

## Quality of life: a study based on the religious perspectives of different communities

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### ABSTRACT

In Indian context, religion even defines a person's characteristics and shapes his personality, sometimes leading to false notion of placing one's religion above others, or religious prejudice. With time, bias and prejudice have decreased to some extent but still many cases of violence and discrimination arise in society due to the conflict between Hindus and Muslims. This research study focuses on analyzing the quality of life of people following these two religions based on their prejudice towards each other. Two scales were used for this research, Prejudice Scale by Dr R.L.Bharadwaj and Dr Harish Sharma (2006) and Quality of Life Scale by B.L.Dubey and Padma Dwivedi (2009). Random sampling method was used to collect data from the population of Ahmedabad city of Gujarat, India. The findings suggested that Hindus have a higher level of prejudice against Muslims and they even have a higher level of Quality of life than the other community.

**Keywords:** *Religious prejudice, Quality of life, Hindu, Muslim*

India, being a secular country is home to a diversity of religions where the Constitution has declared the right to freedom of religion as a fundamental right. Though the Indian constitution embodies the ideal of secularism, the people of India have always seen the conflicts and fights between the two most prevailing religious communities – Hindu and Islam. According to the census (2011), 79.8% of the total population follows the Hindu religion whereas 14.2% are the followers of Islam. Although Muslims are considered as a minority in India, the vast population of both the religions has always been a concern for the government and even the people of India, considering the numerous fights and attempts to create conflicts between the people. Even when many people are very tolerant of others belonging to a different community, the few people who have negative notions about the other religion are enough to start a rift between the two and this has led to many attacks and social disruptions in the society.

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It is true that a person is not born with any specific religious beliefs and cultural practices but we leave in a society where our upbringing is done in respect to the religious beliefs, norms, and practices of the religion that we are born into. Religious communities often profoundly shape the ways in which their members conceptualize the social world (Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009; Paloutzian & Park, 2013; Saroglou, 2013; Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). The social learning thus takes place and although the person is not born as a Hindu or Muslim, he/she will inculcate certain values and beliefs of the specific religion. Similarly, the individual will also socially learn about religious differences and prejudices or preferences to some extent. Prejudice can be defined as ‘a negative or hostile attitude towards people in a distinguished group, based solely on their membership in that group’ (Arson et al., 2014, p.436). Negative religious, ethnic, cultural prejudice is a result of stereotyping concerning the whole group (Gordon Allport, 1979). In India, prejudice has led to discrimination and many forms of violence. People have absolute conviction that their religion has superiority over all others and the strong belief that their own religious beliefs and practices are true and everyone else’s false leads to dangerous discrimination and as a result, verbal/physical violence is experienced by many in the society.

In India, religious prejudice is often seen in Hindus and Muslims towards each other’s communities. The conflict between the two religions has been there since the time of the partition in the year 1947 and although the new generation has been more accepting and accommodating of both cultures, the discrimination and prejudice has still not been abolished and continues to create problems in the society. The time of the partition was traumatizing for the Indian Muslims, the sense of insecurity, uncertainty, and frustration experienced by the people during that time might have been one of the major causes of prejudice that the Muslims feel towards the Hindu people. And the same goes for the Hindus when they had to overnight leave all the possessions behind in Pakistan, which was going to be Islam country. Partition of India left many uprooted and scattered in new regions and the hatred spread in masses, which has still not left the minds of many in both the religions. Apart from this, the Indo-Pak war of 1965 left many citizens of both the countries jolted and brought forward the perennial controversy over the two countries and their prevailing religions. The many terrorist attacks in India by the different terrorist organizations, Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed to name a few are recognized Islamic militant groups that have time and again planned and organized terror attacks in different parts of India and infiltrated many casualties. Hindus thus have gained a reason to discriminate and hate Muslim people even within their own country and however wrong and illogical this false belief might be, this has been a constant reason why even the Indian Muslims face prejudice in the country.

This research study is regionally conducted in Ahmedabad district of Gujarat, India. Ahmedabad is the home to the biggest Muslim ghetto called Juhapura. The city has become the most segregated city on Hindu-Muslim lines with the formation of this ghetto. Ahmedabad, divided into two parts – old and new city, is residence to many Muslim and Hindu population. However, the constant tensions and riots experienced by both the communities in the old city region forced many Muslim people to empty their areas and seek refuge in the city’s western periphery. All this happened mainly in the light of the Godhra riots in the state of Gujarat where a train carrying many Hindu pilgrims were set on fire by a crowd of fanatic Muslims. As a result, violent acts were seen across the state and more than 2000 people were killed in the massacre. Hindus started attacking the Muslim population and there was a loss of many people’s lives and wealth. The entire incident of these riots have been the at the back of the minds of many orthodox Hindus and Muslims and they hold

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strong prejudice against each other to the extent that in many areas people don't even communicate with the opposite community members.

Prejudice in daily life, if restricted to oneself may not cause harm to anyone explicitly but we live in a society where we interact with many people daily and come across people from different communities and housing all the negative beliefs and holding on to harsh prejudice towards certain community will only affect our own mental health. Quality of life covers a variety of areas such as physical, mental, psychological, social, spiritual well-being, personal functioning, and general limitations, the concept has a solid bearing on the mental health of an individual (Searo, 1984). There are many aspects that define the quality of life of an individual and Prejudice is only one of those many, yet this study will give a further clarification as to how both the variables are correlated and how does prejudice affect the quality of life of a person in the society.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In a study conducted by Sunanda Nanda Bera and Dr. Asheesh Kumar Bajpai in the year 2017, it was found that among the college students, no significant difference was observed in the prejudice behavior on the basis of religions like hindus and muslims, however the findings revealed a significant difference in the prejudiced behavior between males and females.

The study conducted by in india under the socio-cultural settings concluded that Muslims were more prejudiced than Hindus where as Hindus were significantly higher in self-disclosure and better adjusted than Muslims. Similar study by Hassan in 1974 concluded that Muslim subjects had more religious, caste and sex prejudice than the comparable hindus. The study done by Adinarayana in 1977 reported that South Indian Hindus had less social ill feeling towards Muslims than North Indian Hindus. Further more in the year 1979, a study was done by Singh who also concluded that Muslim children developed the religious identity earlier and had higher level of prejudice than Hindus.

Natraj in the year 1962 observed that Hindus showed more conservative social and religious attitudes than Muslims. Khan in the year 1979 studied the relationship between religiosity and prejudice. He found that Muslims were more religious and scored higher on religious prejudice than Hindus.

A lot of research has been done regarding religiocentrism varying in different religions across different countries and even exploring the level of prejudice faced by certain minority groups and how it feels like to confront subtle prejudice in the society. However, this research study focuses primarily on analyzing the levels of prejudice that Hindus and Muslims hold towards each other's religious community and how does it affect the quality of life of an individual, and to what extent. The research is specifically conducted in the region of Ahmedabad, Gujarat where such a study has not been conducted before in which both the variables were taken into account and correlated with each other and analyzed simultaneously. The research will also give a brief idea as to what are the few prejudices that most Hindus and Muslims hold against each other and will provide tentative reasons for the same based on the empirical research and theory given. The study also takes into focus the difference in prejudice levels of males and females in both the religious communities and their quality of life status based on religious prejudice.

### **Research Gap**

The major limitation of this study is that, as the research has been limited to a specific region, it can only be generalized to a limited number of people in the city and not the entire country or the world population. This is because, even though the religious beliefs of people might be similar around the world, the society differs in many aspects considering the population, religious people, minority in the society, cultural practices and the history of the region and what its people have been through and how have they communicated with other religion over the time. As the questionnaires used in this study are both self rating and self evaluating instruments, there is always a possibility of false rating and remarks by the person taking the test and hence the result might be open to false analysis however small the probability might be. The study only tries to study the correlation between prejudice and quality of life and because the quality of life does not only depend on the level of prejudice an individual holds, the results cannot give definite level of one's quality of life in social, emotional, economical and personal context, however it will certainly provide with a clear affect that prejudice has on the quality of life.

### **Objectives**

1. To find out the difference in the intensity of religious prejudice between the Hindu and Islam community.
2. To compare the quality of life of the Hindu and Islam community.
3. To compare the religious prejudice between males and females.
4. To find the correlation between the quality of life and religious prejudice of the people following Hindu and Islam religion.

### **Hypothesis**

- H1:** Hindus have higher levels of Religious prejudice and Quality of life than Muslims.  
**H0:** Hindus do not have higher levels of Religious prejudice and Quality of life than Muslims.  
**H2:** Males have higher levels of Religious prejudice and Quality of life than Females.  
**H0:** Males do not have higher levels of Religious prejudice and Quality of life than Females.  
**H3:** There exists a positive correlation between Religious prejudice and Quality of life.  
**H0:** There exists a negative correlation between Religious prejudice and Quality of life.

### **Variables**

**Independent Variables:** Age, Gender (Males, Females), Profession

**Dependent Variables:** Religious prejudice and Quality of life

## **METHODOLOGY**

The type of research used for this study is the Quantitative Research study; the researcher examined the levels of prejudice and quality of life through observations in numerical representations and with the help of statistical tools and analysis.

### **Tool Description**

The levels of prejudice were measured using the Prejudice Scale which was developed in the year 2006 by R.L.Bharadwaj and Dr Harish Sharma. This instrument is a 5 pointer Likert scale questionnaire which consists of a total of 36 items. The respondent had to indicate the measure of agreement on all the statements provided. First, the respondent had to state the religious community that they belong to and point their answer keeping in mind the opposite community. If the respondent was of Hindu community, he/she had to answer the questions

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regarding the people of the Islamic community and if the respondent was a Muslim he/she had to answer the questions keeping in mind that the questions are about the people belonging to the Hindu community. The likert scale ranged from 'strongly disagree' marked as 1 and 'strongly agree' marked as 5. The total was calculated after counting each score of all the items for all the respondents.

The Quality of life scale developed by B.L.Dubey and Padma Dwivedi in the year 2009 was used to assess the quality of life of the respondents. The test instrument is a self assessment scale with 20 items with a 5 pointer Likert scale. The respondents had to mark the level of agreement that suited them the best and on the basis of that, the score for all the respondents were calculated after adding up the scores of all items for each individual.

While collecting the data sample, the respondents were asked for the content and were informed that the confidentiality of personal details will be maintained.

### *Sample Population*

The sample population thus selected was done through the random stratified sampling technique and convenience sampling method. Specific religious community people were approached to and the questionnaire was given to be filled in by Hindus and Muslims only, however there was no clear distinction as to who among them can fill up the questionnaire apart from the age limit which was kept open for 20 to 65 years old. The total of 120 people - 60 belonging to the Hindu religious community and 60 belonging to the Islam religion community were taken for the data. The male-female ratio was also maintained.

**Table 1: Demographic Table**

Hindus	60
Muslims	60
Males	60
Females	60

To fill both the questionnaires, the respondents took, on average, 10-15 minutes.

The sampling technique used for this research study is the **Stratified Convenience Sampling Method**. The population was firstly divided into smaller groups defined as stratas, in this study, people belonging to Hindu and Islam community; and then the questionnaire were passed on to people who came across easily while on field collecting the data. Snowball Sampling is also considered in this research study, as the respondents agreed and passed the questionnaire to the fellow family/neighborhood and relatives to be included in the study.

### *Test Applied*

The test applied to obtain the results for this study is the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) which is the collection of statistical models and their associated estimation procedures used to analyze the differences among group means in a sample. Here as the sample population was divided into two factors, Hindus and Muslims as well as Males and Females, and they were examined with the help of two separate questionnaires, the Two-way ANOVA was applied to the data collected. The primary purpose is to understand if there is an interaction between the two variables. ANOVA Two-factor with Replication is used here to understand the relation of Religious Prejudice and Quality of life in Hindus and Muslims, and also Males and Females.

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### **Test Results**

**H1:** Hindus have higher levels of Religious prejudice and Quality of life than Muslims.

**H0:** Hindus do not have higher levels of Religious prejudice and Quality of life than Muslims.

**Table 2.: Anova Two-factor Test results: Religious prejudice and Quality of life among Hindus and Muslims.**

Summary	Prejudice	Quality of Life	Total			
<i>Hindu</i>						
Count	60	60	120			
Sum	5374	4801	10175			
Average	89.56666667	80.01666667	84.79166667			
Variance	1124.487006	143.1353107	651.4772409			
<i>Muslims</i>						
Count	60	60	120			
Sum	4887	4477	9364			
Average	81.45	74.61666667	78.03333333			
Variance	649.7771186	165.6980226	416.0829132			
<i>Total</i>						
Count	120	120				
Sum	10261	9278				
Average	85.50833333	77.31666667				
Variance	896.2856443	160.4703081				
<b>ANOVA</b>						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Sample	2740.504167	1	2740.504167	5.26	0.02	3.88
Columns	4026.204167	1	4026.204167	7.73	0.01	3.88
Interaction	110.7041667	1	110.7041667	0.21	0.65	3.88
Within	122902.75	236	520.7743644			
Total	129780.1625	239				

### **Interpretation**

If the p-value < 0.05, and the f-value > f-crit value, then Null Hypothesis is rejected and Alternate Hypothesis is accepted. The alpha of 0.05 is used as a standard significant value to indicate a 5% risk of concluding the findings of the study. Here the value of p is lesser than 0.05, it is given as 0.02 and the f-value is 5.26 which is greater than the f-crit value 3.88, hence in this case the Alternate Hypothesis will be accepted, stating that Hindus do have a higher Religious Prejudice against Muslims and at the same time, the results show that they have a higher level of Quality of life than Muslims.

**H2:** Males have higher levels of Religious prejudice and Quality of life than Females.

**H0:** Males do not have higher levels of Religious prejudice and Quality of life than Females.

**Table 3: Anova Two-factor Test Results: Religious prejudice and Quality of life among Males and Females**

Summary	Prejudice	Quality of life	Total			
<i>Males</i>						
Count	60	60	120			
Sum	5059	4736	9795			
Average	84.3166667	75.93333333	81.625			
Variance	881.270904	138.8768362	513.093487			
<i>Females</i>						
Count	60	60	120			
Sum	5205	4511	9716			
Average	86.75	78.18333333	80.96666667			
Variance	884.021186	181.1014124	561.814006			
<i>Total</i>						
Count	120	120				
Sum	10264	9247				
Average	85.53333333	77.05833333				
Variance	876.721569	162.1898459				
<i>ANOVA</i>						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Sample	26.0041667	1	26.0041667	0.05	0.82	3.88
Columns	4309.5375	1	4309.5375	8.27	0.00	3.88
Interaction	573.504167	1	573.504167	1.10	0.30	3.88
Within	123030.95	236	521.317585			
Total	127939.996	239				

**Interpretation:**

In this case, the p-value obtained is 0.82 which is greater than the standard p-value of 0.05. And as observed, the f-value is lesser than the f-crit value;  $0.05 < 3.88$ . The significance level of 0.05 is standard for this study, indicating a 5% risk of concluding that a difference exists when there is actually no difference. Hence, in this case the Null Hypothesis will be accepted and the Alternate Hypothesis will be rejected. This will state that Males do not have higher level of Religious prejudice against the other religion and also have a lower standard of Quality of life than the Females. In simpler words, Females scored higher in both the scales – Religious prejudice against the other religion and Quality of life than the Males did.

**H3:** There exists a positive correlation between Religious prejudice and Quality of life.

**H0:** There exists a negative correlation between Religious prejudice and Quality of life.

**Table 4: Correlation between Prejudice and Quality of life.**

	Prejudice	Quality of life
Prejudice	1	
Quality of life	0.23	1

### ***Interpretation***

The above table shows that the correlation between the two taken variables is 0.23, proving to be Positive Relation, which will mean accepting the Alternate Hypothesis and rejecting the Null Hypothesis. However, the correlation is a weak positive correlation between the two.

## **DISCUSSION**

From the findings, it is evident that Hindus have more Religious Prejudice towards the Muslims by almost 8% than otherwise. This particular finding can be linked to the society and mindset of the people living in the areas of Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The creation of an entire area especially for Muslim community can help us understand the extent to which they suffer the prejudice at the hands of the majority of population that the Hindus comprise of. In the studies it has been found that almost most of the Hindus that participated in the study, expressed the concern and answered in negation whether they would be willing to reside in the neighborhood where Muslims are staying. This particular question of residing with the opposite community gained maximum negative response from the Hindus and proved to be the highest factor in terms of prejudice from their side. Majority of Hindus also believed that their traditions and value are to be ranked higher than that of Muslims and give more importance to their beliefs. This can be linked to the vast culture that the Hindu community has and the notion that the Islam religion is not as old and as well established as the Hindu religion, people tend to see this and compare their values with the opposite community. In addition to this, the cultural practices and norms of both the religions are vastly different, in terms of celebrations and festivals, traditional values, everyday customs and many more. Islam is entirely developed and preached by a prophet while Hinduism is a group and amalgamation of religion traditions that have developed over a long period of time. There are differences in practices, the Hindus often believe in religious offerings, communal worship, contemplation etc; whereas the Muslims believe in the five pillars namely the testament that there is only one god, five times prayer a day, pilgrimage, fast during Ramadan and charity to the poor. Of course, these are very deeply rooted practices and not all people following both the religions will strictly follow them, but the notion still remains that both consider their own religion as a superiority and more so in Hindus. The people of the Hindu community don't want to maintain relations with the people from Muslim community; this is also stated true for most of the people who participated in the study. It may be possible that due to the many terror attacks and the belief that Muslims are not a peaceful and harmonious community, they feel obliged to feel that they should not maintain any sort of relations with that community. This is seen in the society, to the extent that the younger generation who probably don't have the prejudiced beliefs are excluded or even killed in the name of *honor killing* by their own family members or members of the community if they decide to elope or even have any sort of romanticized feelings for the person from the other community.

On the other side, the majority of Muslims believe that Hindus have a blind faith towards their religion. This may be the reason because it is true that Hindu have a lot many superstitions and tend to follow many practices blindly without any understanding for the same. This is found in most of the religions in the world; it is true and also depends on the area and the society once lives in. But nevertheless, this stands true for the Hindu community, more than the people of Islam community. There are people, especially of the older generation who will still not indulge in certain things or practice certain traditions because they believe it will protect them from bad luck. The concept of bad luck and '*karma*', rebirth in there in the Hindu religion and hence there are more chances of certain beliefs to have been formed over the period of time and at this time, simply being followed without any sound explanation.

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In the comparison between Males and Females, Females from both the community had more Religious Prejudice towards the other community. Many females, in India are merely housewives and even when they work, there is a greater percentage of chance that elders in the family will have a major influence on their lifestyles. Females also generally socialize more than Males and so they will be under the influence of others from the society which will have a huge impact on their mindset towards the other community. Males are more concerned with their work as many a times they are the bread earners of the family and hence the influence any prejudices beliefs will be less than those of Females. Although the difference found between them was not significantly very high but still minor difference can be due to the mentioned reasons.

In terms of Quality of life, again the levels were found to be higher in Hindus and in Females. There may be multiple reasons for this finding as it is also found that the correlation between Prejudice and Quality of life is positive weak correlation, meaning that although Religious Prejudice affects the overall lifestyle and thinking of the people hence affecting their Quality of life, it cannot be entirely depended upon a single factor. Quality of life is such a particular aspect which is determined by a lot many other factors including the work experience, the personal life of a person, economic situation, social life, health etc, and more factors such as personality, adjustment levels, attitude and intelligence of a person come into account while measuring the Quality of life of a person. However, this study focused on finding the correlation between Religious Prejudice and Quality of life only.

For more profound study, the sample population who took part in the study was also divided on the basis of their profession. People from IT sector, any technical jobs, mechanical field jobs, engineers, sales and marketing jobs, finance and accounting or banking sector were put under one classification of 'Technical Sector' and people from service sectors involving doctors, teachers, journalists and even people in art field of painting, dancing, and the female housewives were all put under a specific section of 'Service Sector'; and because the sample population included the age group of 20-30, 'Students' were put under a different category. The findings concluded that Religious Prejudice was found highest in the Technical and Service sector as compared to Students. The age-group factor can be the reason for such a result, because the students fall under the age group of 20-30 years, and are the newer generation, they will not have such strong feelings of prejudice towards the other religion, in fact they will be more welcoming and understanding of each other, and also to some extent compassionate. They don't have such wrong regards of the opposite community, and don't even hold on to the superstitions and stereotypes that the elders may have formed due to different reasons. The Quality of life levels were also found higher in the Technical sector, as compared to Students and Service sector. This may be majorly due to economic and social factors, the students are not independent in their lives in terms of finances and also in making certain decisions and choices, and may be dependent on their families, however the findings also suggest that they feel more contented and satisfied in their lives as compared to the elder age group in social aspects.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this research study suggest that there exists Religious Prejudice in Hindus and Muslims towards the other religion. The extent is more in the Hindu community, perhaps because of their majority in the society. The Quality of life was also found to be higher in Hindus.

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As further bifurcations were made to divide the sample population in Males and Females, the Religious Prejudice and Quality of life was found to be higher in Females than in Males.

**Table 3: Mean Table**

	Prejudice	Quality of life
Hindus	89.57	80.02
	81.45	74.62
Females	86.75	78.18
	84.32	75.93

### **Recommendations**

From the findings, it can be recommended that the society, right from the school level should inculcate feelings of harmony and religious equality in the students and the young minds, so that they don't grow up holding false beliefs and stereotyped notions about the opposite community. If the young generation is taught about quality and respecting all the religions of the world, they will pass on that attitude to future generation and gradually the society can be rid off of religious prejudices at some level, and eliminate the wrong attributed people hold about the people from other community.

Inter-religion schools and institutes are there which allows the people to understand and to mingle with other communities and that can be a crucial step in eliminating the prejudice. Religious prejudice should never grow to the extent that people fear the other community even when a few individuals have done any harm, it is not wise to hold the entire community responsible for the terrors of those few who belong to that community because no religion ever teaches to do any harm to others, all the false practices and beliefs have been developed by mankind and when the people of the society understands this value and starts respecting the other religions, the world can be a better place.

Areas where the people of both the communities reside, should organize events where the culture and traditions of both the religions can be shown and people can participate and various activities, understand and realize the true nature of the people of the other community and see them as individuals and not only as a Hindu or a Muslim. Only when they are aware of the communities' better side and have faith that they are innocent, good natured individuals, they will be able to break free of the stereotypes that have compelled them to prejudiced feelings and not allowed them to see the other community as a part of the society. Hence, it is important that people of the society who are aware of the religious equality and who respect the religions, make others understand the message through inter-cultural activities, plays, scriptures etc.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The authors colorfully declare this paper to bear not conflict of interests

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