



Yoga's Impact on Helping Behavior and Cultural Intelligence: a Study of Business Executives in Moldova

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Abstract

Due to the monopolistic public sector's exposure to both internal and foreign competition, public business leaders in Eastern Europe are required to learn new competencies. This study explores whether the age-old practice of yoga could enhance the helpful behaviour and cultural intelligence of corporate executives in a transitional economy through the lens of mindfulness. The study's findings demonstrated that yoga practises considerably enhanced the participants' helpful behaviour and cultural intelligence. A higher level of mindfulness accounts for about two thirds of the influence on helpful behaviour, with yoga practice accounting for the remaining one third. When it comes to cultural intelligence, mindfulness accounts for 88% of the benefit, with yoga practices providing the remaining 12%.

KEYWORDS: Yoga intervention; Mindfulness meditation; Helping behavior CQ

Introduction

Transition economies form a distinct subset within emerging market economies. These are economies in the process of shifting from centrally planned systems to market-based models. This transition involves extensive structural reforms, including:

1. Dismantling trade barriers
2. Removing price controls
3. Implementing broader economic liberalization

To ensure economic stability during this process, these countries typically establish robust financial sectors and promote the inflow of private capital. The transition is characterized by two key institutional changes:

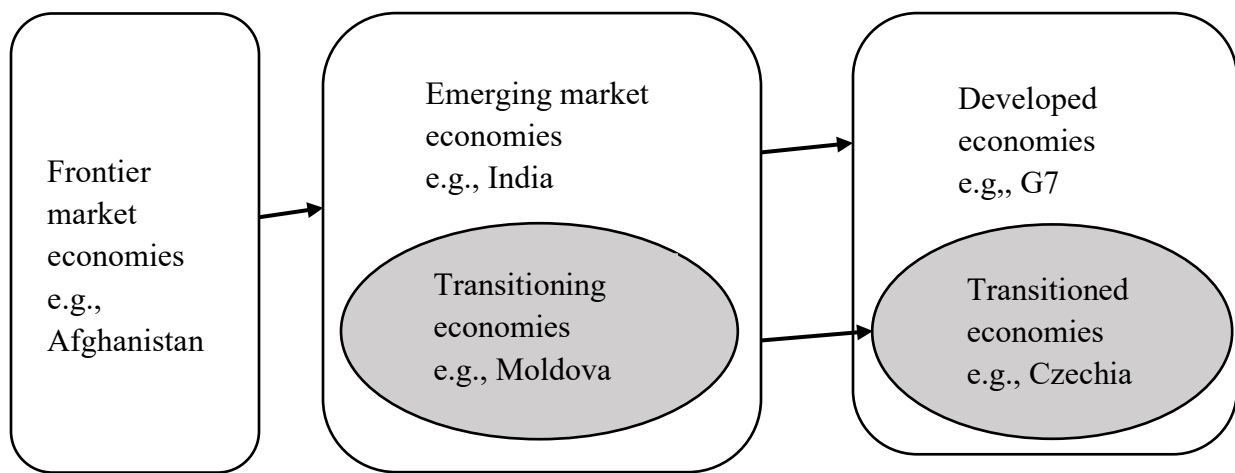
1. Creating new institutions, particularly independent financial entities
2. Transforming existing organizations to align with market economy principles

This process fundamentally alters the state's role in the economy, shifting it from a direct provider of goods and services to an enabler of market activities.

Several countries have already completed this transition, including Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, and Slovenia. Currently, economies still in transition include:

- In Africa: Botswana
- In Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
- In Eastern Europe and the Caucasus: Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine

This transition represents a significant shift in economic systems, affecting various aspects of these countries' economies and societies. Figure 1. Transition of economies



In these economies ownership of the demand and supply adjustment is being transferred from planning process at the national level to free transactions in the market. Income distribution is shifting from contributions made to the workforce to acquisition of profits and wages. As formerly planned economies have undertaken fundamental transitions toward market-based economies since the 1980s, improved knowledge about behaviour of public enterprise executives in these countries has become more important. These countries offer attractive grounds to the researchers in the field of organisation and human resource management to test and hone existing theories and to develop new ones.

As most managers of state-owned firms were selected for their position because of their political loyalty, they are simply not equipped to work in the context of markets because of their lack of knowledge, skills, and experience in such an environment. It has been observed that in transition economies, the firms that offer training programs to their executives seem more likely to trigger an innovation than firms that do not provide such programs. With the help from the

West, there are massive training efforts in every planned economy in transition attempting to upgrade managerial skills of managers. Much of what is being taught may not translate into instant improvement because of the different context that produced Western management expertise in the first place.

Skills required for business executives in a centrally planned economy were not the same as that for business executives in a free market economy. In a socialist economy, due to controlled prices and perennial shortages of various types of goods and services, the customers were treated as supplicants. Now, the public enterprise executives have to build trust and loyalty in the customer and offer a personal touch to the customers. Secondly, the centrally planned economies had been closed to the world. Now, public enterprise executives have to deal with the intricacies of human interactions across cultures. Such intercultural competence, sometimes known as cultural intelligence or CQ includes the ability to comprehend a counterpart's key cultural norms, the desire to listen, watch, and alter one's behaviour or communication preferences as also the ability to reflect on and change interaction approaches and expectations based on the circumstances. This research investigates whether the ancient practice of yoga can support enhancement of helping behaviour and cultural intelligence of mid-level business executives in one of the transitional economies.

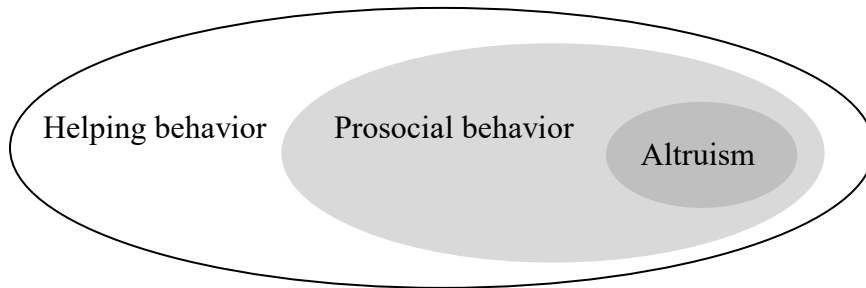
Despite the differences among these countries, there are a number of compelling reasons that we can consider them as one group of countries. First, their common experience under the central planning regime and communist ideology suggests that "they are all members of a broader, clearly identifiable class of social-political-economic systems". Second, their phenomenal transitions toward market-based economies, albeit with different speed and pace, have led to similar changes in their institutional infrastructure, such as weakened bureaucratic controls and tolerance of global competition. Common heritage and transitions as well as similar adaptive strategies for firm growth have led researchers to group them as transition economies. Our study area is Moldova which came into existence as an independent country consequent to dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Helping behaviour

Helping behaviour is not a generalized love for humankind. It is not just a feeling but involves action. An example of helping behaviour that would not be considered PSB is a manager who goes extra lengths to help a customer, because in this behaviour the act is

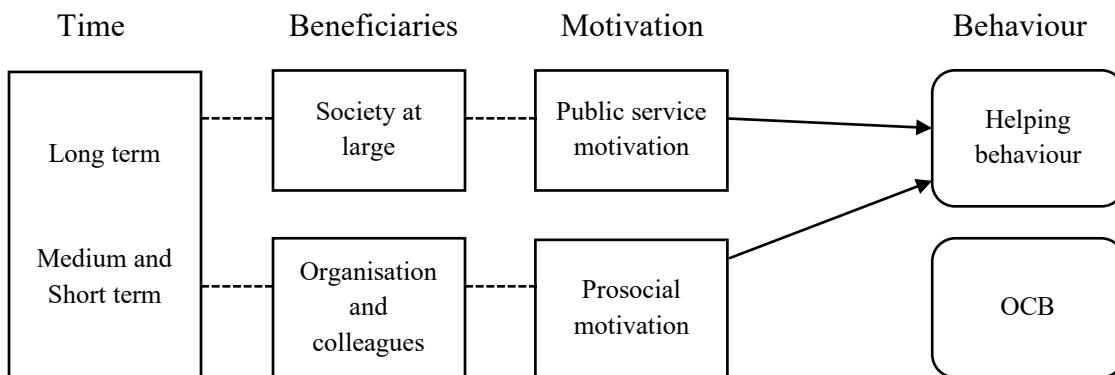
motivated by professional obligations. The term Altruism is reserved for cases where the helper tries to improve the welfare of another person as an end in itself. While altruism is entirely selfless, prosocial behaviour and helping behaviour is often based on a mixture of selfless and selfish motivations. The aim of prosocial behaviour and helping behaviour could be reducing one's own distress when witnessing another person's condition or it could be to receive social approval. While altruism usually involves self-sacrifice, prosocial behaviour and helping behaviour include win-win situations also. Thus, cultivation of helping behaviour will be of benefit to the society as also the employer even if the motivation of the business executive is not purely selfless. Figure 2 is a Venn diagram showing altruism, prosocial behaviour and helping behaviour.

Figure 2. Venn diagram of Helping behaviour



Helping behaviour overlaps with organisational citizenship behaviour but the two concepts are significantly different in terms of temporal focus, beneficiaries and motivation. Organisational citizenship behaviour mainly aims at going the extra mile and doing something good for fellow workers and the organisation. Helping behaviour can lead to doing something good for society not only at the expense of one's free time but also breaking work-related rules.

Figure 3. Schematic overview of similarity and difference between Helping behaviour and OCB



Cultural intelligence

Intelligence is what separates humans from animals and higher levels of intelligence is required for success in various aspects of life including business. Scholars have been trying to classify people into intelligence groups by examining their behaviour in everyday life for ages. In 1850's an English polymath Herbert Spencer tried to create a theory of intelligence but did not get very far. Sir Francis Galton, another English polymath, was the first to attempt to develop a standardised test for assessing a person's IQ, but he abandoned the project in the mid-1880s. Much later the Binet-Simon test released in 1905 by French psychologists Alfred Binet, Victor Henri, and Théodore Simon received wide recognition. The psychologist William Stern coined the abbreviation IQ for the German term *Intelligenzquotient*, which he used to describe a scoring technique for intelligence tests.

Over a century a number of meta-analytic evaluations have proved that general intelligence tests are reliable indicators of work performance across a wide range of occupations. However, intelligence being complex, enigmatic and arguably even indescribable, the business scholars have always been sceptical with the idea of IQ measurement being conclusive when even laypersons would recognise that, intelligence is perhaps the most intricate function of the human mind.

For the past half century or so, advances in neuroscience seem to indicate that different parts of the brain relate to different types of intelligences. In his famous book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, Howard Gardner divided intelligence into various modalities of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic. The theory has been subject of criticism by mainstream psychologists due to reliance on subjective judgement and insufficient empirical evidence. Psychometric studies have consistently discovered high correlations between different elements of intelligence undermining Gardner's theory over multiple intelligences. Gardner has been defending his theory through sequels to his book, rebuttals to criticisms in academic journals and video interviews. Gardner and other experts have been adding other types of intelligences and there is a continuing debate as to whether a particular type of intelligence actually exists.

Few years later in the best-selling social science book of all time, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ* the author Daniel Goleman took a dim view of the entire psychometric tradition, as indicated by the book's subtitle. The author argued that group of skills and abilities — those dealing with people and emotions – has been largely overlooked in mainstream psychology. Goleman emphasised the significance of recognising one's own emotional life, regulating one's feelings, understanding other people's emotions, working with others, and having empathy for others. Yet another key contribution of research on multiple intelligences was the identification of social intelligence, a notion that dates back to Edward Lee Thorndike's study, which defined it as the ability to comprehend people and act and behave wisely in relationships with them. Social intelligence (SQ) as a concept had sporadic development and turned out to be a late bloomer. Some authors define SQ as the capacity to get along with others, social knowledge, ease with others, empathy for others, and insight into others. The term SQ refers to a broad category of social interaction abilities. In essence, high SQ symbolises a person's ability to act, such as collaborating and problem-solving with others.

The concept of cultural intelligence (CQ) has evolved relatively recently with its roots in Gardner's concept of interpersonal intelligence. It takes self-awareness and other-awareness further ahead referring to one's ability to adapt to new cultural environments depending on a variety of factors such as cognitive, motivational, and behavioural characteristics. Intending to expand understanding of intercultural interactions, P. Christopher Earley introduced CQ as an intellectual construct that represents adaption to various cultural situations. Along with Soon Ang, he refined it further in the book *Cultural Intelligence: Individual interactions across cultures* providing a conceptual framework for exploring the relationship between human intelligence and culture and organisational behaviour. Earley and Ang posit that the differing levels of CQ are responsible for different levels of success when people engage cross-culturally. During the same period David Thomas and Kerr Inkson worked on a complementary framework of (CQ) presented in their book *Cultural Intelligence: People skills for global business*. The authors prescribe a three-stage process for enhancing one's CQ. The steps entail learning the important principles of cross-cultural interactions, such as what cultures are, how cultures differ, and how cultures influence behaviour; practising mindfulness and paying attention to cues in a reflective and creative manner; and developing a repertoire of behavioural skills that can be adapted to various situations.

CQ is not an adaptation of EQ or SQ. EQ research does not provide a comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural context or how the notion could be expanded to encompass it. The formulations of SQ are relatively void of cultural richness. SQ demonstrates an ability to assess and manage others presuming universality of content and processes. SQ takes a universalist stance without considering the ecological and social forces that impact thought process. While not all psychological processes are culture-bound, etc aspects of CQ reflect general cognitive abilities that can be used in a variety of situations. CQ refers to one's competence for effective adaptation to new cultural settings and to deal with people with different cultural background.

Can yoga help?

Yoga is a discipline whose history extends back thousands of years. The practice originated in India and has been adapted in other countries in various ways. The ancient Indian book *Gita* was composed sometime in the second half of the first millennium BC and has been translated from Sanskrit to several languages. Of late yoga as explained by *Gita* has been a subject for western management scholars as well. Yoga has a wide range of meanings due to its use in a wide variety of contexts. *Gita* gives a number of definitions describing yoga as “evenness of mind” (Chapter 2; verse 48); “skill in action” (v 50); “renunciation of selfish purpose” (Chap 6; v 2); “harmony in all that we do” (v 16); and “unlinking of the link with pain” (v 23). Sometime between third century BC and third century AD, sage Patanjali compiled the ‘Yoga Sutras’, the original textbook of classical yoga. This is a secular text that has become preeminent in teaching yoga. Other texts that have followed refer to it as being the heart of yogic thought. The eight limbs of yoga in Yoga Sutra are:

“*Yama* (Selfless values): Non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, self-restraint and greedlessness.

Niyama (Self-discipline): Cleanliness, contentment, austerity, self-study and acceptance.

Asana (Postures) Body positions that open energy channels and develop physical stability for meditation and other advanced practices.

Pranayama (Breathing practices) Cardiovascular control to enhance the flow of vital energy through retraining the respiratory organs.

Pratyahara (Withdrawal of senses) Withdrawal of sensory inputs, coming from the five senses into the physical being.

Dharna (Concentration): Creation of one-pointedness of the mind.

Dhyana (Meditation): Uninterrupted flow of concentration.

Samadhi (Merger of individual consciousness with universal consciousness): Highly esoteric practice that cannot be taught. Not practiced in the West.”

Modern yoga, which bridges, the realms of Indian spirituality and European physical culture has been moulded in conformity with contemporary aspirations and inclinations that are the common heritage of a cosmopolitan culture. Of the eight limbs of yoga, three - physical postures, breathing practices and meditation - are popular in the West. It is generally accepted that the primary goal of yoga is to maintain physical fitness and to cultivate balance, calm, harmony and awareness. In 2014 in recognition of the worldwide appeal of yoga, the UN proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga. Many top businesspersons have attributed their business success to regular yogic practice. Most of these eminent businesspersons practise yoga seven days a week - Ariana Huffington of Huffington Post, Sergey Brin of Google, Jeff Weiner of LinkedIn, Ratan Tata of Tata Sons, Beyoncé of Parkwood Entertainment and William Clay Ford Jr. of Ford Motor Company to name a few. As a student backpacker, Steve Jobs learnt yoga in India and was influenced by a book ‘Autobiography of a Yogi’ that reformed his wayward life at the time. This was the only book that he had downloaded on his personal iPad 2. During the Covid-19 epidemic, research on yogic practices accelerated.

Scholars believe that health, peace and joy are not the main goals of yoga practice; the ultimate objective of yoga is to unleash dormant powers within the human body and mind, which leads to care for the well-being of others. In the West, yoga is most recognised for its postures. Several studies indicate practice of yoga leading to increase in Helping behaviour. In an experiment for studying the effects of a 10-week yoga course as an alternative for traditional school sports in in German secondary schools, Michael Jeitler and colleagues found increase in helping behaviour among those opting for yoga. The results of this quantitative analysis agree with qualitative studies, e.g., Lisa Conboy and colleagues and Bethany Butzer and colleagues.

For historical reasons an impression remains in the West that yoga as a part of Indian tradition is inward looking. The “comparative method” developed in mid-19th century had achieved a good deal of success in linguistics but its application to culture had led to much oversimplification and distortion. The influence of orientalist among historians and philosophers created a diptych wherein westerners were supposedly outward looking and

easterners were insular inward looking. A famous example of this view is Mathew Arnold's oft-quoted epic poem:

The East bow'd low before the blast; In patient, deep disdain;
She let the legions thunder past; And plunged in thought again.

Indian nationalists as also Western socialists have always believed that orientalist's claim is erroneous. Jawaharlal Nehru in his book *The Discovery of India* written while serving a jail sentence under the British colonial rule alleges that westerners would like India to remain plunged in thought and entangled in speculation, so that the westerners may possess this world and the fulness thereof. The idea of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' as introduced in many Indian writings like the *Maha Upanishad* and the *Rig Veda* more than three thousand years back is:

The world is a family:
One is a relative, the other stranger; say the small minded.
The entire world is a family; live the magnanimous.

This principle has influenced the texts that followed and is quoted in texts of 1000 BC to 500 BC as "loftiest thought". This adage had an impact on other Asian cultures and has been called an illustration of "dynamics of boundarylessness of a Himalaya Sphere phenomenon, viz. Chinese culture with Indian input". Yoga being an intrinsic part of Indian culture is inward looking only in the sense that it considers inwards as real as outwards.

Numerous empirical studies have demonstrated the therapeutic effects of yoga practices on a wide range of physical and mental health indices. The growing interest in yoga and its possible applications in health, psychology, and other fields is noteworthy as it symbolises a unique interaction between two branches of human knowledge: modern practical science and age-old contemplative practices. Yet, the research on the effect of yoga on intelligence is not even a trickle as compared to the flood of studies on therapeutic effects of yoga. Yogic practice is likely to have a positive effect on CQ because yoga's "approach is from outward to the inwards depths and vice versa, all forming a continuity"; but the empirical evidence has been lacking as yet.

Mindfulness mediation

Businesses operate by its executives making decisions, usually based on incomplete information and often rapidly. Decision making in business settings remains an important component in any executive training programme. Awareness of the feeling that drive one's

reaction can help prevent bad decision making. Historical roots of this awareness lie in the ancient Buddhist tradition called mindfulness. The concept was introduced to psychology and management literature by Ellen Langer. Western scholars, however, subtract mindfulness from its spiritual roots and consider it a cognitive process. As a result of its disassociation from any specific religious system, modern mindfulness practices are fundamentally appealing to a wide range of people in secular societies. Empirical research finds mindfulness related to environmental consciousness. Reviewing Yuval Noah Harari's bestseller *21 Lessons for the twenty-first Century*, Bill Gates states that an important message of the book is that "life in the 21st century demands mindfulness — getting to know ourselves better". Research on mindfulness is gaining steam in Psychology and Management Science. This research examines whether yogic practice enhances mindfulness and examine whether mindfulness – a discriminating awareness of and heightened attention to present reality – mediates between yoga and helping behaviour and between yoga and CQ.

Yoga entails focus is on mind-body awareness, not on the alignment details of the physical posture. Another characteristic of yoga is its emphasis on observing rather than reacting. It is to be expected that practicing yoga will improve mindfulness – an enhanced attention to and receptive awareness of the present that includes acceptance and non-judgement. Several empirical studies have confirmed this hypothesis. In a study of 46 staff and students of two New York colleges it was found that yoga intervention is a viable method for increasing levels of mindfulness. Recently, similar results were found in studies on students in Germany.

Buddhist religious leaders like the Dalai Lama are convinced that mindfulness enhances helping behaviour. There are several mechanisms through which mindfulness might increase helping behaviour. Research has revealed that mindfulness leads to rise in sustained attention. In a social setting, greater attentional capacities could increase the probability of a person observing the needs of others and responding to them. Mindfulness is associated with higher level of awareness of bodily sensations, or what the psychologists call interoceptive awareness, i.e., identifying, accessing, understanding and responding appropriately to the patterns of internal signals. Neuroscientific research shows that a region of the brain, the insula, is impacted by interoceptive awareness. The insula processes others' emotional experiences as well. It follows that the greater interoceptive awareness is likely to increase individuals' awareness of the others' needs and encourage appropriate response.

Mindfulness may improve an individual's affective experience, that is, experience that will present its objects in a more positive and less negative ways. Moreover, mindfulness may improve affect regulation. When confronted with the suffering of others, a mindful person is less likely to turn away to avoid her own personal distress inhibiting helping behaviour. This change in affect may also result in increased helping behaviour. Mindfulness reduces biases of all types and this reduction could also induce helping behaviour. Buddhist scholars as also psychologists believe that mindfulness alters one's view of self from a firm unit to a flexible non-attached entity. With lesser attachment to the self an individual is more likely to help others, including 'outgroup others'.

Theorising in the field of mindfulness has moved ahead of empirical research. While it is not clear the exact mechanism or mechanisms through which mindfulness affects helping behaviour, there is little doubt that the effect of mindfulness on helping behaviour is positive. An examination of the effect of mindfulness on 313 participants in the US and found significant positive effect on helping behaviour. The authors conclude that when we decide to help others, present focused attention and nonjudgment "both sustain our intention and reap the richest emotional consequences".

Over the last quarter of a century, mindfulness has been successfully applied to cross-cultural communication and international management. The way mindfulness works is by giving people the chance to explore a variety of behavioural choices based on information of how different cultures differ and how culture influences behaviour. Mindfulness is a universal practice "because awareness itself could be seen as the final common pathway of our humanity, across all cultures". To be successful in cross-cultural encounters, one must exercise metacognitive approach of mindfulness – paying attention in a reflective manner while keeping track of one's own feelings, thoughts, and actions. It removes a rigid or fixed worldview, allowing one to make meaning of cultural contexts, events, and actions within their own frame of reference. Effective managers mindfully work through this sense-making process on a daily basis.

There are several possible mechanisms through which mindfulness could impact CQ. Empathy is a facet of mindfulness that processes others' perspectives and positions. It is reasonable to assume that a critical relationship between empathy and CQ would exist. Another facet of mindfulness is open-mindedness. The personality trait of openness to experience is

called ‘intellectance’. Individuals who are high on intellectance are likely to be more knowledgeable about other cultures. This ability would enable adjustment to new surroundings that require attention to signals and cues of the new environment. There is likely to be positive relationship between openness to experience and CQ. Yet another facet of mindfulness, the use of all senses, includes reflecting upon one’s doing and the milieu, thus managing one’s consciousness. This facet helps in developing a suitable mental map for a specific cultural interaction. Mindfulness, therefore, is likely to impact CQ positively; but since CQ is a relatively new concept, not much empirical evidence is available as yet. In a study of Canadian professors teaching in China, Cray, McKay and Mittelman found a positive correlation between mindfulness and cultural intelligence.

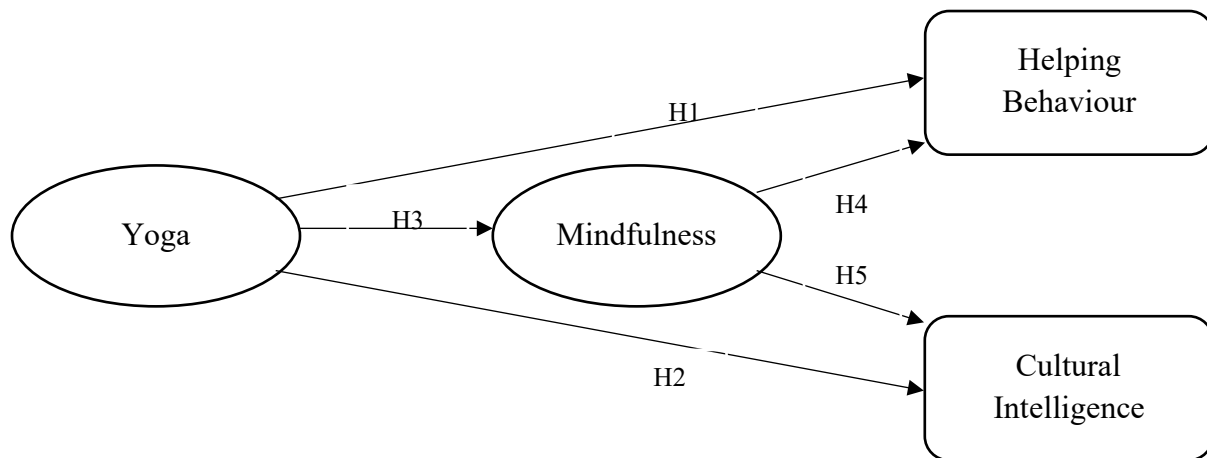
Hypotheses

Based on the review of literature cited in the previous sections, we propose the following hypotheses:

- H1** Yoga will be positively related to helping behaviour.
- H2** Yoga will be positively related to cultural intelligence.
- H3** Yoga will be positively related to Mindfulness.
- H4** Mindfulness will mediate the relation between yoga and helping behaviour.
- H5** Mindfulness will mediate the relation between yoga and cultural intelligence.

The five hypotheses are shown in figure 4.

Figure 4. Mediation model of determinants of helping behaviour and cultural intelligence



Methods

Design and sampling

A quantitative rather than a qualitative technique because the purpose of this research is to evaluate the hypotheses described above deductively and to quantify the direct effects and the mediation effects. The effects of yoga practise on business executives in Montenegro were studied using a Randomized Controlled Experiment. This was not a clinical trial as no specific pathologies were being treated. No measurements were made by clinical instruments. All the participants of Executive Masters of Business Administration (EMBA) programmes the country's business schools were requested to take part. Because an EMBA programme requires an undergraduate degree with good grades as also no less than three years of managerial experience, all of the students had prior management experience and were well-educated. Average age was 35 years 10 months and average work experience prior to joining EMBA programme was 5 years and 9 months.

Of those who expressed interest, a computer programme selected 260 students, 224 turned up to fill out the background information and initial evaluation questionnaire. The personal information of the participants was encrypted using a secure key code. Individuals could request a personal report with their results after the tests were completed. Faculty and administrators were not given access to questionnaires or study data. Following baseline measures, the participants were assigned randomly to either the first batch (intervention group) or the next batch (control group) using a computer-generated randomisation sequence, and the participants were notified via automated emails. Five of the 112 individuals in the intervention group lost interest and did not complete the yoga course, and two of those who did complete the course did not come to the final test, bringing the number in the treatment group down to 105. Four students from the control group did not come to the final test, thus reducing the number in the control group to 101.

Measurements

Yoga classes were scheduled every day for 90 minutes, seven days a week for twenty weeks. Classes included 5 minutes of warm-up, 45 minutes of asanas (physical poses), 20 minutes of pranayama (breathing exercises), and 20 minutes of meditation. Those who could not

spare that much time on a particular day, were advised to do a shorter version at home and report at the next time they participants came to the class. The average yoga training per participant was 8069 minutes for the entire programme which comes to 0.96 hours per day.

This research uses 'Helping Attitudes Scale' which has been a popular scale for the last two decades. It is a measure of respondents' feelings, beliefs, and behaviours related to helping. Each of the 20 items is responded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Some of the items are reverse scored. The scores for the items (some of which are scored in reverse with 5 points for strongly agree to 1 point for strongly agree) are added up to get an overall score. The score has been normalised (ranging between minimum 20 and maximum 100) by dividing by 20.

The pioneers in the field of Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Christopher Earley and his wife Elaine Mosakowsky, have made significant contributions to our understanding of cross-cultural competence. They designed "a self-scored diagnostic tool for measuring cultural intelligence that consists of three components: cognitive, physical and emotional". This initial tool aimed to quantify an individual's ability to navigate and adapt to diverse cultural environments effectively.

At the time of its introduction, this tool was considered "rather primitive and lacking empirical validity tests". However, recognizing the importance of robust measurement in this field, researchers have since worked to refine and improve the scale. The CQ scale has undergone substantial development, including the incorporation of many items for psychometric refinement. Moreover, it has been validated by a team of international business executives, lending it greater credibility and practical relevance in the global business context.

To enhance accessibility and ease of use, an abridged version of the scale has also been developed. This shortened form has gained popularity among researchers and practitioners, including our team. In our study, CQ was measured using this 9-item abridged CQ scale. However, we introduced an important modification by implementing peer group evaluation instead of self-evaluation.

The decision to use peer evaluation was influenced by the nature of MBA education, which places a strong emphasis on group work. Typically, MBA classes are divided into groups of 3 or 4 students for various projects and assignments. This structure makes peer-evaluation not only feasible but also valuable, as it provides a more objective assessment of an individual's cultural intelligence. Additionally, this approach helps to remove the same-source bias that can

occur with self-evaluation, thereby enhancing the reliability of the measurements. Responses to the CQ scale were recorded on a 7-point Likert rating scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). This allowed for a nuanced capture of participants' perceived cultural intelligence. Following data collection, an average score for cultural intelligence was calculated based on the 9-item scores, providing a measure of each participant's CQ.

In addition to assessing cultural intelligence, our study also incorporated a measure of mindfulness. For this purpose, we utilized the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), a psychometrically sound instrument widely recognized in the field of mindfulness research. The decision to use MAAS was based on its status as the most widely used of the measures currently available, which facilitates comparison with other studies and adds to the generalizability of our findings. The MAAS has been extensively validated through investigations across various types of populations, from clinical to non-clinical settings. These studies have consistently established an acceptable level of reliability for the scale, further supporting its use in our research. By incorporating both CQ and mindfulness measures, our study aims to explore potential relationships between these two important constructs in the context of MBA education and cross-cultural competence.

Results and Discussion

The effect of the yoga intervention is shown in Table 1 in a difference-in-differences format. The intervention group showed substantial differences in mindfulness, helping behaviour and CQ but the control group did not exhibit any meaningful changes over this time period. Within the intervention group the mean and variance increased after treatment.

Table 1: Scores at baseline and follow-up for intervention and control group.

		Control group	Intervention group	Difference
Mindfulness score	Initial	3.87 (0.75)	3.88 (0.70)	0.01
	Final	3.88 (0.75)	4.11 (0.85)	0.23***
	Change	0.02	0.31***	0.22***
Helping behaviour	Initial	2.89 (0.45)	2.88 (0.44)	-0.01
	Final	2.89 (0.44)	3.28 (0.53)	0.39***
	Change	0.00	0.40***	0.40***
Cultural intelligence	Initial	4.47(0.68)	4.48(0.64)	0.01
	Final	4.48(0.68)	4.72(0.70)	0.24***
	Change	0.01	0.24***	0.23***

***Significant 1% level.

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, correlations, and dependability statistics. The correlations are significant and positive, as predicted. Notably, Yoga is linked to Mindfulness; and Mindfulness is also positively linked to helping behaviour and cultural intelligence.

Table 2: Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities.

	M	SD	1	2	3	
1 Yoga	0.96	0.25				
2 Mindfulness	4.19	0.85	0.35**	(0.87)		
3 Helping behaviour	3.28	0.53	0.34**	0.43***	(0.90)	
4 Cultural intelligence	4.72	0.70	0.33**	0.39***	0.28*	(0.91)

N = 105; Reliabilities (Cronbach alphas) are in parentheses on the diagonal.

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

The next step was to examine whether mindfulness (enhanced through yoga) plays a mediating role or is it merely a side benefit. For this purpose, the PROCESS macro for regression, as described by Andrew Hayes was used. Table 3 shows the regression findings of the mediation model. The results show partial mediation, which means significance of the mediation as also the direct effects.

Table 3: Regression results for mediation model.

	Mindfulness			Helping behaviour			Cultural intelligence		
	b	SE	t	b	SE	t	b	SE	t
Constant	3.38	0.57	6.81***	2.88	0.95	3.03***	4.48	1.27	3.52***
Yoga	0.24	0.07	3.43***	0.14	0.05	2.80**	0.03	0.01	3.00**
Mindfulness				0.64	0.22	2.86**	0.50	0.17	2.94**
Indirect effect				0.27	0.13	2.08**	0.22	0.10	2.20**
(Confidence Interval)				(BCLB=0.02, BCUB=0.42)			(BCLB=0.02, BCUB=0.42)		
Direct effect				0.14	0.05	2.80**	0.03	0.01	3.00**
(Confidence Interval)				(BCLB=0.04, BCUB=0.24)			(BCLB=0.01, BCUB=0.05)		
Total effect				0.41	0.13	3.15**	0.25	0.10	2.50**
(Confidence Interval)				(BCLB=0.15, BCUB=0.67)			(BCLB=0.05, BCUB=0.45)		
F	9.97***			9.08***			9.19***		
R ²	0.32			0.44			0.43		

Unstandardised coefficients are reported. BCLB refers to lower limit of 95% confidence interval and BCUB refers to upper limit of the 95% bootstrapped confidence interval

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

The total effect of yoga on helping behaviour is significant ($b=0.41$, $p<0.01$; bias corrected lower bound, $BCLB=0.15$; bias corrected upper bound, $BCUB=0.67$), which supports the hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2 predicts that yoga would be linked to a higher level of cultural intelligence. The total effect of mindfulness for cultural intelligence is significant ($b=0.25$, $p<0.01$; $BCLB=0.05$; $BCUB=0.47$), which supports the hypothesis. The association between yoga and mindfulness is positive and significant ($b=0.24$, $p<0.001$), which was predicted by Hypothesis 3.

The indirect effect of yoga (through mindfulness) on helping behaviour was also significant ($b=0.27$, $p<0.01$; $BCLB=0.02$, $BCUB=0.42$), in accord with the mediation Hypothesis 4. Yoga had a substantial direct influence on helping behaviour ($b=0.14$, $p<0.01$; $BCLB=0.04$, $BCUB=0.24$). The indirect effect of yoga (through mindfulness) on cultural intelligence is shown to be significant ($b=0.22$, $p<0.01$; $BCLB=0.02$, $BCUB=0.42$) when the mediation Hypothesis 5 was examined. Yoga also has a small direct influence on cultural intelligence ($b=0.03$, $p<0.01$; $BCLB=0.01$, $BCUB=0.05$). Thus, yoga had a direct and indirect effect on the participants' helping behaviour as well as their cultural intelligence.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that yoga would be linked to improved helpful behaviour. The total effect of yoga for helpful behaviour is significant and positive which supports the hypothesis. Hypothesis 2 predicts that yoga would be linked to cultural intelligence. The total effect of yoga on cultural intelligence is significant and positive which supports the hypothesis. Hypothesis 3 predicted that yoga would be positively linked to mindfulness. The effect of yoga on mindfulness is significant which supports the hypothesis 3. This is in line with previous studies free market countries.

The indirect effect of yoga (through mindfulness) on helping behaviour is shown to be significant when the mediation hypothesis 4 was examined. Yoga also has a significant direct influence on helping behaviour. Thus, yoga has a direct effect as also an indirect effect through enhanced mindfulness on helping behaviour. The indirect effect of yoga (through mindfulness) on cultural intelligence is shown to be significant when the mediation hypothesis 4 was examined. This is in line with previous research by Cray, McKay and Mittelman wherein they found positive effect of mindfulness on cultural intelligence. Yoga also has a significant direct influence on cultural intelligence. Thus, yoga has a direct effect as also an indirect effect through enhanced mindfulness on cultural intelligence.

This research, for the first time estimates that the effect of yoga on skills required for business executives in transitional economies – helping behaviour and cultural intelligence. It finds partial mediation by mindfulness. In case of helping behaviour, the effect of yoga through mindfulness is 66 per cent of the total effect whereas the remaining 34 percent comes directly from yoga. In case of cultural intelligence, the effect of yoga through mindfulness is 88 per cent of the total effect whereas the remaining smaller but still significant 12 per cent comes directly from yoga.

Despite the increasing uptake within diverse organisations and endorsement by companies operating in emerging markets the pressure of time within MBA curriculum is such that introduction of yoga in a meaningful manner is difficult. It will be fair to say that few individuals join an expensive EMBA program to cultivate their helping behaviour and cultural intelligence. Rather, they enter an MBA program for career advancement. and to prepare themselves for managerial responsibilities.

Directions for future research

A bit of caution is advised in application of conclusions from this study to other situations. Utmost care has been taken to check internal validity but in most randomised experiments external validity is a concern. Due to cultural factors, the applicability of average results (obtained in an Orthodox Christian country) to other transition countries may be hampered. Further research may be required to confirm the results in other transition economies.

In Europe, yoga's rich intellectual history is not widely known. In the gymnasiums, often yoga is confined to a physical practice for stretching. According to the yoga guru Iyengar who is widely credited as the person who brought yoga to the West, postures without being preceded by *yama* and *niyama* are just acrobatics. Western academics prefer to subtract spirituality from yoga and mindfulness. Accordingly, in this research a secular approach to yoga and mindfulness has been taken. However, some academics consider such an approach a Eurocentric parochial prejudice. These scholars believe that the world is now in a post-secular age and argue that in order to get the full educational benefits of Eastern contemplative practices, These practices must be connected to their spiritual roots. Disregard of religious traditions that go beyond narrow practical ideas negate the benefits and a denaturalised practice detached from its soteriological setting is of no consequence. Future research could look into these concerns.

Substantial further research may be able to move us beyond the crucial but insufficient organisational wellbeing models of yoga and mindfulness. Using sophisticated statistical analysis techniques in this and subsequent studies may not result in a complete knowledge of yoga-based practices. Yoga is not a stress ball for executives to play with that can be perfected through theoretical and empirical research. Ongoing research in helping behaviour and cultural intelligence includes a deeper conceptualisation of their dimensions, complementary measures of and a richer nomological network. There could be modes of mind the working of which may only be accessible through far more advanced research capacities yet to be developed.

Conclusion

Prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Moldova was one of its constituent republics. Moldovan executives possess strong technical skills, which remain crucial in both public and private sector management. However, as the once-monopolistic public sector now faces global competition, businesses recognize the need for behavioral adaptation.

Our research indicates that yoga can significantly enhance the helping behavior and cultural intelligence of business executives. For helping behavior, yoga's effect through mindfulness accounts for 66% of the total impact, while the remaining 34% is directly attributable to yoga practice. Regarding cultural intelligence, the mindfulness-mediated effect of yoga is even more pronounced, comprising 88% of the total impact, with yoga directly contributing the remaining 12%.

Recent neuroscientific findings suggest that skills can be improved through training. While IQ tends to stabilize around puberty, non-cognitive skills remain malleable well into adulthood. This implies that executives in emerging economies can develop their helping behavior and cultural intelligence at any stage of their careers.

The study demonstrates that yoga serves as an effective tool for cultivating these important non-cognitive skills. This finding has significant implications for executive development programs and organizational strategies aimed at enhancing cross-cultural competence and prosocial behavior in the business world.

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