

JOINT EVENT

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Effect of mantra chanting on cognitive and emotional measures in primary school children: a randomized controlled trialNeha Sharma and Swami Brahmacharananda Saraswati²¹Warwick Research Services, UK²Arsha Vidya Tirtha, India

The present randomized controlled trial assessed the effects of mantra chanting on cognitive performance, self-esteem, and teacher-rated behavior and performance, in primary school children. 78 school children from 2 primary schools in Rajasthan, India; between 6 to 8 years were randomized as mantra chanting group or waitlist control group (n = 39 each group). Ethical approval and parental consent were taken before the recruitments. Both groups were blind assessed after allocation. Stroop color-word task for children, battle's self-esteem inventory and the teachers' rating of the children's performance and behavior were used to assess cognitive function, self-esteem and teachers reported behavior respectively. All the measurements were taken baseline and post-program at 4 months. After baseline assessments, the mantra group practiced mantra chanting (guided mantra chanting), 30 minutes each day, 5 days a week. During this time, wait list control group had usual recess activities. Data were analyzed with RM ANOVA and post-hoc tests. After the 4-months, there was a significant difference between groups in all domains. Social self-esteem was higher in usual recess compared to mantra chant group but did not reach to the significance level. Stroop task both groups showed greater improvement in color, word- and color-word naming ($p < 0.001$), the teachers' rating of the children's obedience, academic performance, attention, punctuality, and behavior ($p < 0.001$) in chanting group compared to wait list control. The study shows that mantra chanting could be useful additions to the school routine, with improved cognitive and behaviour change in primary school children.

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