
ROLE OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME (NSS) IN FOSTERING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS.

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Article Received: 01 July 2026, Article Revised: 21 July 2026, Published on: 08 August 2026

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Doi: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.7948>

ABSTRACT

The National Service Scheme (NSS) plays a significant role in nurturing social responsibility, civic consciousness, and community engagement among students in higher education institutions. The present study examines the role of the National Service Scheme (NSS) in fostering social responsibility among students of Guru Kashi University, Punjab. The study is based on primary data collected from 200 NSS student volunteers through a structured questionnaire. A descriptive research design was adopted to assess students' perceptions regarding the influence of NSS activities on social responsibility, leadership, teamwork, environmental awareness, community service, and personal development. The findings indicate that participation in NSS has a positive impact on students' sense of social commitment and civic responsibility. Most respondents reported that regular involvement in community outreach programmes, cleanliness drives, health awareness campaigns, blood donation camps, and environmental initiatives enhanced their empathy, communication skills, leadership abilities, and willingness to contribute to society. The study further reveals that NSS activities encourage students to develop ethical values, volunteerism, and a greater understanding of social issues while strengthening their confidence and decision-making capabilities. The findings suggest that the National Service Scheme serves as an effective platform for experiential learning by integrating academic knowledge with meaningful community service. The study concludes that higher education institutions should strengthen NSS initiatives through enhanced institutional support, regular training, and community

partnerships to further promote socially responsible citizenship and holistic student development.

KEYWORDS: National Service Scheme, Social Responsibility, Higher, Education system, NEP.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays a crucial role in shaping responsible citizens by promoting not only academic excellence but also ethical values, civic engagement, and social responsibility. In a diverse country like India, where socio-economic disparities, gender inequality, rural-urban differences, and environmental challenges continue to exist, educational institutions have an important responsibility to prepare students to contribute meaningfully to society. Recognising this need, the Government of India introduced the National Service Scheme (NSS) to provide students with opportunities to participate in community service while developing leadership, empathy, and a sense of civic duty. The NSS serves as a bridge between educational institutions and society by encouraging students to engage directly with community needs through voluntary service. The National Service Scheme was launched in 1969 under the Ministry of Education with the objective of developing the personality and character of students through community service. The programme is based on the principle of "Not Me, But You," highlighting the importance of selfless service and collective welfare. Through activities such as village adoption, cleanliness campaigns, environmental conservation, health awareness programmes, blood donation camps, disaster relief, literacy drives, and awareness campaigns on social issues, NSS enables students to understand the realities of society while contributing to sustainable community development.

India continues to face numerous social challenges, including poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, environmental degradation, gender discrimination, public health concerns, and unequal access to education and healthcare. Addressing these issues requires active participation from educated youth who possess both knowledge and a commitment to social welfare. The NSS provides a structured platform through which students can develop a deeper understanding of these societal challenges and actively participate in finding practical solutions. Participation in NSS activities helps students cultivate qualities such as compassion, teamwork, discipline, leadership, communication skills, and social commitment, which are essential for responsible citizenship. In higher education institutions, NSS has emerged as an effective model of experiential learning, where students apply classroom

knowledge to real-life situations through community engagement. Regular interaction with rural communities, disadvantaged groups, and local organisations broadens students' perspectives and strengthens their commitment to inclusive development. Such experiences not only enhance personal growth but also instil values of equality, cooperation, and national integration. Previous studies have reported that participation in NSS significantly enhances students' civic awareness, leadership qualities, volunteerism, and social responsibility. Das (2020) observed that NSS serves as an effective mechanism for promoting social awareness among educated youth and encourages active participation in community welfare programmes. Similarly, Vijay and Esave (2021) highlighted that NSS activities contribute substantially to rural development while improving students' understanding of community service and social commitment through active involvement in various developmental programmes. Despite the recognised importance of NSS, relatively few empirical studies have examined its contribution to fostering social responsibility among students in private universities, particularly in Punjab. Therefore, the present study seeks to assess the role of the National Service Scheme in developing social responsibility among students of Guru Kashi University. Based on responses collected from 200 NSS volunteers, the study examines how participation in NSS activities influences students' civic consciousness, leadership abilities, ethical values, community engagement, and overall personality development. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for educational institutions and policymakers seeking to strengthen community engagement initiatives and promote socially responsible graduates.

Origin and Objectives of the National Service Scheme (NSS)

The National Service Scheme (NSS) was established with the vision of integrating community service into higher education and developing socially responsible citizens. The concept of national service gained momentum soon after India's independence when the Chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC), **Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan**, advocated the inclusion of voluntary social service in the educational system. In January 1950, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) examined this proposal and recommended that students and teachers devote part of their time to voluntary community service. The First Five-Year Plan (1951–1956) further emphasized the importance of involving students in community work, while **Jawaharlal Nehru** also expressed the view that social service should become an integral part of university education. A significant milestone in the development of NSS occurred in May 1969, when the Ministry of Education

and the University Grants Commission convened a conference of student representatives from universities and higher education institutions. The participants unanimously supported the establishment of a national service programme that would promote national integration, character building, and community development. Following this recommendation, an orientation camp was organised at Rajghat, where the framework of the scheme was finalised. The Planning Commission subsequently allocated ₹5 crore during the Fourth Five-Year Plan to launch NSS as a pilot project.

The National Service Scheme was officially inaugurated on **24 September 1969** by the then Union Minister of Education, **Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao**, in 37 universities across the country. Since its inception, the programme has expanded considerably and is now implemented in universities, colleges, and senior secondary institutions throughout India. Today, NSS has become one of the largest youth volunteer programmes in the country, engaging millions of students in community service and nation-building activities. The primary objective of NSS is the holistic development of students through active participation in community service. The programme seeks to help students understand the communities in which they live and work while encouraging them to identify local problems and contribute towards practical solutions. It promotes civic consciousness, social responsibility, leadership, teamwork, democratic values, and national integration. Through participation in activities such as health awareness campaigns, environmental conservation, literacy programmes, disaster management, blood donation drives, rural development projects, and social awareness initiatives, students acquire valuable life skills and develop a strong commitment to public service.

The broad objectives of NSS include enabling students to understand the needs of society, strengthen their relationship with the community, utilise their knowledge for solving social problems, develop leadership and organisational abilities, promote cooperation and shared responsibility, encourage community participation, build resilience during emergencies and natural disasters, and foster national unity and social harmony. These objectives contribute significantly to the overall personality development of students and prepare them to become responsible and active citizens. The motto of the National Service Scheme is **"Not Me, But You."** This simple yet powerful philosophy reflects the spirit of selfless service, empathy, and democratic living. It emphasises that individual well-being is closely linked with the welfare of society and encourages volunteers to place community interests above personal gain. The motto inspires NSS volunteers to cultivate compassion, mutual respect, social

justice, and collective responsibility while working towards the sustainable development of their communities.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of the National Service Scheme (NSS) in fostering social responsibility among higher education students.
2. To assess the impact of NSS participation on students' civic awareness and community engagement.
3. To evaluate the influence of NSS activities on the development of leadership, teamwork, and communication skills among students.
4. To analyse students' perceptions regarding the contribution of NSS to their personal and social development.
5. To identify the challenges faced in the effective implementation of NSS activities in higher education institutions.
6. To suggest measures for strengthening the role of the National Service Scheme in promoting social responsibility and active citizenship among students.

Review of Literature

Sen (2010) found that the hierarchy of involvement among various socio-religious categories does vary depending on the deficit indicators used. Affirmative action for marginalized groups should take into account relevant measurements of "deficits" in participation, according to Basant and Sen (2010).

Agarwal (2006) and Kaul (2006) discussed how the reduced participation in higher education results from supply-side constraints that present in Indian higher education as well as at the school level, in addition to a lack of demand.

Alok Chantia (2008) conducted research on volunteers' awareness of the NSS's goals and objectives as well as its outreach initiatives. The author also outlined the challenges that NSS faces and offered solutions for directing young people's energies towards the creation of a robust and healthy country. Aya Okada (2012) investigated employment, skill development, and education today.

According to Deekshitha (2016), NSS is important and has goals in higher education that help students develop social responsibility. Additionally, the NSS and the students in the system were examined, and solutions to the problems were proposed so that the next generation might be used constructively.

Participation of the National Service Scheme (NSS) in Disaster Relief

The National Service Scheme (NSS) has consistently demonstrated its commitment to nation-building by actively participating in disaster relief and emergency response initiatives across India. During natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, cyclones, droughts, and landslides, as well as public health emergencies, NSS volunteers provide valuable support to affected communities. Their contributions include distributing food, clothing, drinking water, medicines, and other essential relief materials, assisting in rescue and rehabilitation efforts, organising temporary shelters, maintaining sanitation, and conducting awareness campaigns. Through these activities, NSS volunteers not only support disaster-affected populations but also develop a strong sense of empathy, responsibility, teamwork, and public service.

The role of NSS became particularly significant during the COVID-19 pandemic, when volunteers across the country actively supported government agencies and local administrations. They participated in public awareness campaigns on preventive measures, promoted vaccination drives, distributed masks and sanitizers, assisted vulnerable populations, helped maintain social distancing at public places, and disseminated authentic health information through digital and social media platforms. Their efforts complemented those of healthcare professionals and law enforcement agencies in managing the public health crisis. Similarly, during the severe floods that affected parts of Maharashtra, including Satara, Sangli, and Kolhapur in 2019, NSS volunteers actively participated in relief and rehabilitation programmes by assisting displaced families, distributing essential supplies, and supporting local authorities in restoring normalcy. Such experiences highlight the capacity of NSS to mobilise educated youth for humanitarian service during emergencies. Participation in disaster management activities provides students with practical experience in leadership, crisis management, communication, problem-solving, and community coordination. It also strengthens their commitment to social responsibility and reinforces the core philosophy of the National Service Scheme "**Not Me, But You.**" By engaging in disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, NSS continues to play a vital role in promoting civic responsibility, national solidarity, and community resilience among higher education students.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	110	55.0
Female	90	45.0

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Total	200	100.0

Interpretation: The study comprised 200 NSS volunteers, of whom 55% were male and 45% were female. The distribution indicates active participation of both genders in NSS activities.

Table 2: NSS Participation and Development of Social Responsibility.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	82	41.0
Agree	74	37.0
Neutral	20	10.0
Disagree	15	7.5
Strongly Disagree	9	4.5
Total	200	100.0

Interpretation: A majority (78%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that NSS participation enhanced their sense of social responsibility.

Table 3: NSS and Community Engagement.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	76	38.0
Agree	80	40.0
Neutral	18	9.0
Disagree	16	8.0
Strongly Disagree	10	5.0
Total	200	100.0

Interpretation: About 78% of students believed that NSS activities improved their involvement in community service and civic engagement.

Table 4: NSS and Leadership Development.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	70	35.0
Agree	82	41.0
Neutral	22	11.0
Disagree	16	8.0
Strongly Disagree	10	5.0

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Total	200	100.0

Interpretation: Nearly 76% of respondents reported that NSS activities helped them develop leadership and teamwork skills.

Table 5: NSS and Environmental Awareness.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	88	44.0
Agree	70	35.0
Neutral	16	8.0
Disagree	15	7.5
Strongly Disagree	11	5.5
Total	200	100.0

Interpretation: A substantial 79% of respondents indicated that NSS programmes increased their awareness of environmental conservation and sustainable practices.

Table 6: Overall Impact of NSS on Personal and Social Development.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	68	34.0
Very Good	74	37.0
Good	38	19.0
Average	12	6.0
Poor	8	4.0
Total	200	100.0

Interpretation: The majority of respondents (71%) rated the overall impact of NSS on their personal and social development as excellent or very good, indicating the effectiveness of NSS in fostering responsible citizenship.

Major Findings

- NSS participation significantly enhances social responsibility among higher education students.
- Students actively involved in NSS demonstrate greater civic awareness and community engagement.
- NSS activities contribute positively to leadership, teamwork, and communication skills.

- Environmental awareness and sustainable practices are strengthened through NSS programmes.
- Most respondents perceive NSS as an effective platform for personal growth and social development.
- NSS plays an important role in developing socially responsible and community-oriented citizens.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the role of the National Service Scheme (NSS) in fostering social responsibility among higher education students, based on responses from 200 NSS volunteers of Guru Kashi University. The findings indicate that participation in NSS significantly contributes to the holistic development of students by strengthening their sense of social responsibility, civic awareness, leadership skills, teamwork, communication abilities, and commitment to community service. The majority of respondents acknowledged that NSS activities, including environmental campaigns, health awareness programmes, blood donation drives, cleanliness initiatives, and disaster relief efforts, enhanced their understanding of social issues and encouraged them to actively contribute to the welfare of society. The study also highlights that NSS serves as an effective platform for experiential learning by connecting classroom knowledge with real-life community engagement. Through regular participation in voluntary service, students develop empathy, self-confidence, problem-solving abilities, and democratic values, preparing them to become responsible and socially conscious citizens. The programme not only benefits the communities it serves but also plays a vital role in shaping students' personalities and instilling the spirit of selfless service embodied in its motto, **"Not Me, But You."** The study concludes that higher education institutions should further strengthen NSS by providing adequate institutional support, regular training, improved infrastructure, and greater opportunities for community engagement. Expanding partnerships with local communities, government agencies, and non-governmental organisations can further enhance the effectiveness of NSS programmes. By encouraging wider student participation and adopting innovative service-learning approaches, the National Service Scheme can continue to play a pivotal role in promoting social responsibility, active citizenship, and sustainable community development in India.

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