



Practicing yoga and caring for nature

How yoga practitioners relate to the self, the natural environment and planet Earth

Natalia Rubio Miralles

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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU
Department of People and Society
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Natalia Rubio Miralles

Supervisor:

Fredrika Mårtensson, Department of People and Society, SLU, Alnarp

Examiner:

Jonathan Stoltz, Department of People and Society, SLU, Alnarp

Caroline Hägerhäll, Department of People and Society, SLU, Alnarp

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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Faculty of Landscape Architecture, Horticulture and Crop Production Sciences

Department of People and Society

Abstract

Modern lifestyles have increasingly disconnected people from nature, contributing to ecological degradation and mental health challenges. Holistic practices like yoga may represent a pathway for addressing the human-nature detachment by raising self-awareness and a deeper connection to the natural world. This study investigated the relationship between yoga practice, nature connection and pro-environmental attitudes employing a mixed-methods approach. Three experienced yoga practitioners participated in semi-structured interviews, and a total of 28 participants completed a questionnaire measuring yoga practice, nature connection, eco-spiritual values and ecological attitudes. Interviews examined whether yoga is associated with participants' connection and attitudes toward the natural world, while the questionnaire provided quantitative insights into these relationships.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis revealed four main themes: nature as a space for mindful awareness, yoga as a transformative journey, yoga's role in reconnecting with nature and self and, the influence of yoga and nature on environmental attitudes. Quantitative analyses showed that practicing yoga outdoors was positively associated with nature connection, eco-spiritual values and pro-environmental attitudes, emphasizing the importance of context in yoga practice. Notably, a strong correlation between nature connectedness and eco-spirituality values suggested that emotional and spiritual bonds with nature are closely linked, with a spiritual dimension appearing essential for authentic connection.

These findings suggest that yoga, particularly when practiced in natural settings, may support reconnection with both self and the environment. Although outdoor practice was less common, those who engaged in it described deeper emotional and spiritual experiences, highlighting the potential of natural settings to enhance yoga's transformative impact.

Keywords: Yoga, nature connection, environmental attitudes, environmental psychology, eco-spirituality, mindfulness, interconnectedness, sustainable behaviour, outdoor yoga

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1. Introduction

1.1 The global disconnection from nature

Over the past century, there has been a marked physical and psychological separation between humans and the natural environment (White, 2012). Urbanization, technological advancements, and environmental degradation have diminished people's interaction with nature, resulting in negative effects for both mental and physical health. Research has shown that this disconnection contributes to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as a decline in cognitive function and overall wellbeing (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Ulrich, 1984). Furthermore, the lack of exposure to natural environments has been linked to weakened immune systems, reduced physical activity, and a higher prevalence of chronic health conditions (Frumkin, 2001). Louv (2005) introduced the term Nature Deficit Disorder to describe the spectrum of mental and physical health problems resulting from a distancing from the natural world (Louv 2005, see Warber et al. 2012).

This disconnection from nature has meaningful implications, not only for human health and well-being but also for the environment. Pollution and climate change are accelerating biodiversity loss on a global scale (IUCN, 2007; Aitken, 1998; Lande, 1998, see Nguyen, 2010). In addition, the depletion of natural resources such as food, water, and energy are escalating (van Schalkwyk 2011, see Suganthi 2019). These problems are threatening the stability of ecosystems that provide necessary conditions for life, making it harder for both humans and nature to co-exist.

Given the growing detachment between people and nature, and its negative consequences for both, it is clear that a change in how we relate to the environment is urgently needed. Traditional approaches to environmental conservation and mental health tend to focus on rational, scientific methods, yet frequently overlook the deeper and spiritual dimensions of our relationship with the Earth (Orr, 2004; see Nguyen, 2010). This need to introduce spirituality to environmental studies is supported by environmental educator Orr (2004) who stated that "data and research results may be true enough but may lack any resonance in the public mind and the human spirit" (Orr, 2004; see Nguyen, 2010).

In response to this gap, frameworks such as eco-spirituality, deep ecology or transpersonal psychology have emerged, promoting a deeper relationship with nature.

These concepts reflect the principles of interconnectedness, which provide a holistic response to the environmental crisis we face, emphasizing personal healing and responsibility towards the planet. Practices including yoga and mindfulness seem to align with these principles, as they encourage harmony between mind, body, and environment. Practiced outdoors, yoga may serve as a bridge between physical wellbeing and spiritual awareness, helping individuals develop a deeper appreciation for nature and a sense of stewardship for it. The concept of “Eco Yoga” underscores this interaction, suggesting that practicing in yoga within natural settings can intensify awareness and nurture ecological values (Cornell 2006, see Clarke, 2023). Likewise, nature-based mindfulness practices have been associated with enhanced connectedness to nature (Nisbet et al. 2019), which might indicate that the physical environment in which yoga is practiced matters.

Considering the above, the starting point of this study is the idea that yoga may be a pathway to address the human-nature disconnection, not only by supporting personal wellbeing, but also by encouraging care for the environment and potentially fostering ecological attitudes that nurture a deeper relationship with the Earth.

1.2 The origins of yoga and its relationship with nature

Yoga is an ancient practice originated thousands of years ago in India, which comprises various physical, mental, moral, and spiritual practices aimed at improving health, wellbeing, and self-awareness (Iyengar 1994, see Csala et al, 2021).

Central to yoga is the focus on the present moment, which involves mindful attention to one’s thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surroundings (Salmon et al. 2019). In fact, the word ‘yoga’ has the Sanskrit root ‘yuj’, which means to unite or connect, reflecting its holistic principle of connecting mind, body, and spirit with the natural world (Clarke, 2023). Research has shown that this ancient practice not only supports healing (Kinsley, 2021; Stein, 2022, see Clarke, 2023), but also fosters a feeling of interconnectedness with the Earth and encourages the preservation of the natural world. (Cornell, 2006; Vayali, 2007, see Clarke 2023).

Although yoga is popularly known in Western societies for its postures (asanas), often being reduced to a form of physical exercise and stretching (Csala et al 2021), its deeper purpose lies in spiritual growth and self-realization, as expressed in ancient texts like the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and the Bhagavad Gita (Garfinkel & Schumacher, 2000). As

stated by Patanjali, there are eight steps leading to absolute balance and awareness: Yama (ethical restraints), Niyama (ethical observances), Asana (physical poses), Pranayama (control of breathing), Pratyahara (withdrawal of senses), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (superconsciousness) (Zafeiroudi et al. 2021).

The Yamas include five ethical principles concerning the world and people's interactions with it (Zafeiroudi et al., 2021). Among those, Ahimsa (non-violence), Asteya (non-stealing), and Aparigraha (non-possessiveness) are most directly related to nature connection due to their focus on non-harm, resource respect and sustainable living. Ahimsa, for instance, extends to all beings and the environment, encouraging reduced consumption of animal products and seeing humans, other animals and nature as equals. Similarly, Asteya advocates against taking more than is needed, which implies living sustainably and respecting Earth's resources, and Aparigraha promotes minimalism and eco-friendly living (Clarke, 2023).

Hence, yoga emphasizes a harmonious relationship with the natural world through principles that promote an ecological mindset beyond the mat. As a holistic lifestyle, it has the potential to influence all aspects of life, offering principles and practices that can reshape how individuals perceive and interact with the environment (Tsevreni, 2024). Through the cultivation of compassion and empathy, yoga practitioners may become more inclined to support others, protect nature, and approach life with positivity (Zafeiroudi et al., 2021).

The emergence of Eco Yoga as a distinct field highlights yoga's potential to deepen the human–nature relationship (Cornell 2006, see Clarke 2013). Practicing yoga outdoors, as Cornell (2006) notes, can “invoke profound reverence and connect us to the immediacy, freshness, and vitality of the natural world.” This deep connection increases awareness of environmental rhythms and promotes a sense of unity with Earth (Clarke, 2013). Therefore, Eco Yoga aligns with broader environmental philosophies found in Western academic thought, such as deep ecology, which stands for a spiritual connection to nature as necessary for wellbeing (Naess, 2008). In line with this view, yoga practiced in natural surroundings may facilitate a shift in values, leading to greater environmental stewardship and sustainable behaviours (Zafeiroudi et al., 2021).

1.3 Aim

The overall aim of this study is to explore how yoga practitioners perceive that their relationship to nature and their environmental attitudes are connected with their yoga practice.

The research questions are:

- How do yoga practitioners relate to nature?
- What is the relationship between yoga practice and environmental attitudes?
- How is the setting of yoga practice (indoors vs. in nature) related to practitioners' sense of connection to nature?

My assumption is that yoga practice, connection to nature, and environmental concern are interrelated, and that this association is even stronger among individuals who practice yoga in natural surroundings.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Nature connection: integrating personal and planetary health

There is growing scientific evidence confirming that human wellbeing and ecosystem health are deeply interconnected (Barragan-Jason et al., 2023). This relationship suggests that nature not only influences health but also shapes behaviours that impact the environment. Both ecologists and ecopsychologists argue that developing a strong bond with nature is essential for promoting sustainable behaviours. As the influential ecologist Leopold (1949) noted, “we abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect” (Mayer & Franz, 2004).

This relationship between humans and nature has been explored through numerous research within environmental psychology. This field examines the interplay between humans and their environments, focusing on how natural and built environments influence behaviors, emotions, and overall wellbeing. Research has demonstrated that exposure to nature reduces stress, enhances cognitive performance, and promotes restorative experiences (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Hartig et al., 2014). Supporting this idea, studies by Oh et al. (2017) and Cervinka et al. (2012) have also proved that spending time in nature is associated with improved health outcomes and greater overall wellbeing. In this context, the biophilia hypothesis, proposed by Wilson (1984), posits that humans possess an innate affinity for the natural world, a view supported by Baxter and Pelletier (2018), who argue that a sense of connection to nature is a fundamental psychological need.

Connectedness to nature has been discussed by Schultz (2002) as “the extent to which an individual includes nature within his/her cognitive representation of self” (see Mayer & Franz, 2004). Scientific studies indicate that direct immersion in nature, such as walking in a forest, enhances this sense of connection. Furthermore, nature-based mindfulness practices have been shown to significantly strengthen psychological connectedness to nature, which in turn supports behaviors that benefit the environment (Gaiswinkler & Unterrainer, 2016) and contributes to a greater sense of meaning, purpose, and spiritual fulfillment (Barragan-Jason et al., 2023).

Enhancing affinity with nature, therefore, not only improves mental health but also encourages pro-environmental behaviors. The Nova Network’s Planetary Health

discussions (2021–2022) emphasized this idea, describing a connection to nature as a pathway to promoting both personal and planetary health (Barragan-Jason et al., 2021). These discussions align with initiatives such as the Inner Development Goals (IDGs), which aim to accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals by fostering emotional intelligence, caring for others, and a deeper connectedness with the natural world (Zelenski et al., 2023). Thus, inner development is important and necessary for meaningful societal changes towards sustainability.

Several different measures, such as Nature Relatedness (Niesbet & Zelenski, 2013), Nature Connectedness (Mayer & Frantz, 2004), and Nature Connectivity (Dutcher et al., 2007), assess individuals' connection to nature. (Tam 2013, see Zelenski et al. 2023). In the present study, the Connectedness to Nature Scale (Mayer & Frantz, 2004) is employed to measure the sense of unity individuals feel with nature, offering valuable insights into the potential relationship between yoga practice and a deeper sense of connection to the natural world.

2.2 Yoga, nature and spirituality: pathways to reconnection

Yoga and other holistic health practices have been identified as pathways to reconnect with ourselves, each other, and nature. A deep connection to nature has been associated with a greater sense of meaning, purpose, and spiritual fulfilment, with the spiritual dimension becoming stronger as the emotional connection deepens (Trigwell et al. 2014). Fredrickson and Anderson (1999) further emphasize that natural environments promote spiritual wellbeing, with qualities that encourage feelings of interconnectedness with all life forms. In fact, natural settings such as forests, lakes, and mountains have been claimed to evoke feelings of awe and divinity, serving as a source of spiritual inspiration and transcendence (Ferguson & Tamburello, 2015).

Despite an increased interest in spirituality in the western world, the concept remains difficult to define due to its subjective and personal nature (Miller & Thoresen, 1999). However, a broadly accepted definition was provided by Elkins et al. (1988), describing spirituality as a way of being and experiencing that arises through awareness of a transcendent dimension, and is characterized by specific values regarding self, others, nature, life, and the Ultimate (Elkins et al., 1988). In the context of traditional yoga,

spirituality is seen as a journey towards realizing the unity of all things (Satyananda Saraswati, 2013, see Csala et al., 2021). The ultimate aim of yoga is the realization of oneness, developing a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of life. These teachings align with principles of deep ecology and eco-spirituality, which recognize the value of all living beings and emphasize humanity's responsibility to live in harmony with the natural world (Miller, 2019).

Eco-spirituality refers to the spiritual connection between humans and the environment (Itel, 2023). It reflects the interdependence that humans share with the environment (Lincoln, 2000), focusing on harmony, interconnectedness, and admiration for the sacredness of nature (Adow et al. 2024). This perspective also promotes respectful and caring behaviours towards the natural world (Suganthi, 2019), encouraging individuals to appreciate and coexist with nature rather than dominate it.

Both yoga and spirituality are also associated with positive mental health outcomes (Garfinkel & Schumacher, 2000). These practices enhance self-awareness and the ability to understand one's thoughts and feelings which, in turn, fosters empathy and compassion for others and the environment (Woiwode et al., 2021). This holistic outlook promotes a sense of responsibility toward nature, aligning with research suggesting that spiritual growth through yoga and meditation strengthens inner values, leading to more environmentally sustainable behaviour and a better quality of life (Zafeiroudi et al., 2021).

Research also suggests that transcendent and spiritual experiences frequently arise during therapeutic encounters in nature (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999), indicating that natural environments can facilitate spiritual wellbeing. Nature is therefore associated with transcendent experiences, evoking a sense of interconnectedness with nature and all living beings (Williams & Harvey, 2001). In this context, within the field of environmental psychology, spirituality might be approached by studying how particular qualities of the physical environment contribute to feelings of transcendence and how these experiences influence people's health and wellbeing.

2.3 Fostering pro-environmental attitudes through yoga practice

Numerous studies support the notion that yoga and mindfulness practices contribute to the development of sustainable behaviours by deepening individuals' connection with nature. Weisner and Cameron (2020) found that yoga enhances concentration and

awareness, creating a sense of closeness to the natural world that encourages environmentally friendly actions. Similarly, Ericson, Kjøenstad, and Barstad (2014) demonstrated that mindfulness practices improve overall wellbeing and promote ecologically conscious lifestyles.

Pro-environmental behaviors are defined as actions that protect or avoid harm to the environment (Geiger et al., 2018), which are often motivated by a sense of belonging to nature (Barbaro & Pickett, 2016; Davis et al., 2009; Hoot & Friedman, 2011; Mayer & Frantz, 2004, see Ray et al., 2021). Practices such as meditation can foster this sense of unity with the natural world (Thiermann & Sheate, 2020; Riordan et al., 2022). In this sense, Brown and Kasser (2005) found that individuals with higher mindfulness scores showed greater ecological awareness and concern for environmental issues. Similarly, Ryan et al. (2017) highlighted the positive impact of mindfulness-based ecotherapy programs on participants' connection to nature and their environmentally conscious behaviors.

This relationship between inner awareness and ecological responsibility is further supported by perspectives within eco-spirituality and deep ecology. Deep ecology emphasizes self-realization as a path to understanding the interconnectedness of all life (Naess 1973, see Clarke, 2013), which aligns closely with the philosophical foundations of yoga. Capra & Luisi (2016) described the profound link between ecology and spirituality, suggesting that ecological awareness at its deepest level is an intuitive recognition of the oneness of all life, which relates to yoga's central principle (see Clarke, 2013). Van Schalkwyk (2011) further emphasized the important role of eco-spirituality in guiding transformative paths that integrate spiritual growth with environmental engagement. Hence, embracing an eco-spiritual consciousness creates the conditions for healing both self and the environment (Lincoln, 2000).

Based on these ideas, it can be inferred that yoga supports sustainable living not only through its emphasis on mindfulness and self-awareness, but also by nurturing an overall respectful relationship with planet Earth. From this perspective, reconnecting with nature may offer a powerful pathway to spiritual wellbeing and, therefore, environmental responsibility (Zelenski et al., 2023), with yoga as a valuable practice for enhancing this connection.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study approaches the relationship between connection to nature and pro-environmental attitudes among yoga practitioners using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Semi-structured interviews allowed for a deep exploration of personal experiences, while a structured survey evaluated participants' emotional and spiritual connection to the natural world and willingness to take care of it, allowing for measurable comparisons across all participants.

3.2 Participants

This research involved 28 yoga practitioners of diverse ages and European nationalities, with a predominantly female group (24 out of 28 participants). Most participants were between 25 and 34 years old (10 individuals), followed by 7 participants aged 45 to 54, 5 aged 35 to 44, and 4 aged 55 to 64. Only 2 participants were under 24 or over 65.

Three participants—two yoga teachers and one experienced practitioner—were selected for interviews. They were chosen through purposive sampling, based on the criteria of having practiced yoga regularly for at least two years, to ensure sufficient experience with yoga. The rest of participants were clients at a yoga retreat centre, where they engaged in a week-long wellness program consisting of daily yoga, among other activities. In this case, participants were recruited using a convenience sampling method, as they were selected from a retreat where the researcher works as a yoga teacher.

All participants were informed about the study's purpose, told that their data would be treated confidentially, and provided verbal consent to participate.

3.3 Materials

3.3.1 Interview

The three in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were designed to explore personal experiences of yoga in fostering nature connectedness and environmental attitudes from two yoga instructors and one experienced practitioner.

An interview guide was developed with the same questions for all interviewees to allow comparability across participants and to enable the exploration of individual experiences in a flexible way. It comprised a total of 20 open-ended questions structured within different themes, such as personal yoga experience, the relationship between yoga and nature connection, or the perceived impact of yoga practice on sustainable attitudes. Some examples of questions are: “What does yoga mean to you? What does it add to your life?” or “During your yoga practice, do you ever feel a sense of unity with the natural world? If so, can you describe this experience?”

3.3.2 Questionnaires

A questionnaire containing a total of 52 inquiries was developed based on standardized scales, including the Connectedness to Nature Scale (CNS), Eco spirituality Scale (ESS), and Environmental Attitudes Inventory (EAI). These instruments have been used in previous studies, which adds strength to the measure in terms of reliability, validity and credibility of the findings (Field, 2018). Moreover, additional items have been included to assess yoga practice, such as type of yoga practiced, frequency, duration of each session, years of experience, practice environment and frequency of outdoor practice.

Connectedness to Nature Scale (CNS)

It measures individuals’ feelings of belonging and connection to the natural world (Mayer & Frantz, 2004). It consists of 14 items, which are to be answered in a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). This scale was appropriate to the research as it aligns with the aim of exploring the emotional bond individuals feel with nature, and can be used for correlations with yoga-related variables to assess potential relationships between yoga practice and nature connectedness.

exploring whether practices such as yoga, which foster self-connection, may foster a deeper bond with the environment as well.

Eco-spirituality Scale (ESS)

The 8-item version of the Eco-spirituality Scale (Suganthi, 2019) was used to assess participants' sense of spiritual connection to the environment, which was measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Although the original consists of 20 items, this short version includes essential aspects of eco-spirituality, including mindfulness of nature, a sacred view of the Earth, and responsibility for environmental care. Its inclusion was relevant to the study as it allows for the calculation of correlations with variables associated with yoga practice to explore how spiritual engagement through yoga may foster experiences that reflect environmental care.

Environmental Attitudes Inventory (EAI)

It evaluates individuals' beliefs, feelings, and behaviors concerning environmental issues and ecological views (Milfont & Duckitt, 2010). The original version consists of 120 items divided into 12 subscales. However, short version of the EAI was employed for this study, which includes 24 items, two from each of the original subscales.

Items are divided into two domains: preservation, which refers to attitudes and behaviors that prioritize protecting the environment for its own sake, and utilization, which reflects attitudes that view nature more as a resource to be used by humans (Milfont & Duckitt, 2010). In the context of this study, utilization scores were considered not relevant, as this dimension reflects a more anthropocentric worldview of human dominance over nature, which is not aligned with the aim of this research.

Responses were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The EAI was useful for this study because it offers a clear way to measure environmental concern, and it helps explore whether attitudes toward the environment are influenced by yoga through appropriate statistical methods.

These three tools were employed to complement qualitative insights, with an estimated completion time of approximately 15 minutes in total.

3.4 Procedure

3.4.1 Data collection through questionnaires

Questionnaires were administered on the last day of each 7-day retreat to obtain immediate impressions of participants' experiences. It was distributed among all participants, including those who were interviewed. Given my dual role as a researcher and yoga teacher, this timing also aimed to reduce my influence as a teacher on participants' responses.

Data was collected from five retreats held between mid-January and the end of March. Initially, in the first two retreats, a printed version of the questionnaire was distributed to the group. Participants were given brief instructions on how to complete it and were encouraged to respond honestly. However, based on participant feedback, a Google Forms version was introduced in the third retreat. This allowed participants to complete the survey from any location within the centre, offering more flexibility. This change was also convenient because, due to different flight schedules, some participants had to leave early and were unable to complete the printed questionnaire at the scheduled time. Additionally, the switch to Google Forms helped reduce paper waste, which is particularly relevant for this study on environmental consciousness. Nonetheless, due to data protection rules, the shift was made back to the paper version for later retreats. This ensured that all participants who agreed to participate in the study provided responses, considering that in the online version a few participants skipped or forgot to answer.

The estimated completion time was approximately 15 minutes. Participation was completely voluntary, and participants were informed they could withdraw at any time.

3.4.2 Data collection through interviews

Prior to interviews, informed consent was obtained, ensuring participants understood the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and how the data would be used and recorded. All dialogues were audio-recorded using a digital recorder on the phone.

The first interview took place on February 16, 2025, with a yoga teacher in a public park in the centre of one of the largest cities in Spain, immediately after she had conducted a yoga class. The natural setting provided a suitable context for the discussion, as it was

in nature and after yoga, aligning with the study's purpose. The participant was recruited after I attended one of her yoga sessions and thought of interviewing her for this study. Therefore, I sent her a private message explaining the aim of the study and included an informed letter with further details. I then asked if she would be open to an interview, and she agreed. It lasted approximately 45 minutes.

The second interview took place on February 21, 2025, with an experienced yoga practitioner. I reached out to the participant through a person we had in common, as she is a student at a yoga studio where a close friend of mine also practices. Since I was searching for a participant, I asked my friend if she knew anyone from the studio who might be open to participating in an interview. My friend recommended this person, and I reached out to her through social media to explain the purpose of the study and asked if she would like to be interviewed. The interview was conducted in a nearby park, chosen for its peaceful surroundings and because it was convenient for both of us. The duration was about 30 minutes.

The third interview was carried out on February 23, 2025, with another yoga teacher. I found her contact by searching on Google for the nearest yoga studio to my residence. Then, I called to ask if any of their teachers might be open to participating in an interview and explained the purpose of the study. She was open to the idea and suggested that I visit the studio after the last class of the day for the interview. It lasted for approximately half an hour. The setting provided a calm and comfortable environment, allowing for a discussion without external distractions.

3.5 Data analysis

3.5.1 Interview interpretation

The analysis of the results has been based on the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This approach was chosen to explore and understand how the interviewees experience yoga as a means for nature connectedness and pro-environmental attitudes. It is of importance to note that, given its interpretative nature, the data collection and analysis might have been subjectively influenced by me as a researcher. The guidelines have been mainly provided by the article *A practical guide to using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in qualitative research psychology* by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), as well as the chapter Interpretative Phenomenological

Analysis from *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* by Smith and Osborn (2007).

The first step into analysing the data was to transcribe the audio recordings verbatim, which took place within two or three days after the interviews to ensure accurate interpretation of the information. Turboscribe.ai was the program used for transcription. Next, audio recordings were played while checked along with each transcript, and some edits were made for clarity of data.

The analysis procedure consisted of several stages, as outlined by IPA. The first step involved multiple readings of each transcript, during which different dimensions of the participants' perceptions were highlighted, and notes were made on significant aspects. Following this, data was organized into broad themes, without focusing on specific research questions, which allowed for an open exploration.

Subsequently, the emerging themes were reviewed with the study's aim in mind and in relation to the research questions, with the goal of making them as explanatory as possible. Therefore, attention was given to identify how participants described their relationship with nature, how they perceived the influence of practicing yoga in different settings (indoors vs. in nature), and how regular practice in natural environments was associated to environmental attitudes.

Next, the themes were examined to explore how they related to one another across different interviews, revealing similarities and differences in perceptions of yoga and nature among interviewees.

Afterwards, the overall themes were broken down into subthemes. This process involved identifying specific aspects for a more detailed understanding of the data. For instance, the theme "Nature as a space for mindful awareness" was expanded to include subthemes such as "nature as home and refuge" or "increased time and interaction to deepen nature connection." These themes and subthemes were then entered into **Table 1** (appendix 3), together with a brief description.

3.5.2 Questionnaire evaluation

The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Responses from the three validated psychometric scales—the Environmental Attitudes Inventory (EAI) (Milfont & Duckitt, 2010), the Connectedness to Nature Scale

(CNS) (Mayer & Frantz, 2004), and the Eco-spirituality Scale (Suganthi, 2019)— and additional yoga practice questions were examined to assess relationships between yoga, nature connectedness, eco-spirituality and environmental consciousness.

Survey responses from both the paper and digital versions were exported to Excel for analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to examine patterns in yoga practice among participants, and graphs were included to illustrate the frequency, duration, years of experience, locations of their practice, and frequency of outdoor yoga. Descriptive statistics were also applied to summarize participants' scores on three validated psychometric scales: the Connectedness to Nature Scale (CNS), the Eco-spirituality Scale, and the Environmental Attitudes Inventory (EAI). Later, Pearson's correlation analysis were conducted to assess the relationships between yoga-related variables and nature connectedness, eco-spirituality, and environmental attitudes, as measured by the CNS, Eco-spirituality Scale, and EAI Preservation subscale, respectively. This was done to explore the extent to which different nature-based experiences, represented by these constructs, are interrelated with yoga practice.

Furthermore, even though the study is based on a small sample size, t-tests were employed to compare differences between groups based on the frequency of yoga practice in natural environments. Specifically, participants were divided into two groups: those who practiced yoga outdoors rarely or never, and those who did so occasionally, frequently, or almost always. This analysis aimed to determine whether the setting of yoga practice was associated with significant differences in connectedness to nature, eco-spirituality, and pro-environmental attitudes. Significant differences were found for connectedness to nature and eco-spirituality, supporting the hypothesis that engaging in yoga within natural settings may enhance individuals' relationship with the environment.

Data analysis was conducted using Excel, and results have been represented in graphs and tables to illustrate key findings.

3.6 Ethical considerations

To ensure that the study was ethical, all participants were informed about the research objective through an informed letter outlining the purpose, what participation involved, and their rights as participants. It was explicitly stated that participation was anonymous and entirely voluntary, that responses would be handled confidentially, and that they

could withdraw at any time without consequences. Participants were also introduced to the researcher and her academic background. Additionally, they were informed about the approximate duration of either the interview or the questionnaire and were provided with contact details for both the researcher and the thesis supervisor, allowing them to ask questions if they wished.

Both interviewees and questionnaire respondents provided oral consent before participating. Interview participants were informed that the conversation would be audio-recorded only for academic purposes and were made aware of the use of open-ended questions, as well as the estimated duration of the interview. Additionally, they were notified that all identifying information would be removed and that pseudonyms would be used to protect their anonymity.

Regarding the use of questionnaires, both printed and digital formats were used during the study. However, the shift to Google Forms had some limitations, such as concerns about data security and privacy, which led to switch back to a printed version for later retreats.

Interview recordings were transcribed using the AI tool Turboscribe.ai, which encrypts files and does not share data with third parties, supporting the confidentiality of participants' information.

During the process of data analysis, attention was given to accurately capture participants' perspectives in order to minimize bias. This was done by carefully reviewing the data, checking interpretations against their words, and analysing it multiple times.

4. Results

The results are presented in two main parts. Section 4.1 outlines the findings from the interviews, focusing on yoga practitioners' lived experiences and their perceptions of nature, yoga, and environmental awareness. Section 4.2 presents the outcomes from the questionnaires, highlighting statistical patterns and associations between yoga practice, nature connectedness, eco-spirituality, and pro-environmental attitudes.

4.1 Qualitative part: yoga practitioners' perceptions of nature

Overall, yoga was perceived as a transformative practice leading to greater emotional understanding and personal growth, which helped to develop a deeper appreciation for the natural world and encouraged a more sustainable lifestyle. Some individuals were already environmentally conscious, yet yoga deepened their sense of responsibility towards nature. While all of them expressed a preference for practicing in nature, they acknowledged that it is not the setting in where they practice more often, since indoor practice is more practical and fits better into their routines.

4.1.1 Nature as a space for mindful awareness

Nature as home and refuge

Nature was perceived as a place where they could find calm and balance, and all of them agreed on the fact that spending time in nature is essential.

For Martina, nature is perceived as a shelter, suggesting that nature helps her reset emotionally and mentally. She also points out that nature evokes gratitude and appreciation for her life:

For me, nature feels like... like a refuge. A place where I can be calm, where I can find my centre, have space for myself, observe, and... and feel a deep sense of gratitude.

Esther expresses dependence on nature for mental wellbeing in a direct way, using the word “vital”. Therefore, she suggests that for her nature is not just a place of peace, but a necessity for emotional wellbeing:

It's vital (spending time in nature). I think that if nature was taken away from me, my mental health would drastically drop.

Anna sees nature as more than just a peaceful setting, but rather a place of belonging. She also describes it as "truth," suggesting that nature represents authenticity, and "connection," reflecting an awareness of interdependence:

I guess nature means coming back to what is essential, to what we truly need. I would say, just in a few words: truth, connection (...) and home, I would say also. Because you feel at peace, when you feel at home.

Increasing time and interaction to deepen nature connection

All three interviewees emphasize the importance of starting by spending time in nature without expectations of strengthening the connection with it. They claim that a connection to nature is something that happens naturally when spending time outdoors, rather than something that arises with a conscious effort.

Martina suggests that simply increasing time in nature is enough to start building up a relationship with it, indicating that it is intuitively created and that there is no right or wrong way to do it:

Simply spending more time in nature—without any pressure, alone or with others, however it feels easiest, with no judgment or expectations.

Esther believes that nature should be experienced spontaneously, letting go of expectations. However, she encourages reserving time each week, which implies that looking for opportunities for nature connection is important:

Interact with nature—without seeking, without planning, without having a goal. Just go. Set aside time each week.

Anna's statement is the most direct, reflecting that she sees nature connection as essential, rather than an option:

Go in nature. You must have that connection.

Obstacles related to ego, lifestyle and lack of self-connection

Each participant highlights different barriers that prevent people from fully engaging with the natural world. However, they all suggest that nature connection is not just about physical presence but also about mindset and self-awareness.

Martina focuses on external factors, such as modern lifestyles, fear, and misunderstandings about how nature connection should look like:

It could be because of the lifestyle we lead (...) I also think fear might be a factor. Sometimes we're afraid of nature—strong winds, heavy rains, natural disasters... (...) Or there's this idea that being in nature has to involve physical activity, like running or hiking. But sometimes, connecting with nature is as simple as sitting on the beach, meditating, or doing yoga—just being present.

Esther takes a more internal perspective, arguing that the ego is the biggest obstacle, as it creates resistance to connection:

The biggest challenge is the ego—not just with nature, but in everything. Since yoga teaches you to let go of the ego, that's one of the first challenges you'll face. Your mind will resist connecting with your surroundings.

For Anna, rather than getting rid of the ego, the most important aspect is self-connection, suggesting that one must first be in tune with their own body before being able to truly connect with nature:

The hardest part for some people is to connect with their bodies, to connect with themselves (...) I feel that you cannot really connect with nature if you cannot connect with yourself (...) If you cannot connect to your own nature, to your body, and what links you to your environment, then it will be hard to appreciate the beauty of flowers or the quietness of a walking in nature.

4.1.2 Yoga as a transformative journey

From challenge to personal growth through yoga practice

Personal transformation was experienced through yoga, initially facing challenges but, as their practice evolved, yoga became a way of understanding themselves and a tool for emotional healing, shaping who they are and how they live.

Martina's transformation began with an initial sense of struggle which, over time, became a necessity. This shift implies that personal growth emerged through discomfort, deepening her connection to the practice:

At first, it was difficult for me. It was challenging, yes, kind of a personal challenge—attending a yoga class, meeting people, and practicing yoga itself. Well, I suppose it required a lot of effort at the time, physically speaking (...) and now I feel super comfortable with it. In fact, it's something that does me a lot of good, and I feel it when I don't practice. Also, on a spiritual level, I have gradually immersed myself in it.

For Esther, her transformation was connected to teaching. Teaching changed her relationship with yoga, making it something she studied with more dedication, rather than just something she practiced:

My progress was a bit slow at first, but once I decided to start teaching, it accelerated. I'm learning so much more now because teaching motivates me to learn more—not just for myself, but to be able to teach others (...) Right now, yoga is everything to me.

Anna describes her growth in two ways: first, through her own discipline (becoming more consistent), and second, through teaching others. She acknowledges that her students also shape her perception of yoga, highlighting that her practice evolves as she interacts with others:

Yes, it has evolved, my personal practise, because I'm more consistent. Also, the classes change the way you teach and also maybe the way you see yoga a little bit, because you adapt to the people you have in class, and then you learn with them.

For both Anna and Esther, their transformation in yoga was not only through personal practice, but through teaching others. However, Anna's experience slightly differs from Esther's one, given that Esther emphasizes how teaching made her take yoga more

seriously, and Anna describes how her perspective of yoga changed through interaction with students.

Integrating yoga into identity and everyday life

All women agreed that yoga is more than just physical postures (asanas). It affects how they think, how they make decisions, and how they connect with others.

Martina reflects the idea that yoga is a philosophy that guides her personal development, self-awareness, and wellbeing by emphasizing a mind-body connection:

To me, yoga... can be a way of living, a philosophy that accompanies you, helps you grow, and makes you more aware of your body and yourself as a person. I think that would be my definition—a philosophy of life that invites wellbeing and self-awareness, listening to your body, your mind, your breath...

For Esther, yoga is part of her identity. She expresses a deep personal connection to yoga as a guide in her life, which brings her purpose, emotional stability, and love. Furthermore, she adds that her social circle, her career, and how she understands life are shaped by yoga:

Yoga is my life. Right now, yoga is everything to me. It gives me purpose, happiness, stability, connection—everything (...) For me, yoga is love. It teaches you to love everything around you—the light and the darkness, the good moments and the bad.

(Yoga) it's my work, it's what I enjoy, it's what brings me peace, it's what I need to feel good. It's also how I've made friends (...) So, really, yoga is my connection with people, my emotional stability, my financial support, my spiritual growth... Yoga is everything to me.

Anna connects yoga to a balanced way of living and self-realization, rather than just physical postures, suggesting that yoga serves as a basis for balanced, conscious living:

I think yoga is a lifestyle. It has principles and you can follow them to have the better lifestyle and health possible. You can do yoga when you practise with the postures, with asanas, and you can also go back to yoga for personal behaviour

*like how you behave with yourself, how you treat yourself, how you treat others.
To me it's a philosophy, a lifestyle.*

A tool for inner listening, emotional clarity and self-understanding

Yoga gave participants a way to understand their emotions and struggles, helping them listen to themselves more deeply.

Martina highlights that yoga fosters self-awareness, particularly in the ability to listen to the body's needs and sensations, recognize limits, and practice self-care on both physical and emotional levels:

I feel like I listen to my body more. And that has given me a lot of self-knowledge—knowing my limits, how to take care of myself... Yes, how to take care of myself emotionally and physically.

Anna suggests that yoga has helped her develop commitment and consistency, which are a key principle in traditional yoga teachings. It aligns with Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, where discipline is part of the *Niyamas* (personal observances), particularly *tapas* (self-discipline), which refers to the dedication required to maintain a consistent practice:

I would say yoga has brought me discipline, safety and stability. Because I always come back to it and I always find peace when I come back to it.

Esther reflects on an experience of healing through yoga, emphasizing that, thanks to yoga, she understood the causes of her sadness, which gave her the clarity to make changes in her life:

Little by little, through yoga, I started listening to myself. I understood why I was feeling sad, and I changed my life.

Healing through profound yoga experiences

All women shared powerful moments in their yoga journey that changed how they felt about the practice.

Martina revealed how yoga can evoke powerful emotional responses by reconnecting her with the Earth, experiencing intense grounding, and feelings of interconnectedness:

One day we had a session very focused on the connection with the Earth—how it supports us, the feeling of being deeply grounded, and reflecting on this relationship. I remember I started crying, because it really moved me.

For Esther, yoga was a key part of recovering from depression. From feeling drained, she gradually regained energy and motivation through meditation and movement, reflecting a belief in yoga as an alternative path to healing. Interestingly, she shared an experience that goes beyond the mat, which reflects her broader perspective of yoga:

I had no energy at all. (...) I was living on autopilot—getting up to go to work, coming home, walking my dogs, and then collapsing on the couch. He (the psychiatrist) prescribed me antidepressants. That's when I turned to yoga. From what I had learned before, I knew that all the answers are within us (...) So, I dedicated myself to yoga (...) Thanks to yoga, I never took those pills, and I changed my life.

Anna experienced a profound emotional relief through yoga by performing hip-opening postures. This reflects a mind-body connection, where emotions are held within the body:

I remember one class specifically, it was about hip opening, stretching the hips. We tend to store emotions in the hips, which I already felt it in my personal practise but just a little bit. And then during this class, I was sobbing. I really burst into tears. I really could feel that some emotions were released.

Both Martina and Anna's experiences share deep emotional expressions through practicing yoga postures. While one happened through a physical stretch and the other through a reflection on connection to nature, both events are similar in their emotional impact.

4.1.3 The role of yoga in reconnecting self with nature

Yoga as a pathway to deepen connection with nature

All participants interpret nature not just as an external setting but as a place of belonging. This feeling increases when yoga is practiced outdoors. Also, they argue that their relationship with nature has evolved since practicing yoga.

Martina sees yoga as a tool that has helped her slow down and listen more deeply to nature. She says that her connection to nature was always present but has now become more mindful:

I feel like my connection with nature has always been very present (...) But maybe the way I listen to it has changed. Since starting yoga, I think it has given me more stillness, more time to listen, to pause. So yes, I think my relationship with nature has changed since I started practicing yoga.

Esther describes a shift in perception of nature, suggesting that her awareness has expanded beyond visual perception, suggesting a deeper emotional connection:

Yes, my connection with nature has changed because I now understand it in a different way (...) Before, I only saw it. And now, I listen to it.

Anna perceives the relationship as interrelated, questioning whether yoga deepened her connection to nature or if nature transformed her experience of yoga, emphasizing that both influence each other:

Is it yoga that changed my relationship with nature or is it nature that changed my relation to yoga? I don't know, I think it's intertwined. I think it really goes together.

Contrasts between indoor and outdoor yoga practice

All participants acknowledged that practicing yoga in nature and indoors offer distinct experiences, each with its own benefits. While indoor practice provides structure and a controlled setting, practicing in nature enhances sensory awareness, connection, and presence. They all expressed a preference for practicing in nature, yet they acknowledged that studios provide benefits as well.

Martina says that practicing yoga outdoors intensifies her sensory perception, allowing her to be more connected to her surroundings and body:

Yoga in nature invites you to observe and feel more deeply. I believe it's a completely different experience. Even though some studios create a peaceful and tranquil atmosphere, I feel like nature invites you into a different kind of presence.

In nature your senses might be more awakened—both in terms of touch, because you're in direct contact with the ground, maybe barefoot, feeling the earth; and in terms of sight, if you keep your eyes open, observing the trees. I think your awareness of the environment increases.

Esther expresses that yoga in nature is not necessarily better than yoga in a studio; they simply offer different outcomes. She highlights that while a studio or home practice promotes introspection, practicing outdoors teaches adaptability and enhances connection, not just to nature but also to other people:

I don't think one is better than the other (yoga in nature or in a studio). They're simply different and bring different benefits (...) The practice in a controlled environment, which would be a studio or home, encourages introspection much more (...) But it's also really important to learn to practice with distractions, which you'd encounter in a park or a natural setting. Additionally, connection is important—not just connection with nature but also connection with other people (...) Yoga is just as much about looking inward as it is about looking outward.

Yoga that is practiced in open spaces, in natural environments, helps you familiarize yourself with those kinds of surroundings.

Anna highlights the idea that the environment influences the yoga experience, suggesting that practicing in nature helps dissolve the ego and creates a sense of unity with the environment:

The surroundings where you're doing yoga are always affecting you. I think in nature maybe it's easier to get rid of the ego. Maybe it's easier to not think of yourself as yourself, but just be part of your surroundings, of your environment.

Interconnection between self and the environment

Participants' perceptions suggest that interconnectedness is the realization a sense of unity and belonging to nature. In this, yoga and meditation play a key role in pulling apart the illusion of separation and allowing individuals to perceive themselves as linked to nature and all living beings.

Maria understands interconnectedness as a feeling of connection to others and nature, highlighting that we share the same rhythms between humans and nature:

I think interconnection means realizing that we are all connected and that we are part of nature too. And so, it's inevitable that we share the same cycles.

For Esther, interdependence is an essential reality, as she asserts that nothing exists on its own. Her experience suggests that through mindful observation and meditation, one can gain a deeper awareness of interconnectedness:

One of the benefits of meditation is realizing that nothing can exist by itself. I mean, that we all, everything, and absolutely everything, has an interdependence (...) And that is one of the things you realize when you stop to observe and stop thinking.

Anna views nature, humanity, and the divine as part of the same energy. This suggests a spiritual worldview, where yoga deepens her perception of unity and interconnectedness:

You are connected with others, as you are connected with the Earth, as you are connected with the divine. It's like we are all the same, because we are all coming from the same energy. And it's an idea that I developed studying yoga and practising yoga.

Meditation for bonding with self and nature

Martina, Esther and Anna discuss the importance of meditation in yoga and how its practice help with connection, both with oneself and with one's surroundings, including nature. They also claim that meditation is a part of yoga rather than a separate practice.

Martina emphasizes that meditation and breathwork help her to connect more with the environment:

Both meditation and breathwork. Those also help you connect more with your surroundings. Not just with yourself, but with your environment as well.

Esther sees meditation as a crucial tool in yoga. She explains that it helps most of the people pay attention to things around that they might otherwise miss. She suggests that meditation is more important than just physical postures (asanas) because it is what truly connects people with their environment. She adds that yoga is much more than just asanas (yoga postures), implying that meditation is part of yoga.

Meditation. I think it's vital. It's the tool that helps the most to connect with what surrounds you and to pay attention to things that would otherwise go unnoticed. So, meditation more than the postures.

If you only do a class of asanas, it's Pilates. So, talking about meditation is talking about yoga.

Anna argues that the more connection with oneself through practices like yoga and meditation, the better you can connect with nature. She also connects yoga and meditation to living a slower, more mindful life:

I think the more you connect with yourself, the more you can connect with nature (...) Yoga and meditation, they help you to connect with yourself, the present moment and maybe lead a slower life (...) Mindfulness and meditation are parts of the yoga practise.

4.1.4 Environmental consciousness through yoga and nature

Strengthening existing environmental behaviours

The relationship between yoga and environmental consciousness is perceived differently among the participants.

Martina says that she was already sustainable before starting yoga but believes that yoga has increased her awareness of consumption and waste and has shaped some behaviours specially when out in nature.

I've become much more aware of the things I consume, for example. What I eat, what I buy, even the waste I generate. I already cared about those things before, but I think yoga has made me even more conscious of them.

When I'm in nature, I pick up any trash I find. Not that I go out specifically to do that—I don't go looking for trash on purpose—but if I'm walking and I see some, I pick it up. Or, for instance, I used to pick flowers or plants when hiking, but I don't really do that anymore.

Esther recognizes that environmental behaviours have always been part of her identity, which makes it difficult to separate the influence of yoga over them:

I've been practicing yoga since I was little and also wanted to be a biologist from a young age, so a lot of these (pro-environmental behaviours) have been part of my life for a long time (...) I recycle at home, use only organic products, no bleach, no ammonia. But that's been the case for years. I can't say what influenced it because I was doing both at the same time—biology and yoga.

Anna also suggests that her environmental consciousness was formed since a young age, making it hard to determine whether yoga played a role in shaping it:

I think I was taught to be careful about the environment from a young age. So, I don't know if it changed it because I was already careful.

Yoga and nature in deepening eco-consciousness

The three women see nature connection as a way to develop appreciation and responsibility towards the environment, which is heightened through the practice of different aspects of yoga.

Martina sees yoga as a discipline that amplifies awareness, not only on oneself but also on the interaction with nature, which becomes more mindful:

Yoga makes you more aware in general—more aware of your body, your surroundings, the impact of your actions. So, I think that when you become more conscious through yoga, it extends to other areas of life, including how you interact with nature and the environment

Esther highlights Pratyahara, a type of meditation consisting of withdrawal of senses, as the key to deepening environmental connection, suggesting that reducing external distractions in nature leads to appreciation and a desire to protect it. Furthermore, she suggests a gradual transformation: by observing, one begins to feel; through feeling, one gains understanding; understanding cultivates appreciation, and appreciation leads to protection:

Meditation. That's where you'll start seeing the benefits. The first step to meditating is Pratyahara, which is the withdrawal of the senses. (...) . If you're in nature, focusing only on the present, you'll be able to observe without overthinking. When you observe without thinking, you start to feel. When you start to feel, you begin to understand. When you begin to understand, you start

to appreciate. And when you start to appreciate, you want to protect. So, if you want to be more eco-friendly and develop that deep desire to care for nature through yoga, go into nature and practice Pratyahara. Practice looking at nature with your heart.

Anna argues that if one truly sees oneself as interconnected with the world, they will act with compassion and care for nature, relying on yoga's philosophy of union:

I think this notion of union of yoga: if I have the idea that I am part of this world and the world is part of me, then I don't want to hurt myself, so I don't want to hurt what is outside of myself (...) this idea of union I think is really helping you to have empathy and compassion for every living creature around you.

4.2 Quantitative part: links between yoga, nature and ecology

The quantitative results clearly show that yoga practice, especially when conducted in natural settings, is linked with greater connectedness to nature, higher eco-spirituality, and stronger pro-environmental attitudes.

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics: patterns in yoga practice

Almost half of participants (46.4%) practice yoga 1–2 times per week, and 25% practice 3–5 times weekly, showing that the majority maintain a regular practice. However, only a minority (7.1%) practice daily, which may influence the depth of self-connection and, potentially, their connection to nature.

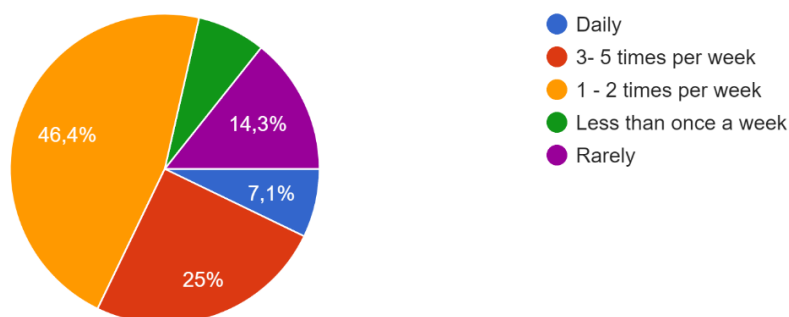


Figure 1. Frequency of yoga practice among respondents

Regarding the duration of yoga sessions, most respondents (82.1%) practice for 30–60 minutes per session, a duration that may already foster self-awareness and

mindfulness. Sessions beyond 60 minutes are less common (14.3%), and very few (3.6%) practice for less than 30 minutes.

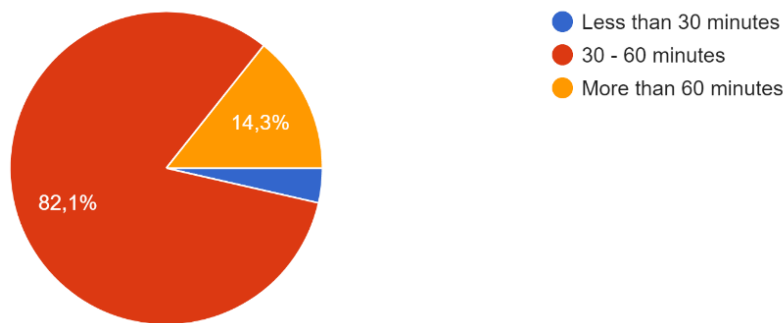


Figure 2. *Duration of yoga sessions among respondents*

Concerning years of yoga practice, nearly half of the participants (46.4%) have practiced yoga for over five years, which indicates a group who has likely developed personal practices, considering that long engagement with yoga may foster qualities like mindfulness, compassion, and introspection. Others have practiced yoga for 1–3 years (28.6%) and 3–5 years (14.3%).

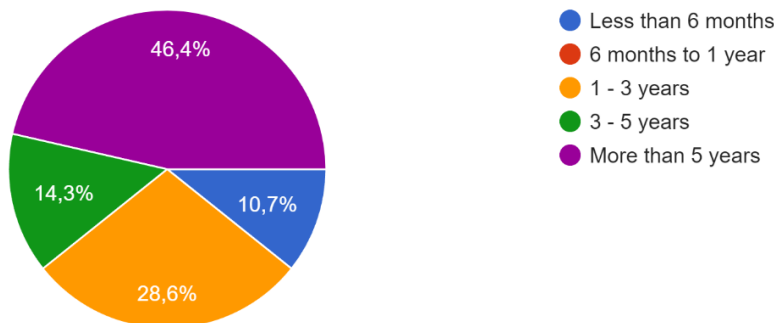


Figure 3. *Years of yoga practice among respondents*

In relation to the location of yoga sessions, the majority of subjects (71.4%) primarily practice indoors in a studio or gym. Only 25% practice outdoors in nature, though a significant group practice at home with nature views (35.7%). This suggests that, while nature is not the main scenery for most practitioners, a considerable portion is at least visually connected to nature during practice, which could contribute to a sense of nature connectedness.

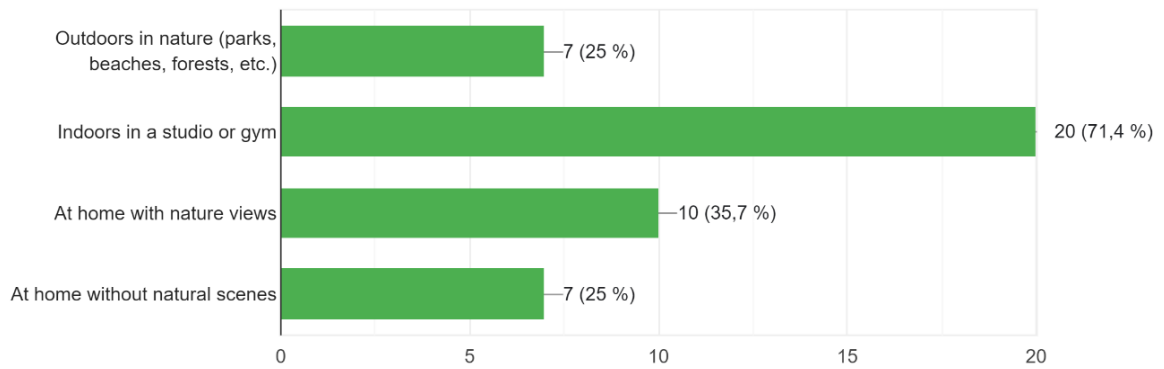


Figure 4. Location of yoga sessions among respondents

With respect to the frequency of yoga practice in nature, most respondents do not regularly practice yoga outdoors. Specifically, 35.7% do so rarely, and a 25% indicated that never do. However, a quarter of participants (25%) practice yoga in nature occasionally, a 7.1% do so frequently and another 7.1% almost always. These findings suggest that, while there is some engagement with natural environments, individuals tend to practice indoors.

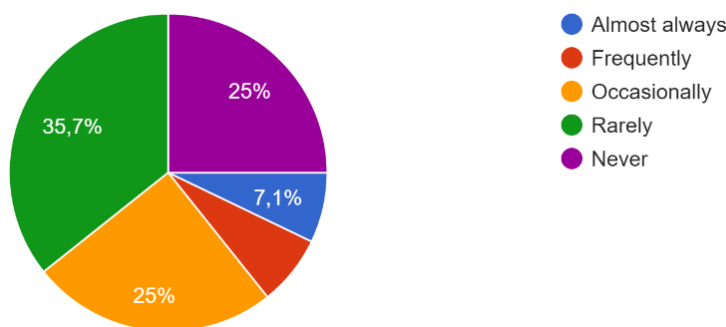


Figure 5. Frequency of yoga practice outdoors in nature among respondents

Overall, the statistics for yoga practice indicate that many participants appear committed and are experienced in their practice, but the integration of natural environments into yoga is limited. However, a significant portion of respondents value having views to nature and practice outdoors occasionally.

4.2.2 Descriptive statistics: values in nature connection, eco-spirituality, and environmental attitudes

Connectedness to Nature Scale: strong sense of interconnectedness

Overall, participants showed a strong sense of nature connectedness, as they expressed high agreement with items reflecting feelings of interconnectedness with nature.

The item with the strongest consensus was “I recognize and appreciate the intelligence of other living organisms,” which received a 96.4% agreement rate. High levels of agreement were also observed for statements reflecting a belief of a shared life force among all beings and a frequent feeling of oneness with the natural world.

Moreover, participants demonstrated awareness of their impact on the environment, as the items indicating an understanding of how their actions affect the natural world received strong agreement. In contrast, statements suggesting human dominance over nature received low levels of agreement.

Eco-Spirituality Scale: nature as transcendent more than sacred

The Eco-spirituality Scale results were analyzed using a two-factor framework proposed by Billet et al. (2023), which distinguishes between (1) appraisals of nature’s spiritual or sacred qualities (items 1–4) and (2) transcendent experiences in nature (items 5–8).

Participants showed higher agreement with items assessing transcendent experiences. For instance, the statement “When I am in nature, I feel a sense of awe” received the highest number of “strongly agree” responses, with 21 out of 28. In contrast, items related to the spiritual or sacred appraisal of nature received lower average scores.

Environmental Attitudes Inventory: preference for ecological preservation

Participants scored notably high on preservation subscales and considerably lower on utilization ones, indicating strong pro-environmental attitudes and a clear preference for ecological preservation.

The highest agreement was observed in the *Enjoyment of Nature* subscale, where most expressed a clear appreciation for time spent in natural environments. Strong agreement was also expressed for the *Support for Interventionist Conservation Policies* and *Environmental Threat* subscales, which indicates concern about environmental degradation and support for governmental regulation of raw material. Similarly, the *Personal Conservation Behaviour* subscale also received high scores, reflecting regular engagement in actions to conserve environmental resources

On the utilization side, subscales like *Human Utilization of Nature*, *Human Dominance Over Nature* and *Conservation Motivated by Anthropocentric Concern* received low agreement, with most participants disagreeing with statements suggesting humans were created to dominate nature or that jobs should be prioritized over environmental protection.

Responses were more varied in the *Confidence in Science and Technology* and *Altering Nature* subscales. Some participants believed in the capacity of science to solve environmental problems or supported human intervention in nature, while others were more sceptical about this.

4.2.3 Inferential analyses: correlations between yoga, eco-spirituality, nature connection, and environmental attitudes

Yoga-related variables included for correlation analyses were: frequency of yoga practice, years of yoga practice, and frequency of practicing yoga in natural settings. Yoga frequency and years of experience showed limited associations with other variables, while frequency of practicing yoga outdoors showed consistent correlations with higher scores on the Connectedness to Nature Scale (CNS), the Eco-spirituality Scale (ESS), and the Preservation subscale of the Environmental Attitudes Inventory (EAI).

Relationship between Connectedness to Nature Scale and yoga aspects

Prior to analysis, negatively worded items (items 4, 12, and 14) were reverse-coded to ensure that higher scores reflected stronger connectedness to nature. It was done by applying the formula $= 6 - [\text{original score}]$, given that answers were provided in a 1-5 Likert scale. Afterwards, a mean score was calculated for each participant. These individual scores were then averaged to generate a measure of nature connectedness at the group level. The overall mean CNS score was 3.98, with $SD = 0.60$, which indicates a high level of connectedness to nature with relatively low variability in responses across participants.

In this sample, yoga frequency does not appear to be significantly correlated with participants' sense of connectedness to nature, as indicated by a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.041$). Similarly, a Pearson correlation was calculated between the number of years participants had been practicing yoga (coded on a 5-point scale) and their mean score on

the Connectedness to Nature Scale (CNS). The result was $r = -0.016$, which indicates no significant relationship between years of yoga practice and connectedness to nature. However, a Pearson correlation between outdoor yoga frequency and CNS scores produced a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.557$), suggesting that participants who engage more frequently in yoga practice in natural environments tend to report a stronger sense of connection to nature.

Associations between Eco-spirituality Scale and yoga parameters

To explore the relationship between eco-spirituality and yoga-related variables, the overall mean score on the Eco-spirituality (ESS) Scale was calculated for each participant. The sample showed a high level of ESS, with a mean of 6.28 and a SD of 0.94.

The correlation between eco-spirituality and overall yoga frequency was very weak and not significant ($r = 0.042$), as was the correlation with years of yoga practice ($r = 0.105$). However, a moderate positive correlation was found between eco-spirituality and the frequency of outdoor yoga practice ($r = 0.531$), indicating that individuals who engage in yoga more often in natural environments report higher levels of eco-spirituality.

Correlations between Environmental Attitudes Inventory and yoga metrics

Given the study's focus on pro-environmental attitudes and connection to nature, analysis focused on the Preservation dimension of the Environmental Attitudes Inventory (EAI), which reflects support for environmental protection behaviours. After reverse-coding negatively worded items, a mean Preservation score was calculated for each participant. The overall sample mean was 5.65 (SD = 0.66) on a 7-point scale, which indicates a high level of pro-environmental attitudes.

Furthermore, Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to explore the relationship between Preservation scores and three chosen yoga-related variables. The correlation between EAI Preservation and yoga frequency was weak ($r = 0.084$) and not statistically significant. A moderate positive correlation was observed between EAI Preservation and years of yoga practice ($r = 0.355$). Interestingly, the strongest correlation was found between Preservation and outdoor yoga frequency ($r = 0.502$), meaning that engaging in yoga outdoors is associated with a deeper environmental concern.

4.2.4 Inferential analyses: group differences and overall scale correlations

Considering that strong correlations ($r \geq 0.50$) were found between outdoor yoga frequency and the three validated scales (CNS, ESS, EAI Preservation), it is convenient to explore whether the group mean differences are statistically significant when comparing groups of people based on how often they practice yoga in nature.

To examine the influence of practicing yoga outdoors in natural environments on participants' relationship with nature and environmental attitudes, independent samples T-tests were conducted. These allowed to compare two groups of participants: those who reported practicing yoga outdoors always, frequently or occasionally with those who stated doing so rarely or never.

The results showed statistically significant group differences in Connectedness to Nature ($p = 0.0085$) and Eco-spirituality ($p = 0.0093$), with higher scores observed in participants who practiced yoga outdoors more frequently. For EAI Preservation, the group difference approached significance ($p = 0.059$), indicating a potential trend, although it did not reach the conventional threshold.

The results showed that participants who practiced yoga outdoors more frequently reported a stronger sense of connection to nature and eco-spiritual values compared to those who did so less often. Specifically, there was a significant difference in Connectedness to Nature scores ($p = 0.0085$) and in Eco-spirituality scores ($p = 0.0093$), with the more frequent outdoor yoga practitioners scoring higher in both areas. In contrast, EAI Preservation scores were just a bit too high to be considered significant ($p = 0.059$). However, this result still suggests a tendency: people who practice yoga in natural environments may be more inclined towards pro-environmental attitudes, even if this particular result is not strong enough to be conclusive.

In addition, Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine associations between participants' scores on the three main psychometric scales. A strong positive correlation was found between CNS and Eco-spirituality ($r = 0.775$). Moderate correlations were found between CNS and EAI Preservation ($r = 0.503$), and between Eco-spirituality and EAI Preservation ($r = 0.428$). These results indicate that both emotional and spiritual connections to nature are associated with pro-environmental attitudes.

To summarize the key relationships between the variables of interest, **Table 1** shows the correlations between yoga-related variables and the three psychometric scales. Only

outdoor yoga frequency showed consistent moderate positive associations with nature connectedness, eco-spirituality, and pro-environmental attitudes. **Table 2** presents group differences, showing significantly higher scores in nature connectedness, eco-spirituality and pro-environmental behaviours among those who practice yoga outdoors more frequently. Lastly, **Table 3** shows strong and moderate positive correlations among the psychometric scales, highlighting links between emotional, spiritual, and environmental engagement.

Yoga Variables	Connectedness to Nature (CNS)	Eco-Spirituality Scale (ESS)	EAI – Preservation
Frequency of yoga practice	r = -0.041	r = 0.042	r = 0.084
Years of yoga practice	r = -0.016	r = 0.105	r = 0.355
Frequency of yoga in natural settings	r = 0.557	r = 0.531	r = 0.502

Table 1. Pearson correlation coefficients between yoga-related variables and scales

Scales	p-value	Interpretation
Connectedness to Nature	p = 0.0085	Significant difference: higher CNS scores in those who practice yoga outdoors.
Eco-Spirituality	p = 0.0093	Significant difference: higher ESS scores in frequent outdoor yoga practitioners.
EAI – Preservation	p = 0.059	Trend toward significance; not conclusive but suggests higher scores outdoors.

Table 2. Group differences based on frequency in outdoor yoga practice

Scales	Correlation Coefficient	Interpretation
CNS and Eco-Spirituality	r = 0.775	Strong positive correlation
CNS and EAI – Preservation	r = 0.503	Moderate positive correlation

Eco-Spirituality and EAI-Preservation	$r = 0.428$	Moderate positive correlation
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Table 3. *Correlations among psychometric scales*

5. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the relationship between yoga practice and individuals' connection to nature and environmental attitudes, with a particular interest in whether practicing yoga in natural settings might deepen this connection more than indoor practice. Based on frameworks from environmental psychology, eco-spirituality, and yoga philosophy, the findings support the idea that nature-based yoga is a meaningful practice that helps in developing a deeper sense of nature connectedness and ecological responsibility.

Overall, results support the research's assumptions. Participants who regularly practice yoga in natural environments reported a stronger connection to nature, both emotionally and spiritually, and expressed more pro-environmental attitudes compared to those who practiced indoors or less frequently in nature. These findings are consistent with the theoretical background presented, particularly with the idea that nature fosters a spiritual meaning and feelings of interconnectedness and transcendence supported by Fredrickson and Anderson (1999). The strong correlation between the Connectedness to Nature and Eco-Spirituality scales further illustrate that emotional and spiritual bonds with the natural world are intertwined. In this context, results also indicate that it is not the amount of yoga practiced, but rather the quality of practice, reflected in the choice of the setting, that matters most. As discussed in the introduction, yoga traditionally aims to realizing unity and interconnectedness. This study suggests that these teachings are not only philosophical, instead, they can be felt, especially when yoga is practiced in natural settings, indicating that the natural environment may offer specific conditions for experiencing the sense of interconnectedness.

Qualitative data further supported these ideas. All participants described their yoga practice not simply as a form of exercise, but as a lifestyle that supports emotional healing, and personal growth, which aligns with previous research showing that yoga can be experienced as a transformative journey that reshapes one's identity and allows for self-realization (Garfinkel & Schumacher, 2000). Nature constituted a key element in their lives, described as a source of peace, grounding and restoration, aligning with research by Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) on restorative effects of natural environments. Practicing yoga outdoors seemed to augment these qualities, which, in turn, supports the eco-spiritual themes explored earlier focusing on the spiritual interdependence that

humans share with the environment (Lincoln, 2000). Furthermore, they are in line with the concept of Eco Yoga, which implies that outdoor yoga can inspire deep appreciation and create a stronger bond with the natural world (Cornell 2006, see Clarke 2013). These experiences reinforce the idea that outdoor environments can deepen the spiritual dimensions of yoga practice, making them powerful at a personal and ecological awareness level.

The connection to nature was expressed not only as a feeling but also in actions. Participants described engaging in environmentally mindful behaviours, such as increased awareness around consumption and waste. Most were already involved in pro-environmental practices before starting yoga, however, many felt that yoga further increased their awareness and supported a more waste-conscious lifestyle. This proves previous research by Weisner and Cameron (2020), who found that the practice of mindfulness and yoga promote nature connection and ecological behaviours. Similarly, Zafeiroudi et al. (2021) also found that the combination of yoga and nature enhances wellbeing and ecological behaviours, aligning with the study's findings.

Taken together, these findings suggest that yoga, particularly when practiced in nature, offers a profound pathway to reconnection, not only with the self but also with the natural world, inspiring an authentic will to take care of it.

Nonetheless, this study presents some limitations related to conceptual and methodological considerations that affect the interpretation of these results.

In this thesis, the term *nature* has been used rather broadly, often as a synonym to “outdoors.” Even if this reflects what many participants described, especially in the interviews, it also simplifies the concept. Practicing yoga in a forest, on a beach, or in an urban park, may provide distinct experiences, which can differently shape practitioners' sense of connection to nature. In this regard, while the results indicate that practicing outside was associated with greater feelings of nature connectedness, the study did not explore which specific environmental features might have been most influential towards this connection. Hence, a conceptualization of what is “nature” would have helped in identifying which settings support most strongly a sense of nature connectedness through yoga.

Furthermore, the measures used in this study—the Connectedness to Nature Scale (CNS), the Eco-Spirituality Scale, and the Environmental Attitudes Inventory (EAI)—together with descriptive statistics used to examine patterns in yoga practice, were all focused on intra-personal dimensions. There was no measure addressing environmental

assessments in relation to yoga practice or the environmental attitudes analysed, which could be considered a weakness of the study. From the perspective of environmental psychology, the relationship between people and their environments suggests that environmental qualities play a significant role in shaping experiences. Without including metrics to evaluate the characteristics of the space where yoga is practiced, the conclusions remain centred on an individual level.

Another significant issue is that the observed associations between yoga practice outdoors and higher levels of nature connectedness cannot be interpreted as causal. One explanation is that practicing yoga in natural environments enhances connectedness to nature, however, the reverse explanation is equally reasonable: that individuals with stronger sense of connection to nature are more inclined to choose outdoor practice settings, as a consequence of this sense of connection. Therefore, the study's design does not allow definitive conclusions regarding causality.

Despite these limitations, the present research contributes to the existing literature about the intersection of yoga, spirituality, and environmental concern. It shows that yoga practitioners often have a meaningful relationship with nature, and that practice settings influence how this connection develops.

6. Implications and limitations

The study provided interesting insights into the potential of yoga, especially in nature, as a meaningful practice for developing nature connection and ecological consciousness.

Findings highlight that it is not simply the practice of yoga, but the context of the experience, that matters most. When practiced mindfully in nature, yoga becomes a powerful activity that helps cultivate internal transformation and ecological responsibility. Therefore, these insights may be useful for the development of wellness programs that integrate yoga and nature immersions for physical and mental wellbeing. Furthermore, they could help in the design of educational initiatives that promote sustainable behaviours through nature-based programs by including yoga as part of it.

However, the study presents some limitations. The small, and purposively selected sample from a yoga retreat context limits the generalizability of the findings. As the participants were individuals already inclined towards wellness practices, the results may not reflect the broader population's response to outdoor yoga. Self-reported measures may also contain social desirability bias. Moreover, there were proportionately more women than men in the sample, which could lead to gender bias into the findings. In addition, the broad use of the term “nature” and the focus on individual-level measures restricted the ability to identify which specific environmental features shaped participants' experiences. Finally, no conclusions about causality can be drawn, given that, while outdoor yoga was linked to stronger nature connectedness, it is unclear whether the practice increased this connection or if those already connected to nature chose to practice outdoors.

Future longitudinal research would be beneficial in understanding how outdoor yoga practice might influence ecological values over time. Control groups could also be incorporated to assess the specific effects of outdoor practice compared to indoor settings, providing a clearer understanding of the influence of exposure to nature.

7. Conclusion

The study shows that nature-based yoga can foster both personal and planetary wellbeing, offering a practical tool for addressing the urgent need to develop a more sustainable relationship with the natural world.

Quantitative results revealed significant correlations between outdoor yoga, nature connectedness, eco-spirituality, and pro-environmental attitudes. The natural setting seemed to amplify the psychological and emotional effects of yoga, creating a deeper sense of unity with the environment and offering multiple benefits for both people and the planet. This connection to nature, however, seemed to imply a spiritual approach for it to feel truly authentic. Qualitative insights supported these results, with participants describing outdoor yoga as a transformative experience that deepens presence and unity with the Earth.

Ultimately, the study suggests that it is not the quantity of yoga, but the environment in which it is practiced, that most influences nature connection. Practicing yoga in natural settings not only supports personal wellbeing but also inspires sustainable behaviours, serving as a bridge between personal growth and environmental responsibility.

While the study was not designed to provide definitive conclusions, and limitations such as the sample characteristics, the focus on individual-level measures, and the broad conceptualization of “nature” should be considered, it is hoped that the findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of the potential benefits of yoga in nature, which are especially relevant in an era of increasing environmental concern.

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Popular science summary

Why does yoga matter for the environment?

In today's world, many people feel disconnected from nature, and this affects how we treat the planet. This study explored whether practicing yoga, especially outdoors, helps people feel more emotionally and spiritually connected to nature. Through interviews and questionnaires, the research showed that yoga can deepen our appreciation for the natural world and even inspire more environmentally friendly behaviours. Interestingly, the setting matters: those who practiced yoga in nature felt more united with it. Being in nature while practicing yoga, therefore, seems to intensify feelings of gratitude, peace, and interconnection, supporting people to take better care of the environment. The results suggest that yoga is not only beneficial for physical and mental wellbeing, but also serves as a pathway to deepen nature connectedness and environmental consciousness, offering a powerful tool for healing both ourselves and the planet.

Appendix 1

Interview Guide

Introduction

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. My name is Natalia Rubio, and I'm a student in the master's program in Outdoor Environments for Health and Wellbeing the Swedish university of agricultural sciences in Sweden. I have a background as a yoga teacher, and I'm now writing my thesis about the connection to nature among yoga practitioners, and how this might influence their behaviors towards the environment. For that reason, I would love to hear about your personal experiences and insights on this topic.

The interview will last around an hour and will be audio-recorded. I will be asking open-ended questions, so feel free to share as much detail as you would like.

Background in yoga

- Can you tell me about your experience with yoga? When did you start? And do you think your practice has evolved over time?
- What does yoga mean to you? What does it add to your life?
- In what ways has yoga shaped your life?

Experiences on yoga

- Can you share a moment in your yoga practice which was special to you? Could you describe the place and surroundings in where it took place?
- During your yoga practice, do you ever feel a sense of unity with the natural world? If so, can you describe this experience?
- How often do you practice yoga in nature? Do you think you feel more connected to your practice?

- How would you say that the experience of practicing yoga in nature differs from practicing in a studio? Where do you prefer to practice? Why?
- Would you say that practicing yoga has helped you to find meaning in your life? Do you think that you get more meaning when you practice in nature?

Experiences in nature

- How would you describe your personal connection to nature?
- Is it important to you to spend time in natural environments? What types of environments are of your preference?

Yoga and nature

- Do you feel that yoga has influenced your relationship with nature? How?
- In general, how do you think yoga can help someone connect with nature?
- Besides postures, which aspects do you find important when it comes to connect with nature through yoga? Maybe mindfulness, meditation...
- Can you share a moment during your yoga journey when you felt deeply connected to nature? What was it like?
- How do you interpret the idea of *interconnectedness*? Do you think that yoga promotes it? And spending time in nature?
- Do you believe that connecting with yourself through yoga helps you connect with nature? How would you describe this connection?

Yoga and pro-environmental behaviors

There is literature exploring how the connection to oneself felt through yoga influences our relationship with nature and shapes our attitudes towards the environment. I would love to discuss these ideas with you

- Has your yoga practice influenced your behaviors toward environmental issues? If yes, can you share some examples?
- Which challenges do you think some yoga practitioners may feel to connect with nature?
- What advice would you give to yoga practitioners who want to deepen their connection with nature or adopt pro-environmental behaviors? Are there specific yoga principles that have inspired you to adopt environmentally conscious practices?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about the relationship between yoga and nature connection?

Thank you for your time and insightful answers.

Appendix 2

Yoga, Nature Connection and Ecological Attitudes' Survey

Age group

- ☐ 18–24
- ☐ 25–34
- ☐ 35–44
- ☐ 45–54
- ☐ 55–64
- ☐ 65 +

Gender

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other/ prefer not to say

Yoga Practice Questionnaire

Please answer the questions below by selecting the option that best represents your practice.

What type(s) of yoga do you primarily practice? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Hatha Yoga
- ☐ Vinyasa Yoga
- ☐ Ashtanga Yoga
- ☐ Kundalini Yoga
- ☐ Yin Yoga
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

How often do you practice yoga?

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ 3–5 times per week
- ☐ 1–2 times per week

- ☐ Less than once a week
- ☐ Rarely

How long are your typical yoga sessions?

- ☐ Less than 30 minutes
- ☐ 30–60 minutes
- ☐ More than 60 minutes

For how long have you been practicing yoga?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ 6 months to 1 year
- ☐ 1–3 years
- ☐ 3–5 years
- ☐ More than 5 years

Where do you primarily practice yoga? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Outdoors in nature (parks, beaches, forests, etc.)
- ☐ Indoors in a studio or gym
- ☐ At home with nature views
- ☐ At home without natural scenes

How often do you practice yoga outdoors in nature?

- ☐ Almost always
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

The Connectedness to Nature Scale

Please answer each of these questions in terms of the way you generally feel. Use the following scale in the space provided next to each question as honestly as you can.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree

- ____ 1. I often feel a sense of oneness with the natural world around me.
- ____ 2. I think of the natural world as a community to which I belong.
- ____ 3. I recognize and appreciate the intelligence of other living organisms.
- ____ 4. I often feel disconnected from nature.
- ____ 5. When I think of my life, I imagine being part of a larger cyclical process of living.
- ____ 6. I often feel a kinship with animals and plants.
- ____ 7. I feel as though I belong to the Earth as equally as it belongs to me.
- ____ 8. I have a deep understanding of how my actions affect the natural world.
- ____ 9. I often feel part of the web of life.
- ____ 10. I feel all inhabitants of Earth, human, and nonhuman, share a common 'life force'.
- ____ 11. Like a tree can be part of a forest, I feel embedded within the broader natural world.
- ____ 12. When I think of my place on Earth, I consider myself to be a top member of a hierarchy that exists in nature.
- ____ 13. I often feel like I am only a small part of the natural world around me, and that I am no more important than the grass on the ground or the birds in the trees.
- ____ 14. My personal welfare is independent of the welfare of the natural world.

Scale for Eco-spirituality

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree			Neutral	Strongly agree		

____ 1. There is a spiritual connection between human beings and the natural environment

____ 2. There is sacredness in nature

____ 3. Everything in the natural world is spiritually interconnected

____ 4. Nature is a spiritual resource

____ 5. I feel intense wonder towards nature

____ 6. When I am in nature, I feel a sense of awe

____ 7. Sometimes I am overcome with the beauty of nature

____ 8. There is nothing like the feeling of being in nature

Environmental Attitudes Inventory (EAI-24)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by circling one of the set of numbers following each statement that best reflects your degree of agreement or disagreement.

1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Somewhat disagree	4 Unsure/ neutral	5 Somewhat agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly agree
I really like going on trips into the countryside, for example to forests or fields.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
I DO NOT believe humans were created or evolved to dominate the rest of nature.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
Protecting the environment is more important than protecting peoples' jobs.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
Whenever possible, I try to save natural resources.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
We need to keep rivers and lakes clean in order to protect the environment, and NOT as places for people to enjoy water sports.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
I think spending time in nature is boring.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
I do not believe that the environment has been severely abused by humans.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
I'd much prefer a garden that is well groomed and ordered to a wild and natural one.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
Modern science will solve our environmental problems.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
One of the most important reasons to keep lakes and rivers clean is so that people have a place to enjoy water sports.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
Protecting peoples' jobs is more important than protecting the environment.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
Humans are severely abusing the environment.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
Governments should control the rate at which raw materials are used to ensure that they last as long as possible.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
Modern science will NOT be able to solve our environmental problems.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
I would like to join and actively participate in an environmentalist group.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
A married couple should have as many children as they wish, as long as they can adequately provide for them.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
It makes me sad to see forests cleared for agriculture.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
I would NOT get involved in an environmentalist organization.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
Human beings were created or evolved to dominate the rest of nature.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
I am NOT the kind of person who makes efforts to conserve natural resources.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
I am opposed to governments controlling and regulating the way raw materials are used in order to try and make them last longer.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
Families should be encouraged to limit themselves to two children or less.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
I'd prefer a garden that is wild and natural to a well-groomed and ordered one.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
It does NOT make me sad to see natural environments destroyed.					1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

Appendix 3

Key Themes	Subthemes	Description
1. Nature as a space for mindful awareness	Nature as home and refuge	Nature is valued for its calming effect and its role in supporting mental wellbeing
	Increasing time and interaction to deepen nature connection	Connecting with nature is believed to develop naturally through time spent outdoors, without the need for conscious effort or expectations.
	Obstacles related to ego, lifestyle and lack of self-connection	Challenges in connecting with nature include external factors, internal resistance (ego), and the need for self-awareness and body connection.
2. Yoga as a transformative journey	From challenge to personal growth through yoga practice	Personal transformation was experienced through yoga, initially facing challenges but eventually integrating it into their identity. Teaching and regular practice enhanced their connection to yoga.
	Integrating yoga into identity and everyday life	Yoga is seen as more than physical postures, but lifestyle that promotes emotional balance and connection to oneself and the world.
	A tool for inner listening, emotional clarity and self-understanding	Yoga helped participants understand their emotions, limits, and needs through deep personal reflection.
	Healing through profound yoga experiences	Moments of emotional release, deep connection to nature and healing from depression were shared of their yoga journey.
3. The role of yoga in reconnecting with self and nature	Yoga as a pathway to deepen connection with nature	Connection with nature was deepened through yoga, viewing the relationship between the two as interconnected, with each influencing the other.

	Contrasts between indoor and outdoor yoga practice	Yoga in nature and indoors offer distinct experiences. Indoor practice is controlled, while in nature enhances presence and grounding, making nature the preferred setting.
	Interconnection between self and the environment	Interconnectedness is understood as a sense of unity with nature. Yoga and meditation help removing the impression of separation.
	Meditation for bonding with self and nature	Meditation is seen as a key element of yoga, rather than a separate practice, which helps finding stillness, presence and a sense of unity with the world.
4. Environmental consciousness through yoga and nature	Strengthening existing environmental behaviours	Varied views on yoga's impact on ecological attitudes were expressed. Some felt it raised awareness of consumption and waste, and others attributed their eco-friendly behaviors to early life education.
	Yoga and nature in deepening eco-consciousness	Connection with nature is seen as a path to developing appreciation and responsibility for the environment, which is deepened through yoga.

Table 4: Key themes, subthemes, and descriptions identified from the interviews

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