



MUTUAL RELATIONAL ORIENTATIONS: INTER-RELIGIOUS AND INTER-GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

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Abstract

Inter-group behavior represents an important topic of discussion and research in the field of social psychology. The term intergroup relations refer to relations between two or more groups and their respective members. It occurs when an individual behaves toward another group in terms of his/her reference group ties. The present study was conducted on 300 participants belonging to Hindu and Muslim groups to explore the inter-religious and inter-generational differences of mutual relational orientations. They were examined by using mutual relational orientation scale developed by (Berry, 2005) and adapted by (Mishra & Tripathi, 2006) in the Indian cultural. Result reported that younger generations have shown more co-existence, assimilation and marginalization rather than old aged. Result further revealed that Hindus preferred separation relational orientation and Muslims preferred integration, assimilation and co-existence relational orientations.

Keywords: *Inter-group relations, Hindu, Muslim, inter-religious, inter-generational and mutual relational orientations*

Introduction:

Culturally plural societies demand harmonious relationships between groups to maintain peace and harmony for national integrity. This is the challenge that the whole world is facing at this time. Inter-group conflicts become the major issue in ethnic or culturally diverse societies. Inter-group behavior represents an important topic of discussion and research in the field of social psychology. The term intergroup relations refer to relations between two or more groups and their respective members. It occurs when an individual behaves toward another group in terms of his/her reference group ties. Culturally plural societies is the reality of present era, these societies are those in which different cultural or ethnic groups living together within a shared political and social background (Brooks, 2002). Every contemporary society is now culturally plural; no society is made up of people having single culture, language, and identity (Sam & Berry, 2006). There has been an established assumption that such cultural diversity within societies will eventually disappear. It happens so because contact between cultures is a creative and reactive process. It generates new customs and values, and stimulates resistance, instead of simply leading to cultural domination and homogenization (Berry, 2009).

The groups and individuals (both dominant and non-dominant) living in plural societies engage each other in some different ways (Berry, 1980) to maintain the relationship between two. There are two underlying issues when people belongs to two different groups: 1. the degree to which one

desires to maintain the group's culture and identity; and 2. the degree to which there is a desire to engage in daily interactions with other ethno-cultural groups in the larger society, including the dominant one. From these two basic issues, four strategies have been derived faced by all acculturating peoples depending on whom ethno-cultural groups (the dominant or non-dominant) are being considered. When individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures assimilation strategy is defined by non-dominant groups.

Conversely, individuals placing a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time, wish to avoid interaction with others define a separation alternative. In case when there is an interest in both maintaining one's original culture while in daily interactions with other groups, integration is the option. Finally, marginalization is defined when little interest in cultural maintenance and little interest in having relations with others. Mishra, Sinha and Berry (1996) research on Adivasi Peoples in India and find out "co-existence" strategy for inter-group relationships which was showed by Indian people when they were contract with other cultures (Sinha, 1988; Sinha & Tripathi, 1994). Coexistence strategy comprises with the values, traditions, customs and practices of two or more cultures in the life of individuals belonging to different cultural groups. In other words there is no effort made by both the culture to fuse or mix with each-others culture, instead of mixing they "enfolded" in the system and kept side by side their own cultural features without including any assessment or ideals of comparison in any context (Mishra et al., 1996; Tripathi & Mishra, 2016).

In India Hindu and Muslim relationship are crucial to understand and many study attempted to search the dynamics of the relationships. The inter-group conflict between Hindus and Muslims has been found in every decade in many parts of India. Many studies conducted in India focuses to identify the dynamics of inter-group relations by social identity (Bano & Mishra, 2009, 2014), relational orientations (Bano & Mishra, 2011; Bano, Mishra & Tripathi, 2018), and prejudice (Siddiki, 2011). So there have been lots of studies conducted on the inter-group relations on different dynamics, but very few studies have been attempted to know the intergenerational and interreligious differences of mutual relational orientations of Hindus and Muslims groups. Thus the present study aimed to know the inter-generational and inter-religious differences of mutual relational orientations of Hindus and Muslims groups.

Sample and Measure:

The study was carried out with 300 subjects belonging to Hindu (N=150) and Muslim (N=150) groups. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify the Hindu and Muslim participants. This study was conducted in Varanasi city. This study attempted to measure the effect of age on the mutual relational orientations so they were divided into two age groups 20-30 years for young age and 50-60 years for old age group.

Mutual Relational Orientations Scale:

This scale was developed by (Berry, 2005) and adapted by (Mishra & Tripathi, 2006) in the Indian culture. This scale measures five relational orientations i.e., integration, assimilation, separation, marginalization and co-existence consisted of 20 items. Administration of this scale required translation and back-translation for Hindu and Muslim samples. All items were answered on five-point Likert scale ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5). The alpha coefficient was $\alpha = 0.52$.

Results:**Table 1: Analysis of Variance of Mutual Relational Orientations**

Variables	Hindu		Muslim		F ratios
	Young	Old	Young	Old	
Integration					Religious group =33.78***
Mean	13.96	14.50	16.98	15.54	Age=1.66
SD	3.62	2.95	2.17	2.06	Religion x Age=8.03**
Assimilation					Religious group =18.60***
Mean	5.61	5.56	7.77	5.98	Age=9.46**
SD	2.18	2.02	3.04	1.87	Religion x Age=8.46**
Marginalization					Religious group =2.59
Mean	8.02	6.78	7.45	6.14	Age=11.51**
SD	3.65	3.16	2.69	2.29	Religion x Age=0.01
Separation					Religious group =35.28***
Mean	13.15	13.44	10.21	10.90	Age=1.12
SD	4.35	3.89	3.27	3.24	Religion x Age=0.18
Co-existence					Religious Group =7.63**
Mean	16.68	15.32	17.53	16.48	Age=10.97**
SD	3.87	3.01	2.09	2.22	Religion x Age=0.18

p<.01, *p<.001

Table 01 presents the result of ANOVA of the responses of young and old, Hindus and Muslims on the dimensions of mutual relational orientation scale. With respect to integration relational orientation, it revealed significant main effect of religion ($F=33.78$, $df=1$, 296, $p<.001$); indicated that Muslims (mean=16.50) showed stronger integration relational orientation than Hindus (mean=14.14). Findings revealed no significant difference ($F = 1.66$, $df=1$, 296, $p>.05$) between young and old age groups on integration relational orientation. Beside the main effect of age, significant interaction effect between religious group and age was noted ($F=8.03$, $df=1$, 296, $p<.001$); suggesting that young generation of Muslims (mean=16.98) showed stronger relational orientation rather than old Muslims (mean=15.54) as well as old Hindus (mean=14.50) and young Hindus (mean=13.96).

Result revealed significant main effect of religious group ($F=18.60$, $df=1$, 296, $p<.001$); indicated that Muslims (mean=7.17) have shown stronger assimilation relational orientation than Hindus (mean=5.59). Significant main effect of age ($F=9.46$, $df=1$, 296, $p<.01$) indicated that young generation (mean=6.69) showed stronger orientation towards assimilation relational orientation in comparison to old generation (mean=5.77). Beside the main effect of age, significant interaction effect between religion and age was noted ($F=8.46$, $df=1$, 296, $p<.01$); suggesting that young (mean=7.77) and old generation of Muslims (mean=5.98) showed stronger assimilation relational orientation as compared to young (mean=5.61) and old generation of Hindus (mean=5.56). Findings revealed no significant difference ($F = 2.59$, $df=1$, 296, $p>.05$) between Hindu and Muslim groups on marginalization relational orientation. There was significant difference between two age groups ($F=11.51$, $df=1$, 296, $p<.01$). It reported that young generation (mean=7.73) showed stronger marginalization relational orientation as compared to old generation (mean=6.46). Interaction effect of religion and age was not significant ($F=0.01$, $df=1$, 296, $p>.05$).

With respect to separation relational orientation significant main effect of religion ($F = 35.28$, $df=1$, 296, $p<.001$); suggesting that Hindus (mean=13.24) showed stronger separation relational orientation than Muslims (mean=10.44). Findings revealed no significant difference ($F = 1.12$, $df=1$, 296, $p>.05$) between young and old generation on separation relational orientation. Interaction effect of religion and age was not significant ($F=0.18$, $df=1$, 296, $p>.05$).

With respect to co-existence relational orientation significant effect of religion ($F=7.63$, $df=1$, 296, $p<.01$) between Hindu and Muslim groups was found. It indicated that Muslims (mean=17.18) showed stronger co-existence relational orientation than Hindus (mean=16.22). There was significant difference between two age groups ($F=10.97$, $df=1$, 296, $p<.01$). It reported that young generation (mean=17.10) showed stronger co-existence relational orientation as compared to old generation (mean=15.90). Interaction effect of religion and age was not significant ($F=0.18$, $df=1$, 296, $p>.05$).

Discussion:

The present study was undertaken to explore the inter-religious and inter-generational differences of mutual relational orientations and the results revealed that young show more integration, co-existence, assimilation and marginalization than their older counterparts. The results suggested that the young have more chance to participate with other group in personal as well as their social life on account of younger generation having more time and freedom. The young decided on their own accord if they were to mingle with friends from other groups or not. Whereas in the case of older generation with orthodox nature and lesser openness there was hesitation to participate with other culture. Another reason Impacting the acceptance of older generation to people from other groups was due to old generation having witnessed riots between the two group and hence the traumatic memories continue to horrify them resisting and even denouncing anything to do with the other group. The possibility of having lost a dear one in such riots further diminishes ant possibility of them even thinking of trying to integrate or co-exist with other religious groups and assimilation is impossible in this situation.

Muslim participants expressed more integration, co-existence and assimilation relational orientation while the Hindu participants expressed more separation relational orientation. This finding explained the fact that Hindu participants were quite conscious about concepts of group purity. The Hindu carry with themselves a strong belief of purity in every aspect of their life, even their dressing and food (Bano & Mishra, 2011). Hindu traditions have focused on the rituals and customs which followed by rules of purity; each day starting with worshipping their *isht-devta* or God. The practices demand purity in variety of aspects and even use different utensils to perform veneration. Worshipping God involves everything pure, including mind and heart. The Hindu mind defends a strong boundary between pure and impure. Pure behavior is considered good behavior and is expected to be followed by the group sharing similar ties and rules. So all rites and rituals since birth to death are associated with the purification process for and this purpose, traditional family performs Solah Samskara of every child of the family. Also, a large section of Hindus considered non-veg food is impure or *tamsic* (creating unbalanced heat) food. Many families also serving food firstly to the God as *bhog* and only then they eat. In case of non-veg food, since it cannot be offered to God so it is considered uneatable. In some Hindu families even onion and garlic are avoided due to their *tamsic* nature food and therefore these are not offered to God. The staunch followers even in many families avoid touching non-veg food for fear of impurity. Bano and Mishra (2006,14) found that young children in an early age know that non-veg food is impure. The Hindu participants were well aware that Muslim children and their families eat non-veg food on a regular basis, This awareness meant that Hindus kept distance from Muslims for fear of impurity based on food. The major threat to a Hindu comes from this sense of impurity if they come in contact with the Muslims.

Another reason for adopting the separations strategy involves different spheres of social life including rituals and customs, language, dressing sense, marriage. The present study has found that Hindu are not much aware about Muslims rituals and customs as their festivals like such as *Eid-ul-Zuha*, *Eid-ul-Adha*, *Muharamm*, *Shab-e-barat*. There is an acute lack of indifference and awareness regarding the stories and reason behind these festivals and rituals performed by Muslims. In the city of Varanasi, the Hindu and Muslim groups live in different area without any physical boundary but

they all live in their own community regions are separate. Thus, the day-to-day life of Hindus and Muslims do not interact and find ways for greater awareness in such segregated living styles. It also noted that languages used by both groups are different. In case of Muslim, they know Urdu and Hindi both as equal level but in case of Hindu, they know Hindi, English and other languages but there is a resistance to adopt Urdu which is often viewed as the language of the Muslim groups; the irony being the supremacy of English - a foreign language receiving full embrace. To contribute to further challenge in understand Muslim culture, the basic sources of knowledge of Muslim culture is available largely in Urdu, Persian and Arabic which the Hindus do not feel the need to seek knowledge.

The other reason mistrusting Muslim religion were found to be associated with the incidence related with history of conversion of Hindus to Islam in large parts of the country (Bano, et al., 2018). The present time “Islamophobia” (Green, 2015) had negatively affected the perception of Muslim worldwide. People feel threat to have contact with Muslim. To evade threat from Muslim Hindu wants to keep distance from them. But overall both group showed preference for co-existence. It is also noted that when separation strategies are preferred, it threatens cultural diversity which results in less out-group contact or mutual acceptance and thus, leads to higher level of discrimination between two groups.

The present study reflected on the point that Muslims preferred integration and assimilation strategy and the results suggest that Muslim participants want to integrate with larger group or assimilate with them. The Muslims are in a position of larger minority at the national level and also in Varanasi from the local point of view. The Constitution of India confers equal rights to majority (Hindus) and (minority) Muslims. Muslims got fundamental rights to maintain their identity and heritage culture but as minority they also access rights that are not extended to Hindus (Bano et al., 2018). Muslims live in India in very secure environment where threat to their identity and culture was not detected directly. Tripathi and Mishra (2016) explained the unique quality of India where process of co-construction (interdependence) of identities through a process of mutual respect and support exists. It is not found anywhere else in the world.

The other interesting finding of this study revealed coexistence relational orientation as most preferred orientation among Muslims and is higher in comparison to Hindu but difference was not found significant. Other studies (Bano & Mishra, 2011; Mishra, Bano & Tripathi, 2017; Bano et al., 2018) also reported similar finding that coexistence is a strongly preferred relational orientation of other groups in India. This study was conducted in Varanasi city which has a long history of encouraging different kind of engaging relationship between these two religious groups. Both the groups have been dependent and responsible economically on each other and for the thriving of Varanasi’s silk industry and weaving businesses. The *Tana-Bana* (originating from weaving a fabric; here the inter cultural relation) or *Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb* (or culture) is the backbone that has for generations saved and allowed the two groups to thrive in Varanasi.

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