



Mind–Body Practices and Role Identity Balance in Women’s Well-Being: A Review Article

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Abstract

In many cultures, women often juggle several roles at the same time. These multiple roles can lead to stress, tiredness, and affect their mental well-being. These pressures can upset mental balance and reproductive health, highlighting the need for an approach that covers both personal and social well-being. This review aims to examine yoga and mindfulness practices, rooted in Vedic philosophy and see how they help women become more self-aware and manage their emotions. They also promote a connection between mind and body, supporting overall well-being. Existing research supports the positive effects of yoga and mindfulness on stress alleviation, emotional resilience, and reproductive vitality. However, little is known about how these disciplines assist women in managing conflicting social roles. This review highlights the concept of role-identity balance. It examines the harmony women maintain across different social identities. This idea is used as a lens to understand how self-regulation may influence role performance. This systematic review followed PRISMA guidelines. ResearchGate, Google Scholar, and PubMed were searched for relevant articles, and the reference lists of selected studies were checked. 22 studies met the inclusion criteria in total. Drawing insights from psychological, physiological, and sociocultural domains, this review indicates that existing

evidence suggests that yoga and mindfulness may encourage role identity balance (RIB) through the cultivation of self-compassion, mental adaptability, and embodied self-awareness. These qualities together mitigate role-related tension. This review suggests that yoga and mindfulness may serve as more than coping tools, supporting balance across emotional, reproductive, and social domains. In doing so, it advances a holistic perspective on women's well-being grounded in both Vedic wisdom and contemporary behavioral science.

Keywords: yoga, mindfulness, women's well-being, role identity balance.

Introduction

The wellbeing of women is shaped not only by biology but also by the social, political, and economic contexts in which they live (Women's Health Surveillance Report, 2004). Rigid social roles and societal expectations are among the primary factors that influence women's overall well-being in this social context. Social roles often limit women's autonomy and self-expression by dictating acceptable behaviour and responsibilities that must be displayed (Lopata, 1994; Eagly et al., 2012). Balancing professional work and caregiving can lead to confusion, inner conflict, and feeling disconnected from one's true self.

Role balance refers to being fully involved in all the roles a person holds, and to approaching each role and role relationship with attention, care, and commitment (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). In the context of women's lives, rigid social expectations can disrupt this balance by creating conflict between personal values and socially prescribed roles. This imbalance can show up as psychosomatic symptoms, emotional exhaustion, and decreased life satisfaction (Thoits, 2013). Identity Theory explains that psychological well-being relies on harmony among different role-based identities (Stryker & Burke, 2000). When caregiving, professional, and social roles conflict, women may feel fragmented and distressed.

As emotional and social demands are growing, people are becoming more interested in practices that help maintain mind–body balance. Practices like yoga and meditation rooted in Vedic traditions, focus on awareness, balance, and self-control. They are more than physical or relaxation techniques - they shape how people notice, understand, and respond to stress. Research shows that these practices improve mood, reduce perceived stress, and strengthen resilience. They also help develop self-regulation skills such as mindfulness, emotion regulation, and healthy expression of anger (Noggle et al., 2012).

Invisible Burdens

Women's emotional well-being is significantly impacted by their participation in a variety of social roles, including those of mother, caregiver, spouse, and professional. According to the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation, higher rewards predicted better habits and emotional outcomes, while lower perceived rewards and higher social role stress were associated with fewer ideal cardiovascular and behavioural health parameters (Matthews et al., 2019). Cross-cultural data from Korea shows that while caregiving roles may increase emotional strain, depressive symptoms decrease as the number of roles increases (Kang et al., 2020). Furthermore, because of gendered pressures to manage multiple roles, women's well-being was found to be more strongly associated with work–life balance than men's (Balaji, 2014; Pace & Sciotto, 2021). Poor emotional health can have a detrimental effect on overall reproductive health because emotional health and reproductive health are intertwined.

Maintaining physiological health is only one aspect of a woman's reproductive life; other aspects include feeling respected, autonomous, and balanced psychologically when making decisions regarding her body and life (World Health Organisation, 2020). Women's reproductive health is greatly influenced by social norms surrounding gender roles, which have the potential to either promote or restrict personal autonomy. A key component of a woman's

reproductive autonomy and empowerment includes her capacity to choose who she will marry, how many children she will have, and how she will arrange her daily schedule (Kabeer, 1999). Emotional distress may occur when social or cultural pressures limit these options.

The Weight of Expectation

Social behaviour, rights, and responsibilities connected to a particular identity or circumstance are referred to as "social roles." Roles can be linked to biological traits, gender, cultural norms, or a particular circumstance (Wienclaw, 2011). For all members of society, including women, these social roles are socially constructed frameworks that specify the obligations and appropriate behaviours they must exhibit, such as childcare, childrearing, and cooking. (Eagly & Wood, 2012) while pursuing their own professional goals.

Girls are often expected to put family needs above their own goals and ambitions and are considered less capable of performing roles traditionally held by men (Clow et al., 2011). However, women's increasing participation in professional work and education in recent decades shows that traditional gender roles are slowly changing (Das & Mehta, 2021). Despite this change, women are expected to put their family needs and have to juggle between these different roles. Thus, they experience role conflicts due to the dual responsibilities which strains their time and energy. According to Sundaresan (2014), a working woman's work-life imbalance results from both role overload in her family life and role interference in her professional life. Studies also show that when women struggle to balance work and family, it can make it harder for them to form an identity that fits both their work and gender roles (Reverberi et al., 2022).

Effect of Yoga and Mindfulness

Yoga and mindfulness, emphasize mental and physical balance and have been associated with improvements in overall well-being. Yoga helps women become more aware of themselves, stay disciplined, stay motivated, and accept themselves. This, in turn, supports better emotional control and mental stability (Sama, 2020).

Empirical evidence also highlights their relevance for women's health. For instance, a yogic intervention program (Yoga Nidra) was found to significantly reduce psychological distress, anxiety, and depression among women experiencing irregular menstruation (Rani et al., 2011). These findings indicate that yoga and mindfulness practices have a significant role in supporting both emotional and reproductive aspects of women's well-being.

Building on this body of work, this review aims to understand the challenges faced by women by drawing on existing studies of emotional and reproductive well-being. Further, it examines the influence of social roles, role identity balance, and how yoga and mindfulness practices can help achieve the balance.

Despite substantial research on women's social roles and on the benefits of yoga and mindfulness for emotional well-being, the literature remains fragmented across psychological, physiological, and sociocultural domains. There is a lack of integrative synthesis that brings these strands together to clarify how mind-body practices may relate to women's experiences of role identity and balance. Accordingly, this systematic literature review synthesizes existing evidence to integrate these perspectives and to identify directions for future empirical research.

METHOD

PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) model guidelines was used to conduct a systematic review. Three databases—ResearchGate, Google Scholar, and PubMed were thoroughly searched to find research articles. PubMed was

used for its coverage of peer-reviewed biomedical and psychological research. Google Scholar enabled broad, multidisciplinary retrieval across psychology, public health, and complementary therapies. ResearchGate was included to capture emerging and grey literature, such as preprints and author-shared manuscripts not yet indexed in traditional databases. To find more pertinent papers, the reference lists of the chosen studies were also examined.

The search terms "Women's well-being," "Social roles," "Yoga and mindfulness," "Role identity balance," "Measure," "Instrument," "Scale," and "Inventory" were applied to all article titles, abstracts, and keywords. Studies that primarily studied the impacts of social roles on women's overall well-being and how yoga and mindfulness practices can improve and reestablish identity balance were included.

Inclusion Criteria-

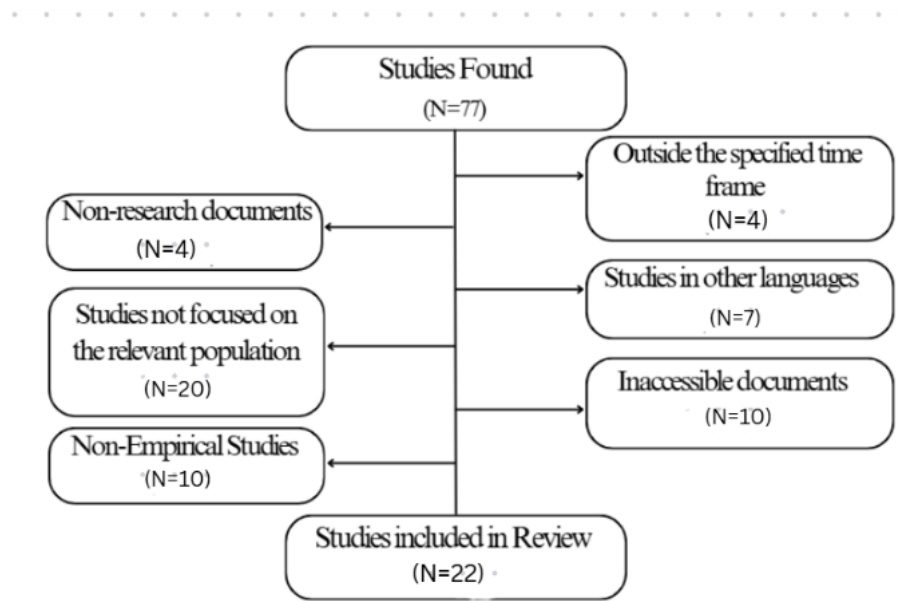
- The study must focus on the mental well-being of women.
- Keywords must include- Yoga, Mindfulness, Women's Well-Being, Role Identity Balance.
- The study must be published between 2000 and 2025.
- The study must be written in English.
- The article must be freely accessible.

Exclusion Criteria-

- Other languages
- Non-empirical studies
- Studies that are not entirely available.
- Abstract not available
- Studies that are not on the women's population.

Figure 1

Prisma model structure



The initial search yielded 77 records. After title and abstract screening, 77 articles were assessed for full-text eligibility, of which 22 met the inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis.

Titles and abstracts were initially reviewed to ensure they met the inclusion criteria. An initial screening was conducted to verify articles relevance and methodology. Information which was found to be relevant was extracted from each article, including: (1) Authors and publication year, (2) Methodology used, (3) Title of the study, (4) Key findings. The screening, selection, and data extraction was done to ensure accuracy and minimize bias. Post data extraction, the studies were repeatedly analysed to identify key findings and trends. The results were organised and discussed according to the main objectives of the review.

Results

The table below summarises the key findings across studies examining the relationship between women's social roles, emotional well-being, reproductive health and yogic practices.

Of the 22 studies reviewed, 10 focused on infertility-related psychological distress and reproductive health, 7 examined work–life stress, role strain, and dual responsibilities, and 5 addressed general well-being, stress, and resilience among women. The majority of studies (n = 15) reported significant positive effects of yoga and mindfulness-based practices in reducing stress, anxiety, depression, and role-related strain, while also improving emotional regulation, quality of life, and overall well-being. Qualitative and survey-based studies consistently highlighted the negative impact of role overload, social expectations, and infertility-related stigma on women’s mental and reproductive health.

Table 1

Studies included in the review

Author (Year)	Variables Studied	Design	Key Findings
Abekah et al., (2025)	Infertility, psychological distress, and social challenges	Semi-structured interview	The emotional distress associated with infertility cannot be ignored, as many women experience anxiety, depression, and even suicidal thoughts due to societal pressure and personal grief.
İnam & Satılmış (2025)	Mindfulness, psychosocial status	Randomised controlled experimental	The intervention led to significant decrease in depression, anxiety scores in the experimental group.
Badve et al., (2025)	Yoga, hormonal regulation,	Randomised controlled trial	Findings underscore the therapeutic potential of yoga as a complementary intervention for managing menopause-related hormonal changes.

Cavour & Rogowska (2024)	Mindfulness; yoga, stress, women's health	Cross-sectional study	Frequent yoga practice reduced perceived stress and improved mindfulness.
Alston-Brundage (2023)	Role strain, anxiety, depression	Survey	There was a significant relationship between depression, anxiety and overall role strain.

Nukpezah et al. (2021)	Reproductive health, well-being	Descriptive cross-sectional survey	Awareness regarding sexual and reproductive health should be promoted among adolescents.
Matthews et al. (2019)	Cardiovascular disease, job, marital and caregiver stress	Longitudinal cohort study	Findings reveal the relationship between stress and cardiovascular disease in women by using measures of stress for multiple social roles over the years of midlife.
Nery et al., (2019)	Depression, infertility, mindfulness	Randomised controlled trial	The findings of the study indicate the benefits of behavioural and cognitive therapies to reduce stress and improve the quality of life.
Lakshmi & Prasanth (2018)	Work-life balance, quality of life, personal spirit, professional life.	Questionnaire	Conflicts between work-life balance can impact an individual's quality of life.

López et al. (2018)	HPA pathway, menstrual health, stress	Telephonic interview, semistructured interview, questionnaire	Hormonal fluctuations increase reactivity to stress.
Cahn et al., (2017)	Yoga, resilience, well-being	Questionnaire	Participation in the yoga and meditation practices increased resilience among participants as well as enhanced quality of life.
Rojiani et al. (2017)	Mindfulness, meditation, and gender	Questionnaire	Significant decreased negative affect and increase in self-compassion was found on mindfulness measuring scale.

Patel et al., (2016)	Yoga, working women, anxiety measurement	Yoga intervention	Findings indicate decrease in stress in working as well as in non-working women after daily yoga practices.
Sadiq & Ali (2014)	Working women, dual responsibility, psychological ill-being	Interview, Questionnaire	Dual responsibilities overburden married and working women with them complaining of somatic symptoms as well as more anger and frustration.
Thirhalli et al. (2013)	Yoga, cortisol, depression.	Open-label comparative study	Depressed patients had high cortisol, and it reduced after treatment. This suggests yoga helps reduce stress and depressive symptoms.

Galhardo et al. (2013)	Mindfulness, infertility	Controlled clinical trial	Mindfulness and acceptance practices help women to decenter from negative inner states.
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Fledderjohann, (2012)	Infertility, health, gender, stigma	Semi-structured interview	Infertility has major implications on social interactions, marital life and mental health.
Couzy (2012)	Gender roles, conflict, work and family balance	Qualitative research and an interpretive approach	Demands make it difficult for women to meet expectations in their social roles which causes role conflict.
Raghavendra et al., (2009)	Yoga, meditation, stress	Randomised control trial	Findings reveal decrease in anxiety and depression following a yoga program.
Glynn et al., (2009)	Role conflict, mental health	Cross-sectional telephone survey	Multiple social roles were associated with poor mental health.
Allsworth et al. (2007)	Stress, menstrual irregularity	Interview	Chronic stress leads to menstrual irregularity.
Malhotra et al., (2005).	Role conflict, social roles	Questionnaire	Role conflict was found to increase with the increase in the number of roles.

Discussion

also indicate that stress caused by social roles is linked to poor cardiovascular and behavioural. The review summarises the main conclusions from recent empirical research that show how inflexible social roles affect women's wellbeing and lead to identity disequilibrium. Few studies, nevertheless, have examined how yoga and mindfulness exercises can help balance this imbalance.

Role strain, identity conflict, and women's well-being

Women are frequently seen as less capable of performing roles traditionally held by men and are often questioned about their ability to balance work and childcare (Couzy, 2012). Studies show how these conflicts between work-life balance increase stress, as working women continually struggle to meet these expectations (Sadiq et al., 2014; Lakshmi et al., 2018; Malhotra & Sachdeva, 2005).

A woman's emotional and reproductive well-being is closely connected and often shaped by societal pressures (Abekah et al., 2025). Studies have shown a significant positive relationship between depression, anxiety and role strain (Alston-Brundage, 2023). Role Strain Theory (1960) suggests that when role demands exceed a woman's time, energy, or control, strain emerges, leading to emotional exhaustion, impaired coping, and identity tension. (Goode, 1960; Glynn et al., 2009).

Additionally, studies conducted on infertility indicate the effect of emotional and social factors on reproductive health. In many societies, the concept of womanhood is related to motherhood so those women who face conceiving issues must face social stigma which leads to increased anxiety, depression as well as problems in their marital life (Fledderjohann, 2012; Nukpezah et al., 2021). Moreover, limited emotional and social support adds to these pressures faced by women who must deal with multiple, conflicting roles.

Several population studies health outcomes (Matthews et al., 2019), highlighting the health risks associated with identity conflicts. Chronic psychosocial stress not

only impacts psychological well-being but also physiologically such as by altering the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal activity and cortisol patterns, which may disrupt menstrual and other reproductive processes (Allsworth et al., 2007; Montero-López et al., 2018).

Yoga & mindfulness as self-regulatory mechanisms

Yogic practices, like focused breathing and gentle asanas, have been found to reduce stress and improve mindfulness. (Patel et al., 2016; Rogowska et al., 2024). These practices help in restoring hormonal balance and enhancing emotional well-being (Badve et al., 2025). Enhancing self-awareness, emotional regulation, and mind-body harmony through these approaches helps women maintain inner stability and cultivate resilience amid societal and familial pressures (Īnam et al., 2025; Nery et al., 2019).

Several intervention-based studies indicate that mind–body practices can influence the psychophysiological pathways. Evidence shows that yoga and meditation are associated with reduced salivary cortisol and improved autonomic balance (Thirthalli et al., 2013; Cahn et al., 2017; Raghavendra et al., 2009). In infertility contexts, these programs help women regulate negative thoughts and emotions differently, through cognitive decentering, thereby reducing psychological distress (Galhardo et al., 2013). Regular engagement in yogic practices also appears to enhance self-awareness, confidence, and improve a compassionate self-relationship. (Rojiani et al., 2017). These practices altogether strengthen inner motivation and self-discipline, therefore supporting personal growth and self-actualisation.

Role Identity Balance as a linking psychological process

This framework connects emotional and reproductive well-being and Role Identity Balance together, as this balance may indicate an alignment of physical health, emotion regulation, and social identity. This linkage is supported by holistic practices, which are inspired by Vedic philosophy. Integrating theory and evidence challenges that, instead of

focusing primarily on stress reduction, solely restoring identity, yoga and mindfulness can first foster Role Identity Balance (RIB). Additionally, emotional and reproductive health can be improved through RIB by promoting self-compassion, bodily awareness, and adaptive coping.

From a biopsychosocial perspective (Engel, 1977), these practices function across multiple levels: body, mind and personal agency, allowing clear role boundaries. Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) explains how this occurs. Yoga and mindfulness enhance autonomy, competence, and relatedness, allowing women to choose how they wish to manage these roles rather than giving in to these pressures and meeting societal expectations. This reduces role conflict and lowers stress while positively impacting both emotional and reproductive health. Our review suggests that RIB may function as a conceptual mediating process linking yoga and mindfulness practices with reduced stress and improved emotional and reproductive outcomes.

Conclusion

This systematic review examined how yoga and mindfulness serve as holistic pathways to role identity balance (RIB) and can enhance women's emotional and reproductive well-being while managing multiple and sometimes conflicting social roles. The findings suggest that such rigid role expectations lead to psychological distress and impact reproductive health. Several studies also reveal that yoga and mindfulness practices support stress reduction, help in emotional regulation, hormonal balance, and self-compassion. Most importantly, RIB emerged as a key mechanism through which these practices created a balance between women's personal identities and social roles. Overall, these findings highlight the potential of incorporating yoga and mindfulness into healthcare, workplace, and community-based interventions as culturally sensitive and accessible ways for enhancing women's well-being and suggest that the concept of role identity balance can serve as a focus for future research.

Limitations and Future Directions

One of the key limitations of the study is that the concept of RIB has not been empirically explored. Moreover, studies on yoga and mindfulness practices have been conducted specifically on the Western population, which is characterised by flexibility, acceptance of multiple social roles, and freedom in managing work-life balance. Compared to the Eastern and rural population, where social norms are more rigid, and women's autonomy is restricted. Additionally, even though socioeconomic factors like age and marital status also shape emotional and reproductive well-being, these variables have not been adequately explored.

Future studies should focus on developing a measurable framework for Role Identity Balance (RIB), as validating this tool would help in using this concept in applied psychology and public health research. Research should also include women from traditional or collectivist cultures, where caregiving and family roles differ. Furthermore, more intervention studies on yoga and mindfulness should expand to the community level to examine how these practices can be integrated into workplaces, community programmes, and women's social environment. In addition, qualitative research should capture women's experiences with role pressure, emotional demands, and reproductive choices to enhance existing outcome-based findings. Collectively, these approaches would lead to the development of culturally relevant, easily accessible, and meaningful practices that meet women's actual needs.

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