



The Influence of Educational Cinema Music Like Prayers and Folk Songs on the Psychological Health and Instillation of Morals and Values in School Students from Panna District, Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract

This study looks at how prayers and folk songs shown through movies affect the moral growth and mental health of students in Panna district, Madhya Pradesh. Educational movies create an audio-visual setting where music can do more than just entertain. It can shape feelings support identity and share important lessons. Prayers can help students think more be more disciplined show care and feel more calm inside. Folk songs can pass on community values, traditions, shared memories and lessons about right and wrong that are part of the culture. The study looks at how hearing these kinds of songs over and over can help students manage their emotions feel better mentally be more sensitive to others and develop their values. Special focus is placed on how music that people in the area know interacts with the school experiences of students in Panna. The research shows that music from movies can be a useful teaching tool, for bringing together mental health, cultural understanding and moral lessons in school.

Keywords: Educational Cinema, Prayers, Folk Songs, Mental Well-Being, Moral Development, School Students

1. Introduction

Music holds a spot in Indian education because it ties learning to feelings, memories and personal identity. It also links students to shared experiences that shape their lives. In schools, music goes beyond just singing or playing instruments. It shows up in morning prayers, patriotic songs, folk tunes, educational videos, cultural events, festivals and even classroom games. In Madhya Pradesh, particularly in culturally distinctive regions such as Bundelkhand and districts such as Panna, local traditions include folk music, devotional songs, regional melodies and community-based musical practices. These musical forms help connect what children learn in school to the culture they grow up in. Panna, situated in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh, has a rich rural and cultural environment in which traditional songs, religious practices, seasonal celebrations and community gatherings remain important aspects of social life. This connection makes education feel more real and meaningful. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 explicitly recognizes arts and culture as important for children's identity, belonging, self-esteem and well-being, while the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023 encourages exposure to local, regional, folk and other artistic traditions.¹

The expression "educational cinema music" may be understood broadly as music presented through educational films, school audio visual material and other pedagogical media, together with music-based activities such as prayers, folk songs, patriotic songs and culturally relevant compositions. Such music has educational significance because it communicates ideas not only through verbal information but also through melody, rhythm, repetition, imagery and collective participation. In the context of Panna and Bundelkhand, educational cinema can provide an additional medium through which students encounter local cultural expressions that may be familiar within their families and communities but less visible in formal classroom instruction. UNESCO's recent work on culture and arts education similarly emphasizes that engagement with arts can develop cognitive and emotional capacities, cultural appreciation, social cohesion and holistic learning.²

Mental well-being during childhood and adolescence is multidimensional. It includes emotional stability, positive self-perception, social connectedness, resilience and the ability to cope with ordinary academic and interpersonal challenges. The World Health Organization has emphasized that mental health conditions frequently develop early in life and that children and young people require supportive environments that promote psychological well-being.³ World Health Organization School therefore represents more than an institution for academic achievement. It is a social environment in which students develop emotional habits, interpersonal relationships and a sense of belonging. This is particularly relevant in rural and semi-rural areas of Panna, where the school may function as an important setting for bringing together children from different social and cultural backgrounds. Music can contribute to this environment because it provides an accessible means of emotional expression and shared participation.

The psychological significance of music is supported by a growing body of research. A systematic review of educational uses of music among children found evidence of beneficial effects relating to emotional development, prosocial skills and aspects of academic functioning.⁴ More recent research has also examined music learning specifically in relation to the well-being of school-aged children and adolescents. Goopy and MacArthur's scoping review indicates that music learning and participation can be associated with positive dimensions of young people's well-being, while also emphasizing the need for stronger and more consistent

research designs.⁵ A 2026 systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized trials involving children and adolescents found that music therapy interventions were associated with reductions in depressive symptoms and improvements in self-esteem and quality of life, although the authors caution that the evidence base remains relatively small and intervention effects should not automatically be generalized to every form of school music.⁶ The relevance of these findings to prayers and school songs lies particularly in the collective nature of musical participation. A morning prayer, for example, can create a predictable beginning to the school day. The shared rhythm and melody may help students shift their attention from the informal environment outside school to a structured communal setting. In schools of Panna, where students may come from families with varied cultural, social and religious backgrounds, such activities need to be implemented in an inclusive and respectful manner. When participation is voluntary or appropriately inclusive and is presented as a cultural or reflective activity rather than as a mechanism for imposing religious belief, such practices may promote calmness, attentiveness and a sense of community. The educational value is therefore not necessarily located in the religious content itself but in the possibilities for reflection, collective participation, emotional regulation and respectful engagement with cultural traditions.

Folk songs have a particularly important role in Madhya Pradesh because the state possesses substantial cultural and linguistic diversity. Musical traditions associated with different communities frequently preserve stories, social memories, seasonal practices, celebrations, occupational experiences and relationships with nature. The Bundelkhand region, including Panna district, provides a significant cultural setting for examining these relationships because folk traditions are closely associated with community life, local history, festivals, devotional practices and everyday experiences. Research on children's musical cultures in North India has shown that children's musical worlds can contain both traditional and contemporary influences and that schools and social rituals provide important contexts in which these repertoires are encountered⁷. This suggests that school music education can function as a meeting point between the cultural knowledge of families and communities and the formal curriculum.

The importance of this connection becomes especially visible in tribal and rural contexts of Madhya Pradesh. Panna contains rural and tribal communities whose cultural experiences can provide valuable local contexts for culturally responsive education. Research concerning tribal education in the state has documented continuing challenges related to educational participation and access, while other work from Betul has demonstrated the potential of participatory and culturally responsive educational interventions to strengthen children's confidence and communication.⁸ Incorporating locally meaningful songs into educational activities can therefore help reduce the distance between home and school cultures.⁹ When children hear musical forms that are familiar from family or community life, classroom learning may become more personally meaningful. Conversely, when students encounter the musical traditions of other communities, they can develop greater awareness of cultural diversity.

Music can also support cultural values through repetition and emotional association. Values such as cooperation, respect for elders, compassion, honesty, environmental responsibility, community solidarity and appreciation of cultural heritage can be communicated through carefully selected songs. In Panna and the wider Bundelkhand region, songs associated with agriculture, nature, family relationships, festivals, devotion and community life can provide culturally relevant material for classroom discussion. A lesson accompanied by a folk song concerning agriculture, nature or seasonal life, for instance, can introduce cultural knowledge while simultaneously stimulating discussion about ecological responsibility. Similarly, songs related to festivals and community traditions can provide opportunities to discuss history, language, social relationships and changing cultural practices.¹⁰ In this way, music becomes an experiential rather than merely textual form of cultural education.

The NCFSE 2023 gives particular importance to local and regional arts. It encourages learners to engage with folk songs, folk dances and local art forms and to become familiar with artistic traditions in their own regions.¹¹ For Madhya Pradesh, this could include appropriate exposure to the diverse musical traditions associated with Malwa, Bundelkhand, Baghelkhand, Nimar and tribal regions, provided that teachers present these traditions accurately and respectfully. In Panna, this regional approach can enable students to explore the cultural heritage of Bundelkhand while also developing awareness of the broader artistic diversity of Madhya Pradesh.

Although the educational use of music is not ideal in general. Not every song automatically promotes mental well-being or cultural values, but certain religious prayers require particular sensitivity in diverse classrooms. Schools should therefore distinguish between teaching about cultural and musical traditions and requiring students to participate in religious practices. Inclusive selection, age appropriateness, linguistic accessibility and respect for diverse beliefs are essential principles. Another consideration is the distinction between music education and music therapy. Evidence from clinical music-therapy studies cannot simply be interpreted as proof that ordinary school prayers or folk songs will treat depression, anxiety or other mental-health conditions. Recent systematic reviews demonstrate promising psychological effects of structured music-based interventions, but they also identify methodological limitations and variation in intervention design.¹² Thus, educational music should be regarded primarily as a supportive pedagogical and socio-emotional resource rather than as a substitute for professional psychological care.

The potential of music is nevertheless considerable when it is integrated into participatory pedagogy. Instead of merely playing recorded songs, teachers can encourage students to sing, clap rhythms, identify instruments, discuss lyrics, interview local musicians, collect traditional songs from grandparents, document regional musical practices and create their own compositions. In Panna, such activities could involve documenting locally

remembered songs, oral traditions and musical practices from families and community members. This approach can help students recognize that their own cultural environment is a legitimate source of knowledge while encouraging them to learn about musical traditions beyond their immediate community. Such activities can develop listening, collaboration, confidence and communication. They can also transform cultural heritage from something encountered only during annual celebrations into an ongoing component of classroom life.

This approach is consistent with the broader direction of Indian educational policy. NEP 2020 places considerable emphasis on holistic development and identifies arts and culture as contributors to cognitive development, creativity, happiness, cultural identity and individual well-being.¹³ The policy also emphasizes the importance of India's cultural wealth and the development of children's appreciation of their own and other cultures. The UNESCO framework similarly advocates education that reflects learners' cultural identities and promotes empathy, creativity and respect for cultural diversity.¹⁴

For schools in Madhya Pradesh, an effective programme could therefore combine three dimensions: emotional well-being, cultural learning and active participation. In Panna's schools, a short reflective or musical activity at the beginning of the school day could support emotional readiness; folk and regional songs from Bundelkhand and other parts of Madhya Pradesh could be integrated into language, social science, environmental studies and arts education; and educational films could provide visual documentation of musical traditions.¹⁵ Teachers could subsequently invite students to discuss what they heard, how the music made them feel, what cultural information it conveyed and how different communities might interpret the same theme. Such reflective dialogue would prevent music from becoming passive entertainment.

Assessment should also extend beyond academic recall. Schools could examine changes in students' participation, confidence, peer interaction, cultural awareness and attitudes toward diversity.¹⁶ Where research is undertaken, validated measures of well-being and culturally appropriate indicators should be used before and after interventions, with comparison groups where feasible. Student, teacher and parent perspectives would provide complementary evidence. Future research in Madhya Pradesh should particularly examine differences between rural and urban schools, tribal and non-tribal communities, age groups and socioeconomic settings. Within this framework, Panna district provides a valuable localized setting for investigating how students from rural, tribal and other communities respond to educational cinema music, prayers and Bundelkhand folk traditions. It should also investigate whether active singing and performance produce different outcomes from passive listening or audiovisual exposure.¹⁷

An important research gap concerns the specific combination of educational cinema, prayer, folk music and regional cultural content.¹⁸ Existing evidence establishes that music and arts can contribute to emotional and educational outcomes, but comparatively less is known about how culturally situated school music programmes operate within specific Indian states and culturally distinctive regions such as Bundelkhand. The 2025 systematic review of regular arts engagement and adolescent mental health concluded that the evidence is promising, particularly for music and internalizing symptoms, while also calling for stronger experimental and quasi-experimental research.¹⁹ Consequently, a carefully designed study based in Panna district could make a useful contribution by examining not only whether students enjoy musical activities but also whether sustained participation is associated with measurable changes in well-being, belonging, empathy and cultural knowledge. Ultimately, the educational significance of prayers, folk songs and music-based cinema lies in their capacity to connect the cognitive, emotional and cultural dimensions of schooling.²⁰ Music can create shared experiences, provide avenues for expression, reinforce memory and introduce children to the cultural narratives of their communities. In Madhya Pradesh, this potential is particularly relevant because of the state's considerable cultural and tribal diversity. In Panna district, located within the Bundelkhand cultural region, music can additionally serve as a bridge between school-based learning and the cultural experiences of families and communities. When implemented inclusively and critically, music can help schools become spaces where students learn not only facts and skills but also how to participate in communities, appreciate cultural difference and understand their own cultural backgrounds. The strongest educational approach is therefore neither to treat music as mere entertainment nor to claim that it independently resolves mental-health problems. Rather, music should be understood as one component of a holistic educational environment in which emotional well-being, cultural identity, creativity and social learning reinforce one another. The available evidence and current educational frameworks provide a strong rationale for further empirical research into culturally responsive music education among school-going students of Madhya Pradesh, particularly in culturally distinctive districts such as Panna, where the traditions of Bundelkhand provide a meaningful context for examining the relationship between educational cinema music, psychological well-being, morals and values. Such research should measure long-term outcomes rather than relying only on immediate impressions of enjoyment or participation.

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