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Spiritual Fitness and Academic Performance of the Secondary Level Students at Gomati District in Connection with Some Demographic Variables: A Study

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Abstract: *The present study investigates the relationship between spiritual fitness and academic achievement among secondary school students, with special reference to selected demographic variables including gender, family structure, number of siblings, place of residence, and mother's occupation. According to the nature of research structure, descriptive survey method was used. A standardized test named "Spiritual Fitness Scale" was used in the present study constructed and standardized by Dr. Asif Hassan and Prof. Akbar Husain. The findings reveal a positive correlation between spiritual fitness and academic performance, suggesting that students with higher levels of inner wellbeing tend to perform better academically. Interestingly, no significant difference in spiritual fitness was found with respect to gender, residence, or sibling count, indicating its universal influence across diverse groups. However, a statistically significant difference emerged based on family structure and maternal occupation. These findings underline the crucial role of the home environment in shaping students' inner strength and overall development. The study supports the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes holistic, value-based, and inclusive education. Educational and social implications are discussed, highlighting the need to integrate spiritual and moral dimensions into school curricula and to foster school-family collaboration for the well-being and academic growth of learners.*

Key words: *Spiritual fitness, Academic performance, Secondary Level Students.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

In the pursuit of academic excellence, educational systems around the world often emphasize cognitive and intellectual abilities. However, in recent years, scholars and educators have increasingly acknowledged that academic achievement is influenced not only by intelligence, resources, or instructional quality, but also by non-cognitive factors such as spiritual fitness, emotional wellbeing, and social background. Spiritual fitness-broadly defined as a state of inner peace, purpose, self-transcendence, moral clarity, and connection to a higher self or divine presence - has emerged as a key dimension of human development, especially during adolescence (Emmons, 2000; Miller & Thoresen, 2003). At the secondary level, students experience rapid developmental changes - physically, emotionally, and socially - which are often influenced by their spiritual orientation and the structure of their daily lives. Spiritual fitness helps adolescents build resilience, develop moral judgment, and adopt positive coping strategies, all of which contribute to improved academic motivation and performance (King & Benson, 2006; Holder et al., 2010). Adolescents with higher levels of spiritual fitness tend to demonstrate greater emotional stability, focus, and self-discipline-factors that support learning outcomes (Snyder et al., 2002). Moreover, spiritual fitness does not function in isolation. It interacts with demographic variables such as gender, family structure, number of siblings, urban-rural residence, and particularly, mother's

occupation-each of which can significantly shape a child's worldview and academic experience (Hay & Nye, 2006; Tisdell, 2003). For example, girls often report higher spiritual awareness and emotional sensitivity, which may contribute to their academic effort and behavior (Francis & Penny, 2013). Similarly, students from joint families may benefit from collective value systems, while those from nuclear families may receive more individualized attention (Yuen, 2015). The presence or absence of siblings, the level of urban exposure, and whether a mother is employed, a homemaker, or professionally engaged, can all shape how spirituality and academic commitment are internalized by children (Koenig, 2001; Benson et al., 2003). Despite the known influence of these variables, there is limited empirical research, especially in the Indian or Asian context, which holistically explores the relationship between spiritual fitness and academic achievement, while simultaneously accounting for key demographic factors. As such, this paper seeks to fill this research gap by investigating how spiritual fitness correlates with academic achievement among secondary school students, and how this relationship is moderated or influenced by gender, family structure, number of siblings, type of residence, and mother's occupation. Understanding this complex interaction is crucial for educators, school counselors, and policymakers to design inclusive, value-based educational environments that nurture not just intellectual abilities but the whole child - mind, heart, and spirit.

2. Need and Significance of the Study:

In the current era of academic competition and performance pressure, students are increasingly vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and a loss of inner balance. While cognitive development and scholastic achievement remain central to educational goals, recent research emphasizes the necessity of nurturing spiritual fitness—a form of inner strength, peace, and moral alignment—as a critical support for students' holistic development. Especially in adolescence, spiritual fitness contributes to self-regulation, emotional stability, purpose in life, and resilience, which are essential traits for academic engagement and success (Pargament, 1997; Cotton et al., 2006).Spiritual fitness becomes even more meaningful when examined alongside demographic variables such as gender, structure of the family, number of siblings, residential background, and mother's occupation. These factors shape a child's upbringing, worldview, moral reasoning, and educational opportunities (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000; O'Connor et al., 2006). For instance, girls often report stronger expressions of spiritual awareness than boys, which may contribute to greater academic diligence and empathy-driven classroom behavior (Francis & Robbins, 2005). Similarly, students from joint families may benefit from shared responsibilities and value transmission, while nuclear families may offer individualized attention but also more stress on achievement (Saraswathi & Pai, 1997).The presence or absence of siblings can influence the child's sense of responsibility, sharing, and competition, thereby impacting academic engagement and social orientation (Downey, 1995). Urban students may have more access to educational resources but also face greater distractions and peer pressure, while rural students often develop spiritual maturity through cultural rootedness and simplicity (Verma & Saraswathi, 2002). Additionally, the mother's occupation plays a pivotal role in shaping children's time management, independence, and self-efficacy. Children of working mothers may gain confidence and autonomy, while children of homemakers may receive more personal attention (Belsky, 2001).Despite the multifaceted importance of these variables; few studies have holistically explored the interactive effects of spiritual fitness and demographic factors on academic achievement, particularly in the context of secondary education. Most existing research treats spirituality and academics as separate domains, failing to investigate their mutual reinforcement or tension (Elias et al., 2003).This study is significant in that it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how spiritual development intersects with socio-cultural backgrounds to influence educational outcomes. It encourages educators and policymakers to broaden the framework of schooling to include value-based education, spiritual counseling, and demographically sensitive pedagogies. In doing so, it aims to promote educational environments where students thrive not only intellectually but also morally, emotionally, and spiritually.

3. Objective of the study:

1. To compare the spiritual fitness of secondary school students at Udaipur sub-division in respect to gender.
2. To compare the spiritual fitness of secondary school students at Udaipur sub-division in respect to type of family.
3. To compare the spiritual fitness of secondary school students at Udaipur sub-division in respect to sibling.
4. To compare the spiritual fitness of secondary school students at Udaipur sub-division in respect to mother's occupation.
5. To compare the spiritual fitness of secondary school students at Udaipur sub-division in respect to their residence.
6. To estimate the relationship between spiritual fitness and academic performance of secondary schools students at Gomati district.

3.1 Hypotheses of the study:

Ho_1: There is no significant difference between the students belonging male and female categories in respect to their spiritual fitness.
Ho_2: There is no significant difference between the students belonging to joint and nuclear families in respect to their spiritual fitness.
Ho_3: There is no significant difference between the students with siblings and with no siblings in respect to their spiritual fitness.
Ho_4: There is no significant difference between the students belonging to working and non-working mothers in respect to their spiritual fitness.
Ho_5: There is no significant difference between the students belonging rural and urban student in respect to their spiritual fitness.
Ho_6: There is no significant relationship between spiritual fitness and academic performance of secondary schools students at Gomati district.

3.2 Variables of the study:

Independent Variables	**Spiritual Fitness**	Gender	Male students
			Female students
		Type of family	Joint families
			Nuclear families
		Sibling	With siblings
			With no siblings
		Mother's occupation	Working mothers
			Non-working mothers
		Residence	Urban
			Rural
Dependent Variable		**Academic Performance**	

4. Methodology:

According to the nature of research structure, descriptive survey method was used.

Sample and Sampling:
The students of secondary schools were selected as sample. For selection of sample 8 schools from Udaipur sub-division were selected by randomly. After selecting schools, 100 samples were chosen on the base of five different aspects (gender, type of family, sibling, mother's occupation and residence) by stratify random sampling process to fulfill the objectives of the study. It is worth mentions here that specified quota for the above mentioned five aspects has already been included through the selection of 300 secondary level learners. There are many learners who may fall under two or even three aspects simultaneously.

Tools used: A standardized test named **"Spiritual Fitness Scale"** was used in the present study constructed and standardized by **Dr. Asif Hassan and Prof. Akbar Husain**.

5. Analysis and Interpretation:

Table 1 't' test score of Spiritual fitness of secondary level learners in respect to five demographic variables (gender, type of family, sibling, mother's occupation and residence)

Objective & Hypothesis	Variables	Variable wings	N	Mean	SD	df	't' value	Significance
Objective 1 ***Ho_1***	Spiritual fitness **(Gender)**	Male students	**50**	94.51	11.21	98	**1.03**	***Not significant at 0.05 levels***
		Female students	**50**	92.83	7.85			

Objective 2 ***Ho2***	Spiritual fitness **(Type of family)**	Joint families	**50**	97.67	9.87	98	**4.38**	***Significant at 0.05 levels.***
		Nuclear families	**50**	90.11	7.19			
Objective 3 ***Ho3***	Spiritual fitness **(Sibling)**	With siblings	**50**	95.54	8.91	98	**1.51**	***Not significant at 0.05 levels***
		With no siblings	**50**	93.14	6.82			
Objective 4 ***Ho4***	Spiritual fitness **Mother's (occupation)**	Non-working mothers	**50**	95.57	8.87	98	**2.68**	***Significant at 0.05 levels.***
		Working mothers	**50**	91.29	7.01			
Objective 5 ***Ho5***	Spiritual fitness **(Residence)**	Urban	**50**	94.67	9.81	98	**1.29**	***Not significant at 0.05 levels***
		Rural	**50**	92.44	7.31			

Interpretation:- A close view of table 1 reflects that the calculated t-value of **Ho_1**, **Ho_3** and **Ho_5** **(1.03, 1.51, 1.29)** is much smaller than the critical 't'-value **(1.98)** for 98 degrees of freedom at the 0.05 level of significance, and thus the result is not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (**Ho_1**, **Ho_3** and **Ho_5**) is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded with certainty that gender, number of siblings and residency status do not differ significantly in terms of spiritual fitness. However, in the case of **Ho_2** and **Ho_4**, a contrary trend is observed, indicating statistically significant differences with respect to family structure (joint vs. nuclear families) and mother's occupation (working outside the home vs. non-working) at 98 degrees of freedom at the 0.05 level of significance. Evidence from both hypothesis **Ho_2** and **Ho_4** suggests that $Ho_2 = 4.38 > t_{critical}$ & $Ho_4 = 2.68 > t_{critical}$

Table 2 Showing the 'r' value between Spiritual fitness & Academic Performance of secondary level learners

Variable	No. of students (N)	'r' value	df	tr	Level of significance	Remarks
Spiritual fitness	300	**0.78**	298	**21.51**	0.05 Level	***Positive Correlation***
Academic Performance					***Significant***	

Interpretation: - The table 2 shows the association between spiritual fitness and academic performance of secondary level learners.. Here, the 'r' value (**0.78**) indicates the positive relationship between the two variables. But this relation is significant or not to be determine by using 'tr' formula. After getting the 'tr' value **(21.51),** it is seen that the calculated 'tr' value is greater that' critical value (1.97) at the 0.05 level with 298 df. Therefore, the result is statistically significant. So, the conjectural statement **H_{06}** is rejected. It means a significant positive correlation exits between these two variables. So, it can be concluded that due to increase of spiritual fitness, the academic success of secondary level learners will also increases and vice-versa.

6. Major Finding:

The present study revealed that spiritual fitness is positively correlated with academic performance among secondary school students. This aligns with the findings of Emmons (2000) and Pargament (1997), who emphasized that spiritual well-being, enhances focus, self-discipline, and resilience, all of which are conducive to academic achievement. Similarly, King and Benson (2006) and Snyder et al. (2002) found that students with a higher sense of purpose and inner strength tend to perform better academically. Statistical analysis showed no significant difference in spiritual fitness based on gender, residential background (urban/rural), or number of siblings, suggesting that these variables do not substantially influence students' spiritual development. This observation is consistent with Holder et al. (2010) and Francis & Penny (2013), who reported minimal variation in spiritual sensitivity across gender and residential settings,

and with Hay & Nye (2006), who emphasized the universality of children's spiritual expression regardless of family size or locality. However, the study identified a significant difference in spiritual fitness between students from joint and nuclear families, with those from joint families scoring higher. This is in agreement with Saraswathi & Pai (1997) and Verma & Saraswathi (2002), who observed that the joint family system provides a nurturing environment enriched with shared spiritual practices and intergenerational value transmission. A similar significant difference was found based on mother's occupation, where students with homemaker mothers showed higher levels of spiritual fitness compared to those with working mothers. This reflects findings by Belsky (2001) and Park (2005), who argued that greater maternal involvement at home facilitates the moral and spiritual growth of children through emotional availability, modeling, and guided discipline. These results collectively reinforce the notion that spiritual fitness is a critical and context-sensitive component of adolescent development, shaped more significantly by family structure and parenting roles than by static demographic attributes like gender or residence.

7. Educational and Social Contribution:

Educational Contribution

This study makes a significant contribution to the field of education by emphasizing the vital link between spiritual fitness and academic achievement. It offers empirical evidence supporting the integration of spiritual and value-based education within the mainstream curriculum. The positive correlation found between spiritual wellbeing and academic performance suggests that students who are more spiritually grounded tend to be more motivated, focused, and resilient-key traits for academic success. The study further reveals that spiritual development transcends demographic variables such as gender, residence, and number of siblings, which reinforces the importance of inclusive teaching practices that cater to the spiritual needs of all learners. These insights can help educators design programs that address not only intellectual but also moral and emotional growth, thereby fulfilling the vision of holistic education as proposed in NEP 2020. Additionally, the findings offer valuable guidance for school counselors, administrators, and curriculum planners to foster environments that support inner well-being, ethical reasoning, and emotional maturity, which are crucial for lifelong learning and responsible citizenship.

Social Contribution

Socially, the study sheds light on the critical role of family dynamics-especially family structure and maternal occupation-in shaping spiritual fitness among adolescents. The finding that students from joint families and those with homemaker mothers possess higher levels of spiritual wellbeing highlights the importance of emotional support, moral guidance, and intergenerational bonding in the home environment. This encourages greater family-school collaboration and community involvement in nurturing ethical values and spiritual awareness among youth. Furthermore, the fact that spiritual development appears largely unaffected by gender, residence, or number of sibling's positions it as a universal and equalizing force that can unite students from diverse backgrounds. By promoting spiritual wellness, society can cultivate a generation of empathetic, balanced, and socially responsible individuals. The study also calls attention to the potential of spiritual fitness in addressing issues such as behavioral problems, emotional distress, and academic disengagement, thus offering long-term benefits for mental health and societal harmony. In alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), the research supports community-based strategies that advance moral education, peace-building, and emotional resilience in a rapidly changing world.

8. Conclusion:

The present study highlights a compelling relationship between spiritual fitness and academic achievement among secondary school students. It affirms that students with higher levels of spiritual wellbeing tend to perform better academically, echoing the insights of Emmons (2000) and King & Benson (2006), who posited that spirituality fosters inner strength, emotional resilience, and a deeper sense of purpose-qualities that directly support academic engagement and motivation. Significantly, the findings suggest that gender, residence (urban/rural), and number of siblings do not show a meaningful variation in students' spiritual fitness. This aligns with earlier conclusions by Holder et al. (2010) and Hay & Nye (2006), who emphasized the universal nature of children's spiritual capacity, independent of such demographic factors. This constancy suggests that spiritual development is an internal process less affected by superficial demographic distinctions and more influenced by intimate social environments. On the other hand, the study demonstrates that family structure and maternal occupation do play a critical role in shaping students' spiritual fitness. Learners from joint families reported higher spiritual wellbeing, confirming the findings of Saraswathi & Pai (1997) and Verma & Saraswathi (2002), who stressed the value of extended family systems in nurturing cultural and spiritual values through shared rituals and generational learning. Similarly, students with homemaker mothers showed greater

spiritual development, supporting research by Belsky (2001) and Park (2005), which found that maternal involvement plays a central role in moral and emotional guidance during adolescence. Overall, the study underscores that spiritual fitness is not only beneficial for academic performance but is also shaped by the emotional and moral scaffolding provided by the family environment. As Pargament (1997) and Benson et al. (2003) observed, fostering spiritual development in youth leads to holistic growth-cognitive, emotional, and moral. Thus, educators, parents, and policymakers must recognize the interconnectedness of spirituality, family context, and academic life. Integrating value-based education, parental involvement, and reflective practices into the schooling process could be pivotal in nurturing spiritually resilient and academically competent learners. As supported by Ryan & Deci (2000) and Lerner (2005), developmentally aligned educational environments that address students' inner needs are essential for fostering thriving youth in today's complex world.

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