



THE ROLE OF PILATE EXERCISES ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING OF POSTPARTUM WOMEN

Abhishta Sehdev*

Department of Physiotherapy, ManavRachna International Institute of Research and Studies, Faridabad (Haryana)

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ABSTRACT

Background: Postpartum period is the transition period after delivery during which the body recuperates and returns back to the pre-pregnancy state. The postpartum period is marked by physical and hormonal changes which leads to physical and mental fatigue, sleep deprivation, anxiety, mood swings and in some cases even to postpartum depression. Postpartum depression is not only detrimental to maternal health, it also adversely affects the wellbeing of the child. There are many researches which proves the beneficial effects of exercises during postpartum period. This study aims at investigating the benefits of Pilate exercise on psychological wellbeing of postpartum women.

Methodology: Various articles on Google scholar and PubMed were reviewed with keywords being “postpartum women” and “Pilate”.

Results & Conclusion: Four studies were found on effects of Pilate training in postpartum women. Pilate exercise program was instrumental in reducing physical and mental fatigue, sleep deprivation and depression.

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INTRODUCTION

Postpartum period can be defined as the transition period after delivery during which the body recuperates and returns back to pre-pregnancy state. During this period the female is physically and mentally fatigued due to labour and added responsibility of the new born. The postpartum period is marked by physical and hormonal changes which can lead psychological disorders like postpartum blues, postpartum psychosis and postpartum depression (Victoria Hendrick *et al.*, 1998).

Postpartum depression is a debilitating condition for maternal health with the symptoms being anxiety, mood swings, sleep disorders along with somatic impairments (Sara Thurgood *et al.*, 2009). Postpartum depression is not only detrimental for mother it affects the mother-child interaction adversely as well. In addition, the children of mothers suffering from depression are at a higher risk of developing mood disorder, and have compromised cognitive, social and academic development (Kym Spring Thompson & Judith E Fox., 2010). The adverse effects of maternal depression are seen till adulthood and are not restricted to infants only.

All these risk factors related to postpartum period make it all the more necessary to take care of women after delivery.

*Corresponding author: **Abhishta Sehdev**

Department of Physiotherapy, ManavRachna International Institute of Research and Studies, Faridabad (Haryana)

Though traditionally the postpartum period is associated with seclusion of mother and baby for 6 weeks, so that the mother can take complete rest and recover from the stress of pregnancy (Young Oak Wells & Elaine Dietsch., 2014) but recent researches have shown that women who indulge physical activity and exercises are less prone to develop psychological symptoms.

One such form of exercise is Pilates. Pilates was invented by Joseph Pilate, it is the exercise form which focus on the core, strengthening of arms and strengthening of legs (Christine E D Lorenzo., 2011). This study reviews the effect of Pilate exercise in postpartum women.

METHODOLOGY

Researches were searched on Google Scholar and PubMed with keywords being “Postpartum Women” and “Pilate Exercises”. Four studies were found relevant, as they had administered Pilate exercises either alone or as part of comprehensive exercise program and were considered for review.

Outcome Studies

A randomized control trial including 80 primigravida were conducted in Iran. 40 of them were asked to perform 13 Pilate exercises at home 5 times a week for 8 weeks. The study reported significant improvement in Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Questionnaire scores pre and post intervention Pilate exercise program (FarzanchAshrafinia *et al.*, 2014 “a”).

In addition, Farzanch Ashrafinia., *et al* in 2015 “b” reported lower Multidimensional Fatigue Inventory -20 scores comprising of general fatigue, mental fatigue, and physical fatigue in Pilate group (40) as compared to the control group (40).

In 2008 “a” Yi-Li Ko *et al* in a sample of 60 postpartum women found significant decrease in mental fatigue among control (30) and intervention group (31). The intervention group was given low intensity exercise program, which included Pilate exercises, yoga and music for an hour 3days a week for 6 sessions. They did not find significant reduction in depression among control and intervention groups as the duration of intervention administered was fairly small.

In another study 19 women in Taiwan were given 10 weeks of intervention comprising of yoga, Pilate, elastic band exercises and low intensity aerobics demonstrated significant reduction in depression and fatigue (Yi-Li Ko *et al.*, 2015 “b”).

CONCLUSION

Pilate is a safe exercise program which can be administered 72 hours post vaginal delivery in women. It improves strength and tone of muscles, along with psychological well-being of postpartum women by means of improving sleep quality, decreasing physical and mental fatigue and Postpartum depression.

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