

Research Paper

Navigating Emotional Well-Being Through Religiosity: A Qualitative Exploration Across Diverse Cultural Context

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the intricate relationship between religiosity and emotional well-being across diverse cultural and religious contexts among people currently living in Delhi. Using a qualitative approach, focus group discussions were conducted with participants from various religious backgrounds to examine how religious beliefs and practices influence emotional experiences, coping strategies, and identity formation. Thematic analysis revealed key insights into how individuals navigate conflicts between personal values and religious expectations, utilise religiosity as a source of emotional resilience, and reconcile religious identities within societal and familial contexts. Also, the study highlights the role of cultural factors in shaping these experiences, underscoring the importance of considering religiosity's multifaceted impact on psychological functioning and emotional health. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamic interplay between religiosity, culture, and emotional well-being, with implications for mental health practice and interfaith dialogue.

Keywords: *Religiosity, emotional well-being, cultural context, identity formation, religious practices, emotional resilience*

Religiosity, a multifaceted construct involving beliefs, practices, and religious affiliations, plays a central role in shaping emotional well-being. According to the Glock and Stark (1965) framework, religiosity consists of five dimensions—experiential, ritualistic, ideological, intellectual, and consequential—which emphasise its complex impact on individual behaviour and emotional experiences. Studies consistently show that religiosity is associated with reduced levels of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress, offering emotional support, coping mechanisms, and existential meaning (Smith et al., 2003; Koenig et al., 2012). Moreover, it contributes to physical health benefits, such as increased longevity and enhanced recovery from illness (McCullough et al., 2000; Chida et al., 2009).

However, the relationship between religiosity and emotional experiences is multifaceted. While religious beliefs provide comfort, they may also lead to internal conflicts when they clash with personal values or societal expectations (Exline et al., 2013; Wood et al., 2010).

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In certain cases, high levels of religiosity can contribute to intolerance or intergroup conflicts, reflecting the need for a more nuanced understanding of its impact on emotional well-being (Ginges et al., 2009; Hunsberger et al., 1999).

Cultural and Societal Contexts

Religiosity is shaped by cultural and societal factors, which influence how individuals experience and interpret their religious beliefs and practices (Kim & Johnson, 2016; Pargament et al., 2013). Variations in religious traditions and practices across different cultural contexts highlight the importance of examining these factors when assessing religiosity's impact on emotional well-being.

Religious Coping and Emotional Resilience

Religiosity often serves as a coping mechanism during times of stress, with individuals using religious practices such as prayer or communal support to manage emotional challenges (Pargament et al., 2004; Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005). This study will explore the role of religious coping strategies in fostering emotional resilience and managing adversity.

Identity Formation and Meaning-Making

Religiosity contributes to identity formation and the process of meaning-making, shaping how individuals perceive themselves and interpret life events. These processes are crucial for emotional well-being, particularly in the context of personal and collective identity construction (Park et al., 2008; Emmons, 1999).

Religiosity has been widely studied in relation to psychological well-being, with research demonstrating both positive and complex associations. Ismail and Desmukh (2012) investigated this relationship among Pakistani Muslims, analysing 150 participants aged 18 to 60 years. Using measures such as religious gatherings attendance, belief salience, and frequency of prayer, they found significant negative correlations between religiosity and both loneliness ($r = -0.852$) and anxiety ($r = -0.511$), while noting a strong positive correlation with life satisfaction ($r = 0.76$). These results suggest that higher religiosity is linked to reduced negative emotions and enhanced psychological well-being.

Spilman et al. (2013) extended this exploration by examining the intergenerational continuity of religiosity and its impact on family functioning. Using data from the Family Transitions Project, a longitudinal study with 451 families, they demonstrated a positive association between parental religiosity during adolescence and that of their children, with lasting effects into adulthood. The study highlighted how religiosity contributes to the quality of family relationships, supporting its role as a resource for promoting psychological well-being and familial stability across generations.

Unterrainer, Lewis, and Fink (2014) took a different approach, focusing on the link between religious/spiritual well-being, personality traits, and mental health outcomes. Their research underscored the consistent positive association between religiosity and mental health, particularly in fostering subjective well-being and aiding recovery from mental illness. Their findings also emphasized the role of spirituality in mitigating addictive or suicidal behaviors, though they called for further research to understand the underlying mechanisms driving these effects.

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Investigating the intersection of social challenges and religiosity, Walker et al. (2014) explored the impact of perceived racism on suicide ideation among African American adults, considering the mediating role of depression and the moderating role of religiosity. Their study of 236 participants revealed that lower levels of extrinsic religiosity amplified the relationship between racial discrimination and suicide ideation, mediated by depressive symptoms. These findings highlight how religiosity can serve as a protective factor in specific demographic subgroups, providing a buffer against emotional distress caused by social adversity.

In a cross-cultural analysis, Lavric and Flere (2018) examined the influence of culture on the connection between religiosity and psychological well-being, studying university students from five distinct cultural and religious backgrounds: Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, the United States, and Japan. They found significant cultural variation in the relationship between religious orientation and well-being, underscoring that religiosity's effects are not universally applicable across different societies. Their findings emphasized the importance of cultural context in shaping how religiosity influences psychological outcomes, with societies exhibiting higher overall religiosity showing more positive associations with well-being.

Murtaza and Bashir (2020) focused on Muslim religious scholars, examining the relationship between religiosity, spirituality, emotional well-being, and contentment among 110 male scholars in Lahore. Their results revealed significant positive correlations between religiosity, spirituality, and emotional well-being, confirming that these dimensions collectively enhance contentment and overall life satisfaction. The study emphasized the critical role of religiosity and spirituality in promoting well-being within specific religious populations, particularly those whose lives are deeply intertwined with religious practices.

These studies collectively highlight the complex relationship between religiosity and emotional well-being, revealing that religiosity can both enhance psychological resilience and buffer against emotional challenges. This study builds on these findings by exploring how religiosity intersects with cultural, social, and emotional factors across diverse religious backgrounds, providing deeper insights into how individuals navigate religious identities and emotional experiences.

Rational

Religiosity, with its profound influence on beliefs, practices, and emotional well-being, has been the focus of extensive research across psychological and sociocultural disciplines. Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive associations between religiosity and mental health, indicating its role in reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress, while promoting coping mechanisms, life satisfaction, and resilience. However, despite the growing body of evidence linking religiosity to psychological outcomes, there remains a notable gap in understanding how religiosity shapes emotional experiences in diverse cultural and religious contexts. Existing research primarily focuses on quantitative assessments of religiosity and psychological well-being, often overlooking the nuanced, subjective experiences that individuals encounter in their daily lives. Moreover, while several studies have explored the intersection of religiosity and well-being, there is limited understanding of how these relationships play out within different cultural, social, and religious frameworks, especially in populations with varying religious identities.

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This study aims to fill this gap by employing a qualitative approach to explore how religiosity influences emotional well-being across a diverse range of religious backgrounds. By engaging participants from Delhi for in-depth discussions, the research seeks to capture the complex interplay between religious beliefs, practices, and emotional experiences. Understanding these dynamics is particularly important in today's globalised society, where individuals often navigate multiple, intersecting identities influenced by both personal faith and broader cultural norms. It also examines how religiosity serves as a coping mechanism in the face of emotional challenges, providing individuals with support structures, existential meaning, and resilience. Additionally, it will investigate the potential conflicts that arise when religious beliefs clash with personal values or societal expectations, adding to the complexity of religiosity's role in emotional well-being.

By delving into these multifaceted dimensions of religiosity, this research aims to contribute valuable insights to the fields of psychology, sociology, and religious studies. The findings will not only enhance our understanding of how religiosity shapes emotional experiences but also offer practical implications for mental health practitioners, educators, and policymakers seeking to support emotional well-being in religiously diverse populations.

METHOD

Aim- To explore the role of religiosity in emotional experiences, examining how individuals navigate conflicts, derive support, and cope with emotional challenges within the context of their religious or spiritual beliefs.

Objectives

1. To explore how individuals reconcile conflicts between their religious beliefs and personal values.
2. To analyse the impact of religiosity on emotional coping strategies and the support systems individuals utilise during times of distress.
3. To examine the diverse expressions of faith and belief systems, and their relation to emotional well-being across different religious and cultural contexts.
4. To investigate the role of cultural and societal influences in shaping the relationship between religiosity and emotional experiences.

Research Design

This qualitative study will employ a focus group discussion (FGD) approach, conducting two separate FGDs with college students to delve into their experiences and perceptions.

Sample Description

The study will include three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), each consisting of 10 participants, for a total of 30 participants from Delhi, aged between 18 to 25 years. This study was done through purposive sampling to recruit participants from a diverse range of religious, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. To ensure a broad representation of religious experiences, participants were selected from major faith groups, including all religions with an equal distribution of male and female participants. Snowball sampling was employed to ensure access to underrepresented religious communities.

Participant recruitment was facilitated through established community networks, enhancing comfort and engagement. Utilising semi-structured interview guidelines, we employed a purposive approach to select a sample that was both diverse and representative. This method

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ensured the inclusion of individuals who were not only willing but also demographically suitable to provide rich and relevant insights into the phenomena under study. Before participants engaged in the study, they were presented with an informed consent form, clearly outlining the study's objectives, potential risks, and benefits associated with participation. Ample time was provided to review the consent form, and all queries were thoroughly addressed. Emphasis was placed on the voluntary nature of participation, granting participants the freedom to withdraw at any point without negative consequences.

Throughout the data collection process, which primarily utilised a mix of qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, participants' physical and psychological well-being was closely monitored. Any signs of distress or discomfort were promptly addressed, maintaining a supportive and ethical research environment. To ensure participants' privacy and confidentiality, all data collected during the study were anonymized and securely stored.

Materials

Semi - structured interviews, audio recorder.

Procedure

This study employs a phenomenological approach to qualitatively explore the intricate relationship between religiosity and emotional well-being. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, the research aims to delve into participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attribute to their religious beliefs within their cultural and social contexts. The researchers function both as facilitators and interpreters, maintaining a supportive and non-judgmental environment to foster open dialogue and reflection.

Participant recruitment is targeted through universities, ensuring a diverse sample reflective of varied religious backgrounds. Each participant undergoes a thorough informed consent process, which outlines the study's scope, voluntary participation, and confidentiality measures, emphasising their right to withdraw without repercussions. Data collection is conducted via semi-structured interviews and two focus group discussions in settings conducive to candid discussion. These interactions are audio-recorded with consent, and supplemented by detailed field notes that capture non-verbal cues and contextual nuances. The interviews are designed to encourage participants to openly share their beliefs and experiences, guided by a flexible interview protocol that allows for in-depth exploration of personal narratives.

The analysis follows an iterative process of thematic coding, employing grounded theory techniques to identify and link themes across the data. This rigorous analytical process is aimed at developing a comprehensive understanding of how religiosity intersects with emotional experiences across different cultural landscapes. Ethical considerations are paramount, with strict adherence to confidentiality and ethical standards set by institutional review boards. The study's findings, while reported anonymously, aim to contribute significantly to academic discourse and practical applications in interfaith dialogue and emotional health advocacy, enhancing understanding of the nuanced roles religiosity plays in individual and communal well-being.

RESULTS

Theme 1: Conflicts between Religious Beliefs and Personal Values (Table 1.1)

SUB-THEMES	CODES	VERBATIMS
Conflicting Religious Practices (e.g., menstruation and religious rituals)	Conflicting Religious Practices	<i>"In my experience, religious practices sometimes clash with what feels right personally. For instance, not participating in certain religious activities during menstruation felt exclusionary to me."</i>
	Cultural Restrictions	<i>"I've faced similar situations where cultural practices, intertwined with religion, such as dress codes, felt restrictive. It's challenging when these expectations come from older family members who see it as part of religious identity."</i>
	Personal Reconciliation	<i>"It's about picking and choosing what aspects make sense to you personally, despite traditional expectations, I guess."</i>
Personal Experiences (e.g., finding solace in religious practices during adversity)	Anchor in Times of Calamity	<i>"There have been several instances where I have first-hand witnessed people go through so much calamity and adversity, and they have come out of it claiming that their anchors were their religious practices."</i>
	Emotional Support and Guidance	<i>"Religion has been a cornerstone for me, especially during challenging times. It's the faith in a higher power and the comfort of religious practices that have provided emotional support and guidance."</i>
	Divine Intervention in Personal Crisis	<i>"According to me, religion has always been close to my heart. And, my personal experience has also been with religion. I have had many problems and issues. And, even emotional problems and issues. And, I have always prayed for divine power. And, I have always received a certain kind of help."</i>

Theme 2: Role of Religious Institutions in Emotional Support (Table 1.2)

SUB-THEMES	CODES	VERBATIMS
Communal Support (e.g., a sense of peace and belonging)	Communal Peace and Belonging	<i>"The communal and spiritual aspects of religious institutions can offer a sense of peace and belonging, helping individuals find stability and answers during tumultuous times."</i>
Individual Choice (e.g., respecting diverse faith journeys)	Respect for Diverse Faith Journeys	<i>"However, it's crucial that this support respects individual choice and doesn't impose a one-size-fits-all belief system, as personal faith journeys are diverse."</i>

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Theme 3: Pressure from Religious Communities or Leaders (Table 1.3)

SUB-THEMES	CODES	VERBATIMS
Societal Pressures	Navigating Personal Beliefs Amidst Societal Expectations	<i>"Yes, societal or communal pressures can sometimes distort personal religious practices, like how we celebrate festivals or adhere to certain rituals."</i>
Political Influences	The Intersection of Religion and Politics	<i>"Like there was this Ram Mandir incident where we were asked to put up flags and do other things and it was odd to me because it felt more like a political move than something natural to me."</i>

Theme 4: Diverse Expressions of Faith and Belief (Table 1.4)

SUB-THEMES	CODES	VERBATIMS
Community and Emotional Support in Religious Practice	Communal vs. Individual Spirituality	<i>"Just the energy of the place and practices like sewa where we help out and volunteer to assist, clean or do something else at the gurudwara makes me feel so much better."</i>
Embracing Non-Traditional Belief Systems	Personal Adaptation of Religious Practices	<i>"In my case, being part of the Arya Samaj movement, we focus on the omnipresence of a higher power rather than idol worship."</i>
Personal Spiritual Practices	Resilience Through Faith	<i>"I don't feel particularly religious but I definitely feel a presence of higher power and a source that is greater than us."</i>

Theme 5: Individual Perspectives on Religion and Spirituality (Table 1.5)

SUB-THEMES	CODES	VERBATIMS
Faith as a Source of Strength	Drawing Strength from Faith	<i>"And, my personal experience has also been with religion. I have had many problems and issues... And, I have always received a certain kind of help."</i>
Subconscious Beliefs	Ingrained Spiritual Reflexes	<i>"I've also noticed that whenever I cross a temple or something, I subconsciously pray for something. I am not someone who prays consistently, only sometimes to keep everyone happy."</i>

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Theme 6: Family Tradition vs. Personal Engagement (Table 1.6)

SUB-THEMES	CODES	VERBATIMS
Personal Beliefs and Practices	Personal Engagement	<i>"Well, my family is Hindu, and we've always been quite devout. We follow all the traditional beliefs, you know, lighting up agarbatti and jyot every day at home. It's just what we do. But honestly, I've never been as involved in those rituals as my family... It's like I'm part of the tradition, but I'm also a bit on the sidelines when it comes to practising it."</i>
Diverse Religious Affiliations	Belief in Universal Power	<i>"In my community, we believe in Arya Samaj, that there is ultimate power and it lies everywhere... And, yeah, the fire is very pure. And then, when we do Phera, we don't keep an idol of God. We just take it in front of that fire... Some people believe in the gods. Some people believe that we are all human beings."</i>

Theme 7: Influence of Religiosity on Emotional Experiences (Table 1.7)

SUB-THEMES	CODES	VERBATIMS
Emotional Connection to Religion	Emotional Comfort Through Religiosity	<i>"According to me, religion has always been close to my heart... And, my personal experience has also been with religion. I have had many problems and issues. And, even emotional problems and issues. And, I have always prayed for divine power. And, I have always received a certain kind of help. So, it's a very close relationship."</i>
Coping Mechanisms and Comfort	Finding Peace in Chaos	<i>"Well, you know, when it comes to my level of religiosity and how it affects my emotional experiences, it's kind of interesting... It brings solace, offering peace amidst life's chaos."</i>
Guilt and Self-reflection	Cycle of Seeking Help and Feeling Guilty	<i>"It's like I only remember to pray when I'm in trouble, and even then, when things start to get better, I don't really thank God properly. It's this cycle of reaching out for help and then feeling guilty about it afterwards."</i>
Emotional Regulation and Mindfulness	Mindful Connection to Spiritual Beliefs	<i>"Praying and meditating not only connect us to something bigger but also help regulate our emotions. It gives us a space to understand our feelings better and be mindful of what's happening inside us."</i>
Spiritual Recharge and Connection	Seeking Divine Guidance	<i>"I think whenever we find ourselves in troubled waters, it's like this natural inclination to seek solace in something bigger than ourselves, you know? It's almost like an instinct, this desire to reach out to a higher power for help and guidance... It's like having a divine presence guiding me along the way."</i>

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Theme 8: Conflict Resolution and Religiosity (Table 1.8)

SUB-THEMES	CODES	VERBATIMS
Moral Conflict and Divine Guidance	Dilemma Between Personal and Religious Values	<i>“Sometimes, my personal desires clash with my religious duties. It’s hard to decide what is right, but I usually turn to prayer for clarity.”</i>
	Seeking Divine Approval	<i>“Before making any major decision, I visit the temple and pray for divine guidance. It gives me the strength to make difficult choices.”</i>
	Religious Texts as Conflict Resolvers	<i>“When I don’t know what to do, I read the Gita. Its teachings on detachment help me make sense of the chaos.”</i>
Religious Teachings Promoting Forgiveness and Peace	Forgiveness as a Religious Duty	<i>“My faith teaches me to forgive, even when someone has wronged me. This has helped me resolve many conflicts at work and home.”</i>
	Patience and Non-violence (Ahimsa)	<i>“I believe in non-violence, not just physically but emotionally too. I try to resolve issues with patience, which is a value from my religion.”</i>
	Acceptance of Karma	<i>“When someone cheats me, I don’t react. I trust in karma to handle the situation. This belief allows me to avoid conflict.”</i>
Interpersonal Conflicts Due to Religious Differences	Generational Religious Conflicts	<i>“There are frequent arguments with my parents regarding religious rituals. I don’t follow all the practices like they do, but it’s hard to make them understand.”</i>
	Cultural vs. Personal Beliefs	<i>“In my community, religious practices are strict, but I have adapted them to fit my life. This causes tension, especially during festivals.”</i>
		<i>“When my spouse and I disagree on religious customs, we compromise. We respect each other’s beliefs, even when they differ.”</i>
		<i>“I was more religious when I was younger, and looking back, I think it gave me a framework to handle challenges. As I’ve drifted a bit, I notice the absence of that framework.”</i>

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Theme 9: Religious Practices and Psychological Resilience (Table 1.9)

SUB-THEMES	CODES	VERBATIMS
Rituals as Anchors of Stability	Daily Rituals for Emotional Balance	<i>“Every morning, I offer water to the sun, a practice that helps me start the day with a calm mind and renewed strength.”</i>
		<i>“Chanting mantras helps me when I feel overwhelmed. The repetition clears my mind and grounds me.”</i>
		<i>“I light a diya everyday at dusk, I feel a sense of positivity filling the house. It’s a small act, but it has a big impact on my mood.”</i>
		<i>“Praying daily helps me process my emotions. It’s a way to let go of my fears and focus on what I can control.”</i>
		<i>“Reading the Quran everyday makes me feel confident and calm.”</i>
		<i>“I always read Navkar mantra 3 times at least, which is very common and basic in our Jainism and after that I somewhat feel secure and feel that things will go better and everything will be alright.”</i>
Community Support and Shared Religious Practices	Religious Festivals as Emotional Rejuvenation	<i>“During Navratri, we fast and celebrate together. The community aspect helps me forget my worries, and I feel rejuvenated afterward.”</i>
	Faith-Based Social Networks	<i>“The people in my religious community checked on me regularly when I was depressed. Their prayers and emotional support were key to my recovery.”</i>
		<i>“I am Jain but I still follow some of Hindu cultures which is different from ours for example we do kanjak on ashtami is not common in Jains”</i>

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study emphasise the significant role that religiosity plays in shaping both conflict resolution and psychological resilience among individuals in India. By focusing on key themes such as conflict between religious beliefs and personal values and religious practices and psychological resilience, the study highlights how religion serves as both a source of support and, at times, a source of internal tension. This analysis aligns with existing literature, further corroborating the relevance of religiosity in emotional well-being.

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Theme 1: Conflicts between Religious Beliefs and Personal Values

The study revealed that conflicts between religious norms and personal values are common among participants. Cultural and religious restrictions, such as prohibitions on visiting temples during menstruation or traditional dress codes, often caused tension and led individuals to question their roles within their religious communities. One participant shared, *“During my period, I’m not allowed to go to the temple, but it feels so unfair. I believe in my religion, but that restriction makes me question my role in it.”* This highlights the complex negotiation between personal autonomy and societal religious expectations. These findings align with Exline and Rose (2013), who discussed the internal struggles individuals face when their personal values conflict with religious norms. Such conflicts can lead to feelings of exclusion, especially when societal and familial expectations reinforce traditional religious practices. Furthermore, these insights echo Kim and Johnson (2016), who emphasised the impact of cultural context in shaping religious expression. Participants in this study advocated for personal reconciliation and autonomy in prioritising religious practices that resonate with individual beliefs, even when faced with societal pressures.

Theme 2: Role of Religious Institutions in Emotional Support

Religious institutions emerged as essential sources of emotional solace and community support. Participants frequently turned to religious practices during times of adversity, finding peace in prayer and communal rituals. One participant expressed, *“My prayers were the only thing that kept me going when my father passed away. I felt this deep sense of peace, knowing that I wasn’t alone in my grief.”* The role of religious institutions as emotional anchors is consistent with the findings of Koenig et al. (2012) and Pargament et al. (2004), who highlighted the significance of religion in fostering emotional resilience. This study also adds a new dimension by indicating participants’ desire for more inclusive and flexible spiritual practices within religious institutions, similar to the findings of Lavric and Flere (2018), who noted the need for religious organisations to adapt to modern believers’ evolving spiritual needs.

Theme 3: Pressure from Religious Communities or Leaders

Participants discussed the pressure exerted by religious communities and leaders, often feeling constrained by rigid expectations. One participant mentioned, *“The temple gives me a sense of belonging, but I wish there was more room for personal interpretation. Sometimes it feels like there’s only one way to practise, and that doesn’t fit everyone.”* This highlights the tension between adhering to communal religious norms and fostering personal spiritual growth. Such societal pressures on religious practices have been documented in studies like Smith et al. (2003), which discuss how religiosity can at times create challenges for individual autonomy. This theme underscores the need for religious institutions to recognize diverse interpretations and experiences of faith.

Theme 4: Religious Practices and Psychological Resilience

Religious practices were central to the participants’ emotional resilience, with rituals and prayer acting as stabilising forces during times of emotional distress. A participant shared, *“Every morning, I offer water to the sun, which helps me start the day with a calm mind.”* Another added, *“Chanting mantras helps clear my mind and ground me when I feel overwhelmed.”* These statements illustrate the way daily religious practices provide emotional grounding. This theme is supported by Koenig et al. (2012), who discussed how religious rituals contribute to psychological resilience by offering emotional structure and meaning. The role of collective worship and community support in emotional recovery, as

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expressed by a participant who noted, *“The people in my religious community checked on me regularly when I was depressed; their prayers and support were key to my recovery,”* echoes Pargament et al. (2004), who demonstrated that social connections within religious communities can enhance emotional strength.

Theme 5: Influence of Religiosity on Emotional Experiences

Participants described how religiosity influenced their emotional experiences, offering them comfort and guidance during difficult times. One participant stated, *“Praying during tough times gives me a sense of control and comfort. It’s a reminder that there’s something guiding me, even when life feels chaotic.”* This indicates that religiosity not only provides a coping mechanism but also offers a sense of purpose and meaning during adversity. These findings are consistent with Unterrainer et al. (2014) and Murtaza and Bashir (2020), who highlighted the connection between religious practices and emotional resilience, showing that religious beliefs can act as a powerful tool for emotional regulation.

Theme 6: Family Tradition vs. Personal Engagement

Participants often found themselves navigating the tension between maintaining family traditions and their personal engagement in religious practices. While some adhered to familial rituals, others chose selective participation, feeling less connected to traditional practices. One participant reflected, *“In my family, we follow a lot of religious rituals, but I’ve always been less involved than my parents. It’s like I’m part of the tradition, but it doesn’t resonate with me in the same way.”* This theme aligns with findings by Lavric and Flere (2018), which emphasise the impact of cultural context and family tradition on religious engagement. Participants in this study showcased a variety of approaches to religious participation, from deeply entrenched practices to more individualised expressions of faith. The diversity of engagement suggests that while family traditions remain influential, personal beliefs and the globalised exchange of ideas have begun to shape how younger generations practise religion.

Theme 7: Influence of Religiosity on Emotional Experiences

Religiosity emerged as a key influence on emotional experiences, particularly in fostering emotional resilience during times of hardship. Many participants highlighted prayer and religious practices as sources of comfort and emotional regulation. One participant shared, *“Whenever I feel overwhelmed, I turn to prayer. It calms me down and makes me feel like I’m connected to something bigger than my problems.”* Another participant added, *“Praying during tough times gives me a sense of control and comfort. It’s a reminder that there’s something guiding me, even when life feels chaotic.”* These findings are consistent with Koenig et al. (2012), who documented the positive correlation between religiosity and psychological well-being, emphasising the role of religious practices in reducing emotional distress and offering a sense of existential meaning. Unterrainer et al. (2014) also noted that religiosity aids in emotional regulation, enabling individuals to cope with life’s challenges through spiritual support.

Theme 8: Conflict Resolution and Religiosity

Religious beliefs played a pivotal role in helping participants resolve conflicts, both personal and interpersonal. Participants frequently mentioned relying on religious texts, such as the Bhagavad Gita, for moral guidance in difficult situations. One participant shared, *“I read the Gita when I don’t know what to do; its teachings help me make sense of the chaos.”* Another emphasised the importance of spiritual guidance, stating, *“Our family priest always helps us*

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resolve conflicts related to tradition and rituals.” These findings echo Exline and Rose (2013), who noted that religiosity offers structured frameworks for resolving conflicts through teachings of forgiveness, patience, and acceptance. Moreover, the acceptance of karma, as expressed by a participant who said, *“I trust in karma to take care of the situation, so I avoid reacting in anger,”* reflects the long-standing cultural belief in cosmic justice, which reduces the likelihood of emotional escalation in conflicts.

Theme 9: Religious Practices and Psychological Resilience

Religious practices were shown to be deeply embedded in participants’ coping mechanisms, providing emotional resilience during life’s hardships. Daily rituals such as offering water to the sun or chanting mantras were seen as crucial stabilising activities. One participant noted, *“Every morning, I offer water to the sun, which helps me start the day with a calm mind.”* Another participant expressed the importance of religious communities in fostering resilience, stating, *“The people in my religious community checked on me regularly when I was depressed; their prayers and support were key to my recovery.”* These observations support the work of Pargament et al. (2004), who emphasised the adaptive function of religious practices in fostering resilience, and Murtaza and Bashir (2020), who identified a strong link between religiosity, emotional well-being, and contentment. This theme further demonstrates how religious practices provide not only emotional strength but also social support through communal worship and prayer, echoing the findings of Koenig et al. (2012) on the benefits of collective religious engagement.

Personal Reflection

As a researcher, this study has been an enlightening journey, reinforcing the significant and complex role religiosity plays in emotional well-being and conflict resolution, especially within the diverse cultural landscape of India. The rich narratives shared by participants highlighted both the positive and challenging aspects of religious engagement. On one hand, I observed how deeply ingrained religious practices serve as pillars of emotional support during times of personal hardship. One participant’s statement, *“Whenever I feel overwhelmed, I turn to prayer. It calms me down and makes me feel like I’m connected to something bigger than my problems,”* illustrates the comforting and grounding role of faith.

Conversely, the discussions also revealed the tension that arises when personal values clash with religious norms, causing emotional distress and internal conflict. For example, one participant expressed frustration about exclusion during menstruation, stating, *“I believe in my religion, but that restriction makes me question my role in it.”* These conflicting experiences provided deep insights into the complexities of navigating personal religious identity amidst societal expectations.

This study also brought to light the significant pressure exerted by religious communities and leaders, shaping individuals’ religious practices. The discussions around the need for more inclusive, flexible religious institutions resonated strongly with me, particularly in a pluralistic society like India. As I continue to reflect on these findings, I am motivated to explore further how religious diversity can be embraced in a way that promotes emotional health and social cohesion. The voices of participants serve as a reminder that religiosity, while deeply personal, is also a collective experience, one that requires understanding, respect, and inclusivity.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a nuanced understanding of how religiosity intersects with emotional well-being and conflict resolution among individuals in India, shedding light on the complex ways religion influences both personal and communal experiences. The research identified multiple themes, including conflicts between religious beliefs and personal values, the role of religious institutions in providing emotional support, societal pressures on religious adherence, and the use of religious practices to foster psychological resilience. These themes collectively highlight the dual nature of religiosity as both a source of comfort and a cause of tension. Through focus group discussions, participants conveyed how religious practices offer stability and emotional grounding, particularly during times of distress. Yet, the findings also reveal the challenges individuals face when religious norms conflict with personal values, especially when these norms are reinforced by societal and familial expectations. This tension underscores the complexity of navigating religious identity in a rapidly globalising world where personal autonomy increasingly influences religious engagement.

The study's limitations, such as its specific cultural focus and relatively small sample size, suggest that further research is needed to explore these dynamics across broader populations. Future research could benefit from longitudinal studies that examine how individuals' relationships with religiosity evolve over time, as well as interdisciplinary approaches that explore the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of religious practice. Additionally, there is a growing need for research that investigates how religious diversity can be embraced within pluralistic societies in ways that promote mutual respect and emotional well-being.

This study emphasises the importance of acknowledging the diverse expressions of religiosity and fostering inclusive environments where individuals feel supported in their personal and communal religious practices. By promoting interfaith dialogue and cultural competency, societies can enhance emotional well-being and social cohesion, creating spaces where religious diversity is celebrated rather than constrained. This approach not only honours the rich tapestry of human experience but also ensures that individuals can engage with their faith in ways that resonate with their personal values and emotional needs.

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Conflict of Interest

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