

Original Research

# Prenatal Yoga as an Effort to Maintain Mental Health of Pregnant Women

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Pregnancy brings both happiness and anxiety, as well as discomfort due to physical and psychological changes. As the pregnancy progresses, the discomfort increases, one of which is caused by the enlargement of the uterus leading to back pain. Excessive anxiety can affect mental health and may trigger depression during pregnancy. Prenatal yoga is one of the efforts that can be undertaken to overcome anxiety and discomfort in pregnant women. Prenatal yoga can help mothers feel more relaxed, thereby reducing anxiety. This study aims to explore in depth the effectiveness of implementing prenatal yoga in maintaining the mental health of pregnant women in the third trimester. **Methods:** Qualitative research methods with a phenomenological approach were used. The study was conducted at PMB Bd. Endah Wiendarti, SST Madiun in January 2025. The key informants were 10 pregnant women in the third trimester who participated in prenatal yoga, and the additional informants were midwives and companions of the pregnant women. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews. Data analysis was carried out by categorizing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusions. **Results:** The results of the study show that prenatal yoga can maintain mental health, including helping mothers feel more relaxed, less anxious, and more prepared for childbirth. **Conclusions:** The conclusion of this study is that implementing prenatal yoga is beneficial in maintaining the mental health of pregnant women in the third trimester, helping them to be better prepared for childbirth. It is necessary to provide information about prenatal yoga from the beginning of pregnancy so that mothers can participate at the appropriate time to reduce discomfort in the third trimester.

**Keywords:** Yoga; mental health; pregnant people

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As the gestational age increases, the mother begins to feel complaints due to discomfort caused by physiological and psychological changes. Physical discomforts include back pain, difficulty sleeping, frequent urination, and swelling in the feet/ hands.<sup>(1)</sup> Physical discomfort in pregnant women can trigger the beginning of psychological discomfort. For example, pregnant women who experience hyperemesis gravidarum will lose their appetite, this makes the mother worry about the condition of her fetus, nutritional fulfillment, and fetal growth and development. Excessive worry can cause increased blood pressure. Providing appropriate care and assistance to pregnant women with discomfort can reduce the risk of psychological disorders.<sup>(2)</sup>

The results of previous research stated that mental health disorders start from physical changes that cause

discomfort, then develop into anxiety and worry about the growth and development of the fetus, the adequacy of fetal nutrition, readiness to face childbirth, breastfeeding, fear of miscarriage, and negative comments about pregnancy from people around.<sup>(3)</sup> Anxiety causes an unstable emotional condition, making it susceptible to depression if not treated immediately.<sup>(4)</sup>

Disturbed mental health has an impact on the health of the fetus, for example the fetus is born prematurely, has low birth weight (LBW), and the baby is born with a tendency to be emotional.<sup>(5)</sup> According to World Health Organization (WHO), mental health disorders, especially depression, occur in 10% of pregnant women and 13% of postpartum women. In fact, the incidence in developing countries is higher, namely 15.6% of pregnant women and 19.8% of postpartum women experience mental health disorders.<sup>(6)</sup>

Physical exercise that can be done by pregnant women in an effort to maintain their physical and mental health is by taking part in prenatal yoga. This is intended so that the mother is always physically and mentally healthy so that she can undergo a normal delivery process and give birth to a healthy baby.<sup>(7)</sup> Yoga is not just about doing body folding movements, but a belief in the heart that influences our thought patterns along with our desires, feelings of worry, fear and confusion that we have so that they can be controlled.<sup>(8)</sup> Yoga exercises produce relaxation that makes pregnant women feel calm so that it can reduce fear of facing the labor process.<sup>(9)</sup>

So far it is known that prenatal yoga does not have any adverse effects on the health of the mother and her fetus.<sup>(3)</sup> Pregnant women can maintain their physical and mental health by following prenatal yoga regularly and intensively.<sup>(10)</sup> Most mothers feel afraid and anxious when facing the labor process because of the pain that occurs. This is what stimulates physical and mental tension which results in stiffness in the muscles and joints. In the end, it causes anxiety, pain and other complaints related to the pregnant woman's mood.<sup>(11)</sup> Mental health disorders can increase the risk of complications during childbirth, so it is necessary to make preventive efforts through prenatal yoga to ease and prepare mothers for the pregnancy and childbirth process.<sup>(8)</sup>

This study aims to explore in depth the effectiveness of prenatal yoga on the mental health of pregnant women in the third trimester. The benefits that can be taken are an increase in the motivation of pregnant

women in the third trimester to do prenatal yoga. From the background above, the problem can be formulated as follows: How effective is prenatal yoga in maintaining the mental health of pregnant women in the third trimester?

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1 Study Design

This research is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach, namely exploring in depth the experiences of informants about the effectiveness of prenatal yoga in maintaining mental health during pregnancy. Phenomenological research aims to obtain information that is understood by informants regarding the phenomena they experience.

The research was conducted at PMB Bdn. Endah Wiendarti, SST, Madiun Regency, in January 2025. This research location was chosen because it is one of the health facilities that provides prenatal yoga services with a relatively large number of mothers participating in prenatal yoga.

### 2.2 Population

In this study, the number of key informants was 10 pregnant women in the third trimester who participated in prenatal yoga. An informant is a research subject, namely someone who provides information in a study. Meanwhile, additional informants are supporting subjects who provide information related to research needs. Additional informants in this study were midwives and companions of pregnant women.

The inclusion criteria in this study were pregnant women with a gestational age of 28–40 weeks who had participated in prenatal yoga at least twice. The exclusion criteria were pregnant women with a gestational age of less than 28 weeks and/or who had never participated in prenatal yoga.

### 2.3 Data Collection

Researchers used tools in the form of interview guidelines, assisted by writing instruments and recorders. A number of questions related to prenatal yoga and mental health had been compiled by researchers as a reference. Data collection techniques involved in-depth interviews.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

The data that had been collected was then analyzed through data categorization, data presentation,

and drawing conclusions. In the first stage, researchers gathered information on the knowledge and understanding of pregnant women about prenatal yoga, including the objectives of implementation, benefits, and the extent of the mothers' motivation to do prenatal yoga. The next step was to collect information about mental health, which included problems experienced by pregnant women, such as feelings of anxiety or stress during pregnancy, symptoms and signs of mental health problems, and efforts made to overcome these problems. From the interview results, it was analyzed whether there were changes or positive impacts felt by mothers after doing prenatal yoga.

### 2.5 Ethical Practices

The study received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee, Muhammadiyah University of Madiun, with reference no. 154/A.3-III/LPPM/2025. Before data collection, the researcher explained the objectives and methods to be carried out in the study. After that, a consent form was provided to pregnant women in TM III who were willing to become informants. The writing of names in the research results uses initials to maintain the mothers' privacy.

## 3. RESULTS

The research results are described in this chapter after the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with key informants and additional informants. The interview was conducted after the key informant did prenatal yoga exercises at PMB Bdn. Endah Wiendarti, SST. Prenatal yoga is done once a week for 60 minutes per session.

### 3.1 Informant Characteristics

The key informants were 10 pregnant women in the third trimester who participated in prenatal yoga, while the additional informants were midwives and companions for pregnant women. A midwife is someone who has a prenatal yoga service and is also competent as a prenatal yoga instructor, so she understands the concept of prenatal yoga. The mother and husband of the pregnant mother act as additional informants because they know the condition of the pregnant mother at home, so they can provide the additional information needed. The characteristics of the informants are described in the Table 1.

**Table 1.** Informant Characteristics

Key Informant	Age(Years)	Pregnancy Age (Weeks)*
Mrs. A	24	36
Mrs. Ra	27	29
Mrs. F	26	34
Mrs. L	29	33
Mrs. Y	39	36
Mrs. Ri	30	28
Mrs. W	23	28
Mrs. Z	16	37
Mrs. P	25	37
Mrs. Lu	26	34
Additional Informants	Age(Years)	
Midwifery	58	NA
Mrs. A's mother	57	NA
Mrs. Ri's Husband	32	NA

\*Primary data

### 3.2 Knowledge and Understanding of Prenatal Yoga

The interview results stated that all pregnant women were aware of information about prenatal yoga, including the benefits obtained. Supporting informant statements include the following:

*"... I already know, miss, I regularly do yoga here every week, since my previous pregnancy I have been doing yoga here, it feels more relaxing, and my back pain has decreased, that's why now that I'm pregnant I regularly do yoga again..."* (Mrs. Y)

*"... I know, miss, because since I was 6 months pregnant, my back was aching, then the midwife recommended that I do yoga, since then the pain has reduced, so I have been doing yoga regularly for the past 2 times..."* (Mrs. Ri)

*"... yes miss, I already know. I have been doing yoga regularly every week here for 6 months until now, so I have done yoga about 10 times.... my body feels fitter, relaxed, my mind is also relaxed. After yoga, I sleep more peacefully..."* (Mrs. P)

Statement from additional informant:

*"... Yes miss, because one of the benefits of yoga is that it can reduce back pain, mothers become more relaxed, so hopefully they are ready when giving birth. Almost all pregnant women complain of back pain, so I suggest taking prenatal yoga. Alhamdulillah almost all are willing to take part because they can feel the benefits themselves..."* (Midwifery)

As many as 7 pregnant women said they got information about prenatal yoga from a midwife, 2 others got information from friends and 1 person got

information from her mother. This is in accordance with the statement from the informant as follows:

*"... I got information from the midwife, I tried to do prenatal yoga, it turned out to be good, my body felt relaxed, finally I got addicted and started doing yoga regularly..."* (Mrs. W)

*"... from Mrs. Endah. I complained of back pain, then Mrs. Endah offered me to try yoga, so I ended up doing yoga..."* (Mrs. L)

Additional informant's statement:

*"... I happened to know Mrs. Endah, I told her about my child's pregnancy who often complained of back pain, then Mrs. Endah suggested to join yoga. I told my child, it turned out she wanted to join yoga..."* (Mrs. A's mother)

### 3.3 Prenatal Yoga Reduces Physical Discomfort in Pregnant

The results of the interview showed that 8 out of 10 pregnant women in the third trimester experienced back pain, 1 person complained of swelling in the legs, and 1 person complained of pain in the groin. This is in accordance with the results of the informant interview below:

*"... since the age of 7 months of pregnancy, I have felt back pain, then I was offered to join yoga, until now I have actively joined yoga 4 times.... After joining yoga, the pain has reduced, so if the pain recurs at home, I can practice it myself at home, regulating my breathing to reduce the pain..."* (Mrs. A)

*"... started to feel back pain when I was 28 weeks pregnant... for 7 months it felt like my back was tight and throbbing, usually I applied a warm compress and it reduced a bit, after joining yoga I was able to practice it myself at home"* (Mrs. F)

*"...my complaint is pain here, miss (back), when it flares up (relapses) I lie down and rest, after doing yoga it feels better, the pain has reduced..."* (Mrs. Lu)

Statement from additional informant:

*"...my wife often complains of back pain lately, usually she lies down and I rub oil on her while massaging her slowly. Then she told me she wanted to join yoga, I allowed her, she said after joining yoga her pain reduced..."* (Mrs. Ri's Husband)

### 3.4 Prenatal Yoga Reduces Psychological Discomfort

The results of the interview showed that all pregnant women in TM III were happy with their pregnancy. There were 8 pregnant women who expressed happiness and anxiety about their pregnancy,

the condition of their baby, and whether the delivery would be normal or not. Apart from that, there are also those who feel more sensitive to the point of feeling like they are overthinking. This is in accordance with the results of the informant interview below:

*"... yes, miss, since I was pregnant, I often feel like I'm overthinking, wondering if my baby is lacking nutrition, if he's stressed, if he's like this or that, so my mind is all over the place... After joining this yoga, I am calmer, more relaxed, and I know what to do when I have bad thoughts because during yoga we are given positive affirmations, so when negative thoughts arise we balance them with positive thoughts"* (Mrs. Ra)

*"...now I am increasingly anxious about giving birth, afraid that something will happen, that I can't have a normal birth, especially if I have to have an operation, I'm afraid... After doing yoga, I felt calmer, confident that I could have a normal birth. Yoga is an effort, the results are still left to God, sis. What is important is that we have tried our best..."* (Mrs. Z)

*"Sometimes I feel sensitive, suddenly I want to cry but I don't know why. Then she got angry with her husband, until her husband was confused as to why he suddenly got angry for no reason. After realizing it, I was ashamed of myself, confused about why I was so angry. Since joining yoga, I am rarely sad, rarely angry without reason because my body and mind are more productive, negative thoughts have also decreased a lot, I think more about what is good for the baby..."* (Mrs. F)

## 4. DISCUSSION

Based on the characteristics of the informants, it is known that the average age range of key informants is in the productive age, namely 23-30 years, namely 8 people with a gestational age of 28-37 weeks. Age 20 to 35 years is considered the safest age for a woman to get pregnant, give birth and breastfeed. At this age, a woman is said to be ready both anatomically, physiologically and psychologically. Additional informants are people closest to the mother who provide support for the mother's pregnancy. The active role of support from a companion is very helpful for mothers in going through the pregnancy process. Companions are expected to be sensitive to the mother's condition so that they are able to provide support according to needs, especially in dealing with the discomfort felt by the mother.<sup>(12)</sup>

Based on the results of the data analysis, several categories were found, including: knowledge and understanding of pregnant women about prenatal yoga,

discomfort felt by pregnant women, knowledge and understanding of pregnant women about mental health felt by pregnant women, and efforts made to overcome the problems experienced. The results of the data analysis are described as follows:

#### ***Knowledge and understanding of prenatal yoga***

The interview results showed that all pregnant women who participated in yoga knew and felt the benefits of participating in prenatal yoga. Everyone says that yoga can reduce physical complaints such as back pain. This is in accordance with the theory that prenatal yoga has a positive impact on health both physically and psychologically. This is supported by the results of statistical tests which show that there is a significant influence on the intensity of back pain in pregnant women before and after doing prenatal yoga.<sup>(13)</sup>

Most pregnant women get information about prenatal yoga from midwives. This statement is in accordance with the duties of midwives as health workers, including providing promotive and preventive services to pregnant women. Providing health information can change a person's health behavior, one of which is through health promotion.<sup>(14)</sup>

#### ***Prenatal Yoga Reduces Physical Discomfort in Pregnant***

The informant's statement regarding physical complaints is in accordance with the purpose of prenatal yoga, namely maintaining the physical and mental health of pregnant women and the development of their fetuses. Physical discomforts including back pain, insomnia, frequent urination, and swelling in the feet/ hands can be reduced by doing prenatal yoga. By doing yoga movements you can stretch your muscles and improve blood circulation so that your body becomes more relaxed.<sup>(7)</sup>

The results of this study are in accordance with the statement by Ariyanti et al. who stated that reducing physical discomfort in pregnant women is one of the benefits of prenatal yoga. Pregnant women experience physical discomfort such as back pain, cramps and swollen feet. Prenatal yoga is believed to be able to reduce physical complaints.<sup>(1)</sup> Previous research found that the benefits of prenatal yoga include reducing physical complaints in pregnant women.<sup>(15,16)</sup>

#### ***Prenatal Yoga Reduces Psychological Discomfort***

From the results of interviews with informants, it can be seen that prenatal yoga is effective in maintaining

the mental health of pregnant women. This is proven by the fact that several emotional disturbances that arise can be controlled after following prenatal yoga. This is in accordance with the aim of prenatal yoga, namely to maintain the physical and psychological condition of pregnant women so that they remain stable during the pregnancy process.<sup>(17-19)</sup> One alternative to maintaining the mental health of pregnant women is to do prenatal yoga.<sup>(20)</sup>

The disturbed mental health of pregnant women begins with physical changes that cause discomfort, then develops into anxiety and worry about things that will happen.<sup>(21)</sup> When the mother is anxious, the body will produce stress hormones (cortisol) which causes narrowing of the blood vessels. This can interfere with the flow of blood and oxygen from the mother to the fetus.<sup>(22)</sup> The movements done during yoga can improve blood flow and reduce cortisol levels, thereby reducing stress and anxiety. The results of this study are in line with research by Lestari and Friscila, which states that prenatal yoga is very effective in maintaining mental health in pregnant women.<sup>(3)</sup> Another study by Ariyanti et al. also concluded that pregnant women's perceptions of the benefits of prenatal yoga include reducing physical complaints, reducing anxiety, and increasing readiness for childbirth.<sup>(1)</sup>

#### ***Study Limitations***

The number of informants in this study was only 10 due to time constraints and the number of pregnant women in TM III who did prenatal yoga at PMB Bdn. Endah Wiendarti, SST. It is expected that researchers who want to conduct similar research can take a larger number of informants.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The conclusion of the results of this study is that the implementation of prenatal yoga at PMB Bdn. Endah Wiendarti, SST, Madiun Regency is useful in maintaining the mental health of pregnant women in the third trimester so that they are better prepared to face childbirth. The implementation of prenatal yoga needs to be improved so that it can provide both physical and psychological comfort to pregnant women. Thus, the research results are in accordance with the objective, namely to maintain the mental health of pregnant women in the third trimester, one of which can be done through the implementation of prenatal yoga.

## Ethical Approval

The study received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee, Muhammadiyah University of Madiun with reference no. 154/A.3-III/LPPM/2025.

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## Competing Interests

All the authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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## Underlying Data

Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on request.

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