ABSTRACT

Spirituality is deeply rooted in the culture of India. Religious/spiritual practices enhance spirituality. Spiritual practices based on spiritual beliefs may be appropriate for helping and alleviating human suffering. For attaining mental peace, Indians practices including attending *satsang*, spiritual discussions, *Bhajans*, and visiting holy shrines may be most effective. Since Indian culture is one of the unique Asian cultures, so, spiritual/religious beliefs and spiritual/religious practices are not the same. The present study was undertaken in order to assess the role of spiritual/religious beliefs and practices in developing the spiritual experiences among two religious communities (Hindu and Muslim) of India. Moreover, the present study will explore the role of age, gender and education in moderating the relationship of spiritual/religious beliefs, spiritual/religious practices with spiritual experiences among religious devotees.

Research Objectives

The present study has set the following objectives.

1. To examine the relationship of spiritual beliefs with over all spiritual practices and its dimensions (positive transformation, self-purification & expanding awareness) among Hindu religious devotees.
2. To examine the relationship of spiritual beliefs with spiritual experiences among Hindu religious devotees.
3. To examine the relationship of overall spiritual practices and its dimensions (positive transformation, self-purification & expanding awareness) with spiritual experiences among Hindu religious devotees.
4. To examine the relationship of spiritual beliefs with over all spiritual practices and its dimensions (individual practices, collective practices & sacred practices) among Muslim religious devotees.
5. To examine the relationship of spiritual beliefs with spiritual experiences among Muslim religious devotees.
6. To examine the relationship of overall spiritual practices and its dimensions (individual practices, collective practices & sacred practices) with spiritual experiences among Muslim religious devotees.
7. To identify the factors which significantly predict spiritual experiences among Hindu and Muslim religious devotees.

8. To identify the factors which significantly predict spiritual experiences among Hindu male and female as well as Muslim male and female religious devotees.

9. To examine the moderating effect of age, gender, and education in the relationship of spiritual beliefs with spiritual experiences among Hindus.

10. To examine the moderating effect of age, gender, and education in the relationship of spiritual practices with spiritual experiences among Hindus.

11. To examine the moderating effect of age, gender, and education in the relationship of spiritual beliefs with spiritual experiences among Muslims.

12. To examine the moderating effect of age, gender, and education in the relationship of spiritual practices with spiritual experiences among Muslims.

The sample of the present study consisted of 400 (200 Hindu and 200 Muslim) adult religious devotees. In the sample, among 200 Hindus 50% males (100) and 50% females (100) and; among 200 Muslims 50% males (100) and 50% females (100). Reason for selecting adult religious devotees as a sample was that at this stage they become matured in terms of religiosity/spiritualilty. Sample’s age ranged between 21-60 years. Purposive random sampling technique was used to select the research sample. Adult religious devotees were selected from different temples, mosques as well as Hindu and Muslim residential areas situated in Aligarh district of U. P.

Three psychological tools were used in the present research for collecting the data namely; Spiritual Belief Scale by Schaler (1996), Spiritual Practices Scale for Hindus by Singh and Husain (2015), Spiritual Practices Scale for Muslims by Husain, Singh and Khan (2016) and Hindi version of the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale by Underwood (2011) were used.

The results were obtained for Hindu and Muslim religious devotees separately. Reason for calculating the results separately for sub-samples is that because both the communities are different in terms of their spiritual beliefs and practices; that’s why the results were not obtained for the whole sample. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was applied in order to examine the relationship of spiritual beliefs and spiritual practices with spiritual experiences among Hindu and Muslim then, gender-wise for both the community religious devotees separately. The results suggest that spiritual beliefs and spiritual practices were
found to be significantly and positively associated with spiritual experiences among Hindu as well as Muslim religious devotees. The also highlighted that the relationship of spiritual beliefs and spiritual practices with spiritual experiences were stronger among Hindu and Muslim females as compare to males of both the communities.

Step-wise multiple regression analysis was also applied in order to see the percent of variance accounted by the predictor variables (spiritual beliefs and spiritual practices) in the criterion variable (spiritual experiences) among Hindus and Muslims as well as gender-wise separately. The results showed that spiritual beliefs and spiritual practices emerged as significant predictors of spiritual experiences among total Hindus and Muslims, when we look at gender-wise spiritual beliefs and practices emerged as significant predictors of spiritual experiences among Hindu and Muslim females as well as Muslim males but, in case of Hindu males only spiritual practices emerged as significant predictor of spiritual experiences not spiritual beliefs.

At the third stage Sub group analysis was also carried out in order to determine the role of moderators (age, gender & education) on the relationship between predictor variables and criterion variable for Hindu and Muslim religious devotees separately. Age and gender of Hindu respondents was neither found to have moderating effect on the relationship of spiritual beliefs with spiritual experiences; nor spiritual practices with Spiritual experiences. Educational qualification of Hindu respondents’ was not found to have moderating effect on the relationship of spiritual beliefs with spiritual experiences. On the other hand, educational qualification of Hindu respondents’ was found to have moderating effect on the relationship of spiritual practices with spiritual experiences. Age of Muslim respondents was not found to have moderating effect on the relationship of spiritual beliefs with spiritual experiences. On the other hand, age of Muslim respondents’ was found to have moderating effect on the relationship of spiritual practices with spiritual experiences. Gender and educational qualification of Muslim respondents was neither found to have moderating effect on the relationship of spiritual beliefs with spiritual experiences; nor spiritual practices with Spiritual experiences.