

KNOWLEDGE ON SPIRITUAL LIFE SKILLS AMONG AGRICULTURE STUDENTS

Original Research Article

Abstract:

Spiritual Life Skills are the values that guide people throughout their life by giving them an opportunity to utilize their conscience while making any decisions. The importance of such skills in our life need not be justified as it is the base of character for any human being. The present research study was conducted with the aim to study about these skills and also to learn its importance and relation in students' life. The study was carried out in the main campus of Assam Agricultural University, which is situated in the Jorhat district of Assam. The study gives a clear and concise meaning of spirituality, spiritual life skills and knowledge of agriculture students on spiritual life skills. The objective of the study was to measure the knowledge of the respondents about spiritual life skills. A total of 126 samples were selected from College of Agriculture and College of Community Science, Assam Agricultural University, using Stratified sampling technique during the year 2021-2022. The data revealed that majority (51.67%) of the respondents have moderate knowledge level on spiritual life skills. Also a significant association was found between several independent variables with knowledge of the respondents.

KEYWORDS: Students, Spirituality, Spiritual life skills, Higher education, Knowledge, AAU.

1. INTRODUCTION

Students are the future leaders who will fill a variety of roles in both public and private organizations. Student's life is the most crucial phase in an individual's life. Thus, it is of utmost importance to concentrate on students' learning styles in order to make recommendations that will improve students' attitudes toward information and skill acquisition, overall academic achievement, intelligence and individual creativity. But due to various reasons, the students are not able to reach upto their highest potential. It has been observed that academic strain has accelerated during the last few years; there are examinations, assignments and plenty of different sports that a student has to work through. Half of the students during a survey in Saudi Arab experienced high and severe levels of stress whereas academic and group activity domains were declared as the major stressors (Al-Qahtani *et al.*, 2020). It has become common to all the students to experience high levels of academic and environmental stress. The demanding nature of parents, teachers and the expectancies of the society have left the students to be stressed and confused, giving rise to self doubt among them. Peer pressure is yet another factor which could be a pressurizing factor among the students to drink, smoke, cheat on test, lying etc., the list is

exhaustive. It was found that drugs, alcohol, social media, etc results in poor academic performance, absenteeism from class and poor emotional adjustment among the students (Manish *et al.*, 2020).

Reports suggest that cyber-sexual addiction, cyber-relationship addiction, net compulsions, information overload, and computer addiction are some of the common Internet Addiction (Griffiths *et al.*, 1999; Young., 2008). All these happenings are caused due to the lack of resilience among the students. A proper channel for guidance and counseling is what the students need at present and spirituality can fulfill this demand of providing guidance as well as build resilience among them. Alva (1991) defined resilient students as those who maintain high motivational achievement and performance even when confronted with stressful events and conditions that put them at risk of poor performance, and Waxman *et al.* (2003) defined resilient students as those who succeed in school despite adverse or negative circumstances. And it is observed that both resilience and spirituality are connected to each other to a great extent. Manning (2013) conducted a qualitative study in which the participants found spirituality as a pathway to resilience. Spirituality and resilience were also found to be "instrumentally connected" to having and maintaining well-being in the study.

1.1 Spirituality

Spirituality is known as Adhyātma in Sanskrit, derived from two Sanskrit words Adhi and Ātman (Ātmanahā). Adhi implies identified with the subject and Ātmā implies the Soul.

Defining spirituality

- Pargament (1999, p. 12) defined spirituality as a search for the sacred.
- Spilka *et al.* (2003, p. 9) defined spirituality as a something more personal than institutional. He further added, spirituality is about a person's beliefs, values, and behavior.

1.2 Spiritual life skills (SLS)

Spiritual life skills (SLS: this abbreviation shall be used throughout the research article) is nothing but some guidelines, which assists individuals to spend a happy, contented and peaceful life. SLS are the combination of self control techniques drawn from a good deal of traditional understanding from across the world. Those empowering and enlightening techniques educate us how to comprise and stay from the better features of our spirit. Such techniques, practices and skills related to spirituality are spiritual life skills.

Based on various research and literature, compassion, empathy, patience, tolerance, love for all living beings, sense of cooperation, sense of care for all, sense of sharing, humility, truthfulness, honesty,

optimism, forgiveness, leadership are all considered as spiritual life skill in the present study. Spiritual practices like yoga, meditation, thought manifestation, generating spiritual vibration are also considered as spiritual life skill.

1.3 Statement of Problem (Rearranged)

The latest concept of Sustainable Yogic Agriculture, where spiritual vibrations are utilized in the farming process developed by the Rural Development Wing Rajayoga Education and Research Foundation, sister institution of Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariyas Vishwa Vidyalaya was found to have attracted the University students towards spirituality. It is a unique form of farming that combines thought manifestation through meditation with methods of organic agriculture (Girme et al., 2019). It is important for all the students of agriculture and allied sectors to have knowledge about this latest innovation and if not; it is only justifiable to at least have a basic knowledge on spirituality. By keeping in mind about the prevailing condition among the students and their growing interest towards spirituality, the researcher has decided to take up the present study.

1.4 Objective of the study

To learn about the knowledge of agriculture students on spiritual life skills was set to be to the objective of the study after thorough research.

1.5 Assumption

The students under the study may or may not have sufficient level of knowledge about various spiritual life skills.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Sain *et al.* (2020), Brahma Kumari Rajyoga Meditation is widely regarded as a beneficial health and farming practice, which is favorable because it is largely non-profit and resource-use free from a sustainable standpoint. It is possibly the only technology for sustainable development that has no carbon footprint. Adopting meditation-based farming in conjunction with organic ingredients has been found to be quite helpful in terms of both product quality and cost.

The degree of religion or spirituality and the perception of life skills have a clear correlation, according to Bonin *et al.* (2013). Spirituality, for example, has an impact on psychological capacities. It provides a loving and caring support structure for pupils to cope with stress and emotions, based on their belief in a benevolent supreme being who gives life meaning. Through cultivating compassion, spirituality also supports students in the development of social skills such as interpersonal

connections, empathy, and effective communication. Spirituality equips students with the opportunity to treat others as valued individuals and to care for them by empowering them with a vision of equity with all life forms and oneness with the creation. The more compassion develops, the more students will be keen to put forth strategy to help those in need. So the more effort students put in, the more they will acquire and improve their skills.

Deb *et al.* (2016) studied a group of 475 Pondicherry University postgraduate students from age group of 20-27 years, 241 of them were males and 234 were females, from various disciplines. And they revealed a link between greater mental health and overall spirituality as well as two spirituality dimensions (spiritual belief and sense of purpose/connection). The findings contribute to an opportunity for university students to have an open discussion about spirituality as part of their mental health and support services, encouraging a positive mindset and increasing resilience.

According to *Shankar et al.* (2017), embedding skills and spirituality in leadership leads to a more productive and compassionate work environment, which could lead to faster achievement of individual goals and objectives while also fostering a sense of shared purpose. Instilling talents and spirituality in organizational leadership would result in a more productive, high-performing working environment in which employees share mutual trust, dedication, and support, resulting in a higher-performing organization with more growth opportunities.

According to *Anand et al.* (2013), many students appear to have a longing for spirituality. Universities play an important role in assisting students in their quest for meaning and purpose. In order to understand the better impact of spirituality in undergraduates' health and well-being further research is needed.

Abdollahi et al. (2015) found that patients with depression and hopelessness but also high in spirituality had less suicidal ideation than with other patients.

Yun et al. (2019) discovered that all of the measurements showed a strong relationship between students' stress levels and their coping mechanisms. Adaptive coping methods like Active Coping, Positive Framing, and Religion were linked to reduced stress levels, but maladaptive coping methods like Behavioral Disengagement, Self-Distraction, Denial, Substance Abuse, Venting, and Self-Blame were linked to greater stress levels. The researcher further revealed that spirituality had a more calming influence on the pupils' stress tolerance. Students with a higher level of spirituality were found to be less likely to experience higher levels of stress and were more likely to employ adaptive coping mechanisms instead of dysfunctional coping methods.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in the Assam Agricultural University situated in the Jorhat district of Assam, India. Stratified Random sampling technique was followed for the present study. Due to the ongoing pandemic, data collection was restricted to Assam Agricultural University (AAU), Jorhat campus only. Two colleges namely College of Agriculture and College of Community Science from the main campus of AAU, providing post graduate courses were selected from the main campus of the university. 126 samples were calculated to be the sample size by using the sample size calculator and were proportionately selected from College of Agriculture and College of Community Science. The data was collected from randomly selected samples from each college.

Formula for sample size:

Finite population:
$$n' = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\epsilon^2 N}}$$

where
z is the z score
ε is the margin of error
N is the population size
p̂ is the population proportion

Here,

Margin of error: 5% with 95% confidence level

Population size: 1162

Population proportion: 10%

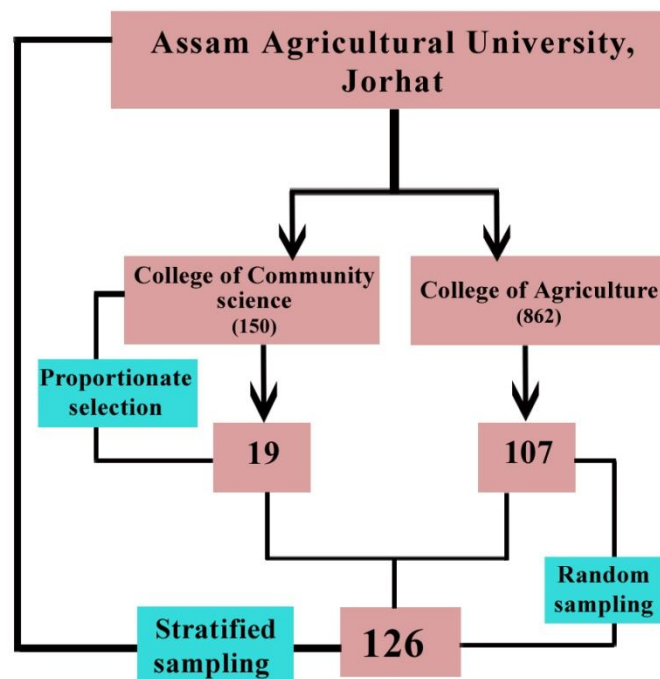


FIG 1: Sample design

3.1 Selection of variables and their measurements

Keeping in mind, the specific objective of the study, the following independent and dependent variables were selected. These variables are described below along with their measurement/instrument used (Table 1).

Table 1. Selection of variables and their measurements

Sl. No.	List of variables	Measurement/instruments
A.	Independent variables	
i.	Age	Chronological age of the respondents
ii.	Sex	
iii.	Marital status	Trivedi Pareek (1963)
iv.	Type of personality	Structured interview schedule
v.	Type of thinking	-do-
vi.	Meditating habit	-do-
vii.	Religious belief	-do-
viii.	Spiritual belief	-do-
ix.	Curiosity to learn	-do-
x.	Praying habit	-do-
xi.	Family belief on spirituality	-do-
B	Dependent variables	
i.	Knowledge	Structured interview schedule

3.2 Operational definition and measurement of variables

Keeping in view the objectives of the study as well as after reviewing the relevant literature available to the investigation, few variables were selected for the present study.

3.2.1. Independent variables

i. Age

It is the chronological age of the respondent at the time of the interview expressed in years. The age was measured as continuous data for the present study.

ii. Sex

It is the biological difference between respondents, who are male or female. For analytical purpose respondents were categorized as follows -

List 1 . Variability in sex

Category	Code
Male	1
Female	2

iii. Marital status

It is defined as the condition of having or not having a spouse by the respondent. For analysis purpose, respondents were divided into 4 categories -

List 2 Variability in Marital status

Category	Code
Married	1
Unmarried	2
Widowed	3
Separated	4

iv. Type of personality

It is defined as the basic qualities or characters of the respondent. People with open personality are those, who are open to experience. They are curious and always enthusiastic to try new

things. People who are conscientious have a strong sense of duty and responsibility. Extrovert people are more social, chatty and draw energy from the crowds. People who are agreeable are more likely to be trusting, helping and compassionate. Neurotic people worry a lot, have anxiety issues and are more likely to fall into depression. For analysis purpose, respondents were divided into 5 categories –

List 3 Variability in personality

Category	Code
Open	1
Conscientious	2
Extrovert	3
Agreeable	4
Neurotic	5

v. Type of thinking

It is defined as the thought, judgment or reflection of the respondent regarding any situation, event or thing at any moment. Optimistic people are those who expect good things to happen to them; pessimistic people are those who expect bad things to happen to them. (Carver *et al*, 2014). For analysis purpose, respondents were divided into 2 categories -

List 4 Variability in Type of thinking

Category	Code
Optimistic	1
Pessimistic	2

vi. Meditating habit

It is defined as the practice of meditating by the respondent. For analysis purpose, respondents were divided into 4 categories -

List 5 Variability in Meditating habit

Category	Code
Theist	1
Atheist	2
Agnostic	3

vii. Religious belief

It is defined as the mental representation of the respondent if they have an attitude positively oriented towards religion or God. Theist is a person who believes in the existence of God, atheist is a person who disbelieves the existence of God and agnostic person is the one who neither believes in the existence of god nor disbelieves the existence of god. For analysis purpose, respondents were divided into 3 categories -

List 6 Variability in Religious belief

Category	Code
Theist	1
Atheist	2
Agnostic	3

viii. Spiritual belief

It is defined as the mental representation of the respondent if they have an attitude positively oriented towards spirituality. They are categorized as -

List 7 Variability in Spiritual belief

Category	Code
Yes	1

No

2

ix. Curiosity to learn

It refers to the desire of the respondent to learn and know about spirituality and spiritual life skills. They are categorized as -

List 8 Variability in Curiosity to learn

Category	Code
Yes	1
No	2

x. Praying habit

It is defined as the practice of praying by the respondent. For analysis purpose, respondents were divided into 4 categories -

List 9 Variability in Praying habit

Category	Code
Yes	1
No	2

xi. Family spiritual belief

It is defined as the mental representation of the family of the respondent if they have an attitude positively oriented towards spirituality. They are categorized as -

List 10 Variability in Family spiritual belief

Category	Code
Yes	1
No	2

3.2.2. Measurement of dependent variables

i. Knowledge of respondents about spiritual life skill

Knowledge is operationally defined as the awareness or familiarity of facts, information, idea and skills acquired through experience or education of the theoretical or practical understanding about various spiritual life skills by the students.

A knowledge scale with 22 items was used by the author to calculate the knowledge level of the respondents about spiritual life skills. The **Table 2** displays the used knowledge scale in the current study.

1.	Spiritual life skills make people mindful (+)
2.	Spiritual maturity follows chronological age (-)
3.	Spiritual life skills make people independent (+)
4.	Being rich in material possession is a spiritual achievement(-)
5.	Spiritual life skills make people compassionate towards others(+)
6.	Meditation is one of the most powerful tools for promoting spiritual development(+)
7.	Being competitive is a spiritual life skill (-)
8.	Want and need is same for a spiritual person (-)
9.	Spirituality implies we are what we think (+)
10.	Happiness is dependent on people, object or situation (-)
11.	Being pessimistic is normal in adverse situation(-)
12.	Spirituality is a different concept from religiosity (+)
13.	Physical comfort is similar to emotional comfort (-)
14.	Positive spiritual vibration is used in sustainable yogic agriculture (+)
15.	Power to control others is a spiritual life skill (-)

16.	Spirituality implies people are responsible for their own pain, hurt or anger (+)
17.	Being physically strong is a spiritual life skill (-)
18.	Forgiving others is a spiritual life skill (+)
19.	Spiritual life skills imply great leader do not believe in cooperation (-)
20.	Spiritual life skills make people graceful in all activities (+)
21.	Lying is justifiable if the truth is painful (-)
22.	Listening to others is a spiritual life skill (+)

TABLE 2: Knowledge scale

3.2.3. Administration and scoring

The total score obtained in the scale indicates the respondent's degree of knowledge. On the basis of the mean (X) and standard deviation (SD) of the obtained scores, respondents were classified as

List 11 Administration and scoring

Category	Range
Low	Below ($X - Sd$)
Moderate	($X - Sd$) to ($X + Sd$)
High	Above ($X + Sd$)

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the data on age of the respondents revealed that 29.37 per cent of the respondents were of 24 years of age, 26.98 per cent were of 25 years of age, 17.46 per cent were of 27

years of age, 14.29 per cent were of 26 years and 11.90 per cent were of 23 years. The findings indicate the average age group of Master Degree pursuing students in University of India. Also, the findings suggest that the respondents belong to the late adolescent group.

It was found that 65.08 per cent of the respondents were female and 34.92 per cent were male. It is encouraging to find that female students belonging to age group of 23-27 know the importance of education and are getting their higher degree. These findings can also be concluded as the beginning of shift in preferences of female students towards education. All the respondents were found to be unmarried, 49.20 per cent have open type of personality, 86.51 per cent of the respondents were optimistic, 60 per cent were found to be theist and 70 per cent (approx) was found to have a belief on spirituality. Maximum (56.34 per cent) of respondents were found to be meditating occasionally and 60 per cent had a curious mind. 65.87 per cent had a habit of praying as 87.3 per cent of the respondents' family had a belief in spirituality.

To assess the knowledge of the respondents, the statements expressing knowledge of the respondents about spiritual life skills were put into 2 point continuum, "have knowledge" and "do not have knowledge". They were then scored 1 and 0 for correct and incorrect knowledge about spiritual life skills respectively. The level of knowledge of the respondents were thus categorized as 'high', 'moderate' and 'low' on the basis of mean and standard deviation scores. The mean score was found to be 15.58 and standard deviation score was 3.15.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to their knowledge level regarding spiritual life skills

N = 126

Category	F	Percentage (%)
Low (< 12.43)	28	22.50
Moderate (18.73 – 12.43)	65	51.67
High (> 18.73)	33	25.83

Mean = 15.58, SD = 3.15

The Table 3 clearly indicates that 25.83 per cent of the respondents had high level of knowledge about spiritual life skills, followed by 51.67 per cent that had moderate knowledge level and 22.50 per cent of the respondents had low level of knowledge about spiritual life skills.

It is disheartening to find that only 25.83 per cent of the respondents had high knowledge level on spiritual life skills. However, the findings are in contrast with Bhatt and Yadavannavar (2016) where 80.00 per cent of the respondents were reported to have good deal of knowledge of spirituality. Considering, spiritual life skills or spirituality is a basic part of our life and plays an important role in enhancing the quality of life, it is essential for the students to have proper and complete meaning on the same. In a related study, Panzini et al. (2017) found that there is compatible literature supporting the existence of a positive relationship between spirituality and quality-of-life. Thereby, more focus in imparting knowledge on spiritual life skills must be given to the students in order to improve their quality of life.

Majority of the respondents 51.67 per cent had moderate knowledge about spiritual life skills. It might be due to the fact that life skills related to spirituality though is an ancient practice, was often used in terms with religion or was considered same as religious practices. It is only in the recent years, that spirituality is viewed as a complete different theory from religion. This might have spiked the interest of the young adults or college students to explore the concept of spirituality at a deeper level. So it can be concluded that majority of the respondents are in the process of learning the concept of spiritual life skill and hence have moderate knowledge on the same.

Association between knowledge of the respondents and selected independent variables

Table 4: Association between knowledge of the respondents and selected independent variables using Chi square method

Sl. No.	Independent variables	Chi square value	Df	“p” value
1	Gender	12.580	2	0.002**
2	Religious belief	14.232	3	0.03*
3	Spiritual belief	13.421	4	0.01*

Table 4 reveals that gender of the respondents have a significant association with knowledge of the respondents. The interconnection between gender and spiritual concepts has been always tested over the course of time. There are results that suggest women to be more spiritually involved than men and hence it is possible for women to have more knowledge on spiritual life skills. Bryant (2017) in his study reported that women scored higher spiritual scores than men. Further, religious

belief was found to have a significant association with knowledge of the respondents. It might be because that though religion and spirituality are two different concepts but are overlapped with each other. Koenig (2012) reported religion and spirituality to be interconnected and overlapping with each other. Again, spiritual belief was found to have a significant association with knowledge of the respondents. Because it is common for people having belief in spirituality to have knowledge on spiritual life skills.

Table 5: Association between knowledge of the respondents and selected independent variables using Phi Cramer's V method

Sl. No.	Independent variables	Phi value	Cramer's V	Sig. value
1	Personality of the respondent	0.484	0.342	0.001**
2	Meditating habit	0.421	0.298	0.001**

Table 5 reveals a strong association between 'personality of the respondents' and knowledge of the respondents. Similar findings was reported by Koessel (2011) where, all four personality traits *viz.*, Extraversion, open mindedness, agreeableness, conscientiousness were all positively correlated with spiritual orientation. The study further revealed that neuroticism *viz.*, the only personality trait was inversely correlated to spiritual orientation. Also Table 5 reveals a significant association between 'meditating habit' and knowledge of the respondents about spiritual life skills. Another research study was found to have reported similar findings where it was clearly mentioned that meditation is one of the factor which is positively associated with the quality improvement of spiritual well being (Yuniarwati, 2020).

5. CONCLUSION

Findings show that more than fifty per cent (51.67%) of the respondents had moderate level of knowledge on spiritual life skills, followed by a sizeable per cent of the respondents (25.83%) had high level of knowledge and 22.50 per cent had low level of knowledge on spiritual life skills. Thus it can be inferred that majority of the post graduate students of Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat have moderate level of knowledge on spiritual life skills.

By using Chi square test, variables 'sex', 'spiritual belief' and 'religious belief' were found to have significant association with knowledge of the respondents about spiritual life skills. By using Phi Cramer's V, variables 'nature of the respondents' and 'meditating habit' were found to have significant association with knowledge of the respondents. Whereas, no association was found between the variables 'type of

thinking', 'curiosity to learn' and 'family belief on spirituality' and knowledge of the respondents about spiritual life skills.

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