

Exploring Spiritual Values among School Children

Fauzia Nazam^{*} and Akbar Husain

Department of Psychology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

^{*}Corresponding author: Fauzia Nazam, Department of Psychology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India, Tel: +91-9557510810; E-mail: nazamfauzia@gmail.com

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Abstract

Spiritual values are the integrated values towards the spiritual development of children. The present study is broadly aimed at identifying and assessing spiritual values among school children. The sample of 104 school children was drawn from grade 5th to grade 8th from different schools of Aligarh city. Of these, 46 children were females and 58 were males. Simple random sampling technique was used to select participants to the sample. The objectives of the present study were: (1) to identify spiritual values among school children (2) to find out percentage of endorsement for a particular spiritual values by school children, and (3) to find out difference between the percentage of male and female school children endorsing spiritual values. Twenty eight spiritual values were identified by children themselves as with regard to their formation of personality. They are: Courage, Charity, Creativity, Cheerfulness, Caring, Discipline, Equality, Faithfulness, Goodness, Honesty, Humility, Happiness, Helping, Hard-work, Humorous, Kindness, Mannerism, Obedience, Punctuality, Peace, Polite, Social, Sharing, Sacrifice, Sincerity, Simplicity, Truthfulness, and the value of being Understanding. Significant differences were found between percentages of female and male school children on the following spiritual values: Caring, Discipline, Sincerity, and Punctuality. Significant differences were not found between the percentages of female and male school children on the remaining spiritual values. Thus, it can be concluded that the spiritual values are responsible for the personality and spiritual development of children. The aim of education should be towards the cultivation of spiritual values at the primary and secondary levels and to develop spiritual individuality.

Keywords: Spiritual values; Truthfulness; Questionnaire

Spiritual Values: Meaning and Definition

Spiritual values are the integrative values of human soul consisting of altruistic, humanistic, personal, divine, and affective values leading to spiritual growth of personality [1]. Altruistic values refer to values promoting spiritual growth of personality such as Truthfulness, Kindness, Repentance, Reliance on God, Modesty, Unity, and Charity, and Love. Humanistic values refer to values guiding our system and we get accustomed to judging and behaving with ourselves and others. These values are more useful for promoting humanity such as Sincerity, Justice, Goodness, Forgiveness, Courage, Power, and Wisdom. Personal values are those values which guide an individual to be perfect and get reinforced in personal relationships such as Self-restraint, Selflessness, Steadfastness, Humility, Righteousness, Forbearance, and fortitude. Divine values which help us to love God and are the values for submission to God, such as Piety, and Compassion. And finally, Affective values helps to develop peace within self and live in harmony with others, such as Tenderness, Gentleness, and Contentment.

The term moral values are used interchangeably in the literature addressing the existence and meaning of values among children [2,3] however the values mentioned in those studies as moral values and the values considered as spiritual values in this study are overlapping. In reality, spiritual value is more encompassing terminology to value identification studies.

The interests of psychologist to ponder about morality of human is not a new one but dates back to the writings of Sigmund Freud who out of his clinical experiences assumed that strong ego is required for moral development which control innate forces driving us to the

negative sides. A highly virtuous person is said to be strong ego. Slowly and gradually subsequent scholar [4,5] also enquired about values and came up with their own theories addressing human values but the angle of spirituality to the values of human was added in their book "Spiritual Virtues and Human Development" [6].

Researchers investigated moral values among kindergarten aged children. The objectives of this study were: (1) to examine the meaning of values, and (2) to examine meaning of morality and moral development as experienced by Kindergarten age children. The sample consisted of 600 children by using Kindergarten Moral Values Questionnaire. Results indicated that children provided valuable understanding of their judgement on various moral values including eight value namely truthfulness, honesty, gratitude, loyalty, reasonability, fairness mercifulness, and patience. Findings of their study revealed that more than 50% of the students showed endorsement for each of eight values [2].

A study on identifying spiritual values among adolescents was conducted [7]. The sample comprised of four hundred (two hundred males and two hundred females) Muslim-Malay adolescents studying in schools located in Kuala Lumpur. The main objectives of the study were: (1) to identify spiritual values among Muslim-Malay male and female adolescents, (2) to determine the reliability of spiritual values scale. Findings of the study revealed a list of spiritual values, namely, benevolence, charity, dignity, forbearance, hope, humility, kindness, loving, modesty, peace, perseverance, piety, repentance, righteous, sacredness, sincerity, steadfastness, striving, trusting, truthfulness, unity, and wisdom. The Cronbach alpha was found to be 0.869 and 0.894 for male and female adolescents respectively.

A comparative study to examine gender difference in the perception of spiritual values among adolescents was conducted. They found

significant difference between male and female adolescents on the following values, namely, forbearance, dignity, peace, righteousness and tolerance and conclude that behaviour of Muslim Indian adolescents is attuned with the principles of the Holy Qur'an [8].

Statement of the problem

The purpose of present research is to explore spiritual values among school children.

Importance of Spiritual Values among Children

The holistic development of children is incomplete without spiritual development and more specifically spiritual development is incomplete without the cultivation of spiritual values. Because spiritual values actually make us spiritual for example, without the values of compassion, humility, goodness, and truthfulness how could we expect transcendental experience? Likewise, without the value of peace, unity, and wisdom how it is possible to get spiritual enlightenment? Spiritual values are not the momentary values but they are universally applicable values and affect our behaviour across many situations. They make children aware of difference between good versus bad, truthful versus lie, modest act versus immodest and lude acts, humility versus to be in vain, courage versus tidiness, patience versus impatience and its effect and so on. So, these are not the specific to any situation rather they are far encompassing than we can think off. Spiritual values have the power to bloom our children and achieve their goals by the means of righteous paths.

Factors Affecting Spiritual Values

Family and values

Acquisition of spiritual values among school children lies in the parental teachings and parent's own value laden behaviour. Children are keen in their observation of how parents interact and behave with their family members, neighbours and friends in their life. To study the parental effect on value learning by children a study was conducted to examine the values of 37 girls from kindergarten in fifth grade. They interviewed and asked those children to give written and verbal assent. They found that children's acquisition of moral values had direct effect of parents and other adults particularly girls were found to be experiencing a communal sense throughout their interaction with adults [9].

The type of family also influences spiritual values development among children. The forces of social change including urbanization and westernization has lead the trend of nuclear family system where unfortunately the grandparents and other elderly figures are crucial. Parents are working and nobody is left at home to guide their behaviour by correcting them as what is right and what is wrong. Social values of parents and children living in joint and nuclear families were examined [10]. The main objectives were to examine the difference in the social value of children and their parents living in joint and nuclear families. The sample consisted of 360 participants (240 parents and 120 children). Findings of this study revealed that there was no significant difference between the values of children and parents living in joint families. However, significant difference was found between the social values of children and parents living in nuclear families. Thus family structure does influence the values of children.

Schools and Teachers

Indeed, after parents teachers are at the ideal position in children's life to teach them values. Even at certain stages of development in the process of identification children follow more of the slaying of their teachers than parents. At such situations teachers have the key to cultivate spiritual values in children by guiding them to the right path. Theoretical writing as "A Teacher has to set a high standard of moral behaviour before the child" supports this notion [3]. The school plays a very important role in the moral values of the child. Through the organization of various curricular and co-curricular activities, teachers can foster among children various moral qualities. In the teaching of different subjects like languages and social studies etc. teacher may stress moral qualities like love, sacrifice, self-control, truthfulness, uprightness, etc. Dramas, games and sports provide many opportunities for an appeal to the moral sense of the students" (p.71).

Cultivation of Spiritual Values

People belonging to various social institutions such as family members, grandparents, teachers, and peer can cultivate spiritual values in children. Children at an early stages of development spend maximum of their time with mother. She can cultivate those values by narrating the stories form holy books explaining the value of courage shown in different legendry fights in Islamic history explaining the victory of truth, the power of courage and unity. Islamic history is full of stories of wives of Sahabas and their virtues of modesty. Thus instead of letting the child sit in front of television they need to make efforts to cultivate values among children. Parallel to mother, father in the family is also accountable for cultivating spiritual values among children. Children usually go out with their fathers and observe the charity given by him to poor at the street. They learn the value of charity from such small observations. How parents meet with others in the society is also a source of observation for children about the values of parents?

Objectives

The main objectives of the present study were:

- (1) To explore spiritual values among school children,
- (2) To find out difference between the percentage of male and female school children on each spiritual value, and
- (3) To identify the source from which they learnt the identified values.

Methodology

Participants

The participants consisted of 104 school children (46 female and 58 male), studying from grade 5-8 grade. They were participating in a course on personality development organized by the UGC Academic Staff College. All students were studying in schools run by the Aligarh Muslim University such as A.B.K. High Schools, City High School, A.M.U. Girls' High School, S.T.S School).

Measure

Interview method was used to explore values of children. The following open-ended questions were asked to the participants:

Write the five values which guide your behaviour.

Write down the meaning of each value.

Write down the source from where you learnt those values.

asked three questions one by one and participants were asked to write their answers in brief. After data collection, participants were thanked for their cooperation.

Procedure

First, the second investigator approached to the Director, UGC Academic Staff College, A.M.U., Aligarh for seeking consent to collect data from students. The second investigator explained in brief about the purpose of the study i.e. the role of values in personality development. After establishing rapport with students, investigator

Data Analysis

Data were analysed by means of percentages and critical ratio of percentages.

Results and Discussion

Spiritual Values	Mother	Father	Siblings	Friends	Teachers	Self	Religious books and Religious Channels TV
Courage	2.88%	3.84%	1%	-	3.84%	4.8%	-
Charity	14.81%	3%	-	-	-	0%	8%
Creativity	1%	2.88%	-	-	-	0%	-
Cheerfulness	1%	1%	-	-	-	0%	-
Caring	3.84	1.42%	-	-	-	0%	-
Discipline	20.19%	19.23%	2.88	-	23.07%	-	-
Equality	1.92%	1.92%	1%	2.88%	-	-	-
Faithfulness	2.88%	2.88%	-	1.92%	1%	-	-
Goodness	9.61%	9.61%	9.61%	2.88%	-	-	-
Honesty	68.26%	57.69%	1.92%	3.84%	16.34%	4.80	1%
Humility	1.9%	1.9%	-	-	1%	-	-
Happiness	2.88%	2.88%	1.9%	1.9%	-	1%	-
Helping	20.19%	18.26%	6.73%	8.65%	7.69%	6.7%	1.92%
Hardwork	11.53%	10.57%	4.8%	1%	11.5%	1%	1%
Humorous			1%	-	-	1%	-
Kindness	18.26%	16.34%	2.88%	1%	9.61%		
Mannerism	4.8%	3.84%	1.92%	-	3.84%	-	-
Obedience	1%	1%	1%	-	-	-	-
Punctuality	12.5%	12.5%	1.92%	18.26%	2.88%	1%	1%
Peace	1%	1%				1%	
Polite	2.88%	2.88%	1%	1%	1%		
Social	5%	4%	-	-	-	-	-
Sharing	1%	1%	1%	-	-	-	-
Sacrifice	7%	3%	4%	-	-	-	-
Sincerity	7.69%	9.6%	1%	1%	4%	6%	-
Simplicity	1.92%	1%	-	-	-	-	-
Truthfulness	5.7%	5.7%	1%	-	-	-	-

Understanding	1.96%	1%	1%	-	-	1%	1%
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Table 1: Showing the list of values identified by children which guide their behaviour and the source from which they learned.

Spiritual Values	P1 (Females, n1=46)	P2 (Males, n2= 58)	Critical Ratio (CR)	Significance
Courage	10.9%	17.9%	0.98	p>0.05
Charity	2.2%	9.8%	1.55	p>0.05
Creativity	2.2%	7.1%	1.13	p>0.05
Cheerfulness	2.2%	3.6%	0.41	p>0.05
Caring	2.2%	7.7%	2.46*	p< 0.05
Discipline	32.6%	0%	4.6**	p< 0.01
Equality	2.2%	0%	1.12	p>0.05
Faithfulness	0%	5.4%	1.58	p>0.05
Goodness	4.3%	10.7%	1.18	p>0.05
Honesty	84.8%	80.4%	0.57	p>0.05
Humility	2.2%	0%	0.24	p>0.05
Happiness	4.3%	10.7%	1.57	p>0.05
Helping	52.2%	28.6%	1.95	p>0.05
Hard work	19.6%	19.6%	0	p>0.05
Humorous	0%	5.4%	1.58	p>0.05
Kindness	37%	41.1%	0.52	p>0.05
Mannerism	10.9%	8.9%	0.33	p>0.05
Obedience	2.2%	0%	0.57	p>0.05
Punctuality	19.6%	32.1%	3.3**	p< 0.01
Peace	2.2%	3.6%	0.41	p>0.05
Polite	10.9%	10.8%	0.01	p>0.05
Social	6.5%	0%	1.96	p>0.05
Sharing	2.2%	3.6%	0.41	p>0.05
Sacrifice	2.2%	0%	0.52	p>0.05
Sincerity	19.6%	32.1%	2.84*	p< 0.01
Simplicity	6.5%	0%	1.96	p>0.05
Truthfulness	4.3%	3.6%	0.18	p>0.05
Understanding	0%	3.4%	1.58	p>0.05

P1= Percentage of Females endorsing each spiritual values, P2=Percentage of Females endorsing each spiritual values. p<0.01, p<0.05 (2-tailed)

Table 2: Showing differences between the percentage of males and females on each spiritual value.

From Table 1, it can be inferred that the wide range of values are learned by children mainly from the mother such as charity, faithfulness, honesty, helping others, hard work, kindness, mannerism, sincerity, truthfulness, and understanding others. Further, the values

learned from the father include creativity and sincerity. Values such as cheerfulness, faithfulness, goodness, humility, happiness, obedience, punctuality, peace, politeness, sharing, and truthfulness are equally learned both from father and mother. The role of teachers is well

evident in cultivating the values of discipline, honesty, helping each other, hard work, mannerism, kindness, punctuality, and sincerity. Children reported that they learn the values of charity, honesty, hard work, punctuality, and understanding from reading religious books and religious television channels.

From Table 2, it can be seen that significant differences exist between male and female participants in percentages on certain values, namely, caring, discipline, punctuality, and sincerity.

Results suggest that the mother plays a pivotal role in cultivating spiritual values to their children. Next to mother is father is also accountable in cultivating values to their children. Teachers play an important role in cultivating the values of disciplined, honesty, sincerity, hard work, and mannerism. By observing the percentages of children learning spiritual values from holy books and religious television channels are very few. This finding suggests that parents may be involved in cultivating the spiritual values by narrating the meaning of values described in the holy scriptures. And also parents may be watchful of what channels their children are selecting in television in order to promote learning process of values cultivation. Many elementary books are available in simple English languages with colourful pictures that can be used to evoke interest of children in learning good values. Cultivation of values are important for their flourishing and well-being.

Future Research Perspective

The prospective researches can be conducted to analyse the meaning of values understood by children by using qualitative analysis (i.e. coding techniques) to evolve concept of values among children.

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