



## Research Article

# Effect of Traditional Ritual ‘Garbhotsav Sanskar’ on Infant’s Mental Health in Karnal District Haryana: A Case Study

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**ABSTRACT.** Garbhotsav Sanskar is an Indian traditional ritual performed by pregnant women for an upcoming child. Garbhotsav Sanskar is performed throughout India by All World Gayatri Pariwar (AWGP) under *Aao Gadhe Sanskarwan Pidhi* (Building a cultured generation) movement. The present study aimed to evaluate the strength and difficulties in the children whose mother performed Garbhotsav Sanskar and followed the holistic lifestyle which compare with the children whose mother did not perform the same. The study aimed to the psychological effect of the ritual and given instructions, a comparative study was done on the children of district Karnal in Haryana, India where 20 children of age 2-4 years (experimental group) were selected whose mother performed the Garbhotsav Sanskar and followed the holistic lifestyle taught by AWGP volunteers, while 20 children of the same age (control group) were selected whose mothers were unaware of such rituals and lifestyle. Children from both groups were evaluated using the ‘Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire’. The findings showed that children of mothers who went through the Sanskar and followed the guidelines given by the team had significantly higher strength ( $p < 0.05$ ) than the children of mothers who didn’t go through the process of Sanskar. Though the numbers of samples were less, the case study indicated the potential of the philosophy and the message of this traditional ritual Garbhotsav Sanskar for the mother in nurturing and developing a child from its beginning.

**Keywords.** Garbhotsav Sanskar, Ritual, Children Mental Health, Aao Gadhe Sanskarwan Pedhi, All World Gayatri Pariwar

## INTRODUCTION

A long time ago, psychologists believed that childhood trauma or genetic disorders were the only or main reason for psychological disorders in children. But as time advances, scientists have observed that the mental health and nutrition of a mother during the gestation period has a significant effect on a child’s mental health. The fetus might also be affected by its mother’s childhood trauma (1-2). A report also indicated that the fetus also

experiences the mother’s stress and its reactivity which correlates with infant temperament (3).

Though there is no clear evidence that the fetus can communicate with the external environment, it is very well established in the cultural view that during the 9 months period of pregnancy, the mother communicates with her child and allows the child to get ready to face the world. Hindu scripture ‘Mahabharat’ described a well-known example of

Abhimanyu, son of Subhadra and Arjun, who learned the special military formation tactics during the time of fetus from a conversation between his father and mother (4). Vedas also talk about the importance of mothers' well-being during pregnancy as the most important factor for healthy childbirth.

Does the stress and lifestyle of the mother affect the child? It is a question that both modern scientists, as well as social activists, are interested. All World Gayatri Pariwar is a socio-spiritual organization and has recently launched a mass movement '*Aao Gadhe Sanskarwan Pidhi*' for pregnant mothers. The movement includes training and consultation along with the Indian ritual 'Garbhotsav Sanskar' for pregnant women regarding best practices for the best child including changes in lifestyle, thinking pattern, personal and family life, food patterns, health, habits, etc.

In the present study, children of age 2-4 were evaluated whose mothers had participated in the training and rituals of Garbhotsav Sanskar. The present study aimed to evaluate the strength and difficulties in the children whose mother performed Garbhotsav Sanskar and followed the holistic lifestyle which then compared with the children whose mother did not perform the same.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to study the psychological effect of the ritual and provided instructions on children's development whose mother had taken Garbhotsav Sanskar, a comparative study was done on the children of district Karnal in Haryana, India. In the study 20 children of age 2-4 years (experimental group) were selected whose mother performed the Garbhotsav Sanskar and followed the holistic lifestyle taught by AWGP volunteers, while 20 children of the same age (control group) were selected whose mothers were unaware of such

rituals and lifestyle. Children from both groups were evaluated using the Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ) (6). SDQ test the strength and difficulties of the child's behavior would allow observing whether the sanskar had an effect on the newborn's mental health.

## Sampling details

The research was done on children of district Karnal, Haryana, India. Total (N=40) were children evaluated. All mothers were from within 20 kilometers of the central-town area of the district. All were of nearly the same socio-economic background with middle-income status except 2 of the participant mothers from the experimental group were of low-income status.

### 1. Experimental research group

Mothers of this group had done Garbhotsav Sanskar and training from AWGP during pregnancy. All of them were also practitioners of Indian spiritual practices. They had also completed the guidelines given by the team of '*Aao Gadhe Sanskarwan Pedhi*' (5). The participant mothers in this group were selectively chosen by the '*Aao Gadhe Sanskarwan Pedhi*' movement volunteer of AWGP from district Karnal, Haryana.

### 2. Control research group

In this group, mothers were not aware of any training and ritual of Garbhotsav Sanskar. They had also been not practitioners of Indian spiritual practices and were leaned towards the western lifestyle. All mother participants in this group were taken from a private gynecology clinic in district Karnal, Haryana. Some mothers in this group also faced emotional trauma during their pregnancy.

## Strength and difficulty scale

SDQ was developed by Dr. Robert Goodman, professor of brain and behavioral medicine at King's College, London. It's a worldwide accepted

brief psychological assessment tool for children of age group 2-4 years. This test is designed to compute emotional problem score, hyperactivity score, peer problem score, pro-social, and impact score.

**Evaluation and analysis**

A telephonic interview was taken for filling up of questionnaire. Either mother or father had given answers for the SDQ questions. Both groups were contacted through telephonic method due to COVID-19 pandemic with permission of using the

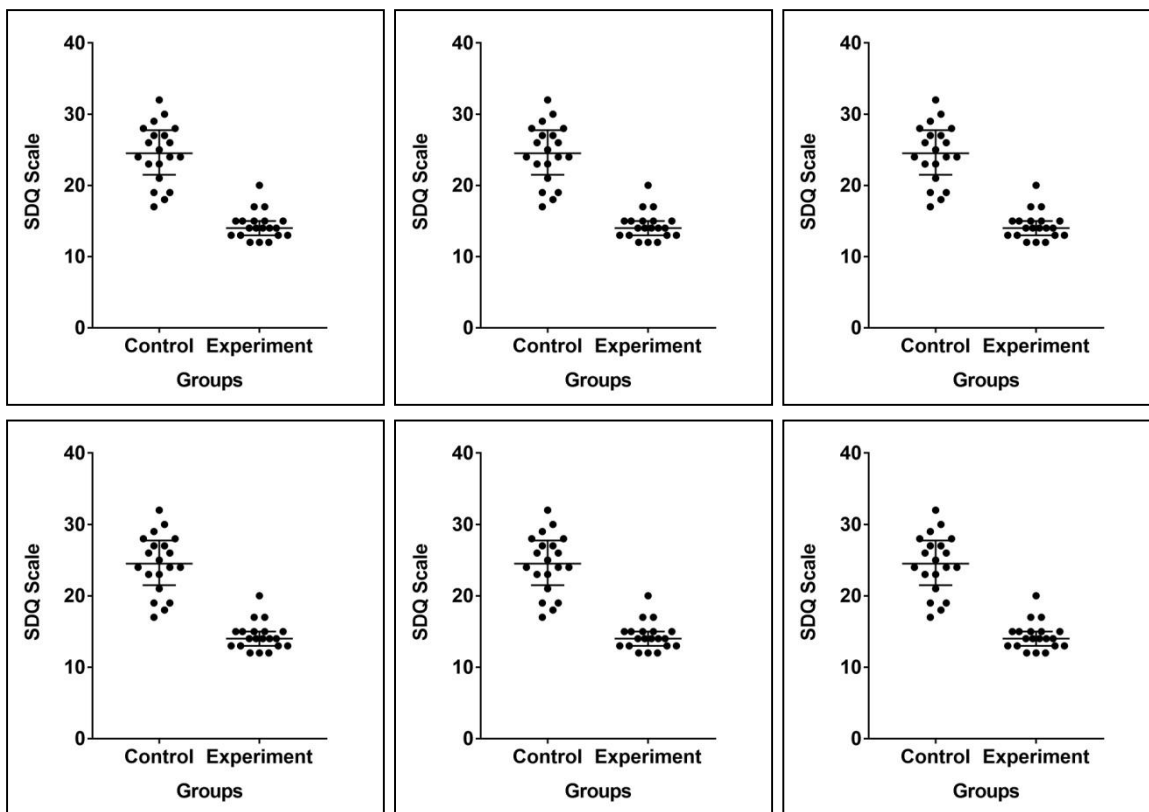
data with essential confidentiality norms. Statistical analysis of the acquired data was done by t-test.

**RESULT**

The results showed a significant difference in both groups. The total difficulty score median in the controlled group was significantly high as compared to the difficulty score in control group children.

Group	Median	25%	75%	P-value
		Percentile		
Control	24.5	21.5	27.75	<0.0001
Experimental	14	13	15	

Mann Whitney test; Two-tailed



**Figure 1.** Strength and difficulty scores of children whose mother performed Garbhotsav Sanskar and training (experimental) than to compared with children whose mother did not (control), A) SDQ Total Difficulties Score, B) Emotional Symptoms Scale, C) Conduct Problem Scale, D) Hyperactivity Scale, E) Peer Problem Scale, F) Prosocial Scale.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings of the present study have shown that children of mothers who went through the Sanskar and followed the guidelines given by the team had significantly higher strength ( $p < 0.05$ ) than the children of mothers who didn't go through the

process of Sanskar. Though the numbers of samples were less, the case study indicated the potential of the philosophy and the message of this traditional ritual Garbhotsav Sanskar in the mother for nurturing and developing child from its beginning.

The mother of the experimental group was following Indian spiritual practices and the mother of the control group was more leaned towards a modern-stressed lifestyle with non or minimal spiritual practices, which might also contribute to the difference in the children.

It is not easy to notice children's signs of problems in today's busy lifestyle which then reflect in adulthood. The first step to take care of a child's problem starts right from the mother's womb. The Garbhotsav Sanskar is the first of the 16 Sanskars that Indian Scriptures mentions. These rituals with profound philosophy and adaptation of its messages in lifestyle have a strong impact in life and have been performed at different stages in human life. The present study showed that the sanskaras are not only to purify and upgrade human life spiritually but it has psychological and physical impact visible in our life. Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya has said in today's society we need great people with superhuman capabilities and they can be created from great mothers.

Mothers don't just give birth to babies with flesh and blood but also nurture them with their love and emotions. 9 months of pregnancy is the most crucial time for a baby's development. Modern studies have shown that the stress of the mother and stressful environment can damage the brain of the fetus (1-3). Hence, it is also expected that providing a peaceful, positive and emotionally mature environment would also contribute to the positive creation of a baby which would help it to become a better human being. The mother may not have control over all the external factors but staying strong, being hopeful, and meditating can help to feel less stressed and make the baby feel better. The present study supported this hypothesis and indicated the utility of ancient practices. The present study also indicated that these sanskaras are not mere religious practices but it has impact

psychological-spiritual impact on a child's development and can't tide with one group rather should be implied to all; because they are powerful spiritual practices helpful to all. AWGP has been actively making available these practices in their true form free of cost to mass for years under movement - Transformation of the Era.

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**Competing interests:** None declared.

**Patient consent for publication:** Author only contacted participants who took part in the traditional ritual – Garbhotsav Sanskar. Patient informed consent for data collection was taken. No treatment from Author's side was given.

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