

Examine the reasons for the popularity of Tai Chi/Qi Gong/Martial Arts.

In recent years, the world's population has experienced a radical overhaul in the state of the healthcare system. There have been wide-ranging debates about how healthcare is delivered and who pays medical bills. These debates have provided a different perspective of how to examine the philosophical approach to well-being and health. The need for self-care has made individuals adopt alternative health practices that are effective in maintaining or regaining their well-being. Typically, individuals concerned about their health should focus on all aspects, including their physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being.

Many individuals have been lucky enough to discover and adopt traditional oriental practices and exercises such as Tai Chi and Qi Gong that focus on developing these health aspects. Tai Chi and Qi Gong are traditional self-cultivation and self-healing practices that originated in ancient China. Although these health practices were not popular some decades ago, many people have now learned about them and adopted them in their cultures. These exercises are based on traditional Chinese medicine philosophies and include coordinating body movements and posture with mental focus, meditation, and deep rhythmic breathing.

Apart from Tai Chi and Qi Gong, individuals have also adopted Martial Arts, an effective health practice that produces physical, cognitive, behavioural, and affective benefits. This paper will examine the popularity of Chinese practices like Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and Wushu-Martial Arts in enhancing healthcare and life enhancement. It will discuss epistemological and metaphysical reasons behind the practice. It will also evaluate these Chinese health practices in music, Calligraphy, Chinese painting, Chinese medicine, Chinese tea ceremony, Chinese cooking, Chinese food and drink, Daoist, and Confucian nourishing life.

Key themes and Practice of Chinese well-being and their Central Characteristics

Chinese well-being is often viewed as subjective well-being found in traditional values and culture. This perception is because subjective well-being highlights an experience that involves individuals evaluating their quality of life concerning their set standards. Subjective well-being is also connected to psychological well-being and Chinese well-being. The ancient Chinese society has a multicultural nature that aids in the formation of the characteristics related to the Chinese perception of happiness and well-being. Moreover, Chinese well-being is founded on major philosophical schools of thought, including Daoism and Confucianism (Yang & Zhou, 2017, p.181).

The practice of Chinese Well-being is also massively associated with contemplative practices like Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and Wushi, which Confucianism and Daoism influence. These practices can be regarded as a timeless bridge supporting and initiating growth in each life dimension: emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental. Moreover, these traditional Chinese practices have the ability and wisdom to address and understand individual health needs, enhancing how individuals can unite the body, mind, and spirit. This connection is regarded as a foundation for authentic and lasting health.

Practices like Qi gong and Tai Chi can be effectively applied to any individual having a health issue at any time, as they are rooted in unchanging natural law that has its source

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beyond time. Every traditional Chinese healing practice harmonizes and reflects relationships within natural law (Jennings, 2014, p.713). A key characteristic of traditional Chinese well-being practices is that the body is an integrated whole, meaning all body structures are integral. When the physical body is connected with the emotions, spirit, and mind, it forms a miraculously complicated, interrelated system powered by energy or life force.

Tai Chi

Tai Chi is among the well-known martial arts of the internal systems in ancient China. This art was developed by Chen Wangting around 1670. Tai Chi is characterized by complementary and contrasting movements, slow and soft or fast and hard. It also involves low stances and explosive power. Tai Chi, also recognized as Shadow Boxing, is regarded as a major branch of ancient Chinese martial arts (DiGiacomo et al., 2010, p.1245). The essential Tai Chi principles rely on Taoism, an ancient Chinese philosophy that emphasizes the need for living in physical and spiritual harmony and the natural balance in all things.

Today, Tai Chi is widely recognized for its flowing movements, slow and elegant gestures. Its main characteristics include imagery, rhythmic breathing, mindfulness, flexibility, social support, structural alignment, and integration of the mind, body, and spirit. Typically, Tai Chi involves more choreographed and complex movements coordinated with an individual's breath. This coordination is essential for self-defence and promoting health. As a result of its nature of calmness, Tai Chi uses a meditative approach to promote life force or vital energy in the body (Nyman, 2021). Tai Chi has ironically evolved from being a form of Chinese boxing into a health practice for improving the well-being of individuals.

Tai Chi has four major schools; Wu, Chen, Sun, Yang. These schools are named after the individuals who developed them and varied in terms of movements (Zhou et al., 2019, 407). For instance, Yang involves relaxed and graceful movements with a circular motion; Chen has more abrupt movements; Wu has gentle and close-knit movements, while in Sun, movements are exquisite and delicate. Yang is considered the most popular Tai Chi movement among these schools due to its simple, athletic style. The Yang movements are performed slowly and steadily, making them easy to learn and ideal for ageing adults.

Tai Chi's gentle sequence of slow, relaxing motions helps individuals deactivate their flight or freeze response as it cleanses the body's tissues of amassed stress. As a result, the emotional and physical stresses dissolve, and a sense of well-being is developed. This dramatically increases the immune system's capacity to fight diseases while concurrently minimizing incidents of anxiety, chronic pain, and depression (Yeung et al., 2018, p.43). Tai Chi focuses on moment-to-moment sensory perception of delicate position changes, promoting deep awareness and increasing proprioceptive sensitivity, enhancing concentration in all other activities.

Qi Gong

Qi Gong has a rich history that can be traced back to Taoist writings in 600 AD. It also has wide-ranging therapies and exercises practised by numerous generations of Chinese for longevity and health. Qi Gong consists of two words: Qi and Gong. Qi is translated as energy flow, life-force, and life energy, and its definitions involve gas, breath, or the relationship between spirit, energy, and matter. Qi is the fundamental principle of martial arts and traditional Chinese medicine. On the other hand, "gong" signifies mastery or

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cultivation. Hence, Qi Gong is translated as “mastery of energy” or “vital energy cultivation” (Klich & Milert, 2018, p.23). There are numerous forms of QiGong practices worldwide. Some of the forms include meditation and breathing to enhance health and spirituality, while others are considered more vigorous as they involve martial arts exercises.

Qi Gong can also be divided into two types: movement Qi Gong, which involves body movement, and static Qi Gong, which involves standing or sitting meditation without added movements. Typically, Qi Gong emerged from major traditions like Daoist, martial arts, Buddhist, Confucian, and medicine (Dong & Bergren, 2016, p.124). Each of these traditions has its practice or training purpose. Through moral awareness, Confucian Qi Gong targets to cultivate a gentleman-like personality. Buddhist QiGong focuses on enlightening wisdom and the cultivation of virtue. Contrariwise, Daoist QiGong purports to offer a means of achieving a closer connection to the natural world, spiritual enlightenment, and longevity. Lastly, medical Qi Gong aims to treat diseases or to enhance mental and physical well-being.

In recent years, many people have adopted related relaxation and meditation techniques to foster an attentive mind and reduce stress. Various electroencephalogram (EEG) studies have indicated changes in spectral band frequencies, especially in QiGong meditation, revealing a relaxed state (Abbott & Lavretsky, 2013, p.4). Hence, posture is essential in Qi Gong’s practice as its most important principle is relaxation. An individual must have a good alignment to be relaxed.

Wushu-Martial Arts

Typically, martial arts is an ancient fighting tradition practised for competition, self-defence, spiritual, mental, and physical development. Wushu is an ancient, diverse, and detailed form of martial arts that originated in China about 4,000 years ago. In China, Wushu martial art is a tradition that has been passed across generations. Throughout its evolution, Wushu has been regarded as “kung-fu” and “martial arts.” Ordinary individuals have practised Wushu for physical training and self-defence, as well as for a joyous life. Chinese martial arts are influenced by Daoism and Buddhism, enabling the fighters to contemplate their body and mind (Macarie & Roberts, 2010).

Though numerous martial art practices involve punching, kicking, and throwing, the main element of the skills passed is the physical aspect. Apart from its physicality, many contemporary practitioners believe that Wushu martial arts provide spiritual development, health and fitness, cultivation of mind, and character training (Fuller & Lloyd, 2020, p.23). Several studies have provided evidence on the effectiveness of martial arts in generating behavioural, cognitive, and affective benefits. According to Fung and Lee (2018), these benefits result from the practice’s enhanced self-regulation, discipline, and self-control (p.408). The approach to life that martial arts and meditation provide to their advocates has proven to appeal to many people who are usually dissatisfied with the materialistic and consumerist values that prevail in the west and create misfortune or unhappiness.

Metaphysical and Epistemological Reasons behind Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and Martial Arts

The dynamic relationships between society, health, and “martial arts” are still unclear, owing to research that generally considers health in a purely compartmentalized and biomedical manner. Martial arts encompass a wide range of disciplines, each with its set of training techniques and goals. Traditionalist Chinese Martial Arts (TCMAs) like Qi Gong,

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Wushu, and Tai Chi facilitate personal development, stress reduction, lifelong practice, and health promotion (Abbott & Lavretsky, 2013, p.8). Based on a structuration framework, there are several links between TCMA and distinct philosophies of health that disseminate individual stories of self-cultivation and transformation through martial art practices.

Health is described as a state of mental, social, and physical well-being without any illness. It is divided into areas of biomedical scientific knowledge handled by professionals from particular disciplines like psychotherapy, geriatrics, sports medicine, and nursing (Jennings, 2014, p.715). Today, martial arts science has become a major health discipline that entails wide-ranging research on health aspects such as rehabilitation and fitness. Various studies have examined the health benefits of moving meditation and Chinese martial art based on public health. These studies have provided insights into integrative and multidimensional health aspects such as physical, emotional, social, and physical dynamics. Practices like Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and Wushu martial arts have provided a general awareness and insight into the sense of self-healing and the mind-body relationship. Although these practices are regarded to be more physical, they have gained sweeping popularity worldwide.

These traditionalist Chinese martial arts exemplify a recent trend in social scientific research as health-restoring or health-bringing practices in the West and Europe. Tai Chi and Qi Gong are self-cultivation practices derived from traditional Chinese religious disciplines, aiming to enhance personality and mind-body relationships in a highly subjective way (Klich & Milert, 2018, p.25). These practices are ordinarily commercialized within the fitness and health sector to meet the demands of contemporary societies, which are based on positive health transformation.

The requirements of internal martial arts directly result in health benefits. For an individual to develop internal power, their entire body must be connected as one unit. This internal power is accomplished when the movements are slow and relaxed with great concentration. These martial art practices are very beneficial in terms of stress reduction. Stress is regarded as one of the most serious issues of modern life. In Tai Chi and Qi Gong, all movements must be done with an all-encompassing spiral motion that improves digestion and circulation and solves various joint problems (Yeung et al., 2018, p.45).

Martial arts help individuals reduce anxiety and stress by encouraging them to breathe deeply, meditate, and practice mindfulness. It also helps train the human mind to its attention while remaining alert and calm. This is especially helpful when attempting to complete multiple tasks that require full attention. Moreover, Wushu martial arts provides a great boost of “feel-good” chemicals such as endorphins, which lift an individual’s mood. It is considered a fantastic way to direct and channel energy towards something positive.

After consistent practice, the benefits can be felt in improved physical, emotional, and mental well-being. On a mental level, an individual can concentrate and think more effectively. On a physical level, movements become more graceful and gain poise as the body becomes suppler. Moreover, on an emotional level, the individual becomes more tolerant, relaxed, and happier.

Daoist Health Philosophy

Daoism is a Chinese philosophy and religion that promotes health, longevity and living in harmony with nature. It is mostly associated with martial arts like Wushu and provides a philosophical approach that draws explicit parallels between the human body and nature. Martial art practices are designed to mimic nature's rhythm, making the connection between well-being and health intuitively clear (Fuller & Lloyd, 2020, p.72). As a philosophy, Daoism has been rapidly repackaged and transported to Western society through Chinese martial arts like Tai Chi, Wushu, and Qi Gong. It now offers individuals a mystical and esoteric guide for living in a busy and stressful society. Daoism has a great influence on traditional Chinese medicine concepts.

Qi Gong and Tai Chi provide a healing and health aspect as a form of moving meditation. These practices improve an individual's sense of well-being and health by creating a sense of shared cultivation and transformation (Jennings, 2014, p.722). Moreover, Daoism and martial arts can be a personal remedy and prevention against the contemporary societal phenomenon of emotional trauma and stress that often results in physical health issues.

Influence of Chinese well-being Practices in Calligraphy and Chinese Painting.

Chinese well-being practices such as Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and Martial Arts have a significant influence in the field of Chinese calligraphy and painting since they promote longevity and physical fitness. Like Qi Gong and Tai Chi, calligraphy and painting can also help individuals dispel stress and depression by elevating the mind and spirit. Typically, when practising calligraphy or painting, the ink or paint becomes more vibrant, and the brush writing strokes become stronger, enhancing physical fitness and healing of illnesses. These aspects are greatly influenced and promoted by embracing Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and Martial Arts. Apart from physical fitness, Tai Chi and Qi Gong provide Chinese calligraphers with a meditative state that helps them have a calm mind, complete focus, and a peaceful body (Staff, 2018). Many benefits and principles of practising Chinese painting and calligraphy are associated with Chinese well-being practices such as Tai Chi, Qigong, and Wushi.

Influence of Chinese well-being Practices in Chinese Tea Ceremony

For centuries, Chinese well-being practices such as Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and Martial Arts have greatly impacted Chinese tea ceremonies. These tea ceremonies spread awareness about Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and Martial Arts, such as meditation, which is essential in reducing anxiety and depression and increasing immunity (Ying, 2020). Chinese well-being exercises have various well-being and mental health benefits similar to drinking Chinese tea. Like Tai Chi and Qi Gong, Chinese tea connects individuals to harmony around and within the body, enhancing mental well-being. In Chinese tea ceremonies, individuals practice wellness exercises, including Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and Martial Arts, to facilitate the state of meditation. This cultivates gratitude and fosters emotional awareness, essential for mental well-being.

Influence of Chinese well-being Practices in Music

Various significant studies in music psychology have focused on the management performance of performance anxiety and mental technique. Suggestions for adopting Eastern mental power and physical relaxation principles, including traditional Chinese martial

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arts like Qi Gong, Tai Chi, and Martial Arts, have become common among health practitioners (Ying & Chiat, 2013, p.100). However, there needs to be in-depth intellectual teaching of body movements with application to music playing.

Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and Martial Arts have medical effectiveness reflected in the field of music. In Chinese well-being practices, music notes are associated with corresponding human body organs. Chinese musical notes have a broad effect of achieving various healing objectives, with individuals using musical instruments to relay their mental states. The philosophy of Daoism that influences Tai Chi and Qi Gong helps in integrating spirituality in music. Moreover, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and Martial Arts suggest the benefits of meditative practices include promoting mental and emotional health, coping skills, resilience, and reducing anxiety and stress (Wu et al., 2017). These benefits are helpful to individuals creating or listening to music.

An in-depth study of Tai Chi and Qi Gong based on movement principles, philosophy, and bodily movements can provide detailed information about the study of enactment, like the kinetic process of musical performance. The Tai Chi and Qi flow act as the achievement of unity between an individual's mind and body. For instance, a pianist's experiences using Qi as a guiding force when playing music begin from their mind focusing on musical content, which acts as an inseparable party with the instrument or whole body to create sound.

A Tai Chi, Qi Gong and Martial Arts Approach to Chinese Food and Drink

It is important to think about the difference between traditional Chinese martial arts and regular exercise as it gives better insights on a common contemporary approach to Tai Chi and Qi Gong practices and nutrition. Chinese martial arts focus on the body and mind, as well as emphasize the intersection in the flows of energy in the whole body. Characteristics of food can be classified based on Yin Yang (Park et al., 2010, p.287). This includes characteristics like; whether the food cools an individual down or warms the individual up; whether it sends the energy outwards or draws the energy to the body's internal organs. These characteristics are based on the intrinsic properties of the food and how they are modified through preparation. Understanding the principles of Tai Chi and Qi Gong in relation to nutrition can help us tap into natural intuition more strongly and apply these principles with more skill to return or maintain balance when required.

A Tai Chi and Qi Gong Interpretation of Confucianism

The key connection between Confucianism, Tai Chi, and Qi Gong is morality. Morality is the fundamental technique and ultimate source of Tai Chi and Qi Gong power. Confucianism is perceived as a Qi Gong system. It is merely a moral and humanistic social philosophy, and its practical side involves the "magical power" of ritual performances (Sukhoverkhov et al., 2021, p.5). Confucianism is considered a process of religious transformation that influences personal behaviour. From Qi Gong's perspective, Confucianism offers significant textual evidence that reveals how Confucians have related their cultivation medicine practices with Qi Gong, both in practice and theory.

The Qi Gong and Tai Chi interpretation of Confucianism also gives us a new perspective on traditional Chinese martial arts. Often, Qi Gong is viewed as an activity aimed primarily at an individual's physical well-being. A breathing control technique brings particular unusual capabilities like the ability of a patient to heal without artificial medication

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or using bare hands to break a pile of bricks (Yeung et al., 2018, p.47). Although Qi Gong masters frequently emphasize morality, it is usually primarily taken for moral applications of Qi Gong. Since morality is considered a fundamental technique for bringing the interpretation of Confucianism and Qi Gong power, it appears Qi Gong's functions are not limited to just improving an individual's physical well-being on a personal level. Confucianism and Qi Gong share a common goal: the overall well-being (mental and physical) of all individuals and society, as well as the harmony of the entire world.

Conclusion

Typically, treatments are complex, and the process of healing and recovery takes time. Rehabilitation also requires continuous commitment and long-term planning. For centuries, Chinese communities have practised traditional medicine and therapies. Today, traditional Chinese medicine has gained much popularity worldwide. On physical training, Chinese Qi Gong, Tai Chi, and Martial arts have been excellent gentle exercises that facilitate healthy development and enhance individuals' well-being. Today, Tai Chi is broadly available in various health systems as it is recommended for its unbelievable health benefits.

In the modern scientific age, many individuals have been disconnected from their physical bodies and frequently lack or have a limited sense of their life. This nature exacerbates nervous system disorders and stress. Many illnesses have been linked to stress, as many live in a constant tension that shatters the nervous system. Hence, individuals have also adopted Tai Chi, Qi Gong, and Wushu as an effective health practise that provides physical, cognitive, behavioural, and affective benefits. Although these practices are more physical, they have gained sweeping popularity worldwide as they provide general awareness and insight into the sense of self-healing and the mind-body relationship.

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