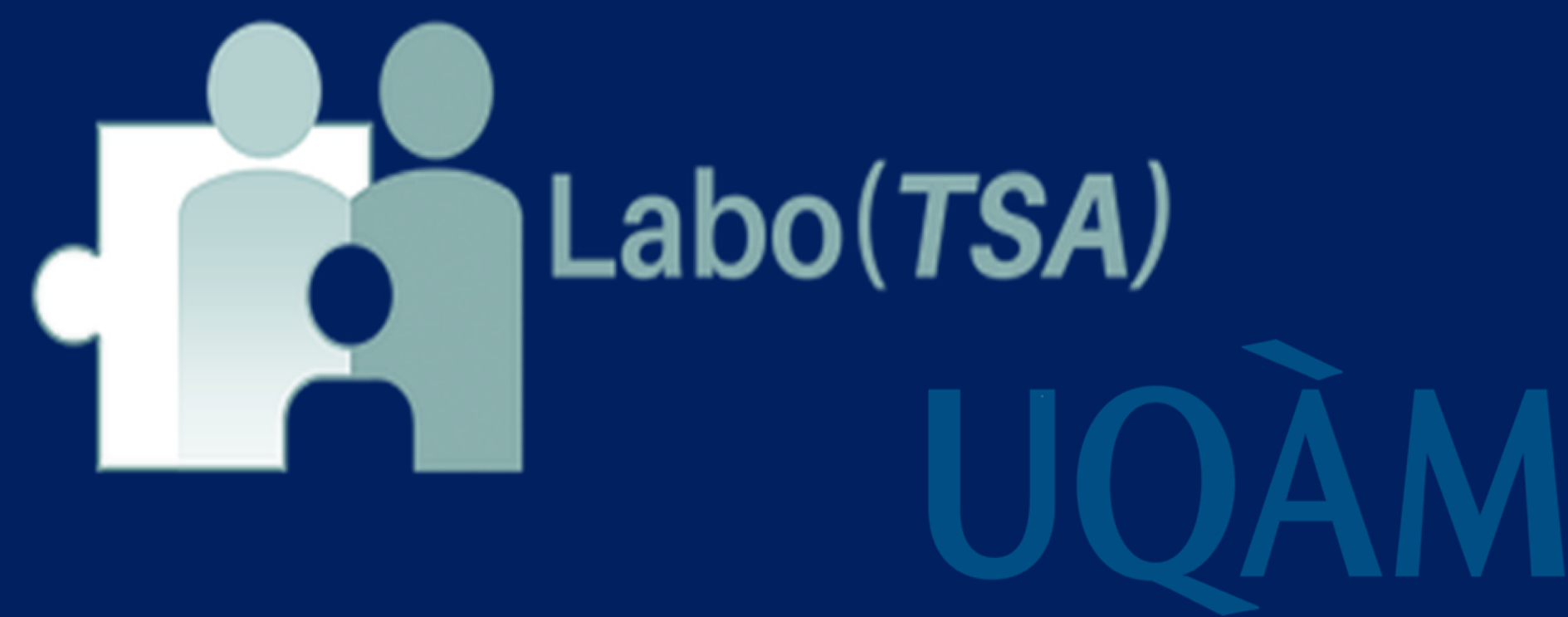


# Yoga Practice among Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Exploring the Effect on Attention Behaviors in Class



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## Introduction

Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may present some difficulties suggesting the presence of a related condition (i.e.: anxiety disorder, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), mood disorder) (American Psychology Association, 2013). About 28 % of adolescents with ASD also meet the diagnostic criteria of ADHD (Simonoff and al., 2008). New intervention avenues are explored to help adolescents with ASD cope with their difficulties, such as yoga therapy, which has demonstrated its efficacy among children with ASD (Kenny, 2002; Koenig and al., 2012; Rosenblatt and al., 2011).

## Objective

**Exploring the efficacy of yoga practice on attention behaviors of high school students with ASD.**

## Method

### Participants :

Two groups of Montreal high school students (girls n=5; boys n=7) aged between 13 and 15 years old.

### Instruments :

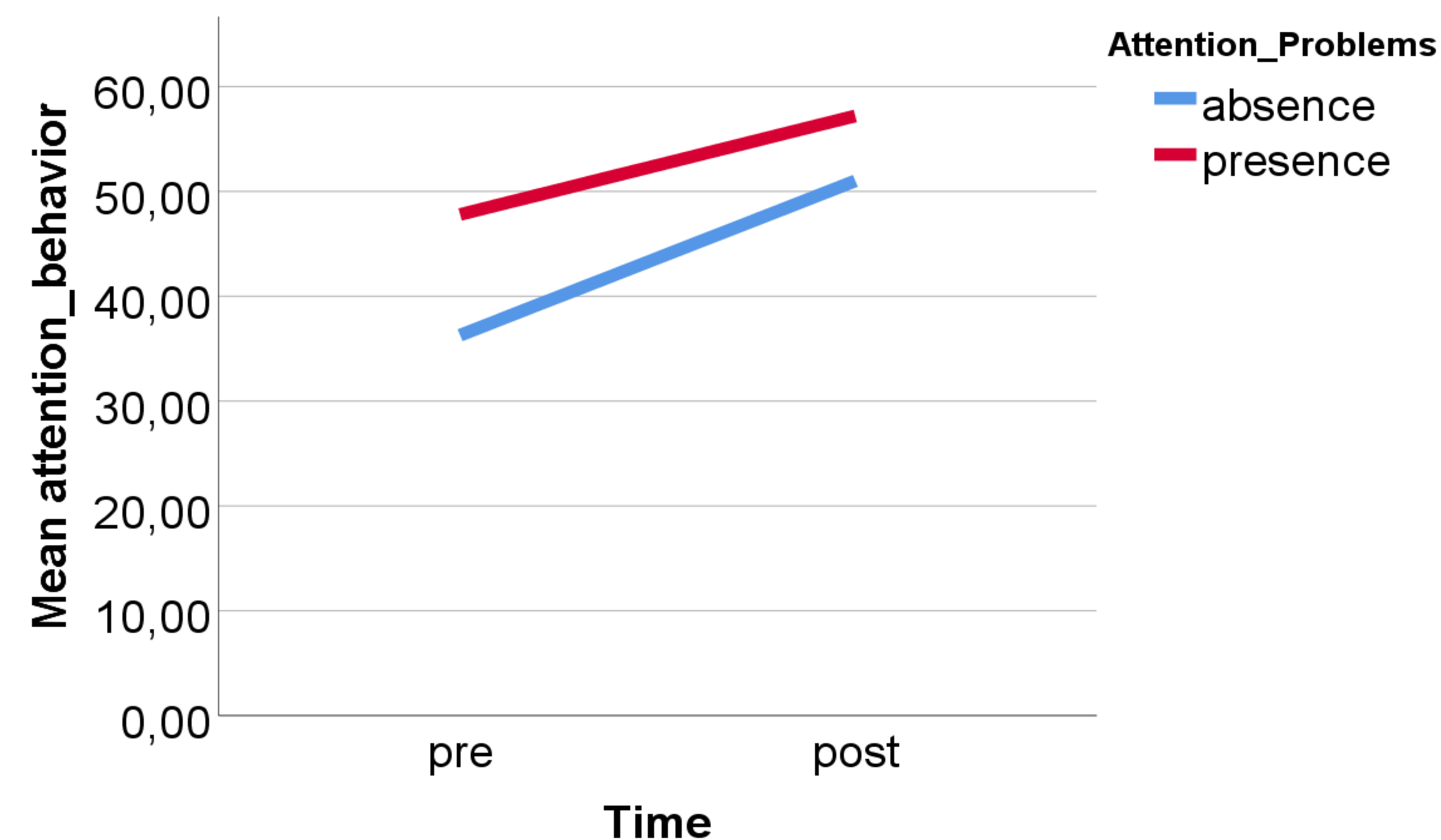
- Behavior Assessment System for Children, second edition, self-reported questionnaire (BASC-2)
- Direct in-class observations aimed at documenting the presence of attention behaviors during a task.

### Procedure :

8 weeks, at school, yoga program.  
Weekly sessions were given by a certified yoga teacher.

## Results

Comparing the mean frequencies of attention behaviors by time and attention problems



|                     | Presence of attention problems (n=5) |         |       |      | Absence of attention problems (n=7) |         |       |      |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|---------|-------|------|-------------------------------------|---------|-------|------|
|                     | Pre                                  | Post    | t     | d    | Pre                                 | Post    | t     | d    |
| Attention behaviors |                                      |         |       |      |                                     |         |       |      |
| M                   | 57.2                                 | 47.8    | 3.05* | 0.70 | 51.00                               | 36.28   | 2.81* | 0.84 |
| (SD)                | (12.95)                              | (13.94) |       |      | (10.04)                             | (22.50) |       |      |

\*Significant level at  $p < 0.05$



## Discussion

The present study reveals that yoga may be a useful practice for adolescents with ASD, regardless of the presence or not of attention difficulties.

This study supports previous research by demonstrating that yoga practice may be effective in increasing attention behaviors of adolescents with ASD (Koenig et al., 2012, Rosenblatt et al., 2011).

Thus, integrating the practice of yoga in a school setting may be an alternative intervention aimed to increase students concentration during academic tasks.

This study provides an understanding of the effects of yoga practice on student's behavior free from any possible teacher perception biases. Future research should include a bigger sample size and a pre/post measure of behavioral problems.

## References

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