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A study on spiritual education and moral values of youth

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Abstract

Moral values appear to be rapidly decreasing among the youth. They are exposed to adversity in life and are more likely to engage in antisocial behaviour. Spiritual education will assist young people in coping with adversity and living meaningful life. Hence, the present study was undertaken to determine the effect of spiritual education on the moral values of youth. A total of 400 youth were selected for the study. Two hundred youth (100 from Majuli and 100 from Barpeta) attending a general degree course and exposed to spiritual education and another two hundred youth (100 from Jorhat and 100 from Kamrup metro) attending a degree course in a general college and not exposed to any institutional spiritual education were considered. To make the group homogeneous, the respondents from the age group of 20-23 studying in Bachelor level (2nd year and 3rd year) were considered as the sample of the study. A self-structured interview schedule on moral values was used for data collection. The study's result showed that the youth with spiritual education had higher level of moral values than those without spiritual education.

Keywords: Moral values, youth, spiritual education

Introduction

In a society, people from various communities coexist. According to Hossain and Ali (2014)^[8], society has become a necessary prerequisite for the growth and continuation of human life. Individuals are surrounded by culture as a societal force in their communities. Everyone in society is expected to follow the rules, retain their status, and become a group member. The parents and other members of society are responsible for their children's development and survival. Within the community, a child's inherent abilities are developed. According to Chile and Simpson (2004)^[4], community growth and spirituality are linked. The social, economic, political, spiritual, cultural, and environmental components of community development are all intertwined with spiritual values of holism, sustainability, diversity, equilibrium, and fairness. People's spirituality develops as they grow in the community. When people experience, create, share, express, and appreciate things that are beneficial to the meaning and purpose of life, they are spiritually developing.

Spirituality is a broad and inclusive term that encompasses values, commitments, appreciations, and a spiritual dimension to living. Spirituality is a process of self-reform that aims to return a person to their original form. It alludes to the cerebral side of life. Spirituality is a dynamic and fundamental part of humanity in which people search for the ultimate meaning and purpose of life while also experiencing interactions with themselves, their families, communities, societies, and nature. It takes the form of concepts, values, traditions, and practises (Joshi, 2018)^[10]. Spirituality has been found to protect adolescents from risky behavior, including delinquency, substance addiction, and emotional issues like anxiety, depression, and suicidality (King and Roser, 2009)^[12]. According to Good and Willoughby (2008)^[6], most adolescents participate in spiritual exploration. They have spiritual-like experiences and such commitments to beliefs and behaviours acquired during adolescence are more likely to last until adulthood. Sparks (1998)^[19] described studies on young people' spirituality as a true indication of optimism in which young adults were well versed about things of inspiration. Indulging in spiritual pursuits provides such inspiration. Spiritual activities frequently arise as a result of religious activities. Religious activities stress the importance of engaging in moral activity in order to connect with the highest power. As a result, spirituality can be said to contribute positively to the formation of morality. Spirituality is intricately tied to our moral sense, and it reflects the individual's moral identity.

Spirituality can flourish when actively nurtured by environments (Luehr and Holder, 2016) [14]. A study by Henry (2000) [7] stated that morality and spirituality share a close relationship where they influence each other. People often refer to spirituality and morality as the same. Solovtsova (2006) [20] said that the concept of spirituality and morality could not be separated as they are considered to have innate qualities and cannot exist without one another. People in the community live cooperatively by following some set of standards which is called morality.

According to Skinner, the outside world is critical in shaping a child's inner sense of morality. The morality of children is influenced by their circumstances. Morality refers to a person's ability to discriminate between right and wrong action, as well as their understanding of how to make good life decisions. Morality and ethics are widely used interchangeably in everyday conversation to refer to proper or justifiable behaviour according to Alexander (2005) [1]. According to Swedene (2005) [21], morality is all about things over which we have power and which contribute to a better human life.

Moral values are the principles that help us determine what is right and wrong. According to Kadam (2017) [11] moral values help build an individual's character and personality, and children are taught about it through moral stories. Family influences a child's attitude toward others and society and his objectives and values, all of which contribute to moral development. Morality grows at different stages of an individual life. Children learn about moral development through the concepts of morality from infancy through adulthood. Children's moral development happens gradually as they grow from infancy to youth and older (Jana, 2018) [9]. As youths' cognitive, emotional, and social development matures, their understanding of moral values broadens and their behavior becomes more conformed to their values and beliefs. Their morality becomes more idealistic and they become socially helpful. Transitions of their moral reasoning take place from the focus on themselves to considering the feelings and rights of others. They also accept adult moral judgments to develop their moral values (Oswalt, 2010) [15]. Researchers found that moral identity is associated with engagement, meaning, identification and acceptance of others, and the warmth of being part of something greater than the self (Garcia *et al.*, 2018) [5]. The great Greek philosopher Plato once wrote that virtue is the beauty and well-being of the soul and those that fail morally will likely end up unhappy, unfulfilled, and physically unwell (Plato, 1973) [16].

Objectives

1. To examine the levels of moral values of youth with spiritual education (WSE) and without spiritual education (WOSE)

2. To find out if there is any difference between the levels of moral values of youth with spiritual education and without spiritual education

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the state of Assam. Four districts, two from upper Assam (Jorhat & Majuli) and two from lower Assam (Kamrup metro & Barpeta), were selected for the study. Majuli and Barpeta districts were selected purposively because in both the districts, institutions imparting spiritual education were located, which was the requirement of the present study. Further, to maintain the homogeneity of the sample, two adjacent districts within the same location were selected. Thus, Jorhat and Kamrup metro were the two different districts to draw another group of samples of the study. Two different institutional centres, namely Satras associated with the Ekasarana Dharma and Krishnaguru Adhyatmik Visvavidyalaya, also known as Krishnaguru Spiritual University associated with Krishnaguru Eknam Dharma, were selected.

A total of 400 youth were selected for the study. Two hundred youth (100 from Majuli and 100 from Barpeta) attending a general degree course and exposed to spiritual education were selected purposively for the study. Another two hundred youth (100 from Jorhat and 100 from Kamrup metro) attending a degree course in a general college and not exposed to any institutional spiritual education were selected for the study. To make the group homogeneous, the respondents from the age group of 20-23 years studying in Bachelor level (2nd year and 3rd year) were considered the study sample. Respondents with spiritual education were selected through purposive sampling method. Respondents without spiritual education were selected randomly from four different colleges considering their willingness to participate. An interview schedule on moral values prepared by the researcher was used for data collection to determine the level of youth's moral values. To better understand the rituals, activities, and functions of the institutes, the researcher made a participatory observation. Additional information was collected by visiting the museum, library, and detailed sightseeing of the campuses.

Results and Discussions

The different moral values used in the present study are respect, self-discipline, compassion, generosity, forgiveness, humility, and justice. This section deals with the respondents' scores obtained for different moral values. The qualities of individual moral values were quantified, and the scores were calculated. Further, the mean and standard deviation (SD) were computed, and then the levels of moral values were categorized under different levels.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to the levels of their moral values

Types of Respondents	Mean	SD	Levels of Moral Values (N=400)						Z- value
			High		Average		Low		
			F	P	F	P	F	P	
WSE	408.72	7.12	40	20%	136	68%	24	12%	60.45**
WOSE	342.64	13.71	12	6%	148	74%	40	20%	

**Significant at 0.01 probability level. F= Frequency, P= Percentage, WSE=with spiritual education, WOSE= without spiritual education

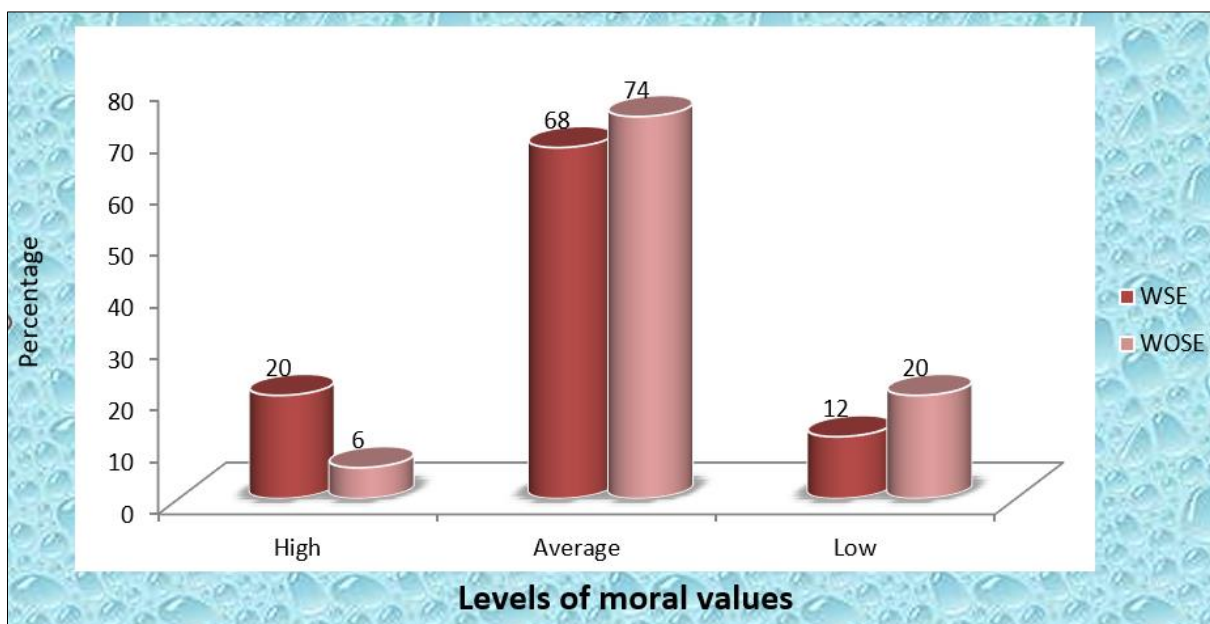
The distributions of respondents according to the levels of their moral values are presented in Table 1. The emerging results depicted that majority of the respondents with spiritual

education (68%) and without spiritual education (74%) had an average level of moral values. High moral values were found in less number of respondents with spiritual education (20%)

and without spiritual education (6%). Further, few respondents with spiritual education (12%) and without spiritual education (20%) were found to had a low level of moral values (Fig.1). The results indicating the better moral values in youth with spiritual education may be due to the impact of their environment. It was observed that the youth with spiritual education were brought up in a residential campus from a very young age where they were taught spiritual education and follow specific guidelines for positive and healthy living. Apart from attending regular colleges, they were also involved in various religious activities in the residential house at the scheduled time, usually held in the morning and evening. Some activities include bathing in the morning, recitation of scriptures, meditation, singing devotional songs, learning about sincerity, caring, and the importance of giving. Being in such an enriching environment enabled them to have better moral values. This is in the same line with the study conducted by Chaudhury (1992) [3], who had also found that a child's home environment and training method influences children's mature moral reasoning and positively impacts their moral values. Moral values are not inborn but develop gradually in children as they observe, learn, and practice daily. The youth with spiritual education are kept in a peaceful environment with positive attitudes and good virtues with minimum outside disturbances. They live with different age groups of people in the same campus, and they follow the guidance and instruction of elders, and thus it helps develop their moral values. Levine *et al.* (2000) [13] also said that moral values and character are not ready-made behavioral patterns but created bit by bit and day by day. It can also be supported by another study by Raju (1997) [17], who also mentioned that students acquire their moral values by observing their parents, siblings, peer groups, adults in their surroundings, and from the religious background as well as cultural rituals in which they grow. These values are the outcome of one's religion, social moves, political and cultural influence.

On the contrary, the youth's lower level of moral values without spiritual education than the moral values of youth with spiritual education may be attributed to the fact that they do not get such an enriching environment as their counterpart. It was seen that these children spent most of their time outside their house by attending school, colleges, and tuition. At the same time, they seemed to involve in different activities like celebrations, outings, partying, getting together, watching movies and playing online games, social media, etc. As a result, they were less exposed to a congenial environment to develop their moral values. They were not exposed to any spiritual education in schools and colleges and focused more on their syllabus to compete in this fast-changing world. Their main goal was to obtain good marks as it was also the dream and expectation of their parents. As a result, their exposure to spiritual and value education was less. This is in the same line with the study conducted by Rahim (2000) [18] who also found that not being exposed to any professional program focusing on moral values, dilemmas of syllabus completion seemed to be the major hindrances in teaching moral values. Moreover, institutional authorities may not be aware of the importance of teaching spiritual education and moral values to the students along with regular course syllabus, or in some cases, the authorities did not permit them to do so. Braskamp *et al.* (2005) [2] also reported that many faculty members did not know and were not interested in fostering students' moral development. Unlike old people, the youth were not much aware or interested in spiritual education or developing their moral values.

The difference in moral values developed by the two groups of respondents i.e. with spiritual education and without spiritual education was also analyzed statistically by using z-test. Results showed that the calculated value of z in moral values (60.45) was higher than the table value, i.e. 2.57. Hence, there is a highly significant difference in moral values between the respondents with spiritual education and those without spiritual education.



WSE= with spiritual education, WOSE= without spiritual education

Fig 1: Distribution of respondents according to the level of their moral values

Table 2: Wilks' Lambda test of Equality of Group Means

Moral values	Wilks' Lambda	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Respect	.421	547.08	1	398	.000
Self- discipline	.303	916.12	1	398	.000
Compassion	.350	739.76	1	398	.000
Generosity	.519	369.39	1	398	.000
Forgiveness	.396	606.07	1	398	.000
Humility	.322	839.74	1	398	.000
Justice	.420	550.67	1	398	.000

The results (Table 2) of Wilks' Lambda test of group equality means demonstrate whether there is any significant difference in various moral values between the respondents with spiritual education and without spiritual education. Here the calculated values of all the seven moral values i.e. Respect - .421, Self-discipline - .303, Compassion - .350, Generosity - .519, Forgiveness - .396, Humility - .322 and Justice - .420 are significant, hence it can be deduced that there is a highly significant difference between the two groups of respondents (with spiritual education and without spiritual education) in holding various moral values (respect, self-discipline, compassion, generosity, forgiveness, humility, and justice).

Conclusion

From the result of the research findings it can be deduced that youth who are exposed to spiritual education had better moral values. Spiritual education was found to positively contribute to the development of youth's moral values.

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