

EXPLORING SPIRITUAL VALUES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS FOR AWAKENING ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY IN YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

Time immemorial, spirituality and nature are deep rooted in most of the religions of the world. Scriptures of Hinduism and many other religions have documented evidences about reverence towards nature. Today, the two United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2015); Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and Goal 13 (Climate Action) emerge as broad framework to guide global efforts towards a vigorous, vibrant and sustainable future. These two SDGs goals are significant in shaping both mental health and environmental consciousness of any community. Keeping this in perspective, the present study aims to explore the relationship of the various dimensions of Spiritual Values viz., Altruistic Values (Alt V), Humanistic Values (HV), Personal Values (PV), Divine Values (DV), and Affective Values (Aff V) with Environmental consciousness (EC). The sample consisted of 108 undergraduate students. The psychological tools used in research were 'Spiritual Values Scale' developed by Nazam, Hussain and Khan (2015) and 'Environment Awareness Ability Measure' by Jha (2010). Regression analysis was applied to compute the data. The results indicate that there is a positive and high significant correlation between Altruistic Values (Alt V), Humanistic Values (HV), Personal Values (PV), Divine Values (DV), and Affective Values (Aff V) and Environmental consciousness (EC) ($r = 0.508, 0.486, 0.416, 0.401, \text{ and } 0.469, p < 0.01$), respectively. Moreover, the calculated F value ($F = 7.71, p < 0.01$) shows that the model is a better fit to the data set. Hence, this study treks towards thriving a spiritually charged and environmentally conscious civilization that would serves in nurturing a generation equipped with knowledgeable, empathetic, just and sustainably enriched world.

Key words: Spiritual, Altruistic, Humanistic, Personal, Divine, Affective Values and Environmental consciousness

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there is a heightened need for saving the environment by providing innovative solutions. Spirituality is one solution that promotes sustainable behaviour by emphasizing interconnectedness and holistic stewardship of the Earth. Various religions all over the world, specifically, Hinduism presents a rich, unification of spirituality and nature and is rooted in sacred texts and philosophical traditions. Hinduism sees the natural world as divine, alive, and interwoven with the spiritual journey. Trees are sacred, rivers are worshipped and animals too are revered

(Chapple, C. K. (2000; Narayanan, 2001) in Hindu Philosophy. Under a Hindu Environmental Movement named as Chipko Movement originating in the 1970s in Uttarakhand, India, villagers hugged trees to prevent cutting and destruction of forests. This movement was inspired by Hindu values of non-violence and reverence for nature. The movement was linked to Gandhian and Hindu ethics (Dwivedi & Tiwari, 2010). It is proposed that youth, as future caretakers, can be guided by values like reverence, mindfulness, and harmony to develop a sustainable eco-spirit.

The call of the day is to confirm and explore the association and interrelationship of spiritual values with Environmental consciousness in youth so as to inspire responsible actions and a deeper commitment to a sustainable and harmonious relationship with nature. Hence the present research was formulated and executed.

Attention towards forestation by humans has been suggested as key resolutions to environmental issues (Sompura et al., 2022). With the exception of students from Commerce and Arts streams, Sarma and Sharma (2021) noted variations in student awareness towards environment.

Despite their lack of societal awareness, Eren and Yaqub (2015), in their research found students to be environmentally conscious.

According to Božek et al. (2020), spirituality, lifestyle, and wellbeing are positively correlated.

Complex spiritual values have a greater impact on psychological awareness as found in a study by Zhang et al. (2023). Hence, to encourage responsible behaviour Mellat et al. (2023) in their study associated spiritual well-being with resilience and reduced negative emotions. Beggs and Martin (2022) noted that spirituality has indirect effect on academic success via psychological well-being. Iqbal and Khan (2020) also established that spirituality has favourable impact on well-being, with religion moderating the link with sustainable behaviour. Martínez-Borreguero et al. (2020) stressed the need for eco-positive attitudes in teacher education, underscoring the role of sustainability education.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

As the world at present is facing extraordinary ecological challenges, it becomes crucial to encourage and inspire responsible behavior and a strong dedication in youth towards a sustainable, harmonious, conscious and respectful relationship with their environment.

There is an urgent need to develop the connectedness between Spiritual Values and Environmental consciousness in young minds in a rapidly chaotic and changing world and develop strategies to cultivate a sustainable mind-set and promote actions for the preservation of our environment for everyone to benefit and enjoy peaceful existence with nature.

Hence, this study was formulated.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To study the relationship between Altruistic Values, Humanistic Values, Personal Values, Divine Values, and Affective Values with Environmental consciousness, respectively.
2. To study the interrelationships among Altruistic, Humanistic, Personal, Divine, and Affective Values with each other.
3. To study the relative contribution of Altruistic Values, Humanistic Values, Personal Values, Divine Values, and Affective Values with Environmental consciousness, respectively.

HYPOTHESES:

1. There would be a positive relationship between Altruistic Values, Humanistic Values, Personal Values, Divine Values, and Affective Values with Environmental consciousness, respectively.
2. There would be a positive interrelationship between Altruistic Values, Humanistic Values, Personal Values, Divine Values, and Affective Values with each other.
3. Altruistic Values, Humanistic Values, Personal Values, Divine Values, and Affective Values would have significant contribution in the determination of Environmental consciousness, respectively.

VARIABLES:

Predictor Variables- Altruistic Values (Alt V), Humanistic Values (HV), Personal Values (PV), Divine Values (DV) and Affective Values (Aff V)

Criterion Variable- Environmental consciousness (EC)

SAMPLE: The study was conducted on a convenient sample of 108 undergraduates, between the age range of 18-21 years. Both male and females were included in the sample.

TOOLS:

1. Spiritual Values Scale (SVS- NFHAKS, 2015) developed by Nazam, Hussain and Khan was used. This scale contains 27 items based on five dimensions i.e., Altruistic Values, Humanistic Values, Personal Values, Divine Values, and

Affective Values. The reliability was established by calculating Cronbach coefficient for full scale to be 0.9. Content (Face and logical) validity and construct validity was established using factor analysis with varimax rotation.

2. Environment Awareness Ability Measure (EAAM-J, 2010) developed by Jha. This scale contains of 51 items based on five dimensions. Split-half reliability was found to be 0.61; K-R method was 0.84 and test-retest values were found 0.74 and 0.71 respectively. For validity, the coefficient of correlation was found to be 0.83.

PROCEDURE AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATION: Official permission from the concerned authorities and written consent from the respondents was obtained. The two psychological scales were administered to measure Spiritual values and Ecological consciousness on the selected respondents/ students from Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Deemed to be University, Dayalbagh, Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India. Convenient sampling technique was applied. The data was then statistically treated with the help of Multiple regression analysis. Ethical considerations were followed sincerely. Trust and confidentiality were maintained regarding the respondents' responses.

RESULTS: Pearson Correlation and Regression analysis were used for statistical analyses of the data for the current study.

DATA ANALYSES AND DISCUSSION

Table-1: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
EC	38.1019	7.12760	108
Alt V	30.6019	7.51191	108
HV	27.4722	6.79260	108
PV	24.0648	6.42028	108
DV	7.0185	2.09575	108
Aff V	10.8519	2.73029	108

Table-1 shows the mean and standard deviation for Altruistic Values (Alt V), Humanistic Values

(HV), Personal Values (PV), Divine Values (DV), and Affective Values (Aff V) as predictors of Environmental consciousness (EC).

The coefficients of correlation were computed to test the anticipated hypotheses. Table-2 shows inter correlations among the proposed variables, viz., Altruistic Values (Alt V), Humanistic Values (HV), Personal Values (PV), Divine Values (DV), Affective Values (Aff V) and Environmental consciousness (EC).

Table-2: Correlation Matrix

	Alt V	HV	PV	DV	Aff V	EC
Alt V	1	0.896**	0.819**	0.722**	0.779**	0.508**
HV		1	0.782**	0.743**	0.817**	0.486**
PV			1	0.727**	0.779**	0.416**
DV				1	0.727**	0.401**
Aff V					1	0.469**
EC						1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table-2 indicates that there is a positive significant association between Altruistic Values (Alt V), Humanistic Values (HV), Personal Values (PV), Divine Values (DV), and Affective Values (Aff V) with Environmental consciousness (EC), respectively ($r = 0.508, 0.486, 0.416, 0.401, \text{ and } 0.469, p < 0.01$). These values indicate that Altruistic Values (Alt V), Humanistic Values (HV), Personal Values (PV), Divine Values (DV), and Affective Values (Aff V) are substantially correlated to Environmental consciousness (EC) and they are significant at $p < 0.01$ level of significance. **Thus, the first hypothesis stating that, "There would be a positive relationship between Altruistic Values, Humanistic Values, Personal Values, Divine Values, and Affective Values with**

Environmental consciousness, respectively” is accepted.

Table-2 shows the interrelationships between the spiritual values as well. It depicts that there is a positive and high significant association between Altruistic Values (Alt V) and Humanistic Values (HV) ($r = 0.896, p < 0.01$), Altruistic Values (Alt V) and Personal Values (PV) ($r = 0.819, p < 0.01$), Altruistic Values (Alt V) and Divine Values (DV) ($r = 0.722, p < 0.01$), Altruistic Values (Alt V) and Affective Values (Aff V) ($r = 0.779, p < 0.01$). Also, significant relationships is found between Humanistic Values (HV) and Personal Values (PV) ($r = 0.782, p < 0.01$), Humanistic Values (HV) and Divine Values (DV) ($r = 0.743, p < 0.01$), Humanistic Values (HV) and Affective Values (Aff V) ($r = 0.817, p < 0.01$). Further, a positive significant correlation between Personal Values (PV) and Divine Values (DV) ($r = 0.727, p < 0.01$), Personal Values (PV) and Affective Values (Aff V) ($r = 0.779, p < 0.01$), Divine Values (DV) and Affective Values (Aff V), ($r = 0.727, p < 0.01$) is observed. Finally, Table 2 suggests that Altruistic Values (Alt V), Humanistic Values (HV), Personal Values (PV), Divine Values (DV), and Affective Values (Aff V) are interrelated with each other and they are significant at $p < 0.01$ level of significance. **Thus, the second hypothesis stating that, “There would be a positive interrelationship between Altruistic Values, Humanistic Values, Personal Values, Divine Values, and Affective Values with each other” is accepted.**

Further, the multiple regression analysis was run to examine the extent to which predictor variable predicts the criterion variable. For interpreting the results obtained from Multiple Regression Analysis, the variance caused by the combined effect of all predictor variables is seen by obtained R square as shown in Table-3.

Table-3: Multiple Regression Analysis for Environmental consciousness

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.524
R Square	0.274
Adjusted R Square	0.239
Standard Error	6.218
Observations	108

The above Table-3, shows that the obtained value for R square = 0.274, suggesting that about 27% of contribution is jointly accounted for by all the predictor variables (Altruistic Values (Alt V), Humanistic Values (HV), Personal Values (PV), Divine Values (DV), and Affective Values (Aff V)) in causing variation in the criterion variable, i.e., Environmental consciousness (EC). The remaining variation of 73% is due to other factors. The statistical test for the significance of R is an F ratio (Table-4).

Table-4: Showing the F-Value for Environmental consciousness

	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	5	1491.510	298.302	7.71	0.000
Residual	102	3944.370	38.670		
Total	107	5435.880			

Table-4 depicts the value of $F = 7.71$, which is significant at $p < 0.01$ level of significance, indicating that the model is fit for the present study.

Table-5: Regression Coefficient of Predictor Variables for Environmental consciousness

S. No.	Name of Variable	Regression Coefficient	Standard Error of Coefficient	Correlation Coefficient	t-value	β	Coefficient of Determination
1.	Alt V	0.353	0.200	0.508	1.764	0.372	0.188
2.	HV	0.057	0.224	0.486	0.254	0.054	0.026
3.	PV	-0.109	0.182	0.416	-0.599	-0.098	-0.040
4.	DV	0.072	0.468	0.401	0.153	0.021	0.009
5.	Aff V	0.511	0.423	0.469	1.208	0.196	0.091

Regression equation between Environmental consciousness and Predictor Variables:

$$Y = 0.353X_1 + 0.057X_2 + -0.109X_3 + 0.072X_4 + 0.511X_5 + 22.318$$

Table-5 reveals that the predictor variables (Altruistic Values (Alt V), Humanistic Values (HV), Personal Values (PV), Divine Values (DV), and Affective Values (Aff V)) have accounted for 27% of the contribution in determining the criterion variable i.e., Environmental consciousness (EC) and the remaining 73% is accounted for by other variables. A careful study of the regression equation reveals that 1 unit variation in X1 i.e. Altruistic Values will bring about a variation of 0.353 units ($b = 0.353$) in the Environmental consciousness (EC). The predictor variable X1 holds for about 18.8% of the contribution to Environmental consciousness (EC). The second predictor variable, Humanistic Values (HV) contributes 2.6% in Environmental consciousness (EC) and 1 unit variation in X2 will bring about 0.057 unit ($b = 0.057$) variation in the Environmental consciousness (EC). The third predictor variable, Personal Values (PV) contributes -0.4% in Environmental consciousness (EC) and 1 unit variation in X3 will bring about -0.109 unit ($b = -0.109$) variation in the Environmental consciousness (EC). The fourth predictor variable, Divine Values (DV) contributes 0.9% in Environmental consciousness (EC) and 1 unit variation in X4 will bring about 0.072 unit ($b = 0.072$) variation in the Environmental consciousness (EC). The fifth predictor variable, Affective Values (AF) contributes 9.1% in Environmental consciousness (EC) and 1 unit variation in X5 will bring about 0.511 unit ($b = 0.511$) variation in the Environmental consciousness (EC).

Thus, the third hypothesis stating that, “Altruistic Values, Humanistic Values, Personal Values, Divine Values, and Affective Values would have significant contribution in the determination of Environmental consciousness, respectively,” is also accepted.

FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The following findings have been drawn for the present study:

- There is a positive relationship between Altruistic Values, Humanistic Values, Personal Values, Divine Values, and Affective Values with Environmental consciousness, respectively.
- Altruistic Values, Humanistic Values, Personal Values, Divine Values, and Affective Values are significantly interrelated with each other.
- Altruistic Values, Humanistic Values, Personal Values, Divine Values, and Affective Values have a significant contribution in the determination of Environmental consciousness, respectively.

Several studies support the positive impact of spiritual values on well-being and environmental consciousness. Research by **Zhang et al. (2014)**, **Bozek et al. (2020)**, and **Reissmann et al. (2021)** highlight how spirituality enhances meaning, health behaviours, and environmental connectedness, all contributing to psychological well-being. **John et al. (2020)** and **Nazam & Hussain (2016)** proposed the integration of spiritual values in education for holistic development. Their findings are closely aligned with the implications of the present study, underlining the vital link between spiritual values and environmental consciousness in shaping a better future. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2015), especially Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and Goal 13 (Climate Action), can be easily achieved by promoting and nurturing spiritual values and environmental consciousness, facilitating both individual well-being and sustainability for a harmonious future.

A systematic search across six major databases-CINAHL, Google Scholar, Scopus, PubMed, PsycINFO, and ScienceDirect was conducted by **Snippe, Pijl, and van der Meide (2023)** to identify peer-reviewed studies that explored the intersections of Shinrin-Yoku, nature-based therapy, originating in Japan during 1980s, and spirituality. Shinrin-Yoku (forest bathing), a nature-based therapy has been increasingly recognized for its holistic health benefits. It involves engaging oneself in a forest environment to promote relaxation, mindfulness, and overall well-being. Consistent evidences were observed from the review supporting The results concludes

that Shinrin-Yoku's practice has a positive impact not only on reducing stress, improving mood, enhancing immune function, but also fostering a sense of spiritual connection with nature, as a meaningful practice that nurtures spiritual well-being.

Moreover, the present study is also linked to the theoretical approaches recognized by **Schwartz (1992) and Rokeach (1973)**, offering empirical support for the multidimensional nature of human values specifically spiritual values and their psychological significance. It is a reinforcement of the religious philosophy that spiritual values and reverence towards nature is associated to each other. Further, the present research has attempted to uncover patterns of alignment among the studied spiritual values, thereby contributing to the theoretical understanding of spiritual values and their relationship with environmental consciousness.

IMPLICATIONS- The implications of understanding the dimensions of Spiritual Values and Environmental consciousness are profound. Educators, counsellors and trainers can design interventions that promote personal growth. This will motivate the youth of today to remain deeply connected, sensitive and respectful towards Mother Nature; thereby taking appropriate measures to safeguard the natural resources.

CONCLUSION- This research emphasizes the role of Spiritual Values in cultivating a conscious, sustainable and harmonious global community. UN SD Goal 3-Good Health and Well-being and Goal 13 -Climate Action, can certainly be achieved by promoting and nurturing spiritual values and environmental consciousness in the students.

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