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Spirituality and Religiosity through a Gender Lens: A study of Pilgrims at Sufi Shrines

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ABSTRACT

Sufism proposes a doctrine that is pluralistic in nature therefore it attracts the masses towards a mannerism which seems meaningful and provides regimen and purpose to the lives of individuals subscribing to it. The divinity attached to Sufi shrines could be experienced during a visit to these shrines. This research paper cuts through historiography, spirituality, religiosity and psychology in order to situate and decipher the spiritual behaviour of shrine visitors evolved down the years. The paper tends to investigate the relationship/s between psychological constructs of spiritual behaviour among the pilgrims visiting world famous Chishti Sufi shrines situated at Ajmer and Delhi. The study aims at exploring the relationship/s between psychological variables which would reflect as a scientific measure of their transcendent spirituality. Embarking upon Spiritual Transcendence, Spiritual/Religious Practices and Meaning in Life among the pilgrims, the study makes crucial observations. Based upon the frequencies of spiritual/religious practices, corresponding spiritual transcendence and meaning in life were recorded with the help of statistically standardized questionnaires. The study recruited 500 individuals who frequented the Chishti Sufi shrines at Ajmer and Delhi. Results showed both significant and non-significant relationship/s between the variables.

Keywords: Spirituality, Religiosity, Gender, Pilgrims, Sufism

Prologue

This research study aims to determine the role of spiritual and religious practices in the search for meaning of life and tends to determine whether individuals subscribing to those practices experience spiritual transcendence throughout their adherence. The study is an endeavor to reason how such things affect or change the lives of individuals visiting Sufi shrines. There has been a perpetual growth in the number of people visiting such shrines, irrespective of their religious affiliations and interests, which becomes the rationale for this research study. The study further aims to understand and elaborate the spiritual yearnings which seemingly bring people to the station of transcendence invoked by spirituality. Since visiting Sufi shrines is an extra religious activity done by people for acquiring inner peace and sublimation, that becomes a behaviour which is not obvious and because of the fact that visiting a shrine for finding solace and tranquil is a modified human behaviour, it becomes a concern of

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psychological research. The survey for the current study was done in the cities of Ajmer in state of Rajasthan and Delhi in the National Capital Territory of Delhi. Ajmer is synonymous with the holy shrine of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (R.A.), the famous 13th century Sufi saint of Chishtiya order, while Delhi houses the holy shrine of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya (R.A.), a great Sufi saint of Chishtiya order during medieval India.

The study is dedicated to the scientific inquiries in Sufi traditions, exploring what exactly draws people to these the centers of spiritual convergence. This study has put great emphasis upon investigation and development of the psychological understanding of spirituality through the measurement of Spiritual Transcendence, frequency and magnitude of Spiritual & Religious Practices and the Meaning in Life, thus obtained by the individuals who visit such shrines. The research finally attempts to examine the potential value of spirituality and how spiritual practices facilitate the process of finding meaning in life. The findings of this research would contribute for further researches on spiritual behaviour.

The Treatise

There has been a steady growth in the assimilation of spirituality and related concepts in the curricula for psychology and mental health professionals recently (Kelly, 1994,1995; Lovinger, 1990; Miller, 1999; Pate & High, 1995; Richards & Bergin, 1997). Spirituality characterizes a behaviour that is centred towards experiencing divine sacredness. People who identify themselves to be spiritually inclined, engage themselves in holistic practices which are considered as the gateway to spiritual transformation. Such practices have a healing nature and rejuvenate the human mind, body and soul. The present research study derives the framework from the existing literature regarding Spiritual Transcendence, Spiritual/Religious Practices and Meaning in Life among Pilgrims of different Religious Traditions.

Objectives

The current study enshrines following research objectives and is dedicated to fulfill them with help of a robust methodology with proper understanding of the concepts that emanate from spirituality.

1. To study the mean differences of Spiritual Transcendence on the basis of religion and gender.
2. To study the mean differences of Spiritual/Religious Practices on the basis of religion and gender.
3. To study the mean differences of Meaning in Life on the basis of religion and gender.

Hypotheses

H₀₁ There is no statistically significant difference between Muslim and Hindu pilgrims on their Spiritual Transcendence.

H₀₂ There is no statistically significant difference between Muslim and Hindu pilgrims on their Meaning in Life and its dimensions viz. Presence and Search.

H₀₃ There is no statistically significant difference between the Muslim male and Muslim female pilgrims on their Spiritual Transcendence.

H₀₄ There is no statistically significant difference between the Muslim male and Muslim female pilgrims on their Spiritual/Religious Practices and its dimensions viz. Individual Practices, Collective Practices, and Sacred Practices.

H₀₅ There is no statistically significant difference between the Muslim male and Muslim female pilgrims on their Meaning in Life and its dimensions viz. Presence and Search.

H₀₆ There is no statistically significant difference between the Hindu male and Hindu female pilgrims on their Spiritual Transcendence.

H₀₇ There is no statistically significant difference between the Hindu male and Hindu female pilgrims on their Spiritual/Religious Practices and its dimensions viz. Personal Transformation, Self-Purification, and Expanding Awareness.

H₀₈ There is no statistically significant difference between the Hindu male and Hindu female pilgrims on their Meaning in Life and its dimensions viz. Presence and Search.

Concepts and Definitions

Spirituality serves as the bridge between human experiences, human intellect and human physiology. Spiritual practices connect individuals on the basis of shared beliefs and this in turn leads to the formation of communities and social groups. They integrate different aspects of human existence into a universal construct of spirituality. It is said that people make conscious efforts to arrive at these experiences which provides them a recess from ordinary mundane lives. Spiritual as well as religious practices help individuals to integrate mind, body and spirit, sometimes spirit is also considered as soul.

Spiritual Transcendence

Piedmont has defined spiritual transcendence as the capacity of individuals to stand outside of their immediate sense of time and place to view life from a larger, more objective perspective (Piedmont, 1999). Spiritual transcendence is an experience that involves different forms of expression which include emotional, cognitive and behavioural manifestations (Seidlitz et al., 2002). Spiritual transcendence refers to the ability of individuals to view life from a larger, more objective perspective and find a deeper sense of meaning (Narimani, Babolan & Ariapooran, 2011).

Spiritual/Religious Practices

Spiritual Practices are the activities in which individuals engage themselves in order to enhance their awareness and spirituality so as to enrich and grow in their spiritual lives. Spiritual practices reflect different ideas of the self and construct a premise for accommodating the healthy and sick conceptions of the soul (James, 1902). Religious practices are individual or congregational activities which emanate from the principles of a given religion corresponding with various aspects of human culture, such as prayer, meditation, marriage, birth and funeral (Dollahite, 1998).

Meaning in Life

Meaning in Life has been defined as “the sense made of and significance felt regarding the nature of one's being and existence” (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006). Meaning in life is considered as a potential mediator of the link between religiosity and mental health. Meaning in life is assessed by the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006).

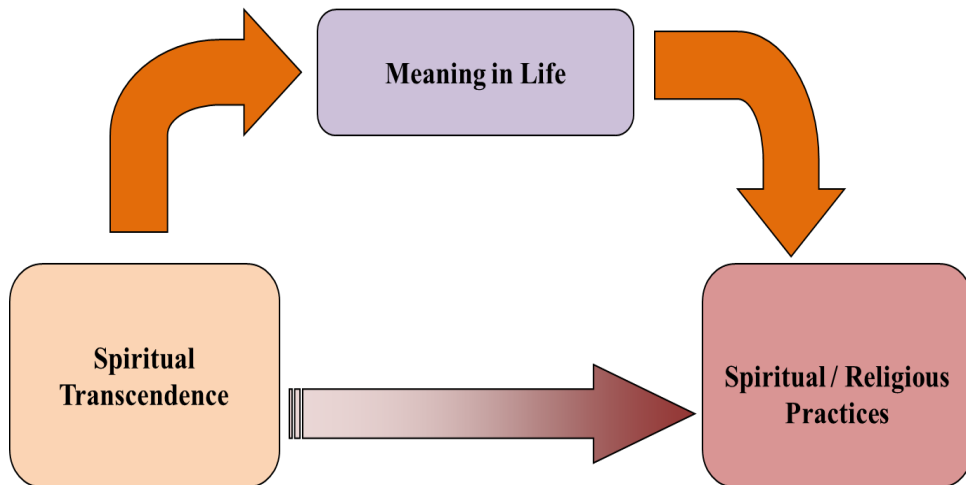


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

Pilgrims

Pilgrims are individuals who embark upon physical as well as metaphysical journeys in search of individual consolation. Finding peace, tranquil and solace could imbibe in the seekers, a sense of cheerfulness, delight, soothe, amusement, entertainment. Pilgrimage for the purpose of seeking solace has empirically shown to have positive effects on physical and emotional regulation and well-being of individuals who practice its indulgence (Vaillant, 2008).

Sufi Shrines

Sufism is considered as the mystical branch of Islamic faith and it derives basic belief and practices from Islam only. Sufism is ordinarily considered as a faith-based tradition that generally requires individual's attention to sacred scriptures, a doctrine that outlines the values and beliefs of the faith, and some spiritual models to emulate. Such traditions are set of beliefs and practices which are usually considered to be an integral part of an established and organized faith community following a particular religion. Conscious indulgence in religious traditions is considered as practice of the religion thus concerned (Fuller, 2001).

Sufi shrines are sacred spaces dedicated to a Sufi saint who lived a life dedicated to the doctrine of Sufism. A Sufi shrine generally houses the mausoleum of a Sufi saints and people related to him, such as his wife, children, and other descendants. In some cases, these shrines also have the tombs of prominent disciples of the saint concerned. Sufi shrines vary considerably in size and patronage, as in rural areas, the shrines is smaller and concise. A small shrine would consist of the tomb of a known Sufi figure, housed in a rudimentary brick and mortar structure, while a large shrine may consist of lodges, kitchen, mosque and other designated spaces besides the mausoleum, for the purpose of spiritual and religious practices related to Sufism in general and the saint in particular (Umashankar, 2012)

Methodology

The research methodology for the current study involves seven important aspects namely research design, sample, demographics, tools, procedure, ethical considerations and analysis of data. These aspects have made the case for the formulation and execution of study, besides everything else, the methodology elaborates the process of administration of tools upon the participants of the study. Generally, the formulation of hypotheses is followed by a measurement that includes scaling and surveying, ascertaining whether sampling is

probable or non-probable. It is thus followed by establishment of a research design which could be experimental or quasi-experimental, providing a certain dimension to the study.

Research Design

The main function of research design is to provide accurate information for the collection of relevant evidence with minimal expenditure of efforts and time. Therefore, it becomes inevitable to have a research design that is susceptible to the challenges which await the researcher during the course of research. The present research enshrines an open cohort design and has made use of independent samples for which t-test has been applied. In order to investigate and understand the behaviour of the sampled population further one-way ANOVA was applied so as to ascertain the sources of variation across the sample.

Sample

The sample for the study has been drawn through purposive judgmental sampling, randomized from a large population pool. The sample was drawn at the world-famous Chishti Sufi shrines Ajmer, the capital city of Rajasthan and New Delhi, the capital city of republic of India in the National Capital Territory of Delhi, respectively. The sample of the study recruited 500 participants who were frequent shrine visitors in order to find inner peace and seek solace from the chaos of life.

Participants

The Participants of the study were pilgrims who visited Sufi shrines frequently with an innate desire to find peace and to make wishes with the saints of Shrines, simultaneously exploring new horizons of their own personalities. It was predefined that the study would empanel 500 shrine visitors; more precisely pilgrims in this case. The sample was further bifurcated into two sub samples, Muslims and Hindus, based upon the religious traditions they adhered to. The sampled population was recruited from two different shrines, namely Khwaja Gharib Nawaz shrine in Ajmer, a city of the Indian state of Rajasthan and Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya shrine in New Delhi, the capital city of India. These two shrines are the most notable Sufi shrines in northern India. Since the population was located in two different geographical locations spread 500 miles apart, the data collection process was a task that had to be dealt very carefully to avoid data aberrations. Both of these Sufi shrines see huge influx of visitors throughout the year, who pay tributes and make wishes at the saints' mausoleums irrespective of their religion, creed and color. Though attendance of pilgrims on the occasion of annual *Urs* festivals surpasses all the expectations of governing bodies and thus there are rise in the prices of accommodation in and around the areas where the shrines are situated, both in New Delhi and Ajmer, yet there is no effect on the devotion of the visitors offering homage to the saints, which intrigues everyone.

Demographics

The demographic details included names, gender, religion, race, educational qualifications, civility, and family type. These details were recorded with a purpose, which was to extract valuable insights for the successful execution of the research study. The study also aimed at exploring the possibilities of any cause-effect relationships. The statistical analyses for the research study made use of categorical data which was collected from the shrines and tabulated in sub-groups on the basis of the demographic variables.

Measures

The instruments used for the study were standardized survey questionnaires which included Assessment of Spirituality and Religious Sentiments Questionnaire (ASPIRES), Spiritual Practices Scale (SPS) & Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ).

a. Assessment of Spirituality and Religious Sentiments Questionnaire (ASPIRES)

The Assessment of Spirituality and Religious Sentiments (ASPIRES) Scale short form is a 13-item scale devised by Piedmont (2010). It is a scale that consists of two sub-scales which provide a measure of Religious Sentiments (RS) and Spiritual Transcendence (ST). The assessment thus renders insights into the individual understanding of universality of human existence. The ASPIRES short form consists of two sub-scales, Religious Sentiments (RS) sub-scale consists of 4 items while the Spiritual Transcendence (ST) sub-scale has 9 items. It is a Likert-type scale in which the respondents are required to rate themselves on the basis of frequencies of their concerned spiritual/religious practices.

The ASPIRES short form comes in both variants, observer rating and self-rating, also there were significant correlations .81 to .96 have been reported between the long form and short form of ASPIRES. For the purpose of this study the short form was chosen in order to cut on the length of the survey in entirety. Spiritual Transcendence (ST) would provide valuable insights into the spiritual orientations of individuals. If a person ranked high on ST, he/she would be considered a person with strong Spiritual Transcendent Orientation.

ASPIRES	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Spiritual Transcendence	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9	.83

b. Spiritual & Religious Practices Scale (SPS)

The Spiritual & Religious Practices Scale (SPS) was developed by Hussain and Singh (2015). The SPS scale consists of 12 items which were framed to measure the influence of spirituality/religion in the lives of individuals. It provides the measures for two dimensions of religious identity of individuals, which are as under:

- (i) Spiritual Practices, and
- (ii) Religious Practices.

The SPS scale helps a researcher to explore the spiritual/religious orientation of individuals and assesses their daily activities which supposedly contribute to changes in their personality due to the influence of religion. The SPS is a Likert-type scale and the responses range from 1 (Always) to 2 (Never). It is a unique instrument that makes assessment of spiritual and religious practices of individuals in order to infer if the individual is spiritual or religious, further reflecting on the spiritual or religious orientation (Hussain & Singh, 2015).

(i) Spiritual Practices Scale-Muslims (SPS-M)

In order to find inner peace, people begin their spiritual journeys in a fashion of social learning but in the case of Islam, everything spiritual has to have a religious affirmation, as per the tenets of the Islamic faith. Hence Islamic spirituality is largely religious in nature and focuses on personal and congregational practices to experience spirituality. The SPS-M is a measure of spiritual practices of individuals subscribing to the Muslim traditions. It is a 12-item scale that consists of 10 items on a 5-point Likert scale and 2 items on a 3-point Likert scale. The dimensions and their corresponding questions are as under:

Individual Practices:

Personal spiritual practices such as reading religious literature or holy texts, performing pilgrimages, *ziyarat*s, saying extra prayers are done by individuals to develop a sense of spiritual belongingness. Questions 1, 10 and 12 of the SPS-M correspond to this dimension.

Collective Practices:

Practices which are performed in congregational settings such as going to mosque, visiting shrines and *dargahs*, attending religious assemblies and doing meditation are considered as collective practices that instill spirituality. Questions 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the SPS-M correspond to this dimension.

Sacred Practices:

Sacred practices are such practices which instill a sense of holiness among individuals. This may include watching religious transmissions on TV, listening to spiritual/religious programs on Radio, thanking God at the time of meals, praying personally apart from going to mosque and taking pleasure in nature. Questions 2, 3, 4 and 11 of the SPS-M correspond to this dimension.

For the purpose of determining the internal consistency reliability Cronbach's alpha is used. Reliability Coefficient: Cronbach's alpha = 0.72 Coefficient = 0.15, $p < 0.001$

(ii) Spiritual Practices Scale-Hindu (SPS-H)

The SPS has another variant for making the assessments about individuals subscribing to the Hindu traditions. It is the Spiritual Practices Scale for Hindus (SPS-H) and measures the spiritual practices of Hindu religious devotees on the basis of beliefs and practices as performed by them. Spiritual Practices Scale- Hindu (SPS-H) is a 15-item scale that consists of 11 items on a 5-point Likert scale and 4 items on a 3-point Likert scale. The dimensions and their corresponding questions are as under:

Positive Transformation:

People engage themselves in spiritual practices to follow a spiritual path in their lives; most of these practices instill a sense of sacredness among them. Making mental efforts to feel the existence of God in order to achieve an enduring sense of spirituality is believed to lead a person towards positive transformation. Questions 1, 2, 8, 9, 11 and 14 of the SPS-H correspond to this dimension.

Self-purification:

Spiritual practices such as attending religious processions and congregations, performing pilgrimages, attending several religious services and almsgiving are done by people for the sole purpose of acquiring a sense of self-purification. Questions 7, 10, 12 and 13 of the SPS-H correspond to this dimension.

Expanding Awareness:

Spiritual practices such as personal prayers apart from temples, thanksgiving to God at the time of meals or before starting or finishing any work, visiting temples, fasting, sacred chanting, listening to sacred music which quiets the mind are believed to be the driving force behind the spiritual growth of people. This growth could be referred as expanding awareness, it helps people to refine their perceptions and develop their conscience. Questions 3, 4, 5, 6, and 15 of the SPS-H correspond to this dimension.

For the purpose of establishing the internal consistency reliability of the scale, Cronbach's alpha is used (Reliability Coefficient: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.85).

c. Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) is a 10-item scale that measures the Presence of Meaning in Life, and the Search for Meaning in Life. The MLQ has been devised to help individuals understand and assess their perceptions about life. The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) was devised by Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler (2006). The scale contains 10 items divided against two dimensions and the items are rated on a seven-point scale with options ranging from *absolutely true* to *absolutely untrue*.

Meaning in Life Questionnaire	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Presence sub-scale	1, 4, 5, 6	.896
Search sub-scale	2, 3, 7, 8	.867
Overall Meaning in Life	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10	.670

Procedure

First of all, the researcher met the participants personally and explained them the purpose of the present study. Then after, the investigator established rapport with the participants and requested them to participate voluntarily and cooperate in the data collection process and assured them that their responses would be kept confidential and utilized for the research purposes only. The participants were asked to read the instructions carefully given on the top of each scale. They were also requested to answer all the statements given in the scales sincerely. After receiving their consent, all three scales namely ASPIRES, SPS Scale and MIL Questionnaire along with personal data sheet were administered to participating adults individually. However, it was very tough job to deal with each and every subject because of different temperament and attitude. Some subjects cooperated effectively but with some it was really a cumbersome experience.

Following the data collection procedure at the shrines, the hand scoring of the response forms was done accordingly as per the guidelines provided in the concerned manuals. The response forms were then used to create a dataset consisting of all the entries. The entries were made strictly item wise so that the dimensions of the variables could be duly assessed. For all the missing data the response forms were consulted wherever required. Since the population was divided into two broad groups viz. Muslims and Hindus, the response forms of individuals adhering to other faiths were not taken into account.

The dataset containing all the entries was then fed into the statistical software SPSS (statistical package for social sciences) in order to derive inferences from the data. The prescribed manuals were consulted at every point during the course of data processing wherever the need arose; subsequently the obtained raw scores were tabulated for final data analysis. The data was then analyzed with the help of SPSS in order to derive inferences from the observations recorded through the responses of the participants of the study. Statistical tests such as t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were administered in accordance with the hypotheses.

Results

The scores from data collected for the research study were tabulated and analyzed through SPSS and statistical tests such as t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were duly administered. The pilgrims were broadly divided into two groups, Muslims and Hindus, as they form two major religious traditions of India. The analyses were then conducted on the basis of genders of the sampled population and the results thus obtained have been displayed in the tables to follow.

Table 3.1: Comparison of Mean Scores of Muslim and Hindu pilgrims on Spiritual Transcendence

Variables	Religion	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p value
Spiritual Transcendence	Muslims	250	35.32	2.378	498	12.098	0.01**
	Hindus	250	31.91	3.760			

Notes: **Significant at 0.01 level, *Significant at 0.05 level

An observation of table 3.1 informs us that the Muslim pilgrims are superior to the Hindu pilgrims in terms of Spiritual Transcendence (ST). The value of t-test shows that the difference between the mean scores of Muslims and Hindus on the counts of ST is statistically significant. This finding is also confirmed by the p value, which indicates a highly significant difference.

The variable Spiritual/Religious Practices (SRP), in terms of its measurement, is different from other variables of this study. SRP in this study has been measured by Spiritual Practices Scale (SPS), which has different variants for Muslims and Hindus. In such a situation, both variants of this scale differ from each other on the psychometric parameters. Although, their theoretical basis is same, the variants differ in terms of dimensions for different religions. Therefore, the numerical counts obtained from both the variants of the scales cannot be compared against each other through statistical operations such as t-test. Therefore, a comparative observation of the descriptive summaries for both the groups has been presented in the following table.

Table 3.2: Comparative observation of statistical summaries of Muslim and Hindu pilgrims on Spiritual / Religious Practices and its Dimensions. The table shows the mean differences of Spiritual / Religious Practices as well as its dimensions i.e. Individual Practices, Collective Practices and Sacred Practices (for Muslims) & Personal Transformation, Expanding Awareness and Self-purification (for Hindus) among Muslims and Hindus respectively.

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICES/PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION			
Muslims (N=250)		Hindus (N=250)	
Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
10.76	.851	20.11	4.753
COLLECTIVE PRACTICES/ SELF-PURIFICATION			
16.05	2.247	11.95	.663
SACRED PRACTICES/ EXPANDING AWARENESS			
14.53	1.368	16.80	2.060

SPIRITUAL / RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

41.33	3.336	48.86	7.076
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An observation of table 3.2 shows that Hindu pilgrims are superior to their Muslim counterparts in terms of average Individual Practices (IP) as well as Personal Transformation (PT). For the second dimension, Collective Practices (CP), Muslims have a better mean score than their Hindu counterparts on Self-Purification (SP). Finally, for the third dimension that demonstrates Sacred Practices (SP) among Muslims and Expanding Awareness (EA) among Hindus, the Hindu pilgrims have shown a considerable advantage over their Muslim counterparts. Overall scores for Spiritual/Religious Practices show that Hindu pilgrims are quite ahead of their Muslim counterparts.

Table 3.3: Comparison of Mean Scores of Muslim and Hindu pilgrims on Meaning in Life and its Dimensions.

Variables	Religion	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	p
Presence	Muslims	250	26.58	1.73	498	17.27	0.01**
	Hindus	250	23.04	2.742			
Search	Muslims	250	29.48	1.791	498	4.98	0.01**
	Hindus	250	28.44	2.771			
Meaning in Life	Muslims	250	56.06	2.520	498	15.55	0.01**
	Hindus	250	51.48	3.909			

Notes: **Significant at 0.01 level, *Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3.3 shows that Muslim pilgrims are superior to their Hindu counterparts in terms of average Presence (PR). The value of t-test shows that the difference between mean scores of Muslims and Hindus on the counts of PR is significantly different. This is confirmed by the p value which further indicates that the difference is highly significant. Similarly, the Muslim pilgrims have emerged superior to the Hindu pilgrims in terms of Search (SR). The value of t-test shows that the difference between the mean scores of Muslims and Hindus on the counts of SR is significantly different. This is also confirmed by the p value, which indicates that the difference is highly significant. Regarding the Meaning in Life (MIL), the observations have suggested that, Muslim pilgrims have greater mean values on MIL than their Hindu counterparts. The value of t-test shows that the difference between the mean scores of Muslims and Hindus on the counts of MIL is significantly different. This is also confirmed by the p value, which indicates that the difference is highly significant.

The tables to follow would represent the group wise statistical observations as carried out for Muslims solace seekers.

Muslim Solace Seekers

Table 3.4: Comparison of Mean Scores of Muslim male and Muslim female pilgrims on Spiritual Transcendence

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	P
Spiritual Transcendence	Male	176	35.51	2.543	248	2.016	0.04*
	Female	74	34.85	1.863			

Notes: **Significant at 0.01 level, *Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3.4 displays the mean scores of Muslim male and female pilgrims on Spiritual Transcendence. Looking closely, an impression emerges that the Muslim females are superior to Muslim males on the counts of Spiritual Transcendence (ST); subsequently t-test has supported the findings. The p value also indicates that there is a significant difference between these two groups.

Table 3.5: Comparison of Mean Scores of Muslim male and Muslim female pilgrims on Spiritual / Religious Practices and its Dimensions.

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	p
Individual Practices	Male	176	10.96	.858	248	6.29	0.01**
	Female	74	10.27	.604			
Collective Practices	Male	176	16.88	2.153	248	10.88	0.01**
	Female	74	14.08	.736			
Sacred Practices	Male	176	15.02	1.108	248	10.43	0.01**
	Female	74	13.36	1.223			
Spiritual / Religious Practices	Male	176	42.85	2.507	248	15.61	0.01**
	Female	74	37.72	2.017			

Notes: **Significant at 0.01 level, *Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3.5 shows that Muslim males are superior to Muslim females on the counts of Individual Practices (IP), the t-value supports the observation made regarding IP. The p value shows that the mean difference is highly significant. Muslim males have excelled over their female counterparts on the counts of Collective Practices (CP), which is an intriguing finding in the context of Muslim females. The value of t-test has supported the observation and the p value confirms that the mean difference on the counts of CP is highly significant. In the case of Sacred Practices (SP), Muslim males have superseded their female counterparts as the average of SP for males is way ahead of females. The value t-test has supported the observation thus made regarding SP and the p value has confirmed that the mean difference is highly significant.

Table 3.6: Comparison of Mean Scores of Muslim male and Muslim female pilgrims on Meaning in Life and its Dimensions.

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	p
Presence	Male	176	26.49	1.864	248	1.209	0.22
	Female	74	26.78	1.347			
Search	Male	176	29.48	1.820	248	.017	0.98
	Female	74	29.47	1.730			
Meaning in Life	Male	176	55.97	2.524	248	.816	0.41
	Female	74	56.26	2.516			

Notes: **Significant at 0.01 level, *Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3.6 shows that Muslim females are superior to their male in terms of the average Presence (PR), the t-value is supportive of the observation regarding PR and suggests that the difference between the mean scores of Muslim females and males on the counts of PR is not significantly different. The p value confirms the observations thus made regarding PR and suggests that the difference is not significant. Although Muslim males have slightly higher mean scores than their female counterparts in the case of Search (SR) they must be considered statistically equal, the t-value has supported the observation. The p value also confirms the finding that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of Muslim males and females on the counts of SR. Moreover, in the case of Meaning in Life (MIL), Muslim females have excelled over their male counterparts, suggesting that there is significant difference between the mean scores on Muslim males and females on the counts of MIL. The t-value supports this observation about MIL but the p-value does not confirm if the mean difference is significant.

The following tables would represent the group wise statistical observations as carried out for Hindu solace seekers.

Hindu Solace Seekers

Table 3.7: Comparison of Mean Scores of Hindu male and Hindu female pilgrims on Spiritual Transcendence

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	P
Spiritual Transcendence	Male	137	31.01	3.195	248	4.299	0.01**
	Female	113	33.00	4.106			

Notes: **Significant at 0.01 level, *Significant at 0.05 level

An observation of table 3.7 tells us that Hindu female pilgrims have emerged superior to the Hindu male pilgrims in terms of Spiritual Transcendence (ST). The value of t-test shows that the difference between the mean scores of Hindu males and females on the counts of ST is significantly different. This is also confirmed by the p value, which indicates that the difference is highly significant.

Table 3.8: Comparison of Mean Scores of Hindu male and Hindu female pilgrims on Spiritual/Religious Practices and its Dimensions.

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	P
Personal Transformation	Male	137	22.45	4.116	248	10.217	0.01**
	Female	113	17.27	3.843			
Self-Purification	Male	137	12.20	.632	248	7.289	0.01**
	Female	113	11.65	.566			
Expanding Awareness	Male	137	17.82	1.601	248	10.293	0.01**
	Female	113	15.56	1.871			
Spiritual / Religious Practices	Male	137	52.47	5.859	248	10.760	0.01**
	Female	113	44.47	5.849			

Notes: **Significant at 0.01 level, *Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3.8 indicates that Hindu males are superior to their female counterparts in terms of Personal Transformation (PT). The value of t-test shows that the difference between mean scores of males and females on the counts of PT is significantly different. This is confirmed by the p value which further indicates that the difference is highly significant. Similarly, Hindu male pilgrims have emerged superior to their female counterparts on the counts of second dimension, Self-Purification (SP). The value of t-test shows that the difference between the mean scores of Hindu males and females on the counts of SP is significantly different. This is also confirmed by the p value, which indicates that the difference is highly significant. In the case of Expanding Awareness (EA), the observations have suggested that, Hindu male pilgrims have greater mean values on EA than their female counterparts. The value of t-test shows that the difference between the mean scores of Hindu males and females on the counts of EA is significantly different. This is also confirmed by the p value, which indicates that the difference is highly significant. Simultaneously, the mean scores for Spiritual/Religious Practices (SRP) show that Hindu males have considerable advantage over their female counterparts on the counts of SRP. As the observation is supported by the value of t-test, it could be inferred that the difference between the means is significant. This observation is confirmed by the value of p, which further consolidates it.

Table 3.9: Comparison of Mean Scores of Hindu male and Hindu female pilgrims on Meaning in Life and its Dimensions.

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	p
Presence	Male	137	24.04	2.508	248	6.919	0.01**
	Female	113	21.83	2.525			
Search	Male	137	29.84	2.602	248	10.613	0.01**
	Female	113	26.73	1.876			
Meaning in Life	Male	137	53.88	3.274	248	14.539	0.01**
	Female	113	48.57	2.306			

Notes: **Significant at 0.01 level, *Significant at 0.05 level

An observation of table 3.9 indicates that Hindu males are superior to their female counterparts in terms of average Presence (PR). The value of t-test shows that the difference between mean scores of male and female pilgrims on the counts of PR is significantly different. This is confirmed by the p value which further indicates that the difference is highly significant. Another observation is that the Hindu male pilgrims are superior to the female counterparts in terms of Search (SR). The value of t-test shows that the difference between the mean scores of Hindu males and females on the counts of SR is significantly different. This is also confirmed by the p value, which indicates that the difference is highly significant. Regarding the Meaning in Life (MIL), the observations have suggested that, Hindu males have greater superseded their female counterparts with considerable mean

difference. The value of t-test shows that the difference between the mean scores of Hindu males and females on the counts of MIL is significantly different. This is also confirmed by the p value, which indicates that the difference is highly significant.

Hypotheses Testing:

Hypothesis 1: (Null Hypothesis)

"H₀₁: There is no statistically significant difference between Muslim and Hindu pilgrims on their Spiritual Transcendence."

Results from table 3.1 have shown that Muslim pilgrims have scored more than the Hindu pilgrims in terms of Spiritual Transcendence (ST). The value of t-test has shown that the difference between the mean scores of Muslims and Hindus on the counts of ST is statistically significant. The finding is also confirmed by the p value, which indicates a significant difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected in this case.

As there was no group comparison between Muslim and Hindu pilgrims on the counts of Spiritual/Religious Practices and its dimensions due to the variations in the items of the scale, which was due to the contrasts in Spiritual/Religious Practices for both Muslims and Hindus. Thus, the observations were limited to the display of mean scores obtained by both groups adhering to different religious traditions. An observation of table 3.2 shows that Hindu pilgrims are superior to their Muslim counterparts in terms of average Individual Practices (IP) as well as Personal Transformation (PT). For the second dimension, Collective Practices (CP), Muslims have a better mean score than their Hindu counterparts on Self-Purification (SP). Finally, for the third dimension that demonstrates Sacred Practices (SP) among Muslims and Expanding Awareness (EA) among Hindus, the Hindu pilgrims have shown a considerable advantage over their Muslim counterparts. Overall scores for Spiritual/Religious Practices show that Hindu pilgrims are quite ahead of their Muslim counterparts.

Hypothesis 2: (Null Hypothesis)

"H₀₂: There is no statistically significant difference between Muslim and Hindu pilgrims on their Meaning in Life and its dimensions viz. Presence and Search."

Results from table 3.3 have shown that the corresponding table have shown that Muslim pilgrims have scored more than their Hindu counterparts in terms of average Presence (PR) and Search (SR), therefore for Meaning in Life (MIL), the observations have suggested that, Muslim pilgrims have greater mean values on MIL than their Hindu counterparts. The value of t-test shows that between the mean scores of Muslims and Hindus on the counts of MIL, there is a significant difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis stands rejected in this case.

Hypothesis 3: (Null Hypothesis)

"H₀₃: There is no statistically significant difference between the Muslim male and Muslim female pilgrims on their Spiritual Transcendence."

Results from table 3.4 have shown that the mean scores of Muslim male and Muslim female pilgrims on Spiritual Transcendence are having a significant difference. Muslim females have scored more than Muslim males on the counts of Spiritual Transcendence (ST); subsequently t-test has supported the findings. The p value also indicates that there is a significant difference between these two groups, hence the null hypothesis is rejected in this case.

Hypothesis 4: (Null Hypothesis)

"H₀4: There is no statistically significant difference between the Muslim male and Muslim female pilgrims on their Spiritual/Religious Practices and its dimensions viz. Individual Practices, Collective Practices, and Sacred Practices."

Results from table 3.5 have shown that Muslim males have better scores than Muslim females on the counts of Individual Practices (IP), also they have excelled over their female counterparts on the counts of Collective Practices (CP). In the case of Sacred Practices (SP), Muslim males have superseded their female counterparts as the average of SP for males is way ahead of females. The mean difference is highly significant and the null hypothesis gets rejected in this case.

Hypothesis 5: (Null Hypothesis)

"H₀5: There is no statistically significant difference between the Muslim male and Muslim female pilgrims on their Meaning in Life and its dimensions viz. Presence and Search."

Results from table 3.6 have shown that Muslim females have scored better than males in terms of the average Presence (PR). Although Muslim males have slightly higher mean scores than their female counterparts in the case of Search (SR) they must be considered statistically equal. In the case of Meaning in Life (MIL), Muslim females have scored more than their male counterparts, suggesting that there is significant difference, inferring that the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 6: (Null Hypothesis)

"H₀6: There is no statistically significant difference between the Hindu male and Hindu female pilgrims on their Spiritual Transcendence."

Results from table 3.7 have shown that Hindu female pilgrims have better scores than the Hindu male pilgrims in terms of Spiritual Transcendence (ST). Since there exists a significant difference between the two groups, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 7: (Null Hypothesis)

"H₀7: There is no statistically significant difference between the Hindu male and Hindu female pilgrims on their Spiritual/Religious Practices and its dimensions viz. Personal Transformation, Self-Purification, and Expanding Awareness."

Results from table 3.8 have indicated that Hindu males have better scores than the female counterparts in terms of Personal Transformation (PT). Hindu male pilgrims have more scores than their female counterparts on the counts of second dimension, Self-Purification (SP). While in the case of Expanding Awareness (EA), Hindu male pilgrims have greater mean values on EA than their female counterparts. Simultaneously, the mean scores for Spiritual/Religious Practices (SRP) show that Hindu males have considerable advantage over their female counterparts on the counts of SRP. Since the difference between the means is significant, the null hypothesis stands rejected.

Hypothesis 8: (Null Hypothesis)

"H₀8: There is no statistically significant difference between the Hindu male and Hindu female pilgrims on their Meaning in Life and its dimensions viz. Presence and Search."

Results from table 3.9 have indicated that Hindu males have greater scores than their female counterparts in terms of average Presence (PR). Also, the Hindu male pilgrims have better scores than the female counterparts in terms of Search (SR). Regarding the Meaning in Life (MIL), Hindu males have scored more than their female counterparts with considerable mean difference. The value of t-test shows that the difference between the mean scores of Hindu males and females on the counts of MIL is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis in this case is rejected.

Discussion

Human life is not necessarily a universal experience; all humans have lifestyles and life events which would never be exactly same for any two persons. Things could be congruent or concurrent but never exactly the same, therefore it becomes quite evident that no two persons would feel the same way about an experience. Spirituality is one such subjective experience about which every person is bound to have a discerning way of comprehension. There are people who link their spiritual experiences to their religious beliefs and then there are people who find their spiritual beliefs way firmer than any of the belief systems.

This paper examines the spirituality and religiosity among individuals who visited Sufi shrines and reflects the gender differences existing therein. The study embarks upon the relationship between shrine visitations and transcending spirituality of participants. Furthermore, it focused on the role of demographic variables in hindering or facilitating the corresponding spiritual growth and development among the participants, as the cases were 500 duly completed survey forms were included for the main study. Followed by a thorough inspection of the nature of data, the suitable statistical technique was chosen. Since there was a variable which was to be measured by two variants of the same scale designated for Muslims and Hindus separately, there was no possibility of further analysis of variance across groups, hence t-test was administered and subsequently one-way ANOVA was used wherever the assumptions were fulfilled by the data. On basis of the analyses done in the context of data of this study, results were obtained and thus tabulated initially group wise and then on the basis of demographic variables. The tables have shown both significant and non-significant relationships, which makes the way for deducing the conclusion in the context of the behaviour of variables of the current study.

Generally, it is seen that pilgrims belonging to Muslim religious tradition are more frequent visitors at Sufi shrines but that is not the case always. Considering the differences in various belief systems, the spiritual/religious practices of both groups differed. For instance, the birth and death rituals, prayer methods, matrimonial practices, almsgiving and educational initiation among Muslims and Hindus have a vast difference except few commonalities. Muslim pilgrims have scored more (35.32) on Spiritual Transcendence ($p < 0.01$) than Hindu pilgrims (31.91); on Spiritual/Religious Practices Hindu pilgrims have superseded their Muslim counterparts but no statistical operation was conducted in that case due to psychometric reasons; and on Meaning in Life ($p < 0.01$), Muslim pilgrims (56.06) have scored way more than their Hindu counterparts (51.48).

Muslim Pilgrims

Subsequently, the comparisons on the basis of demographics revealed interesting findings as the Muslim males (35.51) outshone Muslim females (34.85) on Spiritual Transcendence ($p < 0.05$). For Spiritual/Religious Practices ($p < 0.01$), Muslim males (42.85) have scored more than their female (37.72) counterparts. On Meaning in Life, Muslim females (56.26) have an advantage of scores over their male (55.97) counterparts, but the difference therein is not significant.

Hindu Pilgrims

The comparisons on the basis of demographics for the group adhering to Hindu religious tradition provided equally intriguing findings. As the Hindu males (31.03) scored less than the Hindu females (33.00) on Spiritual Transcendence ($p < 0.05$) and the mean difference was significant. For Spiritual/Religious Practices ($p < 0.01$), Hindu males (52.47) have scored more than their female (44.72) counterparts and the mean difference was significant. For Meaning in Life ($p < 0.01$), Hindu females (53.88) have an advantage of scores over their male (48.57) counterparts, and the mean difference therein is significant.

Conclusion

The prime concern of this study has largely been determining the role of spiritual/religious practices in attaining spiritual transcendence and meaning in life among the male and female pilgrims who visit Sufi shrines. Recent advances in psychological research have already pin-pointed that there is a probable correlation between complex cognitive processes and intriguing neural activities of the human brain pertaining to specific behavior. This research has thus emphasized upon developing better understanding of why, at all, people behave spiritually?

The study yearned to provide psychological explanation of the spiritual behavior and its impact on human life, exploring the contrasts and commonalities of being spiritual but not religious. It was also an attempt to quantify spiritual transcendence and meaning in life and what role do religious/spiritual practices play in making an individual experience both, any one or none.

The results have yielded interesting findings, on basis of which following conclusions have been drawn and they are as under:

- There is a statistically significant difference between Muslim and Hindu pilgrims on their Spiritual Transcendence.
- There is a statistically significant difference between Muslim and Hindu pilgrims on their Meaning in Life and its dimensions viz. Presence and Search.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the Muslim male and Muslim female pilgrims on their Spiritual Transcendence.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the Muslim male and Muslim female pilgrims on their Spiritual/Religious Practices and its dimensions viz. Individual Practices, Collective Practices, and Sacred Practices.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the Muslim male and Muslim female pilgrims on their Meaning in Life and its dimensions viz. Presence and Search.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the Hindu male and Hindu female pilgrims on their Spiritual Transcendence.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the Hindu male and Hindu female pilgrims on their Spiritual/Religious Practices and its dimensions viz. Personal Transformation, Self-Purification, and Expanding Awareness.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the Hindu male and Hindu female pilgrims on their Meaning in Life and its dimensions viz. Presence and Search.

Epilogue

Although there have been contrasts between observations from Muslim respondents and Hindu respondents, the results show more commonalities. This means that the willingness to search for meaning in life is common among the respondents notwithstanding necessarily the religion professed by them. When disciplines of Psychology and Spirituality meet the domain of theology, all three of them unite to create an amalgamation of academia. Therefore, it is a cumbersome task to define things individually, especially when the concern happens to be intersection of these disciplines. Researches in past have suggested that religion has no role to play in making a person experience spirituality but then the emphasis upon religious practices in this study has yielded in observations which were spiritual in nature. It might be the case because of the fact that Sufism is a mystical approach of Islamic faith and most of its followers are practicing Muslims, but then there are evidences of people experiencing spirituality without even subscribing to any religious faith. For instance, if a person belonging from Christianity

wishes to experience the goodness of Zen meditation, he/she is not necessarily required to conform to the faith of Buddhism. Similarly, a person who is practicing Hinduism doesn't need to embrace Islamic faith in order to experience spirituality, because spirituality is independent of religious demarcations.

This research aimed to fulfill the need to determine the role of spiritual and religious practices in search for meaning of life and investigates whether individuals subscribing to spiritual practices experience spiritual transcendence in the due process, also what effect such practices have on their spiritual transcendence. This has been an endeavor to reason how such things affect or change the lives of individuals visiting holy shrines of Sufi saints. There has been a steady growth in the number of people visiting these shrines or similar holy places, irrespective of their religious affiliations. This research has investigated the motivations of shrine visitations so as to understand, reason and compare spiritual yearnings which seemingly bring people to the courtyards of the sacredness. This research has been a dialogue between psychology and religion and as a result, spirituality was deduced.

During the decade of 1960, when the Clark School of Psychology and Religion had collapsed, psychology and religion did not find refuge in the cloak of psychoanalysis, therefore both disciplines stayed away from the arena of psychoanalysis. This was the time when psychology was undergoing a transitive phase when on one hand the rise of humanistic psychology was imminent and on the other hand the applied social psychology and personality psychology was being developed in a fashion to make psychology of religion understood in a better way (Gorusch, 1988).

Spiritual practices studied in this research study have been focused approaches to the sacred and divine, chosen consciously; the motivations to behave spiritually intentionally provide practical purpose to faith thus professed. It is through spiritual practices that the greater immaterialist goals are achieved, by walking a certain path believed to be leading to annihilation of the being into the supreme. Such practices empower individuals with personal strengths to contemplate, with help of these practices; a person s tends to be in harmony with the universe. Helping a person understand the greater meaning and purpose of life and the need to identify and acknowledge universality, spiritual practices render the insights to the dynamism of divine grace, resulting in greater spiritual maturity. These practices tend to change the personal views for good, looking for the positive inhibitions in the times of adversity, restructuring the human dispositions and outlooks about the physical world, making people more open, flexible and responsive towards the life events.

Individuals interested in searching for answers about the finite quintessentially learns to deal with emotional stress, physical ailments and all other extremities of life inclusive of death, the ultimate end of human existence. As Pilgrimage is a spiritual as well as religious practice which instills sacredness and orients the cosmos around a significantly holy shrine, the shrines at which the study was conducted top the list of Sufi shrines having highest number of visitors in the Indian sub-continent. Upon asking why the visitors were at the shrines, the most common answer in support of their motivation was the belief which made individuals experience unique positivity which they believed set the stage for the integration of self around the spiritual symbols concerned with a given tradition.

The visitors who frequent these holy shrines shall be the participants of the study. The research would be a dedicated endeavor as a scientific inquiry in spirituality, exploring what exactly draws people to these the centers of spiritual convergence. A great emphasis has been put upon investigation and development of the psychological understanding of spirituality through the assessment of frequency and magnitude of spiritual & religious practices and the meaning thus obtained in lives of the individuals who visit the holy places. This research study thus examined the scope of spirituality and explained how spiritual practices facilitate the

process of finding meaning in life. The findings of this research would contribute for further researches on spiritual behavior.

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