

**Mini Review**

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Trending Activity Courses: Meeting Today's College Students' Interests and Needs

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***Corresponding author:** Judy K Bloomquist, Department of Health and Kinesiology, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, USA.**Received Date:** June 24, 2021**Published Date:** July 06, 2021**Abstract**

Background: College students enroll in activity courses such as Pilates or yoga with the idea that it is easy and successful completion will take very little effort. As the course progresses, students' perceptions begin to change. They begin to realize that there are significant mental and fitness benefits to performing Pilates/yoga exercises on a regular basis. Methods and Measures: College students (N=62) [44% Females (n=28) and 54% Males (n=34)] were surveyed. The undergraduate sample consisted of 22% freshmen, 30% sophomores, 24% juniors, and 24% seniors. A convenience sample was collected from participants who were enrolled in a physical activity course of some nature (Aquatics, Rhythmic Activities, Mat Pilates, Intramurals and Team Sports). Student participants completed a 17-item survey. Some items were designed to obtain information regarding difficulty performing Pilates/yoga, developing balance and flexibility. Other items focused on determining if yoga/Pilates were considered relaxing and meditative. The final item was designed to obtain perceptions regarding beliefs of appropriate audience and fitness levels for yoga/Pilates participation and if the participants were familiar with Power Yoga and PiYo as alternative forms of Pilates/yoga. Chi-square analysis was performed to determine if there was a significant difference between observed and expected frequencies for female and male respondents. Results: Chi-square analysis revealed the following observed and [expected] frequencies for which students identified knowing the difference between Pilates and yoga. Female students reporting knowing the difference: 26[19.4], female students reporting not knowing the difference: 28[8.6]; male students reporting knowing the difference: 17[23.6], male students reporting not knowing the difference: 17[10.4], $X^2(61) = 13.269, p < .001$. Chi-square analysis also revealed the following observed[expected] frequencies for students' knowledge of what PiYo is. Female students reporting knowing what PiYo is: 9[5.4], female students reporting not knowing what PiYo is: 19[22.6]; male students reporting knowing what PiYo is: 3[6.6], male students reporting not knowing what PiYo is: 31[27.4], $X^2(61) = 5.349, p < .05$. Conclusion: This study found significant gender differences in college students' knowledge and understanding of Pilates and yoga. Understanding students' knowledge and what they value in an activity class may help determine future course offerings, or additional teaching material options to the traditional Pilates and yoga classes currently being offered to accommodate interest and need of college students. As instructors of Pilates or yoga it is vital to stay current with the new forms of exercise options available that we use within our course offerings and teaching style. Faculty that keep abreast of the current trends in the fitness industry may be more successful in meeting the interests and needs of today's college students.

Keywords: Pilates; Yoga; PiYo; Power Yoga**Introduction**

This research was designed to examine perceptions of traditional college students and their knowledge of yoga and Pilates. College students (N=62) [44% females (n=28) and 54% males (n=34)] were surveyed. A convenience sample was collected from participants who were enrolled in a college physical activity course of some nature. Students often enroll in activity courses with the idea that it is easy and successful completion will take very little

effort. As the course progresses through the semester, students' perceptions appear to change. They begin to realize there are significant mental and fitness benefits to performing Pilates/yoga exercises on a regular basis. The undergraduate sample consisted of 22% freshmen, 30% sophomore, 24% juniors, and 24% seniors. Student participants completed a 17-item survey. Some survey items were designed to obtain information regarding difficulty

performing yoga/Pilates, developing balance, and flexibility. Other items focused on determining if yoga/Pilates were relaxing and meditative. The final item was designed to obtain perceptions regarding beliefs of appropriate audience and fitness levels for yoga/Pilates participation and if the participants were familiar with Power Yoga or PiYo (Pi=Pilates and Yo=yoga) as alternate forms of yoga/Pilates. Of the 62 students surveyed, 15 of them were currently enrolled in Beginning Mat Pilates and 100% of them could identify the difference between Pilates and yoga; whereas only 50% of students not enrolled in Beginning Mat Pilates class could identify the difference between Pilates and yoga.

Pilates and yoga are low impact workouts that focus on overall health. Yoga and Pilates share many qualities and benefits. Many individuals see them as complimentary practices and choose to do both [1]. The six principles of Pilates are concentration, control, centering, fluidity, precision and breathing, traditional yoga also shares many of these concepts. Pilates and yoga both condition the mind and body to work together so they can be considered multi-tasking exercises. Multiple muscle groups are engaged to perform each exercise while maintaining balance and flexibility [2]. Previous researchers evaluated perceived benefits of yoga for youth and high school students. Despite its growth and popularity, little is known about the use of yoga among youth. A Health and Wellness Program was developed in New York City using yoga practices to increase physical conditioning, improve academic performance, and reduce stress. In general, increased balance, strength, and flexibility were mentioned repeatedly among all participants, even the non-athletes [3].

Although Pilates and yoga are similar, college students regularly participating in these activities may be interested in which offers more benefits. In a recent study on engagement in functional movement and individual health level, researchers compared three groups (control, Pilates, and yoga) to determine which offered the greatest improvements in functional movement. The Pilates group showed more gains in energy, well-being, and general health compared to the yoga and control group [4]. One positive aspect of Pilates and yoga is that they can both be modified to cater to the fitness level of the participants. In this study, 100% of the students surveyed who were enrolled in Beginning Mat Pilates reported that Pilates is appropriate for people of all fitness levels, whereas only 67.6% of students surveyed that were not enrolled in Beginning Mat Pilates class believed that Pilates is for people of all fitness levels. A major benefit of both Pilates and yoga is that the exercises being taught can be modified to meet the needs of all fitness levels and ages [2].

Both yoga and Pilates require mental focus which can help reduce stress. Both activities can also be tailored to different fitness levels. Evidence suggests that Pilates may be beneficial for those with respiratory conditions and back pain [5]. According to Joseph H. Pilates, performing Pilates based exercises are beneficial to anyone that has suffered from acute or chronic injuries [2].

There are many new forms of yoga and Pilates evolving every day to accommodate the new-found interest in these ancient styles of exercise. Some of the new formats incorporate dynamic movement and cardiovascular movement to reach the goal of whole-body workout [5].

According to the students enrolled in the Beginning Pilates class, some of the direct perceived benefits as a result of Pilates/yoga participation include increased balance, flexibility and muscle mass. Both Pilates and yoga workout programs address four out of the five components of fitness: muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility and body composition. The one component not being met performing traditional mat Pilates or yoga is cardiovascular endurance [2]. Nine of the students enrolled in Beginning Mat Pilates participated in a class assignment to determine if traditional Pilates exercise would elevate the heart to target range for cardiovascular benefits. Target heart rate was calculated using the Karvonen formula ([6]. All students performed a variety of 1-minute exercises followed by a heart rate (HR) check and recording. The seven exercises included jumping jacks, stability ball push-ups, the "100 pumps", superman pose, stability ball helicopter twists, speed skater, and stability ball squats. During six of the seven exercises, 100% of the students did NOT achieve their target HR. During stability ball squats, eight out of nine of the students did NOT achieve their target HR. This evidence suggests that participating in standard Pilates does not elevate heart rate to target heart range and supplemental aerobic exercises may need to be added to achieve whole-body workout.

Two modified methods of Pilates and yoga are PiYo and power yoga. They both utilize the traditional poses, but with a dynamic or increased intensity level to help incorporate the cardiovascular component of a workout. In this research, fewer than 11.8% of the students surveyed not enrolled in Beginning Mat Pilates class who knew what PiYO was compared to 40% of students currently enrolled in Beginning Mat Pilates class knew what PiYO was. PiYo is a total body fitness workout that combines the strength training elements of Pilates and the body lengthening stretching elements of yoga in a high energy format [7]. PiYo, unlike most yoga and Pilates classes, is aerobic in nature. Poses performed are dynamic and designed to increase heart rate and blood flow without the use of weights and impact on the body. Like traditional yoga and Pilates, PiYo is also appropriate for people of all ages and body types. There are varied levels of difficulty and intensity with each pose or exercise that offer modifications to follow for beginners until comfortable progressing at their own pace. PiYo is inclusive and will challenge a person at any level no matter how old or young they are [8]. Power yoga is a fast-paced style of yoga that focuses on building strength and endurance while increasing flexibility. Power yoga is more dynamic and provides a cardiovascular element that can raise and sustain one's heart rate, compared to traditional meditative forms of yoga [9]. The term power yoga is used to describe a vigorous approach to "flow" style yoga. It is fitness oriented rather

than meditative. It uses different intensity levels that are intended to burn calories and help maintain fitness health in addition to the known benefits of yoga such as stress reduction, improved posture and mind-body control [10]. Only 25.8% of students surveyed knew what power yoga was. In conclusion, the purpose of this research was to examine and evaluate college students' perception of benefits gained from participating in Pilates and yoga. Understanding college students' knowledge and what they value in an activity class may help determine future course offerings or add additional teaching material options to the traditional Pilates and yoga classes currently being offered to accommodate interest and need of the students. As instructors of Pilates or yoga, it is vital to stay current with the new forms of exercise options available that we use and teach our students.

Acknowledgement

None.

Conflict of Interests

No conflict of interests.

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