IMPLEMENTING THE TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION PROGRAMME IN THE BRAZILIAN MILITARY POLICE FORCES: A CASE STUDY

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This case study evaluated the effects of implementing the Transcendental Meditation Programme among the police forces of three states of Brazil. After positive results among the police were reported by leaders in Goiás state, police forces in other states began the programme. Results among police trainees in Piauí state who learned the Transcendental Meditation Programme included a high percentage of participants reporting physical benefits, greater relaxation, less worry and tension, greater capacity for study, improved relationships, more support for their military education, and greater respect for country and organizations. In Bahia state, police officers displayed a reduction in disciplinary sanctions and doctor visits after beginning the practice, and an improvement in relationships of the officers with their community members. Police trainees in Bahia state also showed reduced disciplinary sanctions and reduced doctor visits after learning the Transcendental Meditation Programme.—EDITOR

During the past decades, the Transcendental Meditation Programme has been extensively applied and evaluated in the criminal justice system, particularly with prison inmates and prison staff (e.g., 1–3). This case study is the first to report on the implementation of this programme with the police, who serve as the most direct link between the justice system and the population.

A large body of research confirms that the practice of Transcendental Meditation alleviates individual stress on the physiological and psychological levels, thereby promoting physical and mental well-being (e.g., 4–5). These benefits are extremely important to police officers, who are subjected to very high levels of stress originating both in the community they serve and in the demands of their profession. Stress in the community is reflected in high rates of crime and violence which police officers must face daily. The impact of these conditions on police officers is amplified by high work loads and other administrative situations. The cumulative effects of these sources of stress include lack of discipline, absenteeism, and the growth of mistrust between police and the community they serve. The benefits of stress reduction and unfoldment of inner potential through Transcendental Meditation are thus of fundamental practical significance not only for the personal health and well-being of police officers, but also for the professional success of the police forces.

Recognizing these crucial potential benefits for police officers and the police force as a whole, eight Brazilian state governments incorporated the Transcendental Meditation Programme into their military police forces in 1987 and 1988, with more than twenty-six thousand police officers instructed. This case study report summarizes results of this programme in the states of Goiás, Piauí, and Bahia; the source of these results are either police officer reports, reports by officials, or police force statistics.

PROJECT RESULTS AMONG MILITARY POLICE IN GOIÁS STATE

Under the sponsorship of the federal government, the Transcendental Meditation Programme was adopted by the military police of Goiás State in February 1987, with 1,100 members of the police force instructed in the program. The Commander-in-Chief of the Goiás police, Colonel Alvaro Alves, Jr., gave a written evaluation of the
project, reporting that his officers had shown "enormous interest" in the Transcendental Meditation Programme and had easily learned the technique. Among the improvements reported by the officers and by the police authorities were the following:

- reduced fatigue;
- reduced frustration;
- decreased physiological excitement and stress;
- increased creativity and intellectual capacity;
- increased optimism and work capacity;
- increased harmony in the group;
- more respect for authority;
- strengthened family relationships.

On the basis of the substantial benefits expressed by the military police of Goiás, the Transcendental Meditation Programme began to be appreciated as an essential course for police professionals.

PROJECT RESULTS AMONG POLICE OFFICERS AND TRAINEES IN PIÁUÍ STATE

The success of the Transcendental Meditation Programme in Goiás inspired other states to introduce it for their military police forces. Two months after the programme was implemented in Goiás, it was introduced to the police force in the state of Piauí, where 1,400 officers, including 289 trainees, were instructed in the Transcendental Meditation Technique. The results were similar to those of Goiás. In the police academy, trainees experienced less anxiety, greater relaxation, increased energy, improved health, improved academic performance, and improved interpersonal relationships. (These and other findings are charted in Figure 1.) The results of the project led the commander of the academy to state that the Transcendental Meditation Programme "for reasons of its efficacy, could and should be introduced as a curricular discipline in courses of every and any area of teaching, as well as any corporation, particularly those concerning public security."

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AMONG MILITARY POLICE IN BAHIA STATE

Maharishi’s Transcendental Meditation Programme was subsequently implemented by the military police force of the state of Bahia at the request of the Governor, who was concerned about reports of rough and violent behaviour of police officers and by their poor public image. In the first month, six thousand officers were instructed in the Transcendental Meditation Programme, followed later by another five thousand officers. The program was also introduced into the Kriminalpolizei, a separate criminal investigation force that specializes in criminal investigation, where one thousand members were instructed in the Transcendental Meditation Programme. The programme was again subsidized by the federal government.

IMPROVEMENTS IN POLICE TRAINEES

![Graph showing improvements in police trainees](image)

FIG. 1.—A group of 289 trainees of the Centre for Education and Training of Policemen in the state of Piauí, Brazil, reported improvements in mind, body, and behaviour after learning the Transcendental Meditation Technique. Reference: Government of State of Piauí, Brazil, Military Police General Command, Document No. 037-PM-3187, 14 December 1987.
Benefits among Officers in Bahia

The results of the project were evaluated among sixty-three hundred officers who learned the Transcendental Meditation Programme in Bahia. It was found that between January and December 1988, the number of disciplinary sanctions against police officers decreased by 31 per cent. Police officers also experienced a significant improvement in health. In January 1988, 213 visits to the doctor were registered; in December 1988 this number had fallen to 56—a decrease of 74 per cent.1 (Please see Figure 2.)

Benefits among Police Trainees in Bahia

Results were also evaluated in Bahia state among one hundred participants in a ten-month police training course. During month six of the course, instruction in the Transcendental Meditation Technique began. In the following months of the course it was found that there was a 45 per cent reduction in medical visits and a 65 per cent reduction in disciplinary sanctions in comparison with the months prior to instruction in the Transcendental Meditation Technique.2 (Please see Figure 3.)

Major Arcanjo Mendez, Director of the Police Academy, observed: "Statistical studies from the Military Police Operations Centre have shown many positive changes in the behaviour of the police. There has been a significant drop in disciplinary measures taken against police personnel."3

Benefits among Police Administrators in Bahia

The benefits of the Transcendental Meditation Programme extended to the highest levels of the military police forces. The Commander-in-Chief of the Bahia Military Police, Colonel Mesquita, commented:

"I have been practising Transcendental Meditation for over a year now and my personal experience is that I have achieved positive results. I continue to practice TM daily."

"I feel calmer, and consequently, I am in a position to solve the problems of the organization with the tranquility I have acquired. I can transmit this tranquility to my subordinates. I believe that an organization like the police which has a repressive function, but whose aim should also be preventive, should be repressive only when prevention is not achieved.

"The policeman who practices this program and fulfils all its requirements will feel calmer; his mental condition will be transmitted to the citizens. I feel that I transmit tranquillity to the persons who surround me. If I am calmer, the people around me feel calmer too."4

1,2,3,4 Bahia Military Police videotape interview with police administrators, other police officers, and citizens, 1989.

Community Benefits in Bahia

The improvements in the military police were even evident in the interaction of the police with members of the public. Colonel Barbuda of the Bahia Military Police noted:
"When you practice TM, the people who are around you also experience less stress. The surrounding community begins to feel calmer, more tranquil, to have better relationships, more friendship. That is even more fundamental than the stress reduction for yourself."5

Through twice-daily practice of the Transcendental Meditation Technique, members of the police force experienced greater calmness, greater alertness, reduction of stress, and greater sense of responsibility, leading to a more positive interaction with the public.

By the end of 1988, the police department in Salvador, Bahia, had received 205 messages of congratulations from citizens appreciating the quality of performance of police members; in contrast their had only been a few appreciative reports near the beginning of the year. Subsequently, in response to a public survey of attitudes towards the police, one lady stated:

"Since about a year and a half, I have noticed that the police have become more attentive, friendly, and well-mannered. They are calmer when dealing with the public. When they are asked for information they listen and answer. Before it was not like this. It was as though they wanted to run over the people. It was as if a bus was passing by. Now they are more relaxed. I have been appreciating that."6

CONCLUSION

This case study in Brazil documents the profound and practical benefits of the Transcendental Meditation Programme for police officers, police trainees, and the whole community served by the police. These benefits include better physical health, greater psychological balance and ease, more professional behaviour, and better relations with the community.

These same benefits for police officers and the community as a whole can be gained by any city or state through the application of the Transcendental Meditation Programme.

REFERENCES

5, 6 Ibid.