

Influence of Yoga on the Association between Personality Traits and Generalized Anxiety

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INTRODUCTION

- Anxiety is a common problem and is in part a function of personality.
- The strongest personality-related correlate of anxiety is neuroticism, with conscientiousness and extraversion having smaller associations.
- One approach to reducing anxiety is through the practice of yoga.
- Yoga can serve as both a method of coping with anxiety as well as an in-vivo exposure to its physiological manifestations.
- Yoga may also influence the association between traits and anxiety (e.g., being especially potent for those high in neuroticism).
- However, this has not yet been examined empirically.

METHOD

- Participants were 404 workers on Amazon's Mturk ($age_{mean} = 37$ years, 52% male, 79% White).
- Participants completed the BFI, GAD-7, and answered 2 questions about the frequency of yoga practice.
- We tested hypotheses using multiple regression.

RESULTS

- On average, traits had a medium association ($r_{mean} = |.34|$) with anxiety, whereas yoga had a small association (see Table 1).
- Neuroticism had the strongest relative influence on anxiety (see Table 2).
- Yoga moderated select traits and was more beneficial for people high in agreeableness or neuroticism (see Figures 1-2).

DISCUSSION

- Consistent with previous research, personality traits in general (and neuroticism in particular) had robust associations with anxiety.
- The positive association between yoga and anxiety may be a function of anxious people being more likely to seek out yoga.
- The calming and validating nature of yoga may explain why it helps people high in neuroticism, for whom anxiety is high.
- The qualities of yoga also align with those of agreeableness, possibly reinforcing this trait's modest anxiolytic effects.
- Future research might build on this study by examining the optimal yoga practice for people with different personality types.

Doing yoga is associated with lower anxiety for people high in neuroticism and agreeableness.

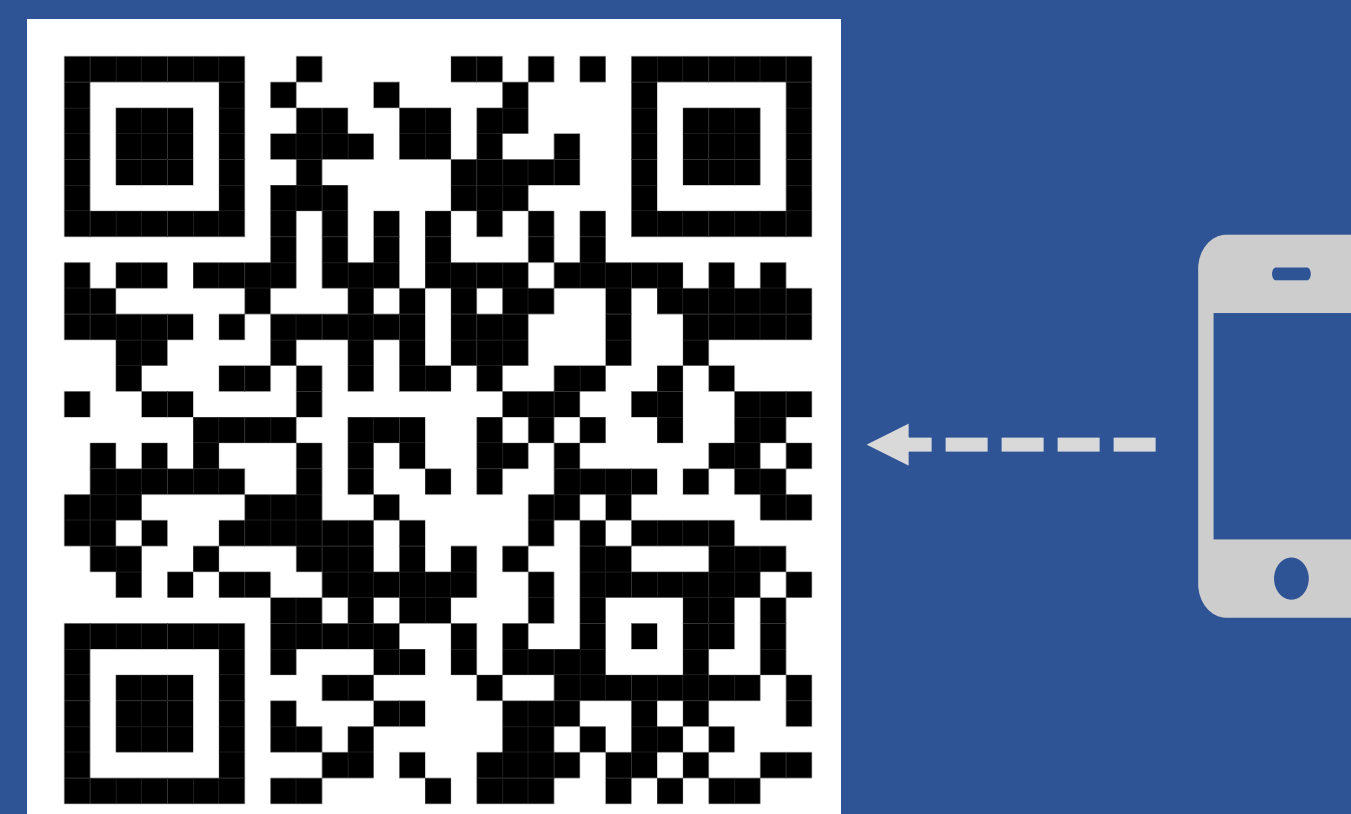


Table 1
Correlations Between Personality, Yoga, and Anxiety.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Anxiety	(.94)						
2. Agreeableness	-.39	(.84)					
3. Neuroticism	.64	-.51	(.90)				
4. Openness	-.09	.25	-.19	(.86)			
5. Conscientiousness	-.36	.47	-.45	.28	(.86)		
6. Extraversion	-.22	.33	-.50	.26	.21	(.90)	
7. Yoga	.11	-.12	.02	-.03	-.14	.09	–

Note: Cronbach's alpha on diagonal; all $r_s > |.10|$ are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Table 2
Relative Influence of Personality Traits and Yoga on Anxiety.

	β	95% CI	R^2
Agreeableness	-.07	[-.19, .00]	.44*
Neuroticism	.64*	[.50, .71]	
Openness	.05	[-.01, .16]	
Conscientiousness	-.07	[-.16, .03]	
Extraversion	.12*	[.03, .20]	
Yoga	.08*	[-.03, .13]	
Agreeableness x Yoga	-.11*	[-.21, -.01]	
Neuroticism x Yoga	-.14*	[-.27, -.01]	
Openness x Yoga	.00	[-.09, .10]	
Conscientiousness x Yoga	-.05	[-.15, .04]	
Extraversion x Yoga	.02	[-.06, .12]	

Note: values with an asterisk (*) are significant at $p < .05$

Figure 1
Moderating Effect of Yoga on the Association Between Neuroticism and Anxiety

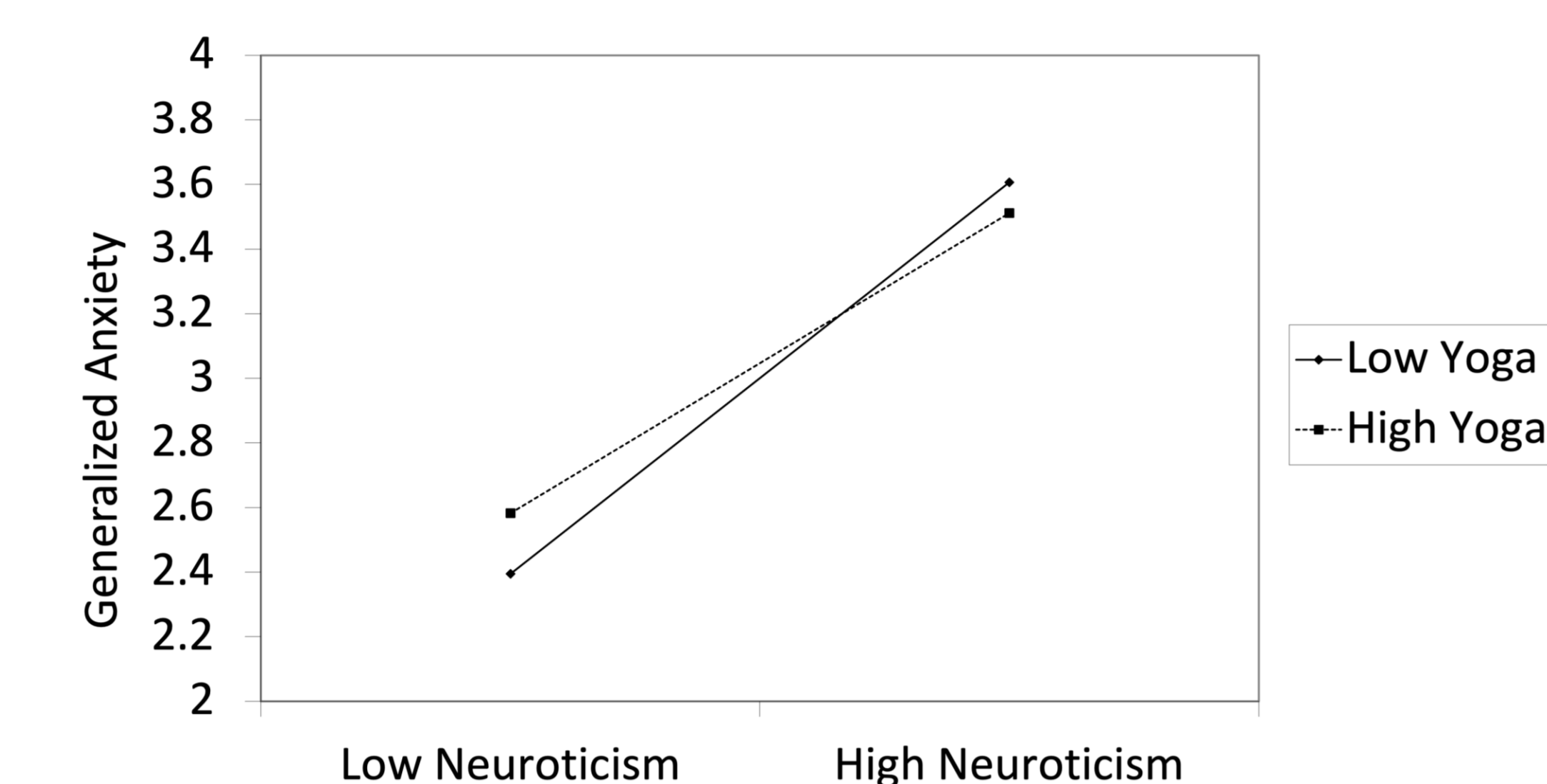


Figure 2
Moderating Effect of Yoga on the Association Between Agreeableness and Anxiety

