

Vivekananda's Educational Philosophy and Its Reflections on Student Values: An Empirical Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

This study presents an empirical investigation into how Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy is reflected in the value preferences of students at Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya (RKMV), Narendrapur. A self-developed Value Survey, operationalising 18 values derived from Vivekananda's teachings, was administered to a sample of 50 secondary and higher secondary students. Quantitative analysis utilising frequency distribution, median calculation, and rank ordering reveals a distinct value hierarchy. The findings indicate that Humanity and Truthfulness are the most internalised values among students, sharing the top rank. Conversely, Dedication was identified as the least prioritised value. The results demonstrate a significant alignment between the institution's humanistic ethos and Vivekananda's core emphasis on character-building and ethical consciousness, validating the role of ideologically-grounded schooling in moral formation. However, the lower ranking of values such as Courage, Inquisitiveness, and Scientific Temper suggests potential areas for pedagogical refinement to achieve a more holistic embodiment of Vivekananda's integrated vision. The study contributes empirical evidence to the discourse on value-based education and offers a methodological framework for assessing the congruence between educational philosophy and student value internalisation.

1. Introduction

In the landscape of modern education, increasingly shaped by metrics of employability and standardised outcomes, the holistic vision of Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) offers a compelling counter-narrative (Yadav et al., 2023). Vivekananda conceptualised education not as a mere transfer of information but as a transformative process aimed at manifesting the inherent potential within every individual, a synthesis of intellectual growth, ethical grounding, and social responsibility (Ghosh & Tiwari, n.d.). His philosophy positioned values such as humanity, truthfulness, courage, self-reliance, and service at the core of meaningful learning (Dash, n.d.). Yet, a critical question persists in educational research: to what extent are such philosophical ideals tangibly reflected in the value systems of students within institutions explicitly founded on these principles?

This inquiry gains urgency against the backdrop of what many scholars term a global values crisis in education. As pedagogical models worldwide grow increasingly transactional, prioritising rankings, skill-acquisition, and economic

returns, the need to reevaluate the foundational aims of education becomes imperative (Kumar, 2019). In India, this reflection is further catalysed by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which explicitly advocates for holistic and value-based education. In this context, institutions such as the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya (RKMV) in Narendrapur, Kolkata, assume particular significance. Established with the explicit mission of embodying the educational ideals of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, RKMV represents a longstanding, ideologically grounded experiment in integrating character formation with academic instruction (Dutta, n.d.).

However, while extensive scholarly work has been devoted to explicating Vivekananda's educational philosophy in theoretical terms, a discernible research gap remains: there is a scarcity of empirical studies examining how students in such value-conscious educational environments internalise these philosophical tenets. Most discussions remain normative, focusing on what *should* be taught, with limited investigation into what values students actually *prioritise* when given agency to reflect independently (Sonwane, n.d.). This study, therefore, seeks to move beyond theoretical exposition to grounded, data-driven inquiry.

The significance of this research is multifaceted. First, it addresses a lacuna in the literature by providing quantitative evidence on value internalisation within an ideologically framed schooling system. Second, it contributes to the broader discourse on value education by offering a methodological framework for assessing the congruence between institutional philosophy and student psychology. Third, in an era of educational globalisation, this study underscores the relevance of indigenous pedagogical wisdom, positioning Vivekananda's vision as a culturally-rooted yet universally resonant alternative to purely instrumental models of learning. Finally, for policymakers and educators, the findings offer evidence-based insights that could inform the design and implementation of value-oriented curricula across diverse institutional settings.

To this end, the researchers designed an empirical study with the following objectives:

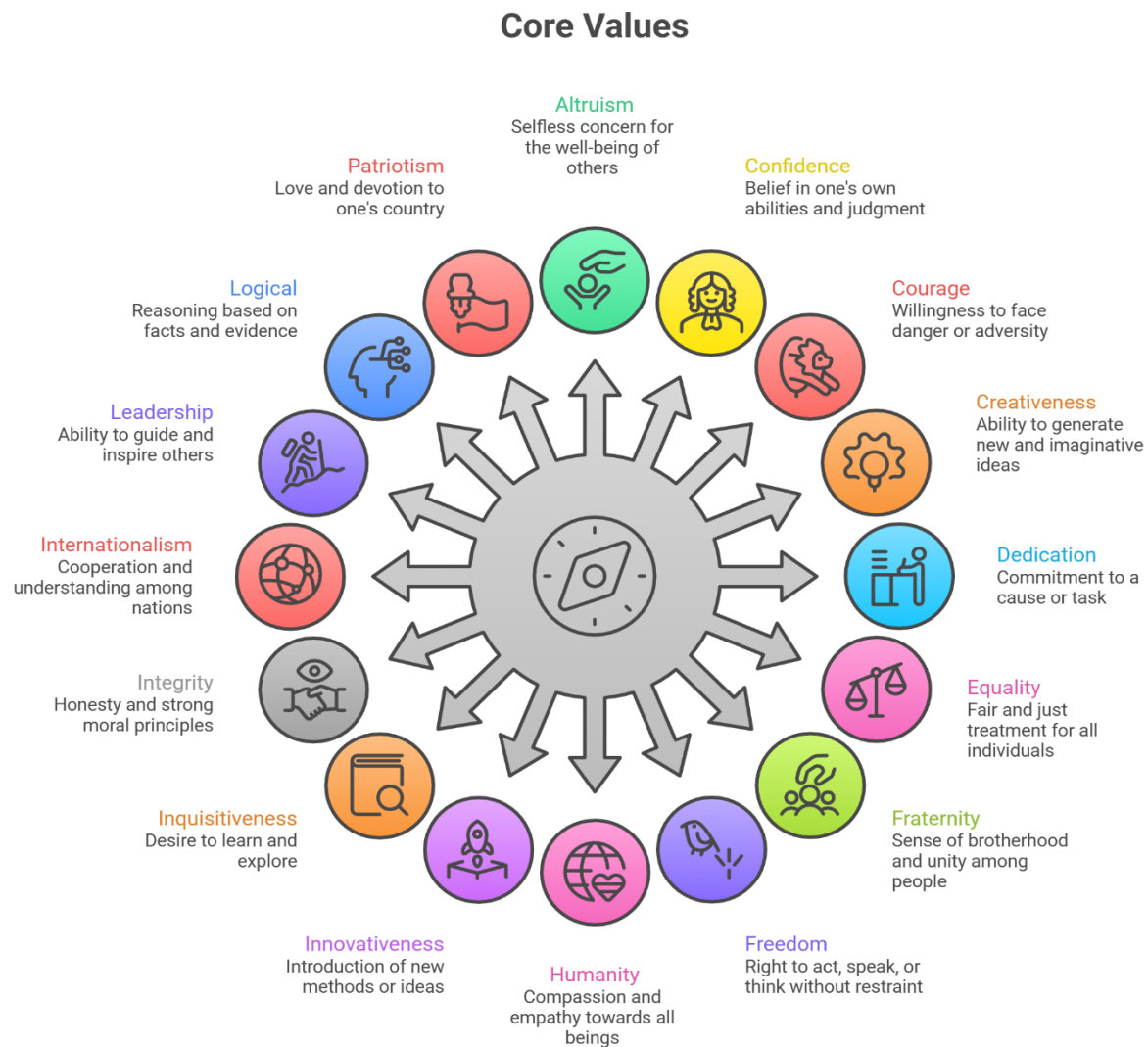
1. To identify the hierarchy of values reflected among students of Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya (RKMV), based on Swami Vivekananda's core educational tenets.
2. To analyse the alignment or divergence between the students' expressed value preferences and the normative framework of Vivekananda's philosophy.
3. To contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how institutional ideology interacts with adolescent value formation.

By undertaking this investigation, the researchers aim not only to assess the specific case of RKMV but also to initiate a broader conversation about the mechanisms and outcomes of value-based education. In doing so, this study hopes to offer a meaningful contribution to the enduring educational quest articulated by Vivekananda himself: the creation of learning environments that nurture not merely skilled professionals, but conscientious human beings capable of contributing to a more compassionate and enlightened society (Berkowitz, 2011).

2. Methodology

A purposive sample of 50 students was selected for this study from Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya (RKMV), Narendrapur, Kolkata. The participants were drawn from secondary and higher secondary levels, ensuring representation across key developmental stages where value orientation is both formative and introspective. All respondents were enrolled in an educational institution explicitly founded on the pedagogical and philosophical ideals of Swami Vivekananda, thus making them a relevant cohort for investigating the internalisation of value-based education. Participation was voluntary, with prior consent obtained from institutional authorities, students, and guardians.

The researchers developed a self-administered Value Survey as the primary instrument for data collection. The survey was designed to operationalise and quantify the core educational values emphasised in Swami Vivekananda's philosophy. It comprised 18 values, systematically derived from his teachings and writings:



Made with Napkin

The data collection was conducted in a controlled classroom setting to ensure consistency and minimise external influence. Participants were briefed about the objective of the study in non-directive terms to avoid priming or ideological persuasion. They were assured of confidentiality and the academic use of responses. No time limit was imposed, allowing students to reflect deeply on their rankings.

Upon completion, the ranked data were subjected to quantitative analysis through the following statistical procedures:

- Frequency counts across class intervals: The ranks assigned to each value were grouped into predefined intervals (e.g., 1–3, 4–6, ..., 15–18) to observe distribution patterns and identify clustering tendencies in student preferences.
- Median calculation for central tendency: The median rank was computed for each of the 18 values to determine the central tendency of student rankings. The median was preferred over the mean due to its robustness in ordinal data and resistance to outlier skew.
- Rank distribution based on median values: Finally, the 18 values were ordered in ascending order based on their computed median ranks. This yielded a consolidated hierarchy of values as reflected in the student sample, enabling comparative analysis with Vivekananda's philosophical emphasis.

All analyses were carried out using descriptive statistical tools, with results presented in tabular and graphical formats to facilitate interpretation and discussion in subsequent sections of this paper.

3. Results

3.1 Frequency Distribution

The frequency table 1 shows clustering of high-frequency rankings for Humanity and Truthfulness in the lower rank intervals (01–03), indicating these are highly prioritised.

The analysis of student rankings reveals distinct patterns in value prioritisation among respondents from Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya (RKMV), providing empirical insight into the internalisation of Vivekananda’s educational ideals. The frequency distribution across rank intervals (Table 1) offers a granular view of how each of the 18 values was positioned within the students’ psychological hierarchy.

A preliminary examination of the frequency table indicates polarised clustering for certain values. For instance, Humanity and Truthfulness show pronounced concentrations in the 01–03 interval (highest importance), with 28 and 29 students respectively assigning these values top-three ranks. This suggests a strong collective endorsement of these virtues as fundamental. Conversely, values such as Inquisitiveness and Leadership demonstrate significant clustering in the 15–18 interval (lowest importance), with 28 and 20 students, respectively, relegating them to the bottom ranks.

Mid-range distributions are observable for values like Creativeness, Logical, and Innovativeness, which display more balanced frequencies across intervals, indicating moderate or context-dependent importance. Equality and Patriotism show a notable early clustering (01–03 and 04–06), reflecting their perceived relevance but not necessarily top-tier prioritisation.

The computed median ranks further crystallise this hierarchy. Humanity and Truthfulness share the lowest median (5.00), confirming their premier status. In contrast, Dedication emerges with the highest median (10.00), marking it as the least emphasised value within this cohort. Values such as Courage, Freedom, Innovativeness, and Inquisitiveness cluster around a median of 9.50, indicating comparable mid-to-lower prioritisation.

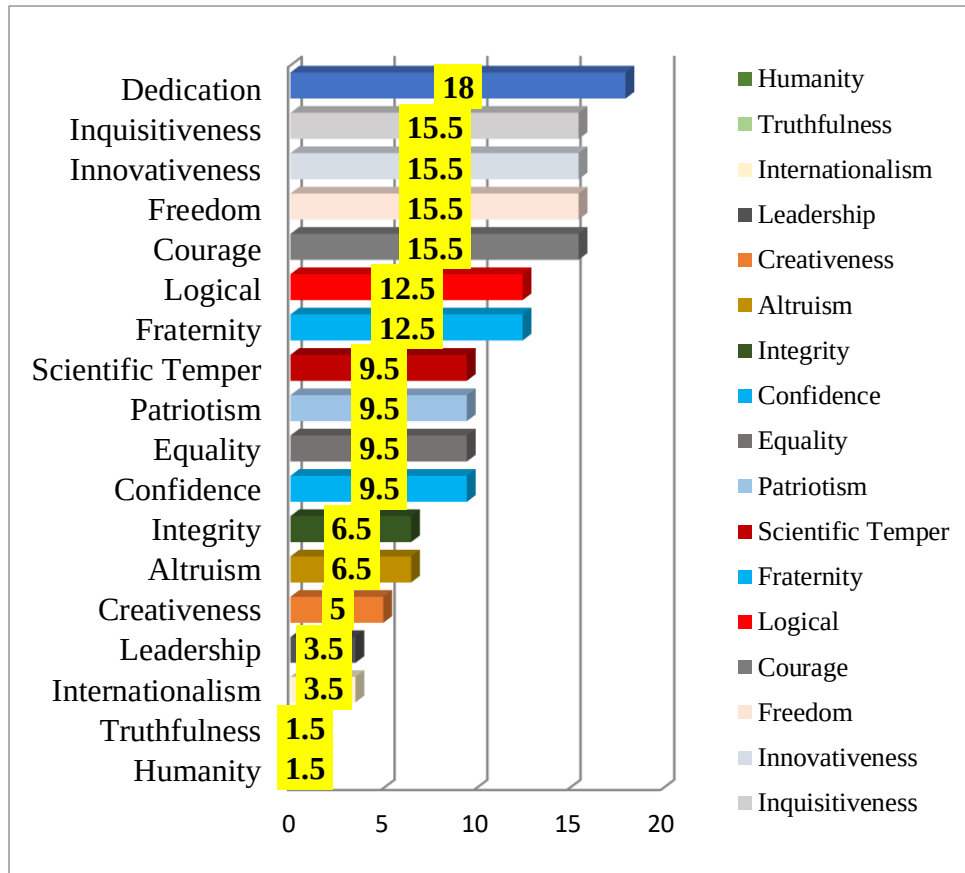
Table 1: Calculation of Frequencies based on Given Preferences of RKMV Students

Sl. No.	Name of the Value	Frequencies Under Class Intervals					
		01-03	04-06	07-09	10-12	13-15	15-18
01	Altruism	06	08	08	08	08	12
02	Confidence	11	15	13	06	01	04
03	Courage	03	10	13	09	04	11
04	Creativeness	05	06	15	10	09	05
05	Dedication	03	14	11	10	10	02
06	Equality	16	12	08	09	03	02
07	Fraternity	03	06	09	09	14	09
08	Freedom	11	10	09	10	05	05
09	Humanity	28	09	05	05	02	01
10	Innovativeness	03	06	12	08	14	07
11	Inquisitiveness	00	01	02	06	13	28
12	Integrity	05	15	06	10	12	02
13	Internationalism	03	03	07	06	14	17
14	Leadership	01	05	05	08	11	20
15	Logical	04	10	08	12	10	06
16	Patriotism	14	12	06	11	04	03
17	Scientific Temper	05	01	08	09	14	13
18	Truthfulness	29	08	05	05	02	01
Total No. of Students – 50							

*Maximum Rank – 18

*Minimum Rank - 01

The data reveals a clear value hierarchy consistent with Vivekananda's emphasis on character and conscience. The top-ranked values, Humanity and Truthfulness, are cornerstones of his philosophy, underscoring the institution's success in fostering ethical and humanistic consciousness. The relatively lower ranking of Dedication and Inquisitiveness invites further pedagogical reflection, particularly regarding how values associated with perseverance and curiosity are communicated and modelled within the educational environment.

Graph No. – 1: Rank Distribution against Reflected Values of RKMV Students

Notably, values such as Internationalism and Leadership secure high ranks, reflecting a forward-looking, globally conscious student outlook aligned with Vivekananda's universalist vision. Meanwhile, the mid-to-low placement of Scientific Temper and Logical thinking suggests a potential area for rebalancing, given Vivekananda's own advocacy for harmonising reason with faith.

This empirical ranking provides a measurable snapshot of value internalisation—one that affirms certain philosophical intents while highlighting opportunities for curricular and pedagogical refinement in value-based education.

Table 2: Rank Order of Values Based on Median Scores

Rank (Numerical)	Rank (Descriptive)	Value	Median	Interpretation
1–2	1.5	Humanity	5.00	Highest priority, strongly internalised
1–2	1.5	Truthfulness	5.00	Highest priority, strongly internalised
3–4	3.5	Internationalism	6.50	High importance
3–4	3.5	Leadership	6.50	High importance
5	5	Creativeness	7.50	Moderately high
6–7	6.5	Altruism	8.00	Moderate
6–7	6.5	Integrity	8.00	Moderate
8–11	9.5	Confidence	8.50	Moderate to low
8–11	9.5	Equality	8.50	Moderate to low
8–11	9.5	Patriotism	8.50	Moderate to low
8–11	9.5	Scientific Temper	8.50	Moderate to low
12–13	12.5	Fraternity	9.00	Lower moderate
12–13	12.5	Logical	9.00	Lower moderate
14–17	15.5	Courage	9.50	Low priority
14–17	15.5	Freedom	9.50	Low priority
14–17	15.5	Innovativeness	9.50	Low priority
14–17	15.5	Inquisitiveness	9.50	Low priority
18	18	Dedication	10.00	Lowest priority

4. Discussion and Interpretation

4.1 Alignment with Vivekananda's Core Philosophical Emphasis

The empirical hierarchy of values established in this study reveals a significant alignment between the value preferences of RKMV students and the central tenets of Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy. The pre-eminent ranking of Humanity (Rank 1.5) and Truthfulness (Rank 1.5) resonates directly with Vivekananda's vision. He famously asserted that education must foster *man-making* and *character-building*, principles fundamentally rooted in human compassion (*daya*) and unwavering commitment to truth (*satya*). The fact that these two values emerged as the most internalised suggests that the institutional ethos at RKMV has successfully translated this philosophical cornerstone into the students' moral consciousness (Paterson, 2010). This finding underscores the potential of ideologically-grounded education to cultivate a value system prioritising ethical conduct and universal empathy.

4.2 Emphasis on Universalism and Social Consciousness

The high ranking of Internationalism (Rank 3.5) and the moderate position of Fraternity (Rank 12.5) reflect an internalisation of Vivekananda's universalist outlook. His teaching that "the whole world is one family" (*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*) appears to have been absorbed, promoting a sense of global citizenship that transcends parochial identities (Halstead & Taylor, 2005). However, the comparatively lower rank of Fraternity suggests a distinction in the students' minds between a broad, abstract internationalism and the more immediate, actionable practice of brotherhood. Similarly, the moderate ranking of Equality (Rank 9.5) indicates a recognition of the principle, but

possibly a perception of it as an ideal to be aspired to rather than a daily practised value within their immediate context (Stephenson, 1998).

4.3 Moderate Internalisation of Performance-Oriented and Rational Values

Values associated with personal efficacy and intellectual discipline, such as Creativeness (Rank 5), Integrity (Rank 6.5), and Logical thinking (Rank 12.5), occupy the middle spectrum. This placement indicates that while students acknowledge their importance, they do not regard them as primary compared to foundational ethical virtues (Lovat & Toomey, 2009). This mirrors Vivekananda's integrated approach, where intellect and creativity are essential but must be guided by character. The position of Scientific Temper (Rank 9.5) in the moderate-to-low category is particularly noteworthy. Vivekananda championed the scientific spirit of inquiry, urging the youth to "reason and reject" superstition (Halstead, 2005). Its current ranking may point to a pedagogical challenge in effectively linking the value of scientific rationality to personal and spiritual development in a way that resonates deeply with students.

4.4 Lower Priority for Self-Assertive and Inquisitive Values

A striking finding is the cluster of values ranked as low priority: Courage, Freedom, Innovativeness, Inquisitiveness, and Dedication (Ranks 15.5 to 18). This presents a nuanced area for reflection. While Vivekananda extolled Courage as essential for spiritual and worldly struggle, and Inquisitiveness as the driver of learning, their low ranking could reflect a socio-cultural or pedagogical context where conformity, discipline, and prescribed learning pathways are emphasised over individual assertion, autonomy, and open-ended questioning (Venkataiah, 1998). The lowest rank assigned to Dedication is paradoxical, given its importance in Vivekananda's teachings on *nishtha* (steadfastness). This may indicate a perception of dedication as an external demand or duty rather than an internally embraced value of persistent commitment to a chosen path (Alexander, 1976).

4.5 Synthesis and Implications

The value hierarchy derived from this study paints a picture of students who have profoundly internalised the humanistic and ethical core of Vivekananda's philosophy. The institutional environment appears most effective in instilling the virtues of compassion and truth (Prasad, 1999). However, the relative deprioritisation of values like courage, inquisitiveness, and scientific temper suggests a potential imbalance. An education truly reflective of Vivekananda's holistic vision would aim to harmonise the heart (humanity), the head (reason & inquiry), and the hand (courage & dedicated action).

This analysis does not imply a failure but highlights an opportunity. It calls for a pedagogical introspection: how can curricula, teaching methodologies, and institutional culture at RKMV and similar value-based schools more dynamically foster the full spectrum of Vivekanandan virtues? Encouraging project-based learning, debate, critical questioning, and platforms for student-led innovation could strengthen the internalisation of those values currently ranked lower, creating a more complete embodiment of Vivekananda's dynamic educational ideal (Thornberg, 2008).

5. Conclusion

This empirical study sought to move beyond theoretical discourse and quantitatively assess the extent to which Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy is reflected in the value systems of students at an institution explicitly founded on his ideals (Thornberg, 2013). The findings present a nuanced picture. On one hand, they robustly confirm a significant alignment: the top-ranked values of Humanity and Truthfulness are precisely the cornerstones of Vivekananda's vision for "man-making" education (Barman, 2016). This indicates that Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya has been effective in instilling its core ethical and humanistic principles, validating the potential of ideologically-grounded schooling to shape a coherent moral consciousness centred on compassion and integrity (Kumar, 2025).

However, the value hierarchy also reveals areas of divergence that invite deeper pedagogical reflection. The relatively lower prioritisation of values such as Courage, Inquisitiveness, Scientific Temper, and Dedication, each strongly advocated by Vivekananda himself, suggests a possible imbalance between the internalisation of passive virtues and active, inquiry-driven ones (Velassery, 2021). This points not to a failure of the institutional mission, but to an opportunity for its evolution. A truly holistic Vivekanandan education would seek a dynamic synthesis, fostering not

only a compassionate heart and truthful mind but also a courageous, questioning, and dedicated spirit capable of engaging with a complex world (Jha, 2017).

Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on value-based education by providing a methodological framework and empirical evidence. It underscores that the translation of philosophical ideals into student psyches is neither automatic nor uniform (Dutta, n.d.). The study affirms the critical role of intentional pedagogical ecosystems while highlighting the need for continuous self-assessment to ensure that all dimensions of a foundational philosophy are fully nurtured. Future research should extend this inquiry through longitudinal studies tracking value development over time and comparative analyses with diverse institutional models. Such work will further illuminate how educational environments can most effectively cultivate not just knowledgeable individuals, but the integrated, value-driven human beings envisioned by thinkers like Swami Vivekananda.

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