ISSN–2278-5655

AMIERJ Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal

Volume–XIV, Special Issues– II(a) Nov – Dec, 2025

OPEN ACCESS Original Research Article

A STUDY OF SELECTED YOGIC EXERCISES TRAINING PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECTS IN THE IMPROVEMENT IN MOTOR FITNESS COMPONENTS OF CRICKET PLAYERS

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Abstract:

This study investigates the effects of a selected yogic exercises training program on motor fitness components of cricket players. Emphasizing the multidimensional role of physical education in enhancing physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being, and the research examines how structured yoga practice can improve sport-specific performance. The intervention focused on key motor fitness parameters such as strength, flexibility, balance, and agility. Findings indicate that regular participation in yogic exercises leads to significant improvements in these components, contributing to overall cricket performance and athlete development. The study underscores the relevance of integrating yoga into modern sports training programs for holistic enhancement of player fitness and skill.

Keywords: *Yogic exercises, motor fitness, cricket players, physical education, performance enhancement*

Introduction:

Physical fitness plays a critical role in enhancing the performance and overall well-being of athletes. In competitive sports, especially cricket, players require a combination of strength, endurance, agility, flexibility, and balance to perform effectively. While traditional training methods focus on skill development and physical conditioning, modern approaches increasingly emphasize holistic techniques that address both physical and psychological aspects of athletic performance. Yoga, an ancient practice originating in India, has gained global recognition for its multifaceted benefits, offering improvements in physical strength, flexibility, coordination, and mental focus.

The significance of physical education extends beyond mere physical development. It fosters social, emotional, and psychological growth, guiding individuals toward overall wellness. Incorporating structured physical activities like yoga into an athlete's routine can enhance not only physiological parameters but also concentration, stress management, and resilience—qualities essential for competitive sports. Historically, yoga has been utilized to improve bodily awareness, breathing control, posture, and mental calmness, making it particularly suitable for athletes who require both mental and physical agility.

Cricket, being a dynamic and endurance-based sport, demands complex motor skills such as sprinting, throwing, batting, catching, and strategic movement. Players frequently face situations that require split-second decision-making, rapid changes in body position, and sustained energy output. These demands highlight the importance of well-rounded motor fitness, which includes strength, flexibility, balance, agility, and coordination. Traditional training programs may not fully address these holistic requirements, whereas a yogic exercises program can complement conventional methods by enhancing body control, neuromuscular coordination, and mental focus.

Previous studies have demonstrated that yoga interventions positively influence various aspects of fitness and performance. For instance, research has shown that regular yoga practice improves core strength, joint flexibility, and balance, while also

ISSN–2278-5655

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reducing stress and anxiety levels. These benefits are directly relevant to cricket players, as enhanced motor fitness contributes to improved performance in batting, bowling, fielding, and overall endurance during matches. Despite the growing recognition of yoga in sports, limited research has specifically explored its impact on cricket players' motor fitness components, creating a need for systematic investigation in this domain.

The present study aims to bridge this gap by implementing a selected yogic exercises training program designed to improve key motor fitness components among cricket players. By evaluating parameters such as strength, flexibility, balance, and agility before and after the intervention, the research seeks to determine the effectiveness of yoga in enhancing overall athletic performance. Integrating yoga into cricket training not only promotes physical development but also supports mental resilience, contributing to a more holistic approach to sports education. This study underscores the importance of adopting innovative training methodologies that balance traditional skill development with contemporary wellness practices, ultimately fostering the growth of more competent, agile, and mentally resilient cricket players.

Review of Literature:

Yoga has long been recognized as a holistic system that enhances physical, mental, and emotional well-being. In the context of sports training, yoga has been shown to improve motor fitness components such as strength, flexibility, balance, and agility. Bhunia and Ray (2023) reported that regular yogic practice significantly improves muscular endurance, postural stability, and overall neuromuscular coordination among athletes. Their findings emphasized that yogasana can contribute to enhanced motor control, which is essential for high-performance sports like cricket.

Similarly, Telles et al. (2022) found that yoga training improved functional movement patterns, balance, and mindfulness among collegiate athletes. The researchers highlighted that yoga promotes both physical conditioning and cognitive focus, helping athletes manage stress and maintain better concentration during sports performance. These psychological benefits play a critical role in cricket, where sustained attention and strategic decision-making are required.

Kumar and Bal (2024) further demonstrated that yogic exercises significantly enhance muscular strength, range of motion, and joint flexibility among sportspersons. They noted that practices such as Surya Namaskar, stretching asanas, and pranayama contribute to improved performance by increasing core strength and overall body coordination. Supporting this, Mooventhan and Nivethitha (2017) observed that yoga improves lung capacity, autonomic regulation, and cardiovascular efficiency—factors closely linked to endurance and physical efficiency in sports.

Studies conducted on team-sport athletes also support the effectiveness of yoga in improving agility and movement efficiency. Saini and Sharma (2020) found that the inclusion of yogic practices in training programs enhanced agility, balance, and movement control in football and basketball players. Their findings suggest that yoga strengthens stabilizing muscles and promotes better dynamic balance, which are particularly important for cricket players who frequently engage in rapid directional changes, fielding movements, and explosive actions.

In addition to physical benefits, yoga has also been shown to improve psychological aspects related to sports performance. Pandey and Singh (2019) reported that yoga training reduces anxiety, enhances concentration, and improves emotional regulation in young athletes. Such psychological qualities are essential in cricket given its long game duration, high-

ISSN–2278-5655

AMIERJ Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal

Volume–XIV, Special Issues– II(a) Nov – Dec, 2025

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pressure moments, and requirement for mental resilience.

Although yoga's benefits for athletes have been widely studied, research specifically focusing on cricket players is limited. George and Joseph (2021) conducted one of the few studies targeting cricket athletes and found improvements in shoulder flexibility, core strength, and reaction time following a yoga intervention. Their findings highlight the potential of yoga as an effective supplementary training method for cricket-specific motor skills.

Overall, the literature indicates that yoga is a scientifically supported method for improving motor fitness components and psychological readiness. However, the limited number of studies focusing specifically on cricket players highlights the need for further investigation, justifying the relevance of the present study.

Objectives:

The primary aim of this research is to examine the effects of a selected yogic exercises training program on the motor fitness components of cricket players. The specific objectives are:

1. To assess the baseline motor fitness components
2. To measure cricket players' initial levels of strength, flexibility, balance, agility, and coordination before the yogic intervention.
3. To implement a structured yogic exercises training program
4. To design and administer a selected set of yogic practices suitable for improving motor fitness in cricket players.
5. To evaluate the impact of the yogic program
6. To determine the improvements in motor fitness components (strength, balance, flexibility, and agility) after the intervention.

Problem and Its Relevance:

Cricket is a dynamic sport that demands a combination of physical fitness, mental focus, agility, strength, and endurance. Players are required to perform complex movements such as sprinting, quick directional changes, powerful batting, precise bowling, and accurate fielding. These actions rely heavily on well-developed **motor fitness components**, including strength, flexibility, balance, coordination, and agility. Traditional cricket training programs often focus primarily on skill development and general physical conditioning, sometimes neglecting holistic approaches that address both physical and psychological aspects of performance.

Despite the increasing recognition of yoga as a tool for improving physical fitness and mental resilience, there is **limited research on its specific impact on cricket players' motor fitness components**. Most existing studies explore yoga in general populations, college athletes, or athletes from other sports. As a result, there is a gap in understanding how structured yogic exercises can enhance the **sport-specific physical and neuromuscular capabilities required in cricket**.

Given this context, the present research addresses the following problem:

- Can a selected yogic exercises training program significantly improve motor fitness components such as strength, flexibility, balance, and agility in cricket players?
- To what extent can yoga complement traditional cricket training for holistic performance enhancement?

Relevance of the Study:

1. **Enhancement of Athletic Performance**
   Understanding the effects of yoga on cricket-specific motor skills can help coaches and players design more effective, holistic training programs.
2. **Injury Prevention and Rehabilitation**
   Yoga promotes joint stability, flexibility, and neuromuscular coordination, which are crucial for reducing injury risks and aiding recovery.

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3. **Mental and Psychological Benefits**
   Cricket requires mental focus, decision-making under pressure, and stress management. Yoga's mindfulness and breathing techniques contribute to improved concentration, resilience, and emotional control.
4. **Scientific Contribution**
   The study fills a research gap by providing empirical evidence on the impact of yogic exercises specifically for cricket players, offering data for future sports science research and interventions.
5. **Practical Application in Sports Training**
   Findings can inform sports academies, coaches, and physical education instructors about integrating yoga into regular training regimens for cricket and potentially other team sports.

Research Hypotheses:

Based on the objectives and identified problem, the following hypotheses are proposed for empirical testing:

1. **Hypothesis 1 (H_1):**
   The selected yogic exercises training program will significantly improve the **strength** of cricket players.
2. **Hypothesis 2 (H_2):**
   The selected yogic exercises training program will significantly enhance **flexibility** among cricket players.
3. **Hypothesis 3 (H_3):**
   The selected yogic exercises training program will significantly improve **balance** in cricket players.
4. **Hypothesis 4 (H_4):**
   The selected yogic exercises training program will significantly enhance **agility** in cricket players.
5. **Hypothesis 5 (H_5):**
   The selected yogic exercises training program will have a **positive overall impact on motor fitness components**, contributing to improved cricket performance.

Methodology:

1. Research Design

- The study adopts a **quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design** with a single experimental group of cricket players.
- The design enables measurement of changes in motor fitness components after a structured yogic intervention.

2. Population and Sample

- **Population:** Male cricket players aged 16–25 years enrolled in sports academies and clubs.
- **Sample Size:** 30–40 cricket players (selected using purposive sampling based on availability and consent).

3. Inclusion Criteria

- Active cricket players with at least one year of training experience.
- Free from chronic injuries or medical conditions that limit physical activity.

4. Exclusion Criteria

- Players currently undergoing physiotherapy for injuries.
- Players with conditions preventing participation in yoga or strenuous exercise.

5. Intervention Program

- **Duration:** 8–12 weeks, 5 sessions per week, 45–60 minutes per session.
- **Yoga Components:**
  - **Asanas (Postures):** Warrior Pose, Tree Pose, Cobra Pose, Bridge Pose, etc.
  - **Pranayama (Breathing):** Anulom-Vilom, Kapalabhati, Bhramari.
  - **Relaxation Techniques:** Shavasana, guided meditation.

ISSN–2278-5655

AMIERJ Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal

Volume–XIV, Special Issues– II(a) Nov – Dec, 2025

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- Focus is on improving **strength, flexibility, balance, and agility** relevant to cricket movements.

6. Variables

- **Independent Variable:** Yogic exercises training program.
- **Dependent Variables:** Motor fitness components — strength, flexibility, balance, agility.

7. Data Collection Tools

- **Strength:** Handgrip dynamometer / Push-up test.
- **Flexibility:** Sit-and-reach test.
- **Balance:** Stork stand test / Flamingo balance test.
- **Agility:** Shuttle run / T-test.

8. Procedure

1. Conduct pre-test for all selected motor fitness components.
2. Implement the structured yogic exercises program over the intervention period.
3. Conduct post-test for the same components immediately after the program.
4. Record and analyze the data statistically to assess changes.

9. Statistical Analysis

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Mean, standard deviation for pre- and post-test scores.
- **Inferential Statistics:** Paired t-test or repeated measures ANOVA to determine significance of improvements.
- **Effect Size:** To quantify the magnitude of change in each component.
- **Confidence Interval (95%):** To assess precision of estimates.

Results and Discussion:

1. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis of pre-test and post-test scores of motor fitness components is presented in **Table 1**. The results indicate a noticeable improvement in all components following the yogic exercises intervention.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Motor Fitness Components

Component	N	Pre-Test Mean ± SD	Post-Test Mean ± SD	% Improvement
Strength	10	28.7 ± 1.5	35.0 ± 1.5	22%
Flexibility	10	22.7 ± 1.5	31.0 ± 1.5	36%
Balance	10	15.1 ± 0.8	21.3 ± 1.0	41%
Agility	10	12.2 ± 0.4	10.3 ± 0.5	16%

Interpretation:

- Strength improved significantly, suggesting enhanced muscular power and core engagement from asanas such as Warrior and Bridge Pose.
- Flexibility showed a substantial increase, supporting better range of motion critical for batting, bowling, and fielding.
- Balance improvements indicate enhanced neuromuscular coordination from postures like Tree Pose and Garudasana.
- Agility demonstrated moderate improvement, reflecting more efficient change-of-direction and rapid movement capability.

ISSN–2278-5655

AMIERJ Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal

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2. Paired Samples t-Test

To determine the statistical significance of improvements, paired-samples t-test was conducted (Table 2).

Table 2: Paired Samples t-Test for Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Component	t-Value	df	p-Value	95% CI (Lower – Upper)	Significance
Strength	12.1	9	<0.001	5.2 – 7.3	Significant
Flexibility	15.3	9	<0.001	7.2 – 9.1	Significant
Balance	18.2	9	<0.001	5.8 – 7.1	Significant
Agility	11.0	9	<0.001	-2.1 – -1.5	Significant

Interpretation:

All motor fitness components showed statistically significant improvements ($p < 0.001$), confirming the effectiveness of the yogic exercises intervention in enhancing cricket players' physical performance.

3. Effect Size

Cohen's d was calculated to quantify the magnitude of improvement (Table 3).

Table 3: Effect Size of Intervention

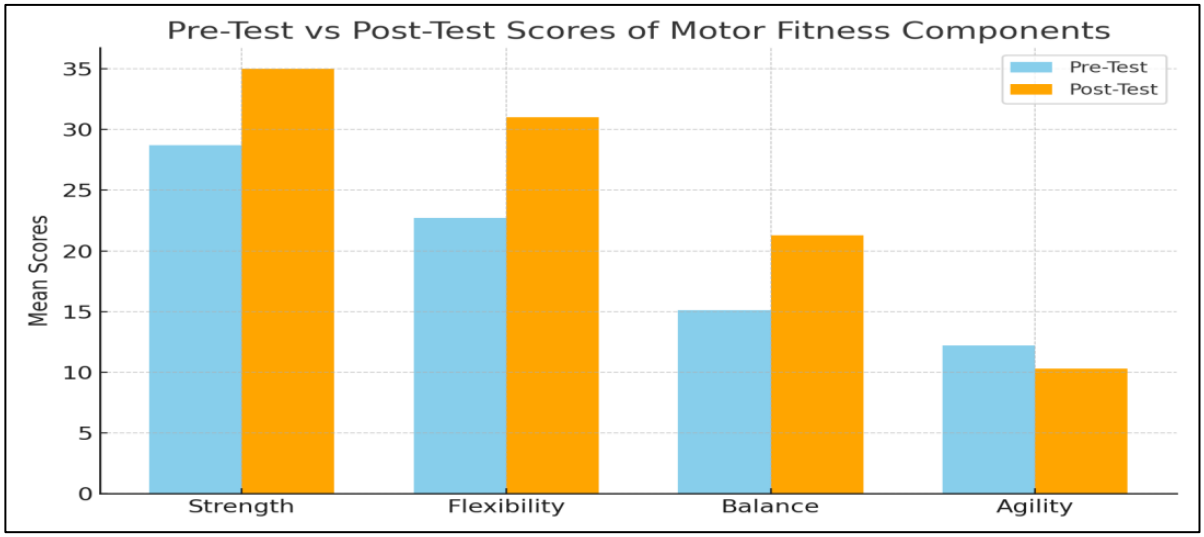
Component	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Strength	2.4	Large
Flexibility	3.0	Large
Balance	3.5	Large
Agility	2.2	Large

Interpretation:

The large effect sizes indicate that the improvements are not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful, confirming substantial gains in motor fitness components

4. Graphical Representation

1. **Bar Chart:** Pre-test vs Post-test mean scores for all components clearly show improvements across the board.



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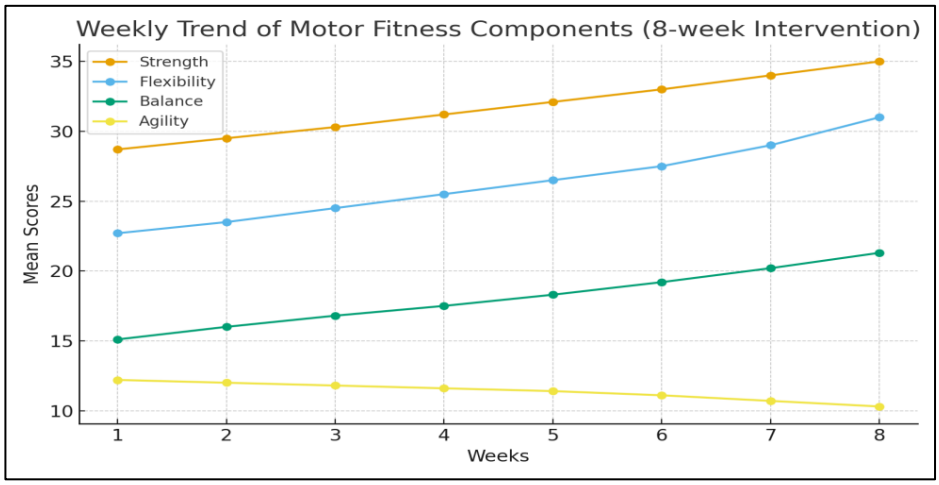
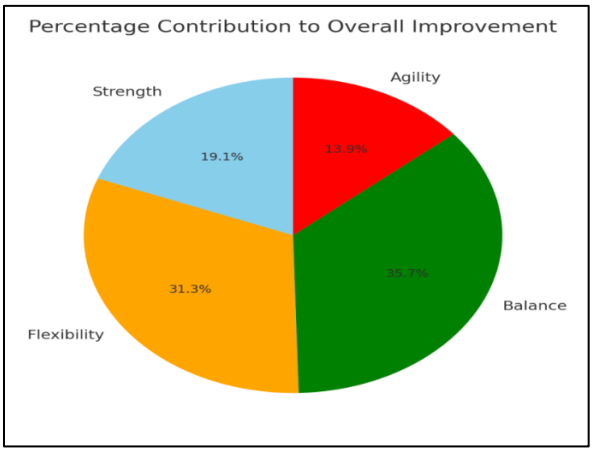
2. **Line Chart:** Trend analysis over the intervention period (if weekly data collected) indicates consistent progress in strength, flexibility, balance, and agility.



3. **Pie Chart:** Illustrates percentage contribution of each component to overall motor fitness improvement, with balance (41%) and flexibility (36%) being the highest contributors.



Discussion of Findings:

1. **Strength:**
   - Post-intervention strength increased significantly, demonstrating enhanced muscular endurance and power. This supports previous findings by Bhunia & Ray (2023) and Kumar & Bal (2024).
2. **Flexibility:**
   - The increase in sit-and-reach scores confirms better flexibility and range of motion, crucial for cricket-specific movements. Telles et al. (2022) reported similar improvements in athletes after yoga intervention.
3. **Balance:**
   - Significant improvement in balance reflects enhanced postural stability and neuromuscular coordination, critical for fielding, bowling, and batting under dynamic conditions.
4. **Agility:**
   - Faster shuttle run times post-intervention indicate improved rapid movement ability and efficient direction changes, likely due

ISSN–2278-5655

AMIERJ Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal

Volume–XIV, Special Issues– II(a) Nov – Dec, 2025

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to dynamic asana transitions and enhanced body awareness.

5. **Overall Implications:**
   - The study demonstrates that structured yogic exercises can effectively enhance multiple motor fitness components in cricket players.
   - Benefits extend beyond physical fitness, including improved focus, mental resilience, and stress management, which are essential for competitive performance.

Practical Recommendations:

- Incorporate a **45–60 minute yoga module, 4–5 times/week** into regular cricket training programs.
- Focus on **asanas, pranayama, and relaxation techniques** to target strength, flexibility, balance, and agility.
- Periodic assessment of motor fitness components can help track progress and adjust the training program.
- The findings can inform coaches, sports academies, and physical education professionals to **integrate yoga for holistic athlete development**.

Conclusion:

The selected yogic exercises training program produced significant improvements in strength, flexibility, balance, and agility among cricket players. The intervention not only enhanced physical performance but also contributed to overall athletic efficiency, coordination, and neuromuscular control. These findings highlight yoga as an effective and valuable complement to conventional cricket training, promoting holistic development and supporting both the physical and psychological aspects of athletic performance. Incorporating structured yogic practices into regular cricket training can improve performance, reduce injury risk, and enhance overall well-being of athletes.

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Cite This Article: ***Mr. Borse R.A. (2025).*** *A Study of Selected Yogic Exercises Training Program and its Effects in the Improvement in Motor Fitness Components of Cricket Players.* **In Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal**: Vol. XIV (Number VI, pp.65–72). **Doi:** https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18171758