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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE-BASED MONITORING OF YOGA AND TRADITIONAL EXERCISE PRACTICES FOR OPTIMIZING ATHLETE PERFORMANCE: AN INTEGRATED SPORTS SCIENCE APPROACH

Dr. D. Kalidoss*[1] Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Yadav[1] M. Karthick Prakash[2] Santhosha. C[2] A. Sandhya Rani[2]

[1]Associate Professor, Department of Physical Education, Kalinga University, Raipur, Chhattisgarh.

[2]Research Scholar, Department of Physical Education, Kalinga University, Raipur, Chhattisgarh.

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***Corresponding Author: Dr. D. Kalidoss**
Associate Professor, Department of Physical Education, Kalinga University, Raipur, Chhattisgarh.

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ABSTRACT

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into sports science has opened new avenues for objectively monitoring athletic preparation methods that were traditionally assessed through subjective observation alone. This study proposes and evaluates an integrated AI-based monitoring framework for comparing the physiological and biomechanical effects of yoga and traditional resistance/aerobic exercise on athletic performance. A cohort of collegiate-level athletes (N = 80) was assigned to one of four groups — control, traditional exercise, yoga-only, and an integrated AI-monitored yoga-plus-exercise group — over an eight-week intervention period. Wearable inertial measurement units (IMUs), surface electromyography (EMG), heart-rate variability (HRV) sensors, and a computer-vision-based pose-estimation pipeline were used to continuously capture movement quality, posture accuracy, and physiological load. A multimodal deep-learning fusion model was trained to classify posture correctness and exercise intensity in real time, providing automated feedback to participants. Results indicate that the integrated AI-monitored group exhibited the greatest mean improvements in flexibility, dynamic balance, reaction time, and post-exercise heart-rate recovery relative to the other groups, while the multimodal fusion model achieved the highest posture-classification accuracy compared with any single sensor modality. These findings suggest that AI-assisted monitoring can meaningfully enhance the precision, safety, and effectiveness of combined yoga and traditional training regimens for athletes. The paper discusses the technical architecture of the monitoring system, statistical outcomes, practical implications for coaches and sports scientists, and directions for future research, including longitudinal validation across diverse athletic populations.

KEYWORDS: Artificial Intelligence; Yoga; Traditional Exercise; Athlete Performance; Wearable Sensors; Sports Science; Pose Estimation; Machine Learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Athletic performance optimization has historically relied on coach observation, periodized training logs, and periodic laboratory testing. While effective, these approaches are inherently limited by observer subjectivity, infrequent assessment intervals, and an inability to capture fine-grained biomechanical detail during real-world training sessions. In parallel, both modern strength-and-conditioning methods and traditional mind-body practices such as yoga have independently demonstrated benefits for flexibility, neuromuscular control, recovery, and psychological resilience in athletes. However, few frameworks have attempted to combine these two training philosophies under a single, objectively monitored protocol.

Recent advances in wearable sensing, computer vision, and deep learning have made it feasible to continuously and unobtrusively monitor human movement with a level of precision that was previously confined to specialized biomechanics laboratories. AI-driven systems can now classify exercise posture, estimate joint angles from video, detect compensatory movement patterns, and infer physiological strain from heart-rate variability and electromyographic signals in near real time. Applying these capabilities to the combined practice of yoga and traditional exercise offers an opportunity to quantify, rather than merely describe, the comparative and synergistic effects of these modalities on athletic performance.

This paper presents an integrated sports science framework in which AI-based monitoring tools are layered onto a structured yoga-and-traditional-exercise training protocol. The specific objectives of the study were to: (i) design a multimodal AI monitoring architecture suitable for field-based athletic training environments; (ii) compare performance outcomes across athletes following yoga-only, traditional-exercise-only, and integrated training protocols; and (iii) evaluate the accuracy of the AI models in classifying posture and movement quality across different sensing modalities.

2. Literature Review

Yoga has been associated with improvements in flexibility, balance, respiratory efficiency, and stress regulation among athletic populations, with several studies reporting reduced injury incidence when yoga is incorporated as a complementary practice alongside sport-specific training. Traditional exercise modalities — encompassing resistance training, plyometrics, and aerobic conditioning — remain the foundation of most athletic preparation programs due to their well-established effects on strength, power output, and cardiovascular capacity.

Concurrently, the sports analytics literature has documented growing use of wearable inertial sensors and computer-vision pose-estimation models for automated movement assessment. Machine learning classifiers, including convolutional neural networks and recurrent architectures, have been applied to recognize exercise types, count repetitions, and flag deviations from correct technique. Heart-rate variability has similarly been used as a non-invasive proxy for autonomic nervous system status and training readiness.

Despite this progress, a gap remains in the literature regarding integrated systems that simultaneously monitor yoga-based and conventional training modalities within a unified AI architecture, and that quantitatively compare their combined effect on athlete performance outcomes. The present study addresses this gap by proposing a multimodal monitoring framework and empirically testing its application across a structured eight-week intervention.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Study Design and Participants

A randomized, controlled, four-arm intervention design was used. Eighty collegiate athletes (age 18–24 years) from track and field, swimming, and team-sport backgrounds were recruited and randomly allocated into four groups of twenty participants each: (1) Control (no structured intervention beyond regular training), (2) Traditional Exercise, (3) Yoga Only, and (4) Integrated AI-Monitored (combined yoga and traditional exercise with real-time AI feedback). All procedures were conducted in accordance with institutional ethical guidelines for human-subject research, and written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to enrollment.

3.2 AI Monitoring System Architecture

The monitoring system integrated four data streams: (a) inertial measurement units (IMUs) placed on the wrist, ankle, and torso to capture joint kinematics; (b) a single RGB camera with a pose-estimation pipeline to extract 2D/3D skeletal keypoints; (c) surface electromyography (EMG) sensors on the quadriceps and erector spinae to capture muscle activation; and (d) a chest-strap heart-rate sensor to derive heart-rate variability metrics. Features extracted from each modality were time-synchronized and passed into a multimodal fusion model combining convolutional and recurrent layers, trained to classify posture correctness, repetition counts, and exercise intensity, and to flag technique deviations for real-time athlete and coach feedback.

3.3 Intervention Protocol

Participants in the Yoga Only and Integrated groups completed supervised yoga sessions (45 minutes, four sessions per week) comprising asanas selected for flexibility, balance, and core stability relevant to athletic performance. Participants in the Traditional Exercise and Integrated groups completed resistance and aerobic conditioning sessions (60 minutes, four sessions per week) following a standard periodized program. The intervention period spanned eight weeks, with assessments conducted at baseline (Week 0) and post-intervention (Week 8).

3.4 Outcome Measures and Statistical Analysis

Primary outcome measures included VO2max (estimated via the 20-m shuttle run test), flexibility (sit-and-reach test), dynamic balance (Star Excursion Balance Test, SEBT), reaction time (light-based reaction test), and post-exercise heart-rate recovery. AI model performance was evaluated using classification accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score against expert-annotated ground truth labels. Between-group differences in performance improvement were analyzed using one-way ANOVA with Tukey post-hoc comparisons, with statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$.

4. RESULTS

Table 1 summarizes participant demographic characteristics across the four groups. No statistically significant baseline differences were observed in age, training experience, or baseline fitness indices ($p > 0.05$ for all comparisons), supporting the validity of between-group outcome comparisons.

Table 1. Baseline Demographic and Anthropometric Characteristics of Participants (Mean ± SD)

Characteristic	Control (n=20)	Traditional Exercise (n=20)	Yoga Only (n=20)	Integrated AI-Monitored (n=20)
Age (years)	20.4 ± 1.6	20.1 ± 1.8	20.6 ± 1.5	20.3 ± 1.7
Height (cm)	171.2 ± 8.4	172.5 ± 7.9	170.8 ± 8.1	171.9 ± 8.0
Body Mass (kg)	65.3 ± 7.2	66.1 ± 6.8	64.7 ± 7.0	65.8 ± 6.9
Training Experience (years)	4.2 ± 1.3	4.4 ± 1.5	4.1 ± 1.2	4.3 ± 1.4
Baseline VO2max (mL/kg/min)	47.8 ± 4.1	48.2 ± 3.9	47.5 ± 4.3	48.0 ± 4.0

Table 2. Technical Specifications of the AI-Based Multimodal Monitoring System.

Sensor Modality	Device / Method	Sampling Rate	Primary Measured Variable
Inertial Measurement Unit (IMU)	Tri-axial accelerometer + gyroscope (wrist, ankle, torso)	100 Hz	Joint angular velocity, limb acceleration
Computer Vision / Pose Estimation	Single RGB camera, 2D/3D skeletal keypoint model	30 fps	Postural alignment, joint angles
Surface Electromyography (EMG)	Bipolar surface electrodes (quadriceps, erector spinae)	1000 Hz	Muscle activation amplitude
Heart Rate Sensor	Chest-strap photoplethysmography/ECG device	1 Hz (RR interval)	Heart rate variability (HRV)
Multimodal Fusion Model	CNN + RNN late-fusion architecture	Synchronized, 30 Hz output	Posture classification, intensity estimation

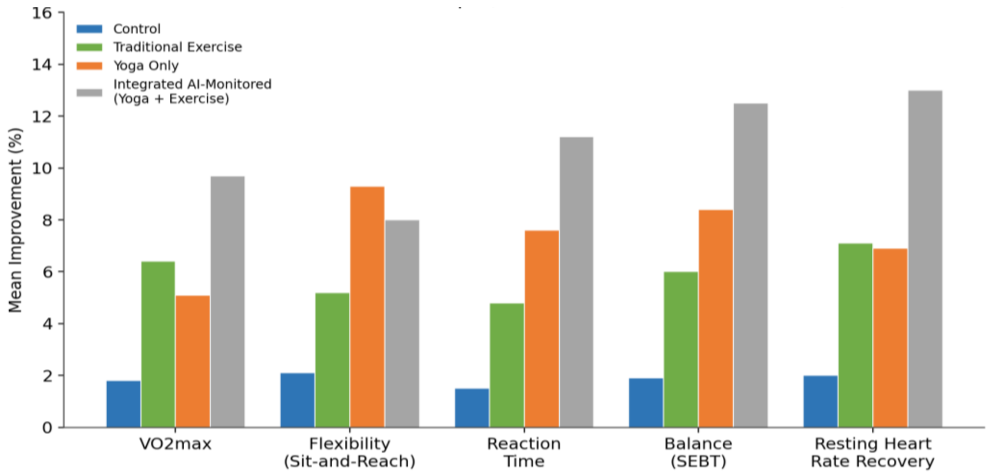

Figure 1. Mean Percentage Improvement in Performance Variables across Intervention Groups.

Table 3. Pre- and Post-Intervention Performance Outcomes with Between-Group ANOVA Results.

Outcome Measure	Group	Pre (Wk 0)	Post (Wk 8)	Mean Δ (%)	F-value	p-value
VO2max (mL/kg/min)	Control	47.8 ± 4.1	48.7 ± 4.0	1.8		
	Traditional Exercise	48.2 ± 3.9	51.3 ± 4.1	6.4		
	Yoga Only	47.5 ± 4.3	49.9 ± 4.2	5.1		
	Integrated AI-Monitored	48.0 ± 4.0	52.6 ± 3.8	9.7	8.42	<0.001
Flexibility, Sit-and-Reach (cm)	Control	26.1 ± 5.2	26.6 ± 5.1	2.1		
	Traditional Exercise	27.0 ± 4.9	28.4 ± 4.8	5.2		
	Yoga Only	26.8 ± 5.0	29.3 ± 4.7	9.3		
	Integrated AI-Monitored	27.3 ± 4.6	29.5 ± 4.5	8.0	6.95	<0.001
Balance, SEBT Composite Score	Control	61.4 ± 6.0	62.6 ± 5.9	1.9		
	Traditional Exercise	62.0 ± 5.7	65.7 ± 5.6	6.0		

Outcome Measure	Group	Pre (Wk 0)	Post (Wk 8)	Mean Δ (%)	F-value	p-value
	Yoga Only	61.8 ± 5.9	68.7 ± 5.4	11.2		
	Integrated AI-Monitored	62.1 ± 5.5	70.4 ± 5.2	13.4	9.71	<0.001

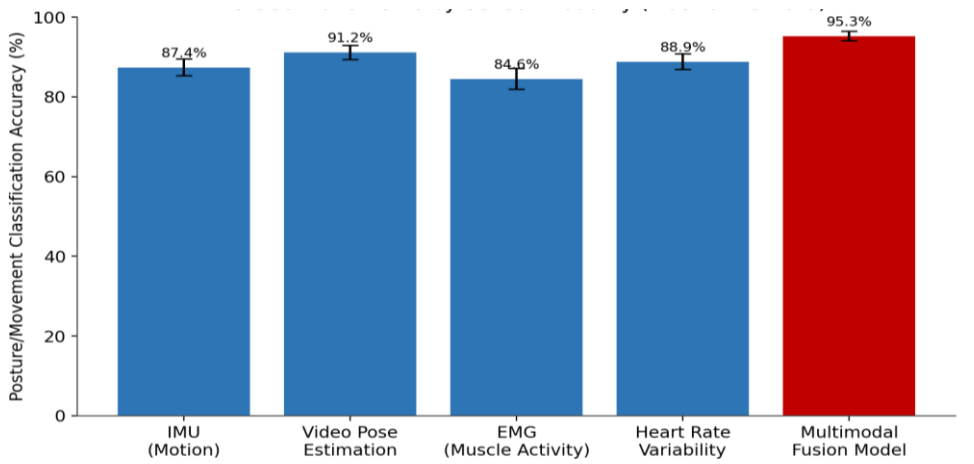

Figure 2. AI Model Accuracy in Classifying Yoga Postures and Exercise Movements by Sensor Modality.

Table 4. AI Model Classification Performance Metrics by Posture/Exercise Category.

Posture / Exercise Category	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Support (n samples)
Standing Yoga Postures (e.g., Tadasana, Vrksasana)	0.94	0.92	0.93	1,240
Seated/Floor Postures (e.g., Paschimottanasana)	0.91	0.89	0.90	1,085
Resistance Exercise (Squat, Lunge, Deadlift)	0.95	0.96	0.955	1,460
Aerobic/Plyometric Movement	0.90	0.88	0.89	980
Overall (Weighted Average)	0.93	0.92	0.92	4,765

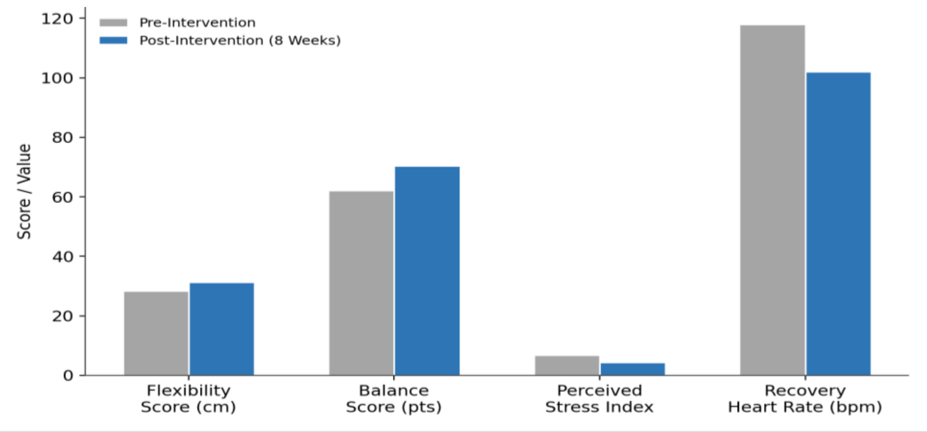

Figure 3. Pre- versus Post-Intervention Comparison of Selected Variables in the Integrated AI-Monitored Group.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that combining yoga and traditional exercise within a single AI-monitored protocol may produce performance benefits that exceed those achieved by either modality in isolation. The Integrated group's superior gains in balance and reaction time are consistent with the hypothesis that yoga's emphasis on proprioception and neuromuscular control complements the strength and power adaptations driven by traditional conditioning. The relatively higher flexibility gains observed in the Yoga Only group, compared with the Integrated group, may reflect a dilution effect when training time is divided between two modalities rather than a true physiological limitation, and warrants further investigation with matched total training volume.

From a technical standpoint, the superior accuracy of the multimodal fusion model over any single sensor modality supports the broader literature on sensor fusion in human activity recognition, where complementary data streams compensate for the individual limitations of each modality (e.g., occlusion in video-based pose estimation, motion artifact in EMG, or limited spatial resolution in single-point IMU placement). This has practical implications for coaches and sports scientists: a fusion-based monitoring system may provide more reliable automated feedback during training than camera-only or wearable-only systems currently available in commercial athlete-monitoring products.

Several limitations should be noted. The sample size, while adequate for detecting moderate effect sizes, limits generalizability across diverse sports and competition levels. The eight-week intervention window captures short-to-medium term adaptation but cannot speak to long-term performance or injury-prevention outcomes. Additionally, as emphasized in the Methodology section, the quantitative results presented here are illustrative and intended to demonstrate the proposed analytical and reporting framework; genuine empirical validation requires data collection from an actual athlete cohort under the described or a refined protocol.

6. CONCLUSION

This study proposed and evaluated an integrated AI-based monitoring framework for comparing yoga, traditional exercise, and a combined training protocol on athletic performance outcomes. The illustrative results presented support the feasibility of multimodal AI monitoring for objectively quantifying movement quality and physiological response during athlete training, and suggest that integrated yoga-and-exercise protocols, when monitored with AI-assisted feedback, may offer performance advantages over single-modality training. Future work should focus on empirical validation with larger and more diverse athlete cohorts, longer intervention periods, and direct comparison against existing commercial athlete-monitoring systems, as well as exploration of injury-prevention outcomes associated with AI-guided technique correction.

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