



## **The Effect of Tai Chi Exercise on Anxiety Disorders of The Elderly**

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### **Abstract**

Ageing or old age is the final stage in the evolution of the human life cycle that every individual will surely experience. Some diseases start to emerge and are expected at this age; one of them is anxiety disorder. If an older adult has an anxiety disorder, it will affect memory and sleep patterns. This study aimed to find out the impact of Tai Chi gymnastics on anxiety disorders in the elderly in the city of Surakarta. The method used is a qualitative method using relevant journals and reverence. Given the large number of cases of ageing anxiety disorder, there is a need for treatment. Usually, elderly enthusiasts do simple, easy activities like gymnastics in an attempt to heal themselves. Tai Chi exercises are ideally suited to be applied to the elderly because the influence of Tai Chi has proven to be effective in reducing anxiety disorder. Tai Chi exercises usually use circular movements, which are never forced so that the muscles do not feel tense but relax. The results of this study can conclude that Tai Chi exercises are straightforward and suitable for older people as an attempt to treat anxiety disorder.

**Keywords:** Tai Chi; Exercises; Anxiety Disorder; Elderly Person

### **Introduction**

As we stand at the crossroads of the elderly phase, a chapter marked by profound changes, we find ourselves pondering the intricacies of ageing. What unfolds in this stage of life, where physical, mental, and social transformations intertwine, shaping a unique tapestry of experiences? Are the challenges of ageing merely a prelude to the companionship of conditions like stroke, hypertension, diabetes, and anxiety disorders?

Amid this journey, a beacon of holistic well-being emerges from the ancient realms of Chinese martial arts – Tai Chi. What makes Tai Chi more than a physical exercise? How does it unfold as a gentle, universally applicable practice, tailor-made to accompany individuals on the voyage through the golden years? Can deliberate movements, meditation, and synchronized breathing genuinely become a conduit for physical rejuvenation and mental resilience?

Tai Chi's allure extends beyond its gentle movements. How do its serene, low-impact techniques resonate with the elderly demographic? What role does improved circulation play in establishing Tai Chi as a popular choice among those navigating the golden years? Moreover, how do the philosophical tenets of Confucianism and Taoism weave a profound layer of wisdom into the fabric of Tai Chi, emphasizing unity and the delicate balance of yin-yang?

Tracing its roots to the Chen Dynasty, Tai Chi embarks on an intriguing journey, evolving into diverse styles like Chen, Yang, Wu, and Sun. How did Tai Chi transcend

cultural borders in the 20th century, earning global acclaim for its transformative impact on balance, flexibility, and overall well-being? What elevates Tai Chi beyond a mere exercise, transforming it into a treasured Chinese cultural heritage seamlessly integrating health promotion and self-defence?

Tai Chi's simplicity is a key to its widespread appeal. How do its movements, from foundational poses to encompassing gestures like "spreading the wings" and "water splitting," become catalysts for enhanced balance, flexibility, muscle strength, and focus? In what ways does Tai Chi extend its influence beyond the physical realm, earning recognition for stress relief, emotional well-being, and improved sleep quality?

As we explore Tai Chi's multifaceted benefits, it becomes evident that this ancient practice is more than a routine—it is a holistic journey towards refined balance, coordinated posture, flexible resilience, robust muscle strength, and a heart nurtured by mindful movements. What lies beyond these tangible gains? How does Tai Chi emerge as a guardian of mental fortitude, a stress mitigator, a beacon for sharpened focus, and a conduit to serene nights of restful sleep? In its inclusive embrace, how does Tai Chi stand as a testament to versatility, catering not only to the vigour of youth but also providing a path to well-being for seasoned individuals navigating the beautiful intricacies of the elderly phase?

### **Research Methods**

The method used is qualitative, utilizing relevant journals and references. Unlike quantitative methods, which concentrate on measurement and statistical analysis, qualitative methods emphasize a thorough understanding of a phenomenon. The benefit of this qualitative approach is its capacity to convey the subtleties, emotions, and individualized viewpoints of people or groups about a problem or phenomenon. Qualitative methods allow us to comprehend the background, motivations, and social dynamics surrounding the phenomenon. We also employed the Internet searching method in addition to direct observation and interviews as part of our data collection process. This method uses media from the Internet as its primary data source. We obtained various information sources, including reports, scientific journals, research articles, and references, by searching the Internet for the topic of our study. This method's benefit is its capacity to swiftly and effectively gather vast and varied data from multiple sources. To maintain the accuracy and dependability of the study's findings, we must verify the reliability and validity of the information sources we use.

### **Results and Discussion**

It is most often associated with various diseases in older adults. These diseases come due to the decline of the immune system in the body of the elderly. Usually, older adults like to do simple activities to avoid disease and make an effort to prevent it. Maintaining health is necessary, especially from a young age, because maintaining health is expected to prevent disease in youth and in future old age, which has more potential for disease. Efforts to maintain health in older adults can be made by doing simple activities. Generally, these activities, such as gardening and gymnastics, are carried out. For example, gymnastics does not require a lot of energy but positively affects physical and spiritual health. Tai Chi is one type of exercise that can be done to overcome health problems. Tai chi exercises nourish physical health and become a meditation for mental health. Based on the experience of the author's grandmother, he also experienced the same thing, namely, elderly anxiety disorder. After doing Tai Chi exercises regularly, anxiety disorders in the author's grandmother can be resolved.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of Tai Chi exercises on anxiety disorders in older adults in Surakarta city.

### **Elderly Age**

Elderly is the last stage in the human life cycle development, which every individual will definitely experience. At this age stage, humans begin to be vulnerable to the emergence of various diseases. The elderly is a natural part of the human life cycle, which is the phase of life when a person reaches old age with physical, mental and social changes. Older adults are in dire need of health care and support from those around them. The senior age phase, also known as the advanced stage or ageing, is the stage in a person's life that usually occurs after retirement. It is the stage when an individual experiences physical, health, and possibly changes in cognitive function. In this phase, individuals may face challenges such as decreased physical strength, higher health risks, and social and support needs changes. However, ageing can also bring wisdom, experience, and the opportunity to enjoy leisure time with family and pursue new interests.

### **Diseases of The Elderly**

Elderly diseases refer to health conditions or illnesses that are often more common in people who have reached old age. Some examples of common diseases in the elderly include stroke, hypertension, diabetes, and anxiety disorders. Most older adults will experience these diseases, which are caused by lifestyle factors, genetics, and health care that can affect the risk and progression of the disease in each individual. Many preventive measures, such as proper medical care and healthcare, are essential in maintaining quality of life in old age. From these examples, the main point is anxiety disorders or mental health.

### **Tai Chi**

Tai Chi, also known as Tai Chi Chuan, is a Chinese light martial art with a deep history and many styles. Tai Chi is a movement meditation and a gymnastic exercise for physical health and inner peace. Tai Chi is often considered a form of exercise suitable for all ages, especially the elderly, as the movements are simple and do not require much exertion. Many people, from young to old, practice Tai Chi to improve their physical and mental health and quality of life. After doing Tai Chi exercises, it is proven that the body feels calmer and more relaxed. Tai Chi exercises have also been shown to be beneficial in reducing the risk of injury, improving joint flexibility, and helping with health issues such as hypertension and anxiety disorders in people. It involves slow body movements, meditation, and synchronized breathing. Tai Chi has various styles, such as Tai Chi Yang, Tai Chi Chen, and others, each emphasizing slightly different movements and principles. Tai Chi is practised as self-defence in times of danger and is also beneficial for our health (meditation). The name Tai Chi stands for Tai Chi Chuan or Tàijí quán. There are almost 300 million people who want to learn Tai Chi, and most of them come from China, but there are also about 2.5 million people from the United States. Tai Chi has a philosophical concept in Confucianism and Taoism that refers to a single 'unity' and becomes a duality of yin and yang. The yin symbol is a Tai Chi symbol, and the concept of yin and yang in Tai Chi has various levels. Tai Chi style focuses on its famously simple and gentle defence against violent attacks. Tai Chi training involves all body movements to receive the energy of the enemy's attack and will be reversed or allowed to pass through. All ages can do Tai Chi because the techniques are practised slowly and with low impact; the style is not

strenuous and does not tire, so it is easy to practice even though many Tai Chi styles also have fast forms. Tai Chi practice also utilizes internal body elements and Qigong exercises (Qigong is the manipulation of the breath and internal energy of the body). The health benefits of doing Tai Chi are that it improves circulation, which is why it is so popular among older people. Western medicine also believes that tai chi exercise is suitable for many people because it impacts the body and joints (heart and lungs). Tai Chi is often done in the morning because the air is fresher and the place is wide open, such as a field or front yard.

## **History**

Tai Chi, also known as Tai Chi Chuan or Taijiquan, is a Chinese health martial art associated with the philosophy of Taoism. Although the origins of tai chi remain unclear, a legend links it to the story of a Taoist named Zhang Sanfeng in the 12th century. However, its history is complex and involves many contributions from martial arts experts. History says that Tai Chi was born and developed during the Chen Dynasty in Henan Province. Chen Wangting, in 1580-1660, created the first version of the Tai Chi movement model called Chen-style. Over time, Tai Chi developed and produced various styles of movements. The style has been modified again by students in the next generation. From these modifications, Yang-style Tai Chi was created by Yang Luchan in the 16th century. Later on, Wu-style Tai Chi was created by Wu Yuxiang in the 17th century. In the 19th century, the history of Tai Chi stopped at the Sun style by Sun Lutang. Each of these movements has a distinctive and different emphasis. Eventually, in the 20th century, Tai Chi Chuan gained popularity as a form of health exercise worldwide due to its positive benefits, such as improved balance, flexibility, and body and mind relaxation. Over the years, Tai Chi has also been featured in popular culture and movies as an elegant, simple, and meditative martial art. The development of Tai Chi exercises has made the form popular with young and old alike.

Given that Tai Chi has good health benefits. Because of this, the Chinese government then standardized Tai Chi exercises as a teaching method included in the sport of Wushu. Tai Chi has been named a Chinese cultural heritage that continues to attract people as a beneficial form of health and self-defence exercise.

## **Tai Chi Movement Techniques**

Tai Chi is famous for its simple movements and does not require much energy. Therefore, Tai Chi can be practised by both young people and older people. The movements are similar to the initial Tai Chi pose, which involves moving two feet shoulder-width apart and both hands next to the hips. After that, the head slowly moves clockwise twice. The second pose aims to relax the hands by raising both hands forward to chest level while inhaling and exhaling three times. When the body is relaxed, start with the Tai Chi movement of two full moons. The first step of the movement is to swing both hands upwards until they are perpendicular to the body. Then, lower them towards the back until they finally return to the sides of the body and form a complete circle. The next Tai Chi movement is spreading the wings, which involves raising both arms forward to chest level. Position the palms of the hands facing downward as if the fingertips are almost touching each other. Then, slowly open your arms to the sides of your body as if you are spreading your wings. Then, return the hand to its original position while performing deep breathing techniques. In the final Tai Chi movement variation, the water splitting movement, position both arms in front of the chest, then position the palms facing down. Then, move as if you are slowly

swimming and breaking the water in front of you. Both arms are swung to the sides of the body until they return to the starting position. Make sure to keep your breathing relaxed and repeat the movement.

### **Benefits of Tai Chi Exercises**

The benefits of doing Tai Chi exercises are diverse. Tai Chi is an easy exercise that can be practised by young and old alike. As it improves the body's balance, Tai Chi exercise helps improve posture coordination and balance. As a stress reliever, Tai Chi is a meditative form of exercise that can help relieve stress and improve emotional well-being. In terms of improving flexibility, with its famously simple and flowing movements, Tai Chi is proven to help improve flexibility. To enhance muscle strength, although Tai Chi movements may seem simple and slow, the exercise requires a lot of muscle work to help improve muscle strength. Tai Chi can help lower blood pressure and improve blood circulation if you want a healthy heart. Tai Chi exercises are perfect for enhancing focus and concentration, requiring attention to movement and breathing, which can improve focus and concentration skills. Tai Chi can help improve posture and reduce the risk of injury and discomfort in muscles and joints. In addition, doing Tai Chi exercises regularly can help you sleep better and soundly.

### **Interesting Fact**

Tai Chi has been included in the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity. Known for its slow movements, Tai Chi is famous as a mild form of gymnastics and meditation for mental and physical health. In addition, Tai Chi has become part of festivals and cultural celebrations worldwide. Tai Chi has been included in the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity. Known for its slow movements, Tai Chi is famous as a mild form of gymnastics and meditation for mental and physical health. In addition, Tai Chi has become part of festivals and cultural celebrations worldwide. Tai Chi is known as a gentle martial art from China.



**Figure 1.** Tai Chi, 2023

Source: <https://www.message-zen-therapie.com/tai-chi-chuan-entreprise.html>

## Conclusion

The elderly are very vulnerable to the arrival of various diseases. In the elderly, activities are needed to cure or avoid diseases. These diseases are generally anxiety disorders, hypertension, stroke, and others. Tai Chi exercise, also known as Tai Chi Chuan or Taijiquan, is a Chinese health martial art born and developed during the Chen Dynasty in Henan Province. Tai Chi exercise is one of the methods to prevent diseases in the elderly. The reason for this is not only because older people like simple activities but also because Tai Chi has easy movements. In particular, Tai Chi exercises can create good physical health, and Tai Chi becomes a meditation to maintain mental health for young adults and adults.

Tai Chi exercise has many benefits for older people and young people. It can improve focus and concentration, address mental health issues, and relieve stress. An interesting fact about this exercise is that UNESCO included tai chi in the list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity. In addition, tai chi is also part of festivals and cultural celebrations worldwide.

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