

Research Article

Comparative assessment of the attitude of christians, muslims and hindus of kerala state, India towards their religion

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Abstract

This article reports the results of a study undertaken to assess the attitude of Christians, Muslims and Hindus of Kerala State in India towards their religion. The study was carried out among a randomly selected sample of 80 Christians, 80 Muslims and 80 Hindus from Kerala using a questionnaire containing the measure of attitude towards religion, and the characteristics of the respondents, namely, sex, age, marital status, and how far their parents were religious. The data was analyzed as proportion of respondents, attitude item scores, total attitude scores and through statistical tests. The results indicate that both Christians and Muslims have comparatively higher attitude towards their religion than Hindus, as evident from the comparatively less proportion of Hindus agreeing with the positive attitude items and disagreeing with the negative items as compared to Christians and Muslims, and the higher and statistically significant scores of attitude items and total attitude score of Christians and Muslims than Hindus. The mandatory religious guidelines/requirements provided to the believers through the churches in the case of Christians and Muslims could be the reason for this, unlike the Hindu religion, where such mandatory strictures do not exist. The religious orientation obtained by Hindus could be mainly from their families, which is also substantiated from the results of the study that the total score for attitude towards their religion is the highest among Hindus whose parents were very much religious, followed by those whose parents were much religious, and the lowest score is obtained by Hindus whose parents were only somewhat religious, with statistically significant difference in the scores. Lack of sufficient orientation on various aspects of the religion could have probably resulted in a comparatively less attitude towards their religion in the case of Hindus in this study. This should be considered as a

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drawback with regard to any religion, since better religious attitude is what ultimately translates into useful and fruitful activities by the believers of the concerned religion at an individual level as well as from the social perspective. In this context, the article indicates the requirement to make more Hindus conscious about various concepts, philosophies, rituals, practices etc. in their religion through suitable measures by Acharyas, religious experts, religious institutions etc. This may be very much required to make sure that the future generations do not deviate from the sustenance and promotion of the Hindu religion, which has many followers at present in a country like India.

Introduction

Religion is traditionally considered a moral foundation, which guides the principles of right and wrong with divine authority. Analysis of the psychology of religion will help to understand the way of life among people having various religious beliefs. It also helps to clarify tradition-specific forms of commitment based on religiousness. Attitude towards religion denotes the feelings and beliefs about religion of people, which can have an impact on their personality also to some extent. Further, specific basic personality traits and corresponding values, social attitudes and cognitive styles also influence the attitude towards religion.

An individual who is extrinsically motivated uses his religion, whereas the intrinsically motivated lives his (Allport and Ross, 1967) [1]. Extrinsic religious orientation was found to significant influence subjective well-being through meaning in life (Sukkyung and Sun Ah Lim, 2018) [2]. Intrinsic religious orientation is likely to be related to a cosmic sense of purpose in life, which facilitates subjective well-being (Ardelt and Koenig, 2007) [3]. For people to have religious orientation, the most important aspect is to have a good attitude towards their religion.

Methodology

The study was undertaken among a randomly selected sample of 80 Christians, 80 Muslims and 80 Hindus from Kerala State of India using a questionnaire containing the measure of attitude towards religion (Astley et al, 2012) [4] and the characteristics of the respondents, namely, sex, age, marital status, and how far their parents were religious. The data was analyzed as proportion of respondents, attitude item scores, total attitude scores and through statistical tests.

Results

Table 1 shows the responses of people from the three religions on religious attitude items considered under the study.

Religious attitude item	Religious group	Respondents (%)				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Finds it difficult to believe in God	Christians	-	-	-	25	75
	Muslims	-	-	-	-	100
	Hindus	-	-	25	50	25
Prayer helps a lot	Christians	75	25	-	-	-
	Muslims	100	-	-	-	100
	Hindus	-	50	50	-	-
Going to a place of worship is a waste of time	Christians	-	-	-	-	100
	Muslims	-	-	-	-	100
	Hindus	-	-	50	25	25
Feels that God is very close	Christians	50	50	-	-	-
	Muslims	75	25	-	-	-
	Hindus	-	50	50	-	-
God helps to lead a better life	Christians	75	25	-	-	-
	Muslims	75	25	-	-	-
	Hindus	-	50	50	-	-
Knows that God helps	Christians	75	25	-	-	-
	Muslims	100	-	-	-	-
	Hindus	-	25	75	-	-
God means a lot	Christians	50	50	-	-	-
	Muslims	75	25	-	-	-
	Hindus	-	75	25	-	-

Table 1: Responses on religious attitude items.

Table 2 gives details of the statistical significance of the difference in scores for religious attitude items between respondents from the three religions.

Religious attitude item	Mean score of the item			
	Christians	Hindus	Muslims	Hindus
Finds it difficult to believe in God	4.7	4.0	5.0	4.0
	t stat NS		t = 2.45; p <0.10	
Prayer helps a lot	4.8	3.5	5.0	3.5
	t = 3.27; p <0.01		t = 5.20; p <0.01	
Going to a place of	5.0	3.8	5.0	3.8
	t =2.61; p <0.10		t =2.61; p <0.10	

worship is a waste of time				
Feels that God is very close	4.5	3.5	4.8	3.5
	$t = 2.45; p < 0.05$		$t = 3.27; p < 0.01$	
God helps to lead a better life	4.8	3.5	4.8	3.5
	$t = 3.27; p < 0.01$		$t = 3.27; p < 0.01$	
Knows that God helps	4.8	3.2	5.0	3.2
	$t = 4.24; p < 0.01$		$t = 7.00; p < 0.01$	
God means a lot	4.5	3.8	4.8	3.8
	$t = 1.96; p < 0.10$		$t = 2.82; p < 0.05$	

Table 2: Statistical significance of the difference in scores for religious attitude items between respondents from the three religions.

Table 3 shows details of the ANOVA of scores for religious attitude items between respondents from the three religions.

Religious attitude item	Mean score for the item		
	Christians	Muslims	Hindus
Finds it difficult to believe in God	4.7	5.0	4.0
	$F = 3.54; p < 0.10$		
Prayer helps a lot	4.8	5.0	3.5
	$F = 13.28; p < 0.01$		
Going to a place of worship is a waste of time	5.0	5.0	3.8
	$F = 13.28; p < 0.01$		
Feels that God is very close	4.5	4.8	3.5
	$F = 5.72; p < 0.05$		
God helps to lead a better life	4.8	4.8	3.5
	$F = 7.50; p < 0.01$		
Knows that God helps	4.8	5.0	3.2
	$F = 21.05; p < 0.01$		
God means a lot	4.5	4.8	3.8
	$F = 4.2; p < 0.05$		

Table 3: ANOVA of scores for religious attitude items between respondents from the three religions

Table 4 shows the results of ANOVA of total score for religious attitude of respondents from the three religions.

Particulars	Christians	Muslims	Hindus
Mean total score for religious attitude	33.0	34.3	25.3
$F = 20.62; p < 0.01$			
Maximum possible total score = 35			

Table 4: ANOVA of total score for religious attitude of respondents from the three religions

Table 5 gives details of the statistical significance of the difference in total score for religious attitude of Christians based on age

Particulars	Age group (years)	
Mean total score for religious attitude of Christians	28	52-61
	29.0	34.3
$t = -8.0; p < 0.01$		

Table 5: Statistical significance of the difference in total score for religious attitude of Christians based on age

Table 6 shows the statistical significance of the difference in total score for religious attitude of Christians based on marital status

Particulars	Marital status	
Mean total score for religious attitude of Christians	Unmarried	Married
	29.0	34.3
$t = -8.0; p < 0.01$		

Table 6: Statistical significance of the difference in total score for religious attitude of Christians based on marital status

Table 7 shows the results of ANOVA of total score for religious attitude of Hindus based on how far their parents were religious

How far parents were religious	Mean total score for religious attitude of Hindus
Very much	28.0
Much	24.5
Somewhat	24.0
$F = 6.33; p < 0.10$	

Table 7: ANOVA of total score for religious attitude of Hindus based on how far their parents were religious

Discussion

Responses on religious attitude items

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that the proportion of Hindu respondents agreeing with the positive religious attitude items as well as disagreeing with the negative items is comparatively less than the proportion of Christians and Muslims. This implies that the attitude of Christians and Muslims is more than that of Hindus towards their religion. Based on a study carried out among a sample of Hindus in Kerala State of India, Madhava Chandran et al (2024) [5] have reported that 77.5 % of them have a medium level of attitude only towards their religion.

Statistical significance of the difference in scores for religious attitude items and total attitude score between respondents from the three religions

It can be made out from the data on statistical significance of the difference in scores for religious attitude items between respondents from the three religions (Table 2) that Hindus have a comparatively lower score for all the items of attitude than both Christians and Muslims and that significant difference is there between the scores of Hindus and Christians as well as between Hindus and Muslims for the items. This supports the finding that Hindus have comparatively less attitude towards their religion than the attitude of Christians and Muslims towards their religion. The results of ANOVA of the item scores (Table 3) as well as ANOVA of total attitude scores of respondents from the three religions (Table 4) also help to establish this finding.

From the statistical significance of the difference in the total score for religious attitude of Christians based on age shown in Table 5, it can be inferred that comparatively younger Christians aged 28 years have a lower mean attitude score than those who are in the higher age group of 52 to 61 years, indicating that elderly Christians have comparatively higher attitude towards their religion than youngsters. The level of religiosity built up over many years of their life through attending ceremonies in their church would have contributed to this.

Statistical significance of the difference in total score for religious attitude of Christians based on their marital status (Table 6), it is evident that unmarried Christians have comparatively less attitude towards their religion than married people. This may be probably because of the influence of the family members of married people in promoting better religious orientation, which would have been reinforced from the church in the case of this religion.

The results of ANOVA of total score for religious attitude of Hindus based on how far their parents were religious has revealed that respondents whose parents were very much religious get the maximum total attitude score of 28, followed by those whose parents were much religious (24.5) and then, by the respondents whose parents were somewhat religious (score of 24), with statistically significant difference in the scores (Table 7). This substantiates the fact that the level of religiosity of parents influences the attitude of Hindus under this study towards their religion. This appears to be logical, since there are no mandatory religious guidelines or

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strictures in the Hindu religion, unlike in Christianity or Islam. Hence, wherever religiosity the Hindus attain may be expected to be mainly from their parents and grandparents.

The results of ANOVA of total score for religious attitude of Christians as well as Muslims based on how far their parents were religious were not found to be statistically significant. This indicates that more than the level of religiosity of their parents, mandatory guidelines and instructions usually passed on to them by the clergies through their places of worship influence their religious attitude.

Statistical significance of the difference in the total score for religious attitude of Christians based on sex was not observed. Statistical significance of the difference in the item scores as well as the total score for religious attitude between Christians and Muslims was not evident. Similarly, statistical significance of the difference in the total score for religious attitude with respect to Christians as well as Hindus based on sex, age, and marital status was also not observed in the study.

Conclusion

The study has shown that both Christians and Muslims have comparatively higher attitude towards their religions than Hindus, as evident from the comparatively less proportion of Hindus agreeing with the positive attitude items and disagreeing with the negative items as compared to Christians and Muslims, and the higher and statistically significant scores of attitude items and total attitude score of Christians and Muslims than Hindus. The mandatory guidelines/ requirements provided to the believers through the churches in the case of Christians and Muslims could be the reason for this. However, such mandatory religious strictures do not exist in the Hindu religion. The religious orientation obtained by Hindus could be mainly from their families, without much role for religious institutions such as temples or religious entities such as Poojaris, Thanthris of temples, Hindu Acharyas etc. in orienting them on various aspects of the religion. This is also substantiated from the results of the study, which shows that the total score for attitude towards their religion is the highest among Hindus whose parents were very much religious, followed by those whose parents were much religious, and the lowest score is obtained by Hindus whose parents were only somewhat religious, with statistically significant difference in the scores.

Lack of sufficient orientation on various aspects of the religion could have probably resulted in a comparatively less attitude towards their religion in the case of Hindus in this study. In fact, this should be considered as a drawback with regard to any religion, since better religious attitude is what ultimately translates into useful and fruitful activities by the believers of the concerned religion at an individual level as well as from the perspective of the society as a whole.

In this context, the findings of this study indicate the requirement to make more Hindus conscious about various concepts, philosophies, rituals, practices etc. in their religion through suitable measures by Acharyas, religious experts, religious institutions etc. This may be very

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much required to make sure that the future generations do not deviate from the sustenance and promotion of the Hindu religion, which has many followers at present in a country like India.

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