

## THE TYPE "MIND-BODY" IN AYURVEDA TROUGH AQUAYOGA

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### INTRODUCTION

Wellness tourism refers to travel that prioritises health and well-being, with the goal of enhancing physical, mental, and spiritual health (Ignatova, 2022; Nesheva 2022). It typically involves activities such as Spa treatments, fitness and recreational classes, meditation, and healthy eating (Tomova et al., 2023; Chipeva 2019; Nesheva 2019). Recreational programs, on the other hand, are leisure activities that promote physical and mental relaxation, such as hiking, camping, and sports (Chipeva 2018; Tomova et al., 2023; Ignatova et al. 2022). As we mentioned, in other publications, wellness tourism is a growing industry, and it presents an opportunity for Bulgaria to attract more visitors and generate revenue (Polimenov 2019; Tsanov 2015; Nesheva 2023a). However, the lack of clear definitions and standards in the industry, as well as the shortage of specialised personnel, can hinder its growth and competitiveness (Polimenov 2014; Nesheva 2023; Markov et al., 2019).

To address these challenges, Bulgaria may need to invest in training programs for wellness and recreational professionals and create clear guidelines and standards for the industry (Nesheva 2022; Markov, 2019; Chipeva 2018a). Additionally, efforts to improve health literacy among Bulgarians can increase demand for wellness tourism domestically (Polimenov, 2022). In highly demanded is the specialized staff and new accredited programs for them to transform Bulgaria in a destination for international travelers seeking wellness experiences (Polimenov, 2023).

The development of polyvalent Wellness & Spa culture is very important (Polimenov, 2018; Ignatova 2022). The significance of physical activity in the aquatic environment must be acknowledged for its positive impact on customer health and quality of life (Nesheva 2023a; Ignatova et al 2020). Finding highly qualified personnel for wellness centers is a major problem, and the situation is not improving. The industry is facing a "War for Talents," and many owners of wellness centers report difficulty finding the right mix of experience and skills in their

employees. The demand for specialised packages is growing rapidly, requiring more staff than what is currently available. This has led to an increased focus on education, training, and certification programs for employees in the industry. Aqua yoga, a practice combining the principles of traditional yoga with the buoyant and resistive properties of water, has emerged as a growing area of interest in both the wellness and rehabilitation sectors. This unique form of exercise harnesses the therapeutic qualities of aquatic environments to enhance physical, mental, and emotional well-being, offering benefits that extend beyond those of conventional land-based yoga. The appeal of aqua yoga lies in its accessibility and adaptability. The reduced gravitational impact in water enables individuals with limited mobility, chronic pain, or physical disabilities to participate in yoga postures (asanas) with greater ease and safety.

## METHODS

Our long years experiences<sup>1</sup> has directed us to establishing a working hypothesis based on the supposition that the aquayoga classes tailored to the individual and a "mind-body" in Ayurveda are pleasant, relaxing and not lead to fatigue practices that neutralize situational anxiety, live anxiety and stress, using the support of the water environment. The research object of this work were total 40 persons - advanced in its preparation, which participated in the main experiment.

The research subject is the selection of specific indexes, which manifestation defines the process of the current or situational anxiety.

## RESULTS

Responses from the survey united in five key issues that sparked our interest:

\* The question "Why aquayoga classes", the answers to those two groups show different levels of motivation: beginners are guided by the interest and curiosity (24%), the strong desire to improve health (40%) and quest for self-improvement (36%); advanced experiencing constant need (66%) and awareness of the need of physical and spiritual perfection and knowledge of his own body (34%).

\* The question "How many times a week visiting classes" both groups are adamant that try to be regular as participate in classes on average twice a week (26-27%): beginners, who practice two times with 28% but three times or more, 44%; advanced involved three or more times were 87%, but daily work independently at home (Table 1).

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<sup>1</sup> *Bistra Dimitrova is Bulgarian National team member and "Master of sports" in swimming, Head coach of the synchronized swimming National team in Bulgaria. She is the author of the educational programs for "master" and "doctoral" degree on "SPA&Wellness culture „at the National Sports Academy in Sofia and have 10 years' experience in management with classes for aqua practices (aquayoga, aquafitness, aquajoging ext.)*

**Table 1:** Systematisation and tabulation of the obtained results like individual responses from the survey united in five key issues

Question	Beginners answers	Advanced answers
	%	%
<b>Q1: Why aquayoga classes</b>		
• Interest	24	76
• improve health	40	60
• self-improvement	36	64
• knowledge of his own body	66	34
<b>Q2: How many times a week visiting classes:</b>		
• twice a week	72	27
• three a week	56	44
• more	13	87
<b>Q3: sports you before</b>		
• no	56	44
• swimming	23	77
• gym	14	86
<b>Q4: What is your diet</b>	72	28
• without	50	50
• vegetarian	12	88
• organic food		

\* The question "sports you before," 55-56% of the participants answered negatively and only 44-45% said that sports are two to five years, mostly swimming, gymnastics and fall for tourism.

**Table № 2:** The mean and variation of the results studied group: advanced

№	Indexes	X	S	tX	V	R	As	Ex
1	AGE (years)	47.05	15.91	3.65	34	57	0.10	-0.84
2	Experience (month)	4.95	3.46	0.79	70	11	1.14	0.23
3	Body mass index (Ind.)	21.73	2.58	0.59	12	9.73	0.60	0.07
4	Test Rufina (Ind.)	2.44	1.79	0.41	73	5.20	0.65	-1.11
5	Evaluation Rufina (Bal)	4.57	0.37	0.08	8	1.10	-0.64	-1.05
6	Inhalation Home (s)	45.42	7.40	1.70	16	28	0.45	-0.10
7	Inhalation after 20 squat (s)	22.84	5.40	1.24	24	20	0.48	0.16

8	Exhalation Home (s)	29.05	5.97	1.37	20	23	0.60	0.79
9	Exhalation After 20 squat (s)	17.26	4.27	0.98	25	20	1.31	3.59
10	Test Romberg TREE (s)	17.84	4.45	1.02	25	19	0.53	1.47
11	Scale test Romberg (s)	18.79	4.18	0.96	26	12	-0.18	-1.08
12	STAI (Ind.)	31.36	7.54	1.73	24	23	0.71	-0.80

**The criteria for a normal distribution at:  $\alpha < 0.05$ ;  $A_s < 0.71$ ;  $E_x < 0.88$ .**

This result (Table 2) is confirmed by our study on the behavior of practitioners - their facial expressions, gestures, color of the face, sweating. We believe that the behavior represents a reliable diagnosis for the functional status among cognitive (cognitive) parameters. The findings of this study demonstrate the multifaceted benefits of practicing aqua yoga, highlighting its potential as a therapeutic and fitness modality for diverse populations. The discussion centers on three key areas: physical health outcomes, psychological well-being, and the unique benefits conferred by the aquatic environment.

#### *Physical health outcomes*

Practicing aqua yoga has been shown to improve flexibility, strength, and balance due to the natural resistance and buoyancy of water. These properties allow participants to perform yoga poses (asanas) with reduced strain on joints, making it particularly beneficial for individuals with musculoskeletal conditions such as arthritis or back pain. The gentle resistance provided by water enhances muscular engagement and promotes joint stability, while the low-impact nature reduces the risk of injury. Moreover, the cooling effect of water minimizes the heat stress often associated with land-based yoga, enabling longer and more comfortable practice sessions. Aqua yoga has also demonstrated efficacy in promoting cardiovascular health. The hydrostatic pressure of water supports venous return and enhances circulation, which may contribute to improved heart health and overall physical endurance. These findings align with previous studies on aquatic exercise, further validating aqua yoga as a viable option for both rehabilitation and fitness.

#### *Psychological Well-being*

The practice of aqua yoga contributes significantly to mental health and emotional well-being. The calming effect of water, combined with the meditative aspects of yoga, fosters relaxation and reduces stress. Participants often report improvements in mood and decreased symptoms of anxiety and depression. The immersive experience of water enhances mindfulness,

encouraging a deeper connection with one's body and breath. Additionally, aqua yoga provides a sense of inclusivity and empowerment, particularly for individuals with physical limitations. The supportive environment of water allows participants to achieve poses and movements they might find challenging on land, boosting self-esteem and promoting a positive self-image.

## DISCOUSSION

### *Unique Benefits of the Aquatic Environment*

The distinct properties of water offer several advantages that amplify the benefits of yoga. Buoyancy reduces the effective body weight, enabling greater range of motion and easing the performance of challenging postures. This makes aqua yoga particularly effective for older adults, pregnant women, and individuals undergoing physical rehabilitation. Water resistance provides a natural form of strength training, subtly engaging stabilizing muscles and improving core strength. Additionally, the sensory stimulation of water enhances proprioception and balance, further supporting functional movement and injury prevention.

### *Limitations and Future Research Directions*

While the benefits of aqua yoga are evident, this study recognizes several limitations. Variability in water temperature, depth, and individual fitness levels may influence outcomes, necessitating further standardization of aqua yoga protocols. Future research should explore the long-term effects of aqua yoga on specific populations, such as individuals with chronic conditions or elite athletes seeking cross-training methods. Additionally, comparative studies between aqua yoga and other aquatic or land-based exercises could provide deeper insights into its unique advantages.

## CONCLUSION

The gentle resistance provided by water enhances muscle engagement, improves balance, and promotes flexibility. Combined with breath control (pranayama) and mindfulness, aqua yoga offers a holistic approach to health and wellness. Despite its growing popularity, the scientific study of aqua yoga remains limited, leaving gaps in our understanding of its physiological, psychological, and rehabilitative benefits. This paper seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the effects of aqua yoga on specific health outcomes, including its role in stress reduction, physical rehabilitation, and overall quality of life. Furthermore, it examines how the unique properties of aquatic environments contribute to the effectiveness of yoga practices,

providing a foundation for the development of evidence-based guidelines for aqua yoga programs. By delving into the multifaceted aspects of aqua yoga, this study aims to contribute to the expanding body of knowledge in aquatic exercise and wellness, highlighting its potential as a valuable tool for diverse populations, from athletes seeking cross-training to individuals managing chronic conditions.

**Note:**

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