Creswell, 2017). The fact that 40 healthy older adults participated in this yoga class suggests that the intervention successfully captured the interest of the community, which is essential for ensuring long-term engagement and adoption of the practices introduced.

The distribution of yoga movement videos to the participants further empowers the elderly group to continue practicing yoga independently. This approach aligns with previous findings that demonstrate the value of providing accessible tools and resources to sustain physical activity at home (Lee et al., 2024; Mascarenhas et al., 2018). By giving participants the opportunity to practice yoga at their own pace and in their own environment, the intervention supports long-term behavioral change, which is a key component of successful public health interventions. The availability of these instructional materials ensures that the elderly can maintain physical activity even in the absence of structured community classes, reinforcing the project's goal of fostering sustainable health practices.

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However, some limitations of this community service intervention should be acknowledged. First, the sample size of 40 participants, while suitable for a community-level intervention, may not be sufficient to draw generalizable conclusions. Future interventions could benefit from engaging a larger and more diverse population of elderly individuals to better understand the varying needs and responses to yoga as a physical activity. Additionally, while blood pressure was measured as a key indicator of physical health improvement, other variables, such as mental health outcomes or quality of life, were not formally assessed in this project. Future studies should consider a more comprehensive evaluation of well-being, including mental health indicators like anxiety and depression, to better understand the broader impact of mindfulness yoga on older adults.

The mindfulness yoga intervention in Senggreng village has shown promise in promoting physical activity and well-being among older adults. The results suggest that incorporating yoga into community-based health programs can serve as an effective strategy for encouraging physical activity in aging populations. The provision of educational resources and the availability of instructional videos also contribute to the sustainability of these efforts, allowing the elderly to continue practicing physical activity independently. Continued efforts to expand such programs, along with further evaluation of their health impacts, are necessary to ensure that older adults can lead healthier, more fulfilling lives as they age.

Conclusion

The mindfulness yoga intervention conducted for older adults in Desa Senggreng demonstrates that yoga can be a practical and adaptable alternative method to promote physical activity among the elderly, enhancing their awareness of its importance for physical health. This community-based initiative provided seniors with the tools to incorporate yoga into their daily routines, potentially aiding in blood pressure management and supporting overall well-being. Continued promotion of such physical activities can encourage sustained engagement, empowering older adults to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle independently.

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