

Transformational Effects of Holotropic Breathwork® in Practitioners' Orientation and Mental Well-being: Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the transformational aspects of Non-Ordinary States of Consciousness (NOSC) induced through Holotropic Breathwork® (HB) practice by examining the correlations between *number* and *period* of HB practice and scores on mental health and self-actualization levels, measured by the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI); meaning and purposefulness in life, measured by the Purpose in Life test (PIL); and quality of life, measured by the Quality of Life Scale (QOLS), respectively. The *number* of HB practice represents how many HB sessions a practitioner has experienced; *period* of HB practice indicates how long a practitioner has been practicing HB. The study employed a quantitative correlative method to address the research problem and discover the usefulness of the intervention and associated factors. Correlations were assessed using a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient ($N = 119$). Results showed that both independent variables, *period* and *number* of HB practice, were significantly positively correlated with all dependent variables (PIL, QOLS, and POI), with the exception of 2 out of 12 POI subscales. The correlation between *number* of practice and the scales signified positive correlation of PIL ($r = .362, p \leq .0036$) and QOLS ($r = .388, p \leq .0036$). Out of 12 POI subscales' correlation, 11 ranged from .244 to .415. Similarly, *period* of practice and scales were significantly positively correlated. Both PIL and QOLS were significant at the .0036 level with a positive correlation of .330 and .342. For POI, one of 2 major subscales, IDS (Inner Directed; $r = .376, p \leq .0036$) was shown to be significantly positively correlated.

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Problem Statement

The problem to be addressed by this study:

- Whether the psychotherapeutic catalyst, HB, can serve as a transpersonal or spiritual practice that nurtures practitioners to gradually transform their orientation to life and enhance their perception of the quality of their lives. (Value as a life practice?)
- Whether the transformational and healing effects of HB can be affected by the degree of commitment to the practice.

Research Question (Hypothesis)

Is there a relationship between the *period* and *number* of Holotropic Breathwork® sessions taken by individuals and their scores on the **POI**, **PIL**, and **QOLS**?

- ✓ *period* of HB practice - how long a practitioner has been practicing HB?
- ✓ *number* of HB practice - how many HB sessions a practitioner has experienced?

Research Method

Correlational Study - a quantitative research method to address the research problem and to discover the usefulness of the intervention and the associated factors (Bonferroni correction was applied to correct for multiple dependent variables).

Participants (N = 119)

Sampling Method: Convenience; Purposive Sampling

Participants Eligibility: the certified facilitators and HB practitioners who have ever participated in week-long HB training modules or 1-day workshops.

Procedure

- Review by Research Ethics Committee of Sofia University
- An initial invitation email with solicitation notice.
- A follow-up email with the link which directs to a web-based survey software (e.g., *SurveyMonkey for PIF, QOLS, and PIL; EdITS [Educational & Industrial Testing Service site] for POI*).
- The **independent variables** (number and period of HB practice) were included in a **Personal Information Form (PIF)** along with the other demographic information such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, and religion, and collected in numeric value (e.g., 25 months and 15 times).
- For the **dependent variables**, survey scales were reported by **participants' self-administered survey responses** through online survey software.

Measurement Instruments (Dependent Variables)

POI (Personal Orientation Inventory)

A leading criterion instrument to measure positive mental health or level of self-actualization rather than psychopathology, as well as a standardized mechanism for measurement of self-actualization

- 150 paired-choice "comparative value and behavior judgments"

PIL (Purpose in Life) test

Based upon Frankl's concept of existential philosophy and theoretical framework of logotherapy

- 20 sentence items of a 7-point Likert-type scale

QOLS (Quality of Life Scale)

Five conceptual categories with 16 items of the 7-point Likert-type scale

RESULTS

Demographics of the Study Sample

- Gender: 58.8% male and 41.2% female
- Education: 84% of participants holding a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree.
- Age: the range of 30 to 69 comprised 87.3% of the participants.
- Ethnicity: White (90.8%)
- Religion: 73.1% of the study sample identified themselves as 'spiritual but not religious' or not religiously affiliated.

Correlations—Period of practice.

Period of practice was found to be significantly positively correlated with all dependent variables except NC (Nature of Man) and A (Acceptance of Aggression). The table below shows correlations between *period* of practice and all dependent variables. By applying Bonferroni's correction, the significance level of .05 changed to .0036. Therefore, the significance levels were denoted at the .05 level and the corrected .0036 level for each correlation.

Variable	r	r ²
PIL	.330**	.109
QOLS	.342**	.117
Time Competence (TC)	.281*	.079
Inner Directed (IDS)	.376**	.141
Self-Actualizing Value (SAV)	.275*	.076
Existentiality (EX)	.346**	.120
Feeling Reactivity (FR)	.252*	.064
Spontaneity (S)	.241*	.058
Self-Regard (SR)	.317*	.100
Self-Acceptance (SA)	.363**	.132
Nature of Man (NC)	.168	.028
Synergy (SY)	.324*	.105
Acceptance of Aggression (A)	.200	.040
Capacity for Intimate Contact (C)	.279*	.078

Note. PIL ($n = 119$); QOLS ($n = 116$); POI subscales ($n = 108$).
* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .0036$.

Correlations—Number of sessions.

Number of sessions was found to be significantly positively correlated with all dependent variables except NC (Nature of Man). Table below shows the correlations between number of sessions and all outcome variables.

Variable	Number of sessions	
	r	r ²
PIL	.362**	.131
QOLS	.388**	.151
Time Competence (TC)	.297**	.088
Inner Directed (IDS)	.393**	.154
Self-Actualizing Value (SAV)	.244**	.06
Existentiality (EX)	.382**	.146
Feeling Reactivity (FR)	.330**	.109
Spontaneity (S)	.254**	.065
Self-Regard (SR)	.279**	.078
Self-Acceptance (SA)	.415**	.172
Nature of Man (NC)	.072	.005
Synergy (SY)	.291**	.085
Acceptance of Aggression (A)	.328**	.108
Capacity for Intimate Contact (C)	.357**	.128

Note. PIL ($n = 119$); QOLS ($n = 116$); POI subscales ($n = 108$).
* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .0036$.

DISCUSSION

Relationship between *period* of HB sessions and scores on the POI, PIL, and QOLS.

- Both PIL ($r = .330, p \leq .0036, R^2 = .109$) and QOLS ($r = .342, p \leq .0036, R^2 = .117$) are positively related with the period of practice.
- For POI's subscales, one of two major subscales, IDS ($r = .376, p \leq .0036, R^2 = .141$) was shown to be significantly positive correlated. The other major subscale, TC ($r = .281, p \leq .05, R^2 = .079$) was positively related only at .05 level. Only two out of 12 POI subscales did not reveal a significant correlation: NC (Nature of Man) and A (Acceptance of Aggression).

Relationship between *number* of HB sessions and scores on the POI, PIL, and QOLS

- The results from the Pearson product-moment correlation signified positive correlation of PIL ($r = .362, p \leq .0036, R^2 = .131$) and QOLS ($r = .388, p \leq .0036, R^2 = .151$).
- Most of the POI subscales showed significantly positive correlation; respectively, TC ($r = .297, p \leq .0036, R^2 = .088$) and IDS ($r = .393, p \leq .0036, R^2 = .154$).
- The number of HB practice was positively correlated with all the dependent variables (three main scales), *except for the POI subscale NC*.
- The other POI subscales (11 out of 12 subscales) correlations ranged from .244 to .415 and significantly positively correlated at the level of .0036.
- All correlations were significant at the specific initial lower threshold .05 and the more stringent and corrected threshold of .0036, except for NC. That is, all those correlations remained significant even after Bonferroni's correction, except for NC.

CONCLUSIONS

Practitioners' degree of engagement, given by the period and number of HB practices, was significantly positively correlated with practitioners' psychological orientation, self-actualization, life purpose, and quality of life.