

ASSESS THE EFFECT OF SURYANAMASKAR AT SLOW SPEED ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN LATE-POSTPARTUM WOMEN – A PILOT STUDY

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ABSTRACT

*Pregnancy not only brings a new life into the world but also a mother. It is a pivotal time accompanied by umpteen numbers of psycho-physiological ups and downs that can influence one's outlook toward life. Hence, the present study was designed to assess the effect of Suryanamaskar at Slow Speed (SSN) on the quality of life (QOL) in late-postpartum women. **Method:** 20 eligible women were recruited using convenient sampling who underwent SSN intervention. The Maternal Postpartum Quality of Life (MAPP-QOL) questionnaire was used for data collection. The pre-and post-test data were calculated using a t-test. **Results:** A significant growth ($p < 0.01$) was seen post-intervention in the QOL in late-postpartum women. **Conclusion:** Regular SSN practice helps improve QOL in late-postpartum women.*

Keywords: quality of life, postpartum, late-postpartum, yoga, suryanamaskar.

INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy not only brings a new life into the world but also a mother. It is a pivotal time accompanied by umpteen numbers of psycho-physiological ups and downs. As a woman adjusts to her maternal role in the foreground, she is constantly trying to balance her personal relationships and social and professional roles in the background. This constant juggling between roles can greatly influence her outlook towards life impacting her perception of life. Quality of Life (QOL) can be understood as an individual's way of looking at and evaluating self from the point of view of where he/she stands in the context of his/her environment, society, culture, etc., and his/her expectations, goals, apprehensions, etc. affecting his/her psycho-physical health, socio-environmental relations, and belief systems (Kuyken et al., 1995, De Oliveira et al., 2015). The World Health Organisation mentions 6 primary areas of QOL that influence both positively and negatively one's viewpoint towards life determining their satisfaction levels. These primary areas are physical, and psycho-emotional health, level of independence, social relationships, spiritual beliefs, and environmental status.

The postpartum period is a challenging time that can tremendously affect a woman's QOL, and any momentary or consistent incapability in being able to manage multiple roles and responsibilities that come along in the postpartum period can directly affect the mother's QOL, deteriorating it greatly. Additional aspects like inadequate support from a partner, familial or societal fronts, monetary challenges, professional burden, age, parity, the form of delivery undergone, medical history, etc. can further lower the mother's QOL. Kohler et al. (2018) in their study on postpartum Indian women found that women who had vaginal births had better quality of life than their caesarean counterparts within 1 month of delivery. Another study conducted by Papamarkou et al. (2017) revealed that postpartum depression has direct impact on maternal quality of life during the postpartum phase, while Jeong et al. (2021) found postpartum fatigue, marital intimacy, breastfeeding and impact of occupation to be direct influencers determining QOL of the new mothers. Studies have shown that women with low QOL in postpartum tend to have a negative attitude towards their baby (Mokhtaryan-Gilani et al., 2022). Additionally, Taso et al.'s (2014) research among breast cancer patients revealed depression, anxiety, and fatigue as the weightiest hitches prompting QOL. Hence, addressing low QOL levels among late-postpartum mothers becomes crucial, especially during pressing times like pandemics which by itself forms a major threat to one's QOL.

Yoga, one of the most ancient lifestyle practices in the world, originating from the Sanskrit root 'yuj' means to connect or unify. Yoga is the path that connects the individual spirit to the Ultimate Soul. It brings out a sense of equanimity by creating a harmony between one's gross body, intangible mind, and subtle soul. Sage Patanjali in the Yoga Sutra explains Yoga as the means that helps cease the endless mental turmoil. Yoga

is, thus, the science that teaches one to overcome mind and emotion and ultimately reach the final goal of eternal bliss. However, in modern times, yoga is perceived from a more superficial level and used as a mere means to manage ailments and achieve ideal health status. Though Yoga comprises of 8 limbs, only asanas (postures), pranayama (breathing practices) and dhyana (meditation and mindfulness) have been given the limelight. Many scientific researchers have found Yoga to be instrumental in the management of lifestyle-based disorders and conditions like obesity (Shetty et al., 2018), PCOS (Mohseni et al., 2021), blood pressure (Muruguvalavan & Jayanthi, 2019), stress (Maddux et al., 2018), anxiety (Atici et al., 2021), depression (Shohani et al., 2018), etc. Yoga has proved itself to be impactful in managing side-effects associated with cancer like fatigue too (Taso et al., 2014). It helps in boosting immunity too (Dalpati et al., 2022). According to Nadholta et al. (2020), Yoga has the potential to restore HPA balance which helps manage stress responses, reduce disturbances in sleep and ameliorate individual quality of life. Thus, as an affordable, non-invasive practice with countless therapeutic benefits, Yoga has become one of the most accepted lifestyle management practices today.

Suryanamaskar (SN), one of the wholesome yoga sequences, leads its way to the top as the most popular yogic exercise practiced worldwide. Having its roots deeply seated right from Vedic times, SN of modern times is very different from its Vedic counterpart which is ritual based, while contemporary version is based on postures. There are 8 postures placed in a rhythmic flow into 12-step sequence form the flow of SN. These 8 postures are pranamasana, hastauttanasana, hastapadasana, ashwasanchalanasana, chaturanga dandasana, ashtanga namaskara, bhujangasana, and adhomukhasvanasana. These asanas form an alternating forward-backward bending sequence of postures which not only activates the spinal cord but also creates isometric and isotonic stretches in majority of the muscles, while regulating all major body systems and promoting overall health. The breath synchronisation with postures paired with mantra recitation at each posture and step helps improve mental health as well. Sasi et al. (2011) established in their study the positive impact SN on physical health, while Sinha et al. (2011) evidenced SN's effect in improving muscle and joint health. Further, Deorari et al. (2013) proved SN's efficacy in ameliorating individual's emotional maturity and mental health. When one feels at ease with their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual self, their perspective towards life also improves and becomes balanced. These characteristics and benefits derived from suryanamaskar, hence, makes it a perfect practice to promote one's holistic wellbeing that would eventually enhance the quality of life of the person.

With changing lifestyle habits and sedentary routine emerging from more and more dependence on machines and technological advancements, there exists less and less physical activities. Adding to this, pandemic situations like COVID-19 further impose restrictions to movements bringing a near standstill conditions with no to limited access for maintaining one's wellbeing. Thus, considering these restrictions caused due to COVID-19 situation, and the multiple barriers and challenges faced by a postpartum woman in general, an online SN intervention which could be easily accessible from the comfort of the home was considered to be the most suitable option for this study as it cuts down on the childcare-related limitations, reduces risk of attracting infections, increases maternal availability, and provides a great incentive to the mothers to be regular. As one can easily monitor and manipulate the practice intensity of Yoga and SN to suit the practitioner's comfort, the present study was intended to indicate the competence of slow-speed SN in improving the QOL levels of late-postpartum women through the regular practice of SN in online mode during the pandemic considering the new mother's overall health, social environment and other such influencing factors.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Statement of the Problem: The purpose of this study is to assess the effect of Suryanamaskar at Slow speed on the Quality of Life in late-postpartum women.

Hypothesis: Suryanamaskar at a Slow speed has no positive effect on the Quality of life in late-postpartum women.

Population and Sample: In this interventional study, 20 healthy late-postpartum women, between 25-35 years of age, 3 to 6 months postpartum were recruited for a 12-week SSN intervention using convenient sampling. After an online orientation, participants’ verbal consent was obtained before commencing the intervention.

Study Design: A single group, pre-post design was adopted, where participants were evaluated at baseline (before commencing intervention) and post-data (collected within 1 week of intervention completion).

Intervention: The participants underwent 30 minutes of 12-week SSN sessions online, 5 days a week under expert guidance. They performed 1-6 rounds of slow speed suryanamaskar (15 minutes) along with Sukshma vyayama, relaxation, and Om chanting.

Assessment tool: The Maternal Postpartum Quality of Life Questionnaire (MAPP-QOL) questionnaire developed by Hill et al. (2006) was used to evaluate the impact of SSN on QOL in the subjects. MAPP-QOL is a self-administered questionnaire containing 39 questions regarding satisfaction levels and the importance levels of the given item to evaluate the level of QOL in postpartum women. The questionnaire uses a Likert-type scale (1 - 6) with a minimum possible score of 0 and a maximum of 30.

Data Analysis: The assessment was carried out at 2 points - baseline and post-intervention using the MAPP-QOL questionnaire. A paired T-test was used for pre-post data analysis using Excel software.

RESULT, INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSION

Results: After undergoing 12 weeks of SSN online intervention, a statistically significant rise was recorded in participants’ QOL scores ($p < 0.01$).

Table 1

	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean	18.932	21.965
Pearson Correlation	0.563	
df	19	
t Stat	3.917*	

*Since calculated t-value > tabulated t-value, the result is considered statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.

Interpretation: As seen in Table 1, there was a rise in the QOL pre-test mean score from 18.932 to 21.965 in the post-test mean QOL score indicating an improvement in the level of QOL among the late-postpartum women post-intervention. Further, this increase was statistically significant at 0.01 level revealing the efficiency of the intervention in improving postpartum QOL.

Discussion: Entering the uncharted area of child care, continuous postpartum physical and psycho-emotional changes, and pressuring expectations from family and society can overwhelm the mother affecting her self-perceptions which may provoke her to doubt her capabilities and lower her QOL. Yoga is a well-established preventive and management practice known to be effective in enhancing physical, emotional, mental, social, as well as spiritual well-being. When one’s holistic health is improved, an elevated QOL is sure to follow. The current pilot study, designed to evaluate the impact of Suryanamaskar at slow speed on QOL in late-postpartum women, shows (Table 1) that QOL levels grew substantially from pre-test evaluation to post-test at a statistical level of 0.01. Past studies conducted by Piekorz et al. (2022) on Polish yoga practitioners, and Anggraeni et al.’s (2019) systematic review on different postpartum exercise and their effect on QOL support these present findings. Ko et al.’s (2013) study on 28 postpartum women also show analogous result from a Yoga-Pilates based intervention program. Another study evaluating effect of Yoga on fatigue and QOL among postpartum women reveal that yoga does help reduce fatigue while increasing QOL of the postpartum women (NaoSrisorn et al., 2019). Thus, the fact that current results are in agreement with its prior research counterparts indicates the slow speed SN intervention’s efficiency in bettering postpartum QOL while

additionally suggesting that short-duration intervention can produce prolific outcomes. As the data analysis points to a positive effect of SSN on QOL in late-postpartum women, the original hypothesis can be rejected and a suitable alternative hypothesis would be: ‘There is a positive effect of SSN on QOL in late-postpartum women’.

CONCLUSION, AND CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE STUDY

Conclusion: Life-changing moments like the birth of a neonate can create a massive impact on a woman’s psycho-physiological well-being influencing her Quality-of-Life levels. As postpartum QOL is dependent on multiple factors like the woman’s self-coping mechanisms with changing situations post-delivery, supporting aid received for child care, her perspective towards her socio-familial as well as professional standings, etc. a short-coming in any of these aspects can drastically lower her levels of QOL without being noticed by the woman herself or her entourage. However, the introduction of modest lifestyle practices like yoga in routine life can do great marvels. Yoga practice, an amalgamation of body, mind, and soul, not only brings an equilibrium between the three but also induces calm and increases one’s awareness of self and surroundings. Where QOL can be impacted by various aspects, yoga offers an efficient pathway to manage these stressors without negatively affecting the QOL. Yoga practices like Suryanamaskar offer a convenient, and viable solution for this purpose. It is not just easy to learn and adapt to but is an extremely effective practice. Its holistic approach helps elevate QOL which indirectly helps keep postpartum perils like fatigue, stress, depressive symptoms, anxiety, etc. at bay. Though the study was performed on a small sample and was constrained concerning time, it still defends slow speed Suryanamaskar’s ability to improve QOL among late-postpartum mothers.

Significance of the Study:

- a. the study checks slow speed SN’s impact on QOL among late-postpartum women.
- b. It establishes that short term SN practice can lead to positive effects too.
- c. It encourages mothers to spare 30mins to improve their QOL

Strength of the Study:

- a. Pilot attempt of its kind addressing QOL of late-postpartum women during pandemic
- b. An intervention that would motivate individuals with time-crunch to focus on their QOL

Implication of the Study:

- a. Easy to practice and adapt module
- b. Can become a point of reference for future postpartum-related studies involving yogic module

Suggestions and Future perspectives:

- a. Being a pilot, smaller sample size was recruited. Future studies with larger sample should be performed.
- b. Long-term follow-up of the module and effect of time factor on QOL can be studied
- c. Study comparing QOL of primipara and multiparas in late-postpartum could be performed
- d. Study comparing QOL of professional working and non-working mothers in late-postpartum could be performed
- e. A comparative study of SN and other physical exercises’ effect on QOL of late-postpartum women can be conducted

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02/24/04

MATERNAL POSTPARTUM QUALITY-OF-LIFE

Part I. For each of the following, please choose the answer that best describes how satisfied you are with that area of life is to you. Please mark your answer by circling the number. There is no right or wrong answer.

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 = Very dissatisfied | 3 = Slightly dissatisfied | 5 = Moderately satisfied |
| 2 = Moderately dissatisfied | 4 = Slightly satisfied | 6 = Very satisfied |

How satisfied are you with:

1. Your health?	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. The amount of pain that you have?	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Amount of energy for everyday activities?	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Amount of control you have over your life?	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Your ability to take care of yourself without help?	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Your physical appearance?	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. The amount of sleep that you are getting?	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Your breasts?	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Your surgical incision or episiotomy?	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Your sex life?	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Your peace of mind?	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Your personal faith in God?	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Your happiness in general?	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Your life in general?	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. The amount of worries in your life?	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. The emotional support you get from:						
a.) your husband/partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6
b.) your extended family	1	2	3	4	5	6
c.) your friends or other people	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please turn the page around to continue

Continuation Part 1

1 = Very dissatisfied 3 = Slightly dissatisfied 5 = Moderately satisfied
 2 = Moderately dissatisfied 4 = Slightly satisfied 6 = Very satisfied

17. Your relationship with your husband/partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Your ability to meet family responsibilities?	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Your baby's health?	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. The assistance with baby care and other children?	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. Time for children?	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Time for maintaining the household?	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. Time for friends/relatives?	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. Time for husband/partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. Time for yourself?	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. Your ability to feed your new baby?	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. Your husband/partner's health?	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. Your day to day life's routine?	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. Your home/apartment/place where you live?	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. Your neighborhood?	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. Your financial independence?	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. Your ability to meet financial obligations?	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. Your access to medical care?	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. Your access to transportation?	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. Your living conditions in the home?						
a.) Your materialistic possessions	1	2	3	4	5	6
b.) Your economic or financial capacity	1	2	3	4	5	6
c.) Your overall environment/surrounding (no yelling, fights, squabbles)	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. Employment/work?						
a.) Your husband's employment	1	2	3	4	5	6
b.) Your own employment	1	2	3	4	5	6

End of Survey Part 1

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MATERNAL POSTPARTUM QUALITY-OF-LIFE

Part 2. For each of the following, please choose the answer that best describes how important that area of life is to you. Please mark your answer by circling the number. There is no right or wrong answer.

1 = Very unimportant 3 = Slightly unimportant 5 = Moderately important
 2 = Moderately unimportant 4 = Slightly important 6 = Very important

How important to you is:

1. Your health?	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. The amount of pain that you have?	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Amount of energy for everyday activities?	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Amount of control you have over your life?	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Your ability to take care of yourself without help?	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Your physical appearance?	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. The amount of sleep that you are getting?	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Your breasts?	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Your surgical incision or episiotomy?	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Your sex life?	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Your peace of mind?	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Your personal faith in God?	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Your happiness in general?	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Your life in general?	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. The amount of worries in your life?	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. The emotional support you get from:						
a.) your husband/partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6
b.) your extended family	1	2	3	4	5	6
c.) your friends or other people	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please turn the page around to continue

Continuation Part 2

1 = Very unimportant 3 = Slightly unimportant 5 = Moderately important
 2 = Moderately unimportant 4 = Slightly important 6 = Very important

17. Your relationship with your husband/partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Your ability to meet family responsibilities?	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Your baby's health?	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. The assistance with baby care and other children?	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. Time for children?	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Time for maintaining the household?	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. Time for friends/relatives?	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. Time for husband/partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. Time for yourself?	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. Your ability to feed your new baby?	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. Your husband/partner's health?	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. Your day to day life's routine?	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. Your home/apartment/place where you live?	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. Your neighborhood?	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. Your financial independence?	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. Your ability to meet financial obligations?	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. Your access to medical care?	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. Your access to transportation?	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. Your living conditions in the home?						
a.) Your materialistic possessions	1	2	3	4	5	6
b.) Your economic or financial capacity	1	2	3	4	5	6
c.) Your overall environment/surrounding (no yelling, fights, squabbles)	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. Employment/work?						
a.) Your husband's employment	1	2	3	4	5	6
b.) Your own employment	1	2	3	4	5	6

End of Survey Part 2