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INTEGRATING INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS IN VALUE-BASED EDUCATION TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH AND HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

School students are experiencing increasing levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional difficulties in recent times. This highlights the need for educational approaches that focus beyond academic performance of students on exams and tests. Value-based education shows great potential as an approach to holistic development by focusing on ethical values, emotional awareness, and social responsibility. This narrative review examines the role of value-based skill training on improving the mental health and overall well-being of students with the help of classic Indian Knowledge Texts like Basavanna's Vachanas, Hitopadesha and the Panchatantra. The review consolidates existing literature published between 2010 and 2023, and suggests that culturally grounded approaches like ethical storytelling, guided reflection, and life-skills based activities, correlate with improvements in emotional regulation, empathy, resilience, interpersonal relationships, and psychosocial well-being among school students. Furthermore, it has been seen that integrating the indigenous knowledge systems strengthens the cultural identity and sense of belonging in students, contributing to positive mental health and social harmony. This study is indented to explore the effects of longitudinal studies and variations in the implementation of value-based educational programmes. Overall, this review suggests that integrating traditional Indian wisdom with current educational practices provides a culturally relevant framework for promoting the holistic development of students. This approach also aligns with the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and highlights the importance of incorporating value-based skill training programs into school curriculums to foster students who are emotionally resilient, ethically grounded, and socially responsible individuals.

Keywords: Value-based education, Mental health, Well-being, School students, Holistic development, Life skills, Emotional resilience, Indian Knowledge Systems

1 INTRODUCTION

There has been a drastic rise in the levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional difficulties among school students worldwide, which poses a serious threat to mental health and overall well-being (WHO, 2021). While schools continue to primarily focus on improving academic performance, there is increasing recognition among educators and policymakers that schools should also focus on developing character, emotional skills, and essential life skills beyond their curriculum (UNESCO, 2015; OECD, 2018). Therefore, value-based education becomes an important approach that focuses beyond the teaching of moral principles to promote resilience, emotional well-being, empathy, and positive interpersonal relationships among students (Narvaez, 2006; Nair, 2010).

Value-based education has its roots in traditional Indian Knowledge Systems and draws from classical texts like Basavanna's Vachanas, the Hitopadesha, and the Panchatantra. These texts include ethical principles and practical wisdom that encourage empathy, self-control, resilience, moral reasoning, and responsible decision-making (Ghosh, 2014; Hiremath, 1996; Singh & Misra, 2013; Kumar & Pathak, 2017). Application of these principles within educational settings provides specific learning opportunities, helping students gain socio-emotional well-being (UNICEF, 2012).

This narrative review synthesizes the existing literature on value-based skill training based on Indian Knowledge Systems, with reference to educational approaches using Basavanna's Vachanas, the Hitopadesha, and the Panchatantra. The review examines the available literature regarding their contribution to students' mental health, emotional well-being, resilience, and character development. It also explores how culturally rooted educational practices can strengthen empathy, self-awareness, and emotional competence by demonstrating the continuing relevance of traditional Indian wisdom in contemporary educational contexts (Narvaez, 2006; Nair, 2010; Ghosh, 2014; UNESCO, 2015).

2 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Contemporary educational systems mainly focus on academic achievement, examination performance, and the development of technical skills. While these aspects are essential, lesser attention is given to the students' emotional, moral, and psychosocial development. As a result, several school students experience stress, anxiety, behavioural difficulties, and challenges in developing healthy interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, and emotional resilience.

In recent years, more importance has been given towards promoting mental health within school settings. However, many existing educational approaches pay limited attention to culturally grounded methods of value education that focuses on indigenous knowledge and ethical traditions. India possesses a rich philosophical and literary heritage, with classical texts such as Basavanna's Vachanas, the Hitopadesha, and the Panchatantra, which offers great insight about moral reasoning, self-discipline, empathy, resilience, ethical decision-making, and responsible social behaviour. Despite their educational value, these texts have not been systematically integrated into contemporary school curriculums as resources for promoting students' mental health and holistic development. Although the potential of traditional Indian wisdom to foster emotional well-being and character development has increasingly been recognised, the existing evidence remains dispersed across diverse educational and psychological studies. There is a need to synthesise the available literature to better understand how value-based skill training informed by Indian Knowledge Systems contributes to students' mental health, emotional well-being, and social development.

Based on this, the current narrative review examines the existing body of research on value-based educational approaches derived from Basavanna's Vachanas, the Hitopadesha, and the Panchatantra. By bringing together the available evidence, the review aims to explore the relevance of these traditional Indian texts in promoting emotional resilience, ethical values, and holistic development among school students, while identifying current gaps and directions for future research.

2.1 Objectives of the Study

The objective of this paper is to provide a detailed analysis of the existing literature on the importance of value-based skills training based on teachings from the Indian tradition in the development of mental health and wellbeing of school children. In particular, this narrative review brings together the available evidence on the methods of education which involve the teachings of Basavanna's Vachanas, the Hitopadesha, and the Panchatantra and analyze their role in the development of traits such as emotional resilience, empathy, emotional intelligence, moral reasoning, and prosocial behavior in the context of value and life-skills education.

3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This narrative review is relevant as it compiles previous research done on the application of Indian traditional knowledge systems in contemporary practices of education for mental health, emotional well-being, and holistic development of students. This review specifically focuses on school-aged students from 10-16 years of age, and it reveals that value-based education using Indian knowledge systems can meet the growing demand for emotional and moral development while the children learn academically.

Today, all students are facing many challenges, which stem from not just academia but also from technology and their social environment. Added academic pressure, along with more time spent online with minimal real-life interaction, has also led to increasing concerns about emotional well-being and the adjustment of the student. Therefore, there has been a shift towards an approach where school is not just about academic attainment, but about emotional resilience, empathy and the fostering of moral values and responsible citizenship.

Value-based education plays a critical role in the contemporary world, and ancient Indian literature such as Basavanna's Vachanas, the Hitopadesha and Panchatantra offer ways to facilitate moral and life skills education in a culturally sensitive manner. Through these literary resources and the narratives presented within them, students are presented with opportunities to reflect on ethics, empathize with others, develop self-control, and improve their decision-making abilities as well as their interpersonal skills through the stories and the problems they present. This works well because students find traditional Indian texts accessible, as they are culturally relevant to them.

This review contributes to the growing body of literature by compiling research done on how classical Indian literature can be integrated into current practices. Instead of seeing them as solely literary texts from the past, the review highlights their relevance as resources to enhance not only the students' moral and emotional development, but also their well-being. This fits well into the more general understanding that education is a holistic phenomenon and should not only focus on academic achievement but also on self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, self-control and responsible citizenship.

The findings of this review have vital implications for educators, curriculum developers and policymakers, especially in the light of the Indian National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 that emphasizes the incorporation of Indian Knowledge Systems and holistic education. By bringing all the available evidence together, the review provides a base for integrating culturally grounded value-based education into children's schools, which can contribute significantly to students' mental health and overall well-being.

In essence, this review underlines the importance of blending Indian traditional knowledge with current methods of education in order to foster morally upright and emotionally resilient students. In addition to the aspects discussed, the review identifies areas for further research so that the understanding and utilization of Indian traditional knowledge systems may flourish further for the benefit of students.

Future directions from this study longitudinal studies, variations in evaluation methods, and challenges related to the large-scale implementation of value-based educational programmes.

4 CONCLUSION

The reviewed literature suggests that value-based education rooted in Indian Knowledge Systems, particularly Basavanna's Vachanas, Hitopadesha, and Panchatantra, can contribute to students' mental health, psychological well-being, and holistic development. Integrating these traditional knowledge resources with contemporary educational approaches may promote essential life skills, including self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, critical thinking, decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and social responsibility among school students. Such culturally relevant and practical learning approaches can create supportive classroom environments that encourage positive behaviour, resilience, mutual respect, and overall well-being. This integration of traditional wisdom with modern education can benefit society by nurturing emotionally balanced, socially responsible, and confident individuals; however, further empirical research using larger samples and longitudinal study designs is needed to establish its long-term effectiveness and support its wider implementation in educational settings.

STATEMENTS ON COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding this manuscript.

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