

Yoga and Workplace Well-Being: A Holistic Approach to Stress Reduction

Park Ji-Won

Department of Environmental Sciences, Northbridge University, Canada

Received: 06/02/2026

Accepted: 14/06/2026

Published: 23/08/2026

Abstract

Workplace stress, prolonged sitting, musculoskeletal discomfort, sleep problems, and psychological strain can negatively affect employee well-being and organizational functioning. Yoga is a multidimensional mind-body practice that can combine physical postures, breathing, relaxation, and mindful attention, making it potentially relevant to occupational health. This paper examines yoga and workplace well-being from a holistic perspective, focusing on stress reduction, physical health, musculoskeletal comfort, mental well-being, sleep, mindfulness, work-life balance, organizational implementation, and safe practice. A 2025 systematic review and meta-analysis of desk-based workers included 15 studies, with 11 studies and 1,123 participants contributing to quantitative analyses. Compared with passive controls, yoga was associated with improvements in psychological and physical well-being, perceived stress, sleep quality, and musculoskeletal discomfort; however, the authors emphasized heterogeneity and risk of bias and described the evidence as preliminary. An earlier meta-analysis of workplace yoga found a moderate reduction in perceived stress, with an overall effect size of -0.67 , while also noting concerns about study bias. The paper argues that yoga can be a useful complementary workplace-wellness intervention, but it should accompany broader organizational measures addressing workload, work design, ergonomics, and employee support.

Keywords

Yoga; Workplace Well-Being; Occupational Stress; Stress Reduction; Employee Health; Desk-Based Workers; Mindfulness; Work-Life Balance; Workplace Wellness

Introduction

Workplace well-being is influenced by workload, job demands, organizational culture, working hours, physical environment, social relationships, and opportunities for recovery. Desk-based employment can add prolonged sitting and repetitive postures, which may contribute to physical discomfort as well as mental strain.

Yoga has attracted interest as a workplace wellness intervention because it combines physical movement with breathing, relaxation, and attention. It can be delivered in

offices, online, community settings, or at home and can be adapted to different levels of physical ability.

A 2025 systematic review and meta-analysis specifically examining desk-based workers included 15 studies and found improvements in psychological and physical well-being, perceived stress, sleep quality, and musculoskeletal discomfort when yoga was compared with passive controls. [\[cite turn0search0\]](#)

Earlier systematic-review evidence also supports a role for workplace yoga in reducing perceived stress. One meta-analysis included six workplace trials involving 266 yoga participants and 221 controls and reported an overall effect size of -0.67 in favour of yoga, while identifying some concerns about risk of bias. [\[cite turn0search4 turn0search10\]](#)

This paper examines nine dimensions of yoga and workplace well-being: occupational stress, physical health, musculoskeletal comfort, mental well-being, sleep, mindfulness, work-life balance, implementation, and safety.

1. Workplace Stress and the Need for Holistic Interventions

Workplace stress can arise from excessive workload, time pressure, low autonomy, interpersonal difficulties, job insecurity, and inadequate recovery. Persistent stress may affect psychological well-being, sleep, physical health, and work functioning.

A holistic intervention considers both physical and psychological dimensions rather than addressing stress through a single technique. Yoga can combine movement, breathing, relaxation, and mindful attention within one structured activity.

A systematic review of 35 studies examining yoga and consequences of work stress found research across behavioural, physical, and psychological outcomes and across multiple yoga traditions. [\[cite turn0search2\]](#)

2. Yoga and Occupational Stress Reduction

Yoga may help employees manage perceived stress by providing a scheduled opportunity for physical movement, breathing, relaxation, and mental recovery.

The workplace yoga meta-analysis reported a moderate overall effect favouring yoga for perceived stress reduction. [\[cite turn0search4\]](#) More recent evidence among desk-based workers also found a large improvement in perceived stress compared with passive controls, although the overall evidence was considered preliminary because of heterogeneity and risk of bias. [\[cite turn0search0\]](#)

These findings support yoga as a complementary stress-management strategy rather than evidence that yoga can eliminate workplace stressors.

3. Physical Health and Musculoskeletal Well-Being

Desk-based workers may experience prolonged sitting, neck and shoulder tension, back discomfort, and reduced movement. Yoga can incorporate stretching, controlled movement, postural awareness, balance, and muscular engagement.

The 2025 review found improvements in physical well-being and musculoskeletal discomfort among desk-based workers compared with passive controls. It also found benefit when yoga was used alongside conventional therapies for musculoskeletal discomfort. □cite□turn0search0□

Workplace yoga should complement ergonomic improvements, regular movement breaks, appropriate workstation design, and clinical care when required.

4. Psychological Well-Being and Emotional Health

Employee well-being includes psychological as well as physical health. Yoga may support relaxation, emotional awareness, self-regulation, and general psychological well-being.

The 2025 desk-worker meta-analysis found improvements in psychological well-being compared with both passive and active controls, although the number of studies was limited. □cite□turn0search0□

Workplace yoga should not be presented as a treatment for clinical mental-health disorders. Employees with significant symptoms should have access to qualified psychological and medical support.

5. Yoga, Sleep, and Employee Recovery

Sleep is an important part of occupational recovery. Stress and long working hours can interfere with sleep, while inadequate sleep can increase fatigue and reduce concentration.

The 2025 systematic review found improved sleep quality among desk-based workers compared with passive controls. □cite□turn0search0□ A yoga program may support recovery by encouraging relaxation and helping employees establish healthier routines.

However, workplace well-being programs should also consider workload, working hours, shift schedules, and organizational practices that influence sleep.

6. Mindfulness, Self-Awareness, and Work Performance

Mindfulness can help employees become more aware of bodily tension, emotional reactions, attention, and stress signals. Yoga may provide a practical setting for developing this awareness through breathing, movement, and focused attention.

Greater self-awareness may help employees recognize when they need a short recovery period or healthier response to stress. However, mindfulness should not be used to place responsibility for organizational stress entirely on individual employees.

Workplace programs are most appropriate when individual wellness initiatives are combined with organizational improvements.

7. Work-Life Balance and Employee Resilience

Work-life balance involves managing occupational responsibilities alongside family, social, personal, and recovery needs. Regular yoga practice may create structured personal time and support physical and psychological recovery.

Yoga may also contribute to resilience by encouraging regular physical activity, relaxation, and self-regulation. However, resilience should not be interpreted as an employee's obligation to tolerate unhealthy working conditions.

Organizations can support well-being through reasonable workloads, flexible arrangements, adequate breaks, supportive leadership, and access to wellness resources.

8. Designing Effective Workplace Yoga Programs

Workplace yoga can be delivered through short sessions during working hours, longer scheduled classes, online sessions, or hybrid programs. The 2025 review included both online and in-person interventions, showing that different delivery formats are feasible.

□cite□turn0search0□

Effective programs should consider employee preferences, physical ability, accessibility, session length, frequency, instructor qualifications, privacy, and voluntary participation. Programs should also be evaluated using meaningful outcomes such as perceived stress, well-being, sleep, musculoskeletal discomfort, and participation.

Organizational support is important because voluntary wellness programs are unlikely to compensate for excessive workload or unsafe working conditions.

9. Safety, Inclusion, and Responsible Workplace Practice

Yoga is generally suitable for many people when appropriately modified, but difficult postures can cause injury. Workplace programs should offer beginner-friendly options and avoid pressuring employees to perform movements beyond their abilities.

Programs should be inclusive of different ages, fitness levels, disabilities, cultural backgrounds, and health circumstances. Employees should be free to participate without stigma or employment consequences.

The strongest workplace approach combines yoga with ergonomic measures, mental-health support, healthy work design, appropriate breaks, and evidence-based occupational-health practices.

Illustration

The following illustration presents yoga as a holistic workplace-wellness approach connecting stress reduction, physical health, mindfulness, recovery, and work-life balance.



Figure 1. Yoga and workplace well-being.

Conclusion

Yoga can contribute to workplace well-being by addressing several interconnected dimensions of occupational health. Its combination of physical movement, breathing, relaxation, and mindful attention makes it particularly relevant to stress management and the needs of desk-based workers.

Current evidence indicates improvements in psychological and physical well-being, perceived stress, sleep quality, and musculoskeletal discomfort in some workplace populations. □cite□turn0search0□turn0search4□ However, the evidence remains limited by small numbers of studies, heterogeneity, and risk of bias.

Yoga should therefore be implemented as a complementary workplace-wellness intervention rather than as a substitute for organizational change. The most effective

approach combines accessible yoga with healthy work design, ergonomic support, reasonable workloads, recovery opportunities, and professional health services when required.

References

Wadhen, V., Pavey, L., & Vyas, N. S. (2025). Exploring the effectiveness of yoga interventions in improving the well-being and productivity of desk-based workers: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Applied Psychology*, 74(6), e70040.

Valencia, C., et al. (2020). Role of yoga in managing the consequences of work stress: A systematic review. *Health Promotion International*, 38(3), daac038.

Proper, K. I., et al. (2021). Effectiveness of workplace yoga interventions to reduce perceived stress in employees: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health*.

Mandlik, G. V., et al. (2024). Effect of a single session of yoga and meditation on stress reactivity: A systematic review. *Stress and Health*.

Arya, R. G., Srivastava, D., Divya, B. R., Madhu, & Bhargav, H. (2025). A systematic review of yoga interventions on the mental health of nursing professionals and students. *International Journal of Yoga*, 18(1), 13–26.

Field, T. (2016). Yoga research review. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*, 24, 145–161.

Ross, A., & Thomas, S. (2010). The health benefits of yoga and exercise: A review of comparison studies. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 16(1), 3–12.