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THE TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION TECHNIQUE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A SHORT REPORT ON A CONTROLLED LONGITUDINAL PILOT STUDY

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Postgraduate students practising the Transcendental Meditation technique showed an improvement in academic performance compared with control subjects.—EDITORS

The following is an abstract of the original research prepared in consultation with the author. The full paper will appear in the British Journal of Educational Psychology.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of the Transcendental Meditation technique on academic performance in a British postgraduate student population, using an experimental design complementary to those utilized by previous research indicating improvements in this field.

Twenty male students taking the first year of an M.Sc. course in Industrial Engineering and Production Management at Cranfield Institute of Technology were randomly allocated to an experimental group (N = 10; mean age 26.0 years) or a control group (N = 10; mean age 25.0 years).

Neither group was aware that the purpose of the experiment was to assess the effects of Transcendental Meditation on examination performance, and all the evaluating staff were either unaware of the study or blind to group membership. Together these conditions controlled for artifactual effects of expectation, motivation, and self-selection.

Examination performance of the two groups was evaluated in December 1981 (pre-test) and June 1982 (post-test). Instruction in Transcendental Meditation for the experimental group took place in January 1982.

At pre-test the experimental group had a mean score greater than that of the control group in four out of nine subjects (44.4%), while at post-test the meditators had a higher average score in ten out of twelve subjects (83.3%). This post-test difference was statistically significant ($p = .019$, Binomial test).

The data was transformed into standard scores in order to compare the results obtained by students for different examination subjects. There were no significant differences between the groups at pre-test, but at post-test significantly more standard scores for the experimental group were greater than two standard deviations above the mean (five scores for the experimental group, compared with none for the control group; $p = .03$, Fisher Exact).

Finally, it has been noted that only six of the control group completed the whole year, in contrast to all ten of the experimental group. Given random allocation of subjects this finding is also significant ($p = .04$, Fisher Exact).

This result is consistent with previous studies indicating that the practice of Transcendental Meditation produces an improvement in academic performance.