A Systematic Review of 10 Years of Research on the Development of Spiritually and Morally Resilient Youth

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ABSTRACT

A massive bulk of the literature is devoted to the issue of the development of spiritual and moral resilience in youth. However, no study comprehensively analyses this literature and follows up with suggestions and recommendations for different stakeholders. To address the gap, the authors conducted a systematic literature review by collecting data from Google Scholar. As a result, 16 English-medium peer-reviewed articles and proceedings papers of the past ten years were included in the review and classified into the two research lines: (1) research presenting specific theoretical contributions to the issue and (2) research sharing practical knowledge by conducting original studies, i.e., knowledge transfer research. The study found that local history classes, web-based mapping, oral history projects, historic photo, and art creation workshops, and business game competitions can be used at all educational levels to develop resilience in youth effectively. The content of such youth-centered activities must be demarcated as well as the extent of engagement in them. The study also delineated some recommendations for further research.

Keywords: *Systematic Review, Development, Education, Spiritual and Moral Resilience, Resilient Youth, Young People.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of spiritually and morally resilient youth has drawn a special significance at the intersection of psychology and pedagogy. First, such interest in the topic has been prompted by the long-standing idea that tomorrow's adults cannot construct their future devoid of knowledge about the experiences of previous generations [1]. Second, young people become susceptible to substance use, crime, and violence at this stage. In this context, developing spiritual and moral tenets in youth is highly important for enhancing their resilience, i.e., the ability to withstand society's negative influence, build positive relationships, critically evaluate personal actions, and make the right choice in different situations.

Education is assigned a crucial part in fostering a resilient society; that is why we argue that school and out-of-school activities stand out as the potential source used to develop resilient and spiritually and morally wealthy individuals. The experiences and knowledge received at

a young age are easily acquired and remain stable for the rest of life [2]; hence, the shortcomings of upbringing are hard to remedy in the subsequent years. Adolescence is the most optimal time window in one's life for a powerful impetus to increase the personal intellectual potential and actively build spiritual and moral tenets [3] when an individual is transitioning from childhood into adulthood. In this regard, if young people are poorly taught the perpetual concepts of spirituality and morality and if risk awareness is not raised, the societies will continue to be afflicted by public evils such as organized crime, alcohol, or drug abuse.

In the last two decades, a growing number of organizations, academics, and educators have been bringing up, more explicitly than ever before, the topic of the development of spiritually and morally resilient young people. However, so far, no study has endeavored to concentrate on drawing a global picture of this bulk of research. The present study attempts to address the delineated gap and provide potential implications for

academia and education based on the results of this systematic review.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study adopted a systematic review method [4], which entails retrieving and scrutinizing research outputs published throughout an applicable period. The method is typically employed when researchers identify research trends and comprehensive impact on their field.

For this study, we opted for peer-reviewed research articles and proceedings papers that are not limited geographically but are written in English and published during the past ten years. The rationale here was that English is the widely recognized language science communication around the globe [5]. As a rule, ten-fifteen years is a feasible period to account for and a reasonably wide temporal frame to cover in reviews across many fields, including education [6].

The study took its data from Google Scholar, one of the most common research tools in academia. It indexes research outputs similarly to science databases Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus but can reach even more outputs than these databases [7]. Given this, on the one hand, the reported dataset here encompasses a relatively large number of research articles. On the other hand, it also consists of outputs with a high impact factor in the field. Thus, the findings underlined the leading research and practice scope of the past 10-year period and produced some guidelines for educators and researchers.

In order to collect the material for further analysis, the following searches were alternately conducted through Google Scholar: 'spiritual values moral values youth'; 'moral values young people'; 'spiritual and moral values youth'; 'spiritual moral resilience youth' and other analogous searches. Then, the custom timespan from 2011 to 2020 was selected, and sorting out the retrieved items was performed by checking the option 'sort by relevance' and considering only the first five pages of search results (n=500). Since some of the items appeared in results several times due to their inclusion in different databases and sources, we checked for duplicates.

The collected outputs were then refined by applying the purposive sampling technique, which seeks not to oversimplify or randomize the sample of participants or analysis items but instead select the well-informed and specific cases to amplify the likelihood of detecting the most relevant phenomena to the focus of the investigation. Our intent to choose purposive sampling out of all techniques was that it is more appropriate than other techniques such as probabilistic. The purposive sampling technique is suggested to be opted for when the number of units for analysis happens to be minor, i.e., the presence of the phenomena in the literature is elusive, as in our case [8]. By applying this technique, the received

items (n=484) were first scrutinized for the title and abstract relevance to the topic, and, as a result, more than half of the items were left out (n=283). Then, the full-text papers (n=201) were taken for eligibility check, i.e., read carefully and assessed for the possibility of inclusion. So, 185 items were removed due to their apparent irrelevance to the topic, finding out that the same data is used in several papers or overlapping ideas. As a result, our refined dataset consisted of 16 records for further analysis.

3. RESULTS

One strand of the retrieved studies outlined first-hand outcomes of the interventional investigations, and the other used secondary data or reports on survey research. This literature expounded on the development of spiritual and moral resilience predominantly in the educational context, in some cases, with the family context. We further classified this literature into two research lines: (1) the studies presenting specific theoretical contributions (TC) to the issue; (2) the studies sharing practical knowledge by conducting original studies, or the so-called knowledge transfer (KT) research.

The TC studies predominantly informed about the overarching practices of spiritually and morally resilient youth across the globe. This developmental path has been regarded as the formative goal of education in England [9]. So, school students in England are encouraged to develop their morality and spirituality by familiarizing themselves with religions and worldviews and creative work or reflecting on math complex concepts as infinity and probability. The family also plays a prominent role in the development of spiritually and morally resilient youth. That is why it should not go unnoticed that this developmental path has been considered within the family context [10]. While interpreting earlier fetched data from a part of the American Families of Faith national research project, these authors concluded that future research has to investigate youth's positive religious and spiritual development with the inclusion of diverse contexts. They can range from "earthly" phenomena, e.g., political activism and volunteering, to "divine" phenomena, e.g., exploring big questions (purpose of life) and spiritual practices.

Several other TC studies brought suggestions to the table to establish and sustain the development of spiritually and morally resilient youth. For instance, Barskaya [11] proposed employing the student-centered approach and adapting to young cadets' interests by introducing virtual reality (VR) tours for learning naval cadet history. In such a learning environment, the young representatives of the naval academy can efficiently shape the positive image of military people in their minds and eventually develop their sense of duty, honor,

discipline, and responsibility owing to the acquaintance with best exemplars of military service. Darzhinova et al. [12] presented the findings of an earlier intervention study that instituted both online and offline multidisciplinary educational programs across the structured network of Russia's educational institutions. Such network cooperation allows for the joint use of resources of different institutions, e.g., pedagogical potential and technological capacities, and promotes mutual understanding among the members of participatory institutions. As a result, each student in the network can discover his or her educational trajectory by participating in different activities.

The strand of KT research highlighted the features for consideration in the development of spiritually and morally resilient youth, including geographic, racial, cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic features of the educational institution, local community, and even the whole country. As for curricular activities, Stefaniak, Bilewicz, and Lewicka [13] advised integrating local history classes in the educational context, apart from state and world history subjects. Additionally, according to Dutt-Doner, Allen, and Campanaro [14], the inclusion of oral history projects has to be engrossed in the curriculum. Further, Huusko [15] recognized that the lack of efficient curriculum and extracurricular learning about own customs and traditions might lead to the extinction of personal identity, as in the case with the Evenki identity, which has been going through its replacement with the Russian national identity. Zhang [16] endorsed incorporating basic yoga elements into physical education classes for children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or autism. For designing extracurricular activities, suitable methods and tools have to be identified. Among these are geographic tools and methods [17], historical photo and art creation workshops [18], as well as web-based mapping projects [19]. In turn, Darzhinova et al. [20] recommended content-based extracurricular events such as business game competitions and contests, e.g., 'University through the Eyes of Schoolchildren' and 'Mirror of the Region.'

The remainder of KT studies administered questionnaires among young people to determine the extent to which moral competencies are being developed. The self-report questionnaire was validated about extracurricular youth-centered activities and suitable for large national samples of 13-18 years old adolescents. Its goal was to quantify both adventure-based pre-program and post-program states of a set of eight assets, including support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity [21]. The self-report questionnaire termed the Personal Strengths Inventory (PSI) was suggested for measuring social resilience, emotional awareness, goal

setting, emotional regulation, and empathy in adolescents, specifically secondary schoolchildren ranging from 11 to 16 years [22]. In turn, the regional survey data can reveal the specific values that young people in a particular community seek to adhere to in priority order. For instance, such value constructs as self-fulfillment (e.g., gaining other people's respect), well-being (e.g., having a close-knit family), and success (e.g., getting an exciting job) were found to be prioritized by the youth of Southern Russia [23]. A similar survey at the cross-national level can measure the critical characteristics of this developmental process. Thus, it was found that 64% of international youth is categorized as going through the development of spiritual and moral resilience devoid of a solid commitment to overt religious and spiritual practices [24].

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The reviewed studies focus on the central issues of the development of spiritually and morally resilient youth in the educational context: (1) the specific groups of young people to be prioritized; (2) the particular methods and activities to be used; (3) the extent of the organized activities to be instituted; (4) the characteristics of the developmental path at regional, national, and cross-national levels. First, our systematic literature review allows us to conclude that immersive storytelling, being the combination of appealing VR technology and traditional archive sources, can potentially augment information acquisition in young people. The reviewed example of the VR-based educational project, which is aimed at developing spiritually and morally resilient young cadets, is illustrative in this respect. Based on the review, we also acknowledge the importance of curriculum adjustments favoring the social inclusion of schoolchildren with special educational needs for their holistic development and resilience in life.

Second, local history classes, oral history projects, and traditional moral thought readings as components of classroom activities are proven to increase youth's civic engagement and social trust and provide meaning to patriotism in young people and, therefore, have to be included in the school curriculum. Such extracurricular events as historical and art workshops or youth camps may cultivate young people's interest in divulging their spatial narratives and making them invested in their local community's history. Presumably, the failure to integrate such local history activities in the educational context replaces the national identity, as in the case with the Evenki adolescents, leads to the feeling of 'second rate' and inferiority in indigenous adolescents. Furthermore, the participation of young people in a series of business games and contests can furnish them the opportunity of their thoughtful acquaintance with local and global enterprises, available career paths, and socioeconomic issues of their vicinity. For both curricular and

extracurricular activities, the elements of the so-called 'edutainment' programs, with the coverage from math to cultural heritage, can involve young people in the current issues of their native place. Besides, these programs can gain youth teamwork experience, enhance their general understanding of the world, boost their psychological and social resilience, and help make a future career choice.

Third, the content of organized youth-centered activities should be regulated and the extent of young people's engagement in them. So, the more exposure young people receive to such activities, the more robustly they are inspired to be the actors of change in their communities. Fourth, conducting regional and national surveys reveals the social pursuits of the particular samples of a younger generation and ranks the importance of specific spiritual and moral values. Cross-national surveys, in their part, determine the overall picture of spiritual and moral values that are predominant in young people across the globe and identify the core values that they share.

In sum, our review of theoretical and practical advances to the study of the development of spiritually and morally resilient young people permits us to look at the relevant values from the two perspectives. From the first perspective, spiritual and moral values are defined as goals characterized by functional and personal meanings. From the second perspective, such values are the path for obtaining life's purpose and building resilience. Based on the findings of our systematic review, it is the engagement of young people in local-history activities that can efficiently cultivate the ability to grasp the significance of spiritual values by the affection to history and culture of their birthplace and turn these spiritual and moral values into resilient ones. The driving tool here is personal motive experience or the experiences received from the gradual immersion of young people in the world of their native culture and family history, social and cultural characteristics of their birthplace.

Nevertheless, apart from the inclusion of the spiritual and moral components to merely educational context, such social institutions as the family, government, and public agencies alongside media and Internet have to be regarded as well, since the development of spiritually and morally resilient young people is to be operated from an early age and by all accounts. Therefore, we urge future systematic literature reviews to examine the evolution of the designated contexts and potentially extend the sample to other types of research publications, such as book chapters and doctoral dissertations.

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