



Yoga and Face Acupressure as a New Breakthrough to Prevent Baby Blues in the Postpartum Period: Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Background: The postpartum period is a critical phase marked by physical, emotional, and psychological changes in mothers. Non-pharmacological interventions such as yoga and facial acupressure are increasingly being researched as methods to improve postpartum maternal comfort.

Objective: To assess perceptions and acceptance of the effects of yoga and facial acupressure interventions in preventing baby blues and postpartum depression in Tabanan Regency.

Methods: This qualitative study, using thematic analysis, involved midwives, complementary obstetrics experts, provincial and district administrators of the Indonesian Midwives Association, and 15 postpartum mothers up to the fourth week of pregnancy at the Tabanan III Community Health Center. The study was conducted from June to September 2025, and used an in-depth interview guide as the instrument.

Results: Four main themes emerged from the qualitative analysis: self-happiness, self-acceptance, acceptance, and relaxation. Of the 15 postpartum mothers, 12 reported no difficulties practicing yoga at home, felt supported by their husbands or families, and practiced yoga regularly. Ten reported no symptoms suggestive of baby blues or postpartum depression. Nearly all respondents reported feeling happy and comfortable doing yoga and facial acupressure at home during the postpartum period.

Conclusion: The combination of yoga and facial acupressure is acceptable and recommended for improving maternal comfort during the postpartum period.

Keywords: postpartum yoga, facial acupressure, comfort, postpartum period, complementary therapy



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INTRODUCTION

The postpartum period is the period following labor and delivery of the baby and placenta, lasting up to six weeks (42 days). This period is critical because of the high incidence of morbidity and mortality among women and neonates due to complications during pregnancy and delivery. Postnatal care is a fundamental component of the continuum of maternal, newborn, and child care services, and key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on reproductive, maternal, and child health, including the targets to reduce maternal mortality and end preventable newborn deaths (World Health Organisation, 2022).

A positive postnatal experience is a highly desirable situation where women, newborns, partners, parents, caregivers, and families receive ongoing information, support, and a sense of security from dedicated health workers. This occurs within a responsive, well-resourced health system that adapts to the needs of mothers and babies while respecting their cultural backgrounds. However, postnatal care for mothers and newborns is often low in coverage and quality, resulting in missed opportunities to improve well-being and provide compassionate care to newborns (Brealey et al., 2010; Diorella M. Lopez-Gonzalez & Kopparapu., 2022; Kripa Balaram. & Marwaha., 2023; Levis et al., 2020; Nurbaeti et al., 2019; Rahyani., Gusti Made Ayu Agung Budhi, et al., 2024; Sharma, 2022; Sunarsih & Astuti, 2021; Yu et al., 2023). Newborn mortality is the leading cause of death among women, children, and adolescents, yet it receives the least attention and investment in care (Kegiatan et al., 2018; Ria et al., 2018; World Health Organisation, 2022).

The duration of postpartum care for women in postpartum health facilities varies significantly across countries, and the majority of mothers and newborns do not receive adequate postnatal care within the first 24 hours after birth. Median coverage of routine postnatal care within two days of delivery for women (71%) and newborns (64%) lags behind global targets for 2025. Poor-quality care contributes to 61% of neonatal deaths and half of maternal deaths (Bangun, 2019; Dewi & Suyoga Hindhuyana, 2021; Mousa et al., 2023; Munk-Olsen et al., 2022; Rahyani., Made, et al., 2024; WHO et al., 2018; Zuhrotunida, 2020).

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The postpartum period is a time of significant physiological and psychosocial transition for women. Hormonal changes, physical exhaustion, and emotional stress often lead to discomfort, sleep disturbances, anxiety, and the risk of postpartum depression. Furthermore, the need for a holistic and non-invasive approach to supporting maternal recovery is increasing. Psychological issues in the postnatal period, such as baby blues, can progress to postpartum depression if not properly addressed. The prevalence of postpartum depression is generally higher among women in low-income countries compared to women in countries with higher socioeconomic status (Liang et al., 2015; Prianti, A. T., & Handayani, 2020; Rahyani. et al., 2023; Say et al., 2014; Vincenzo Zanardo, Francesca Volpe, Federico de Luca, Lara Giliberti, Arturo Giustardi, Matteo Parotto, 2020; Zauderer, 2009).

Postpartum yoga has been shown to help restore pelvic floor muscles, improve posture, and reduce stress and anxiety (Rahyani. et al., 2023; Slomian et al., 2019; Urbanová et al., 2021; Yunitasari & Suryani, 2020). Meanwhile, facial acupressure is a traditional technique that stimulates acupressure points on the face, which is known to improve relaxation, blood circulation, and sleep quality (Buttner et al., 2015; Diorella M. Lopez-Gonzalez & Kopparapu., 2022; Fatmawati, 2019; Kripa Balaram. & Marwaha., 2023; Levis et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2013; Saharoy et al., 2023; Saligheh et al., 2014)

This study aims to assess perceptions and acceptance of the effects of yoga and facial acupressure interventions in preventing baby blues and postpartum depression in Tabanan Regency.

METHOD

This qualitative study, using thematic analysis. The resource persons involved were 15 postpartum mothers from day 2 to week 4 postpartum who did not experience any complications or problems during pregnancy until postpartum, and were willing to attend pregnancy classes according to the specified schedule and were trained in yoga and facial acupressure from June to September 2025. To validate the research results, triangulation was carried out through in-depth interviews, observation and documentation. This study also involved two midwives implementing maternal and child health services at the Tabanan III community health center, one expert midwife in complementary medicine, and the

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administrators of the Indonesian Midwives Association in Tabanan Regency. The midwife who served as the informant was a midwife who worked at a community health center and provided yoga and facial acupressure training for respondents in the pregnancy class. To assess respondents' compliance in carrying out yoga practices at home, midwives conducted assessments at each follow-up visit and during home visits, which were recorded on the follow-up visit form.

The research instruments used interview guidelines and observation sheets. Qualitative analysis used thematic analysis. Steps in Thematic Analysis: a) Familiarization with Data, b) Coding, c) Looking for an Initial Theme, d) Reviewing and Developing Themes, e) Defining and Naming a Theme, f) Writing Reports. The researcher has previously processed research permits, ethical approval from the Denpasar Ministry of Health Polytechnic Ethics Committee in 2025, number: DP.04.02/F.XXXII.25/767/2025. Before collecting data, the researcher asked for respondents' approval using an informed consent form. The flow of qualitative research and analysis is shown in the figure below. used an in-depth interview guide as the instrument.

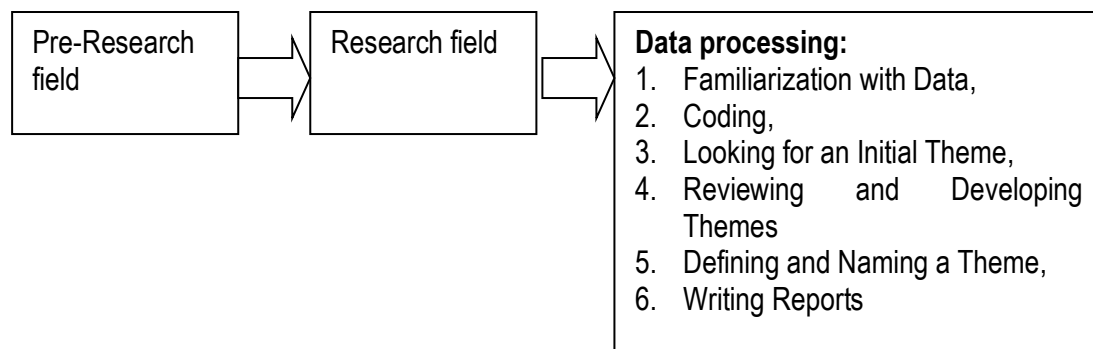


Figure 1. Qualitative research flow

Thematic analysis is a method for discovering patterns of meaning in qualitative data. In a reflective approach, this analysis aims to understand the meanings of the data, which are ultimately formed and connected to a broader research perspective. In thematic analysis, coding is for understanding how these codes interact with each other. There are two main approaches to coding: inductive, or data-driven, and deductive, or using existing theory. The thematic analysis stage begins with interviews with respondents and informants/midwives.

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The interviews are recorded and transcribed verbatim. The thematic analysis begins with coding and identifying main themes followed by compiling the analysis results.

The research sources or respondents were postpartum mothers from day 2 to week 4, who had previously attended pregnancy classes and were trained in yoga and facial acupressure. Researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 15 postpartum mothers, four midwives, and administrators from the Tabanan Regency Indonesian Midwives Association. Five questions were asked about their experiences coping with the postpartum period through yoga and facial acupressure. Questions for midwives covered strategies, obstacles, opportunities, and strengths in conducting yoga and facial acupressure training during prenatal classes. Observation sheets were used to observe the condition of postpartum mothers and the implementation of yoga and facial acupressure during the postpartum period.

RESULTS

This qualitative study also collected data on respondent characteristics, including: age, education, occupation and number of pregnancies. The age of respondents was >25 - <35 years (100%), education level was secondary (10 people/66.67%), and 5 people (33.33%), all respondents were workers, and 9 people were primigravida (60%), 6 people were multigravida (40%).

The thematic analysis of this study encompassed four main themes: (1) happiness and self-care, (2) self-acceptance and bonding with the baby, (3) sincerity in embracing motherhood, and (4) relaxation and emotional calmness. Yoga and facial acupressure provided a pleasant and happy experience for postpartum mothers, according to respondents. These results can be summarized in the following responses:

Table 1. Results obtained responds of respondent and coding

No	Responds of respondent	Initial Code
1	Yoga makes me feel like I have time for myself, blissful	Me time, inner pleasure
	Facial acupressure makes me feel pampered	Feeling pampered, treated
	Baby blues lessened after yoga	Reduced negative emotions
	Facial acupressure restored spirits	Revitalized mood, happiness
2	Feeling closer to baby after yoga	Strengthened bonding

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No	Responds of respondent	Initial Code
	Accept breastfeeding despite tiredness	Emotional acceptance
	Able to accept baby with love	Maternal bonding
	Accepting self helps accept baby	Self-compassion, attachment
3	Accept lack of sleep sincerely	Acceptance of challenges
	Accept pain with sincerity	Pain acceptance
	No longer comparing with others	Reduced comparison, self-kindness
	Gratitude after yoga	Growth mindset, gratitude
4	Body lighter, mind calmer	Physical and mental relief
	Facial acupressure gives deep relaxation	Stress relief
	Cry less easily	Improved emotional regulation
	Found peace through yoga and facial massage	Emotional stability, peace

From the results of the respondents' responses and the initial coding results, the results were obtained related to the main theme categories produced, namely 1) Happiness and self-care, 2) Self-acceptance and bonding with the baby, 3) Relaxation and emotional calmness, 4) Sincerity in embracing motherhood.

Table 2. Main theme, subtheme and description in thematic analysis

Main Theme	Subtheme	Description
1. Happiness and Self-Care	a. <i>Me-time and personal pleasure</i>	Yoga provides a personal space for mothers after childbirth.
	b. <i>Feeling pampered and emotionally fulfilled</i>	Facial acupressure provides a feeling of pampering and increases happiness.
2. Self-Acceptance and Bonding With the Baby	a. <i>Self-compassion and role acceptance</i>	The practice of yoga helps mothers accept themselves and the postpartum process.
	b. <i>Strengthened mother-baby bond</i>	Mothers feel closer and more able to love their babies fully.
3. Sincerity in Embracing Motherhood	a. <i>Acceptance of physical and emotional challenges</i>	Mothers accept pain, lack of sleep, and physical recovery as part of their role.
	b. <i>Growth in gratitude and reduced comparison</i>	Yoga helps reduce the tendency to compare themselves and increase gratitude.

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Main Theme	Subtheme	Description
4. Relaxation and Emotional Calmness	a. <i>Physical relaxation</i>	Yoga and acupressure techniques reduce physical tension.
	b. <i>Improved emotional regulation and peace</i>	Mothers feel calmer, cry less, and feel at peace.

DISCUSSION

Thematic analysis showed that yoga and facial acupressure had a significant positive impact on the emotional and psychological well-being of postpartum mothers. Participants reported that these practices helped them create a space for self-care, fostering feelings of happiness, and reducing symptoms of baby blues. Furthermore, yoga practices also played a role in increasing self-acceptance and the mother-infant bond, thereby strengthening the emotional dimension of motherhood. Mothers felt more able to accept the physical changes and challenges of postpartum with sincerity and gratitude.

First, the theme of happiness and self-care demonstrates how mothers value personal time amid the demands of caring for a newborn. Previous studies have shown that postpartum women often neglect self-care, leading to heightened risk of *baby blues* and depression (Kurnia Widya Wati et al., 2018; Rahyani., Gusti Made Ayu Agung Budhi, et al., 2024). Yoga and face acupressure provided a structured opportunity for mothers to regain joy and balance (Sulistyorini, 2020). Yoga involves a combination of mindful breathing, gentle movements, relaxation, and meditation—all of which directly help reduce stress, reduce anxiety, and stabilize mood. Studies show that postnatal yoga improves the mother's psychological well-being: relieving stress and anxiety, promoting better sleep, reducing muscle tension, and increasing energy and self-confidence. By reducing stress and anxiety, the likelihood of developing baby blues symptoms such as mood swings, unexplained crying, feelings of sadness or oversensitivity may decrease. This aligns with non-pharmacological intervention research showing that light or regular physical activity can reduce symptoms of postnatal depression (S & Widiанти, 2022).



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Second, self-acceptance and bonding with the baby emphasizes how these practices enhance maternal confidence and bonding. Similar results were found in yoga interventions that improved body image and promoted mother–infant attachment (Rahyani., Made, et al., 2024).

Third, sincerity in embracing motherhood illustrates the psychological shift from resistance to acceptance. This aligns with the concept of mindfulness in yoga, which fosters emotional resilience and acceptance of challenging experiences (Dewi & Suyoga Hindhuyana, 2021; Nurdewi Sulymbona. Suryani As'ad. et al., 2020; Susukida et al., 2020; Zuhrotunida, 2020). Labor and the postpartum period are often accompanied by fatigue, pain, and physical discomfort. Postnatal yoga and gentle movements help speed physical recovery, improve muscle tone, and reduce tension which in turn supports mental and emotional stability. Giving facial (meridian) acupoint massage to postpartum mothers has been proven to reduce fatigue and lower scores on the postpartum depression scale (EPDS) compared to controls.

Finally, relaxation and emotional calmness were consistently mentioned, with participants reporting improved sleep, reduced irritability, and decreased emotional tension. This is in line with evidence that both yoga and acupressure stimulate parasympathetic activity, reduce cortisol levels, and promote relaxation (Dewi & Suyoga Hindhuyana, 2021; Nurdewi Sulymbona. Suryani As'ad. et al., 2020; Rao et al., 2015; Susukida et al., 2020; Winarni et al., 2020; Zuhrotunida, 2020). For many postpartum mothers, caring for a baby while navigating bodily and hormonal changes can leave them feeling overwhelmed, inadequate, or lacking “me time.” Yoga provides “me time,” an opportunity for self-care, which helps them feel valued, happier, and more emotionally stable. Meanwhile, facial acupressure, especially when combined with aromatherapy or loving touch provides a sense of care and comfort, which is essential for a mother's mental health. Feeling cared for and treated with tenderness helps strengthen self-confidence and emotional well-being, and helps mothers feel more connected to themselves and their babies.

Finally, the relaxation aspect showed that yoga and facial acupressure contributed to a lighter body, a calmer mind, and improved emotional regulation, leading to a sense of peace and stability. The findings highlight that yoga and face acupressure were perceived as

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meaningful practices for psychological well-being during the postpartum period. The four themes reflect both emotional recovery and maternal role adaptation. Since baby blues is often an early phase (or “predictor”) of the onset of more severe postpartum depression if left unmanaged, reducing early symptoms through yoga/acupressure could also potentially prevent the transition to clinical depression.

CONCLUSION(S)

Overall, these findings suggest that integrating yoga and face acupressure into postpartum care may provide a holistic, culturally acceptable, and non-pharmacological strategy to prevent *baby blues* and postpartum depression. Yoga and facial acupressure have been positively received by postpartum mothers as methods to prevent baby blues. These interventions help mothers rediscover happiness, embrace their new role as mothers, and foster acceptance and relaxation.

Simple yet consistent practices have been shown to have a significant emotional impact, supporting maternal mental health during the postpartum period.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest with any party in this research.

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Ni Komang Yuni Rahyani, et all: Yoga and Face Acupressure as a New Breakthrough to Prevent Baby Blues in the Postpartum Period: Qualitative Study



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