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ATTITUDE TOWARDS INTER-RELIGIOUS HARMONY AMONG UNDER-GRADUATE STUDENTS OF SOUTHERN INDIA. (With special reference to Shimoga District in Karnataka State)

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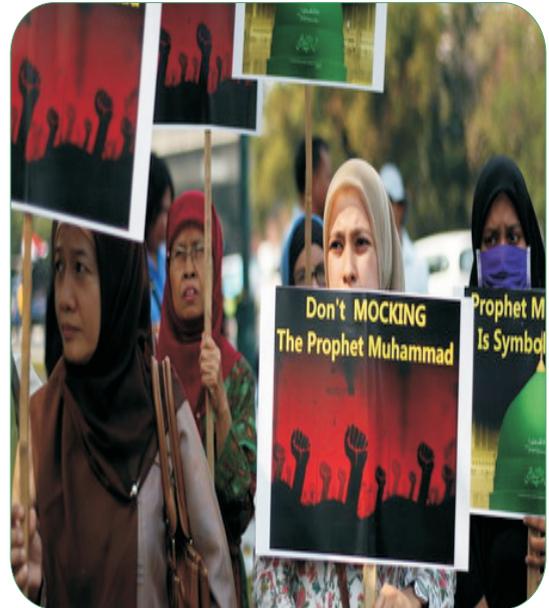
ABSTRACT

India is a country of more than one billion people; the majority of people are from Hindus. However, we also have large populations of minorities, with about 150 million Muslims, making this country as the second largest Muslim population in the world, after Indonesia. There are also many millions of Christians, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists. In recent decades, the conflict between religious communities (referred to as communalism in India) have grown substantially, and thousands of people have been killed in these religious conflicts. The future of India is bleak, if religious conflicts tear the democratic fabric away. In addition, it creates the conditions of Committee on religious and moral instruction, popularly known as Shri Prakash Committee stressed on the teaching of moral and spiritual values.

KEYWORDS :religious communities , communalism in India , moral instruction.

INTRODUCTION

The committee has suggested regarding content that “education in moral and spiritual value should be included as a comparative and systematic study of the lives and teaching of great religious leaders and at later stage their ethical systems and philosophies should be taught. Moral values particularly refer to the conduct of man towards man in the various situations in which human beings come together in the home, in social and economic fields, and in the life of the outside world generally. It is essential that from the earliest childhood, moral values



should be inculcated in the individual.” The committee also recommended that all educational institutions should start the day with few minutes of meditation either in the classroom or in a common hall. There could be some sort of prayer or inspiring passages from great literature, religious as well as secular and pertaining to all-important religious and cultures of the world.

Community singing of inspiring songs and hymns can be most effective at the school stages and in the course of extra-curricular activities, learned and experienced persons may be invited to deliver lectures on inter-religious understanding. It also laid the stress on the teaching of good manners promoting the virtues of reverence and courtesy, which are badly needed in our society.

The Education Commission (3) recommended that a syllabus is giving by well-chosen information about each of the religion and it should be included as a part of the course in citizenship or as a part of general education to highlight the fundamental similarities in the great religions of the country, and emphasizing the cultivation of certain broadly comparable manual and spiritual values. It also emphasized the training of efficient leadership at all levels by expanding secondary and higher education and providing equal opportunities for all children of merit and promise, irrespective of economic status, caste, religion, sex or place of residence. Social, moral and spiritual values were specifically suggested that education system should emphasize the development of fundamental, social, moral and spiritual values. From this point of view, the Centre and State Governments should adopt measures to introduce education in moral, social and spiritual values in all institutions under their (or local authority) control on the lines recommended by the University Education Commission and the Committees on Religious and Moral instruction.

National Policy of Education (4) also suggested that the essence of education should be harmonious society where people with different religious beliefs can live co-operatively. The national curriculum framework should be designed to promote the secular attitude and all educational programs should be based on secular values. National Knowledge Commission (5) expressed similar views. It suggested that the civic education should be provided to Adolescents so that positive attitude towards the equality of castes, religions and gender and secularism may be developed. A number of researches have been carried out in the past to find the level of secular attitude among the learners and different employees belonging to different service sectors.

A number of issues arose at the time of the selection of the research study. The main issues, which emerged at the time of the research, have been presented here in the form of the following research questions.

- 1.How much do the College Students know about religions?
- 2.Do the College Students appreciate religions?
- 3.What practices are prevailing in the present Colleges to inculcate religious harmony?
- 4.Do they vary in their religious harmony according to Gender, Locality and Streams?
- 5.Do the students know the causes of communal conflicts?

This study promotes the explanation and discussions on the sure issues under the captions 'present status' and 'need for the study'. The present status of the study explains the theoretical framework needed for this research. The statement of the problem, definition of each term, objectives, hypothesis, assumption, limitations and organisation of the entire report has been presented in this paper.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Today's world is full of chaos and miseries. No man or woman is satisfied in his or her life. Religious people who are supposed to be the light of the world are in fight. They mix religion and politics and perform 'poly-tricks'. Religion when projected in politics becomes communal ism of a narrow type, and we have seen the commanded performance of communal riots in the past. Emphasis on secularism and religious harmony in education is bound to end this problem.

A reverential study of the essentials of all the religions would be a step forward in developing religious harmony. An attitude of toleration may only imply a subtle secret sense of superiority, which may deteriorate into indifference. The curriculum in religion is not expected to instruct a student to

learn a religion, but rather to attain greater depth and perspective in the totality of the human spirit. The different religions are not 'opposites' but 'distinct'. In religion, there should be no either-or. Respect for all religions can easily be inculcated in our country since this attitude is native to our tradition. In our schools and colleges, it should be possible for the students to pay equal regard to selections from the old statement, The Bhagwad Gita, The Dharmapada, The Zenda Avestaa, The Gospels, The Quran and the GranthSaheb. "If we leave religions out of education altogether", writes Prof Niblett, "we may find ourselves teaching more efficiently, though without meaning to, that the world is chiefly a place for colonisation by technology".

It is the purpose of education to develop love and brotherliness among individuals. We must see to it that the atmosphere of fear or force does not pervade the school. Coercion destroys all the finer sentiments we intend to build in the students. Force turns a human being with a soul into nothing while he is alive. It is twice cursed. It intoxicates the person who employs it and crushes him who is the victim of it. To punish a child through terrorizing him or inflicting violence on him is not the pathway to developing in him a religious sense. The principle of competition is inconsistent with the development of a proper religious sense. Competition cuts at the roots of social understanding. The competitive spirit presupposes that the world outside is encircled by enemies and not by friends. It is a tragedy that in our educational institutions this spirit of competition holds undisturbed sway. True religious life means that educational values should be restated in terms of a co-operative community. Education should provide for the pupils an environment fostering community sense and the art of living together. It should prepare human beings to build a world fit for human beings to live in. From the earliest stage, children should be trained in socially useful and responsible activities. For these reasons the present study has a high significance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A study on "Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony of Under-Graduate Students of Southern India" (With special reference to Shimoga District of Karnataka State).

OPERATIONAL TERMS USED IN THE STUDY

- **Inter-religious Harmony:** The agreement (of feelings, interests, Attitudes and opinions) of different religions is the Inter-religious
- **Harmony:** Religion is the belief in a super human being or beings and more especially in a personal God (or Gods) who controls the Universe and is worshipped and obeyed.
- **Under-graduate Students:** An under-graduate student is a student who is studying for his/her first degree (usually entitled Bachelor of Arts [BA] or Bachelor of Science [B. Sc] or Bachelor of Commerce [B. Com]. There are three levels of under-graduate study equating to first-year, second-year and third-year study.
- **Shimoga:** One of the 30 districts of Karnataka State.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1.To measure and analyze the Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony among under-graduate students.
- 2.To find the difference, if any, between the means of scores on Inter-Religious Harmony test among a) boys and girls (Gender) b) students from different Streams (Arts, Science and Commerce) and students from different Locality (Rural and Urban).

HYPOTHESES

Three hypotheses were framed for this study, which were later converted into null hypotheses for the sake of statistical analysis. The research hypotheses were:

1. There is no Significant Difference in Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony among under-graduate students with respect to Gender.
2. There is no Significant Difference in Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony among under-graduate students with respect to their Streams.
3. There is no Significant Difference in Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony among under-graduate students with respect to their Locality.

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

The present study is a descriptive study, where a survey was undertaken to measure and Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony of the student's under-graduate students in Shimoga District, with regard to the Gender, Streams and Locality. The survey was carried out in three phases. These Phases are as follows. Phase-One: Preparation of Tools, Phase-Two: Selection of sample for the study, Phase-Three: Procedure for the collection of data.

VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

In the present study the variables taken into consideration by the investigator were as follows.

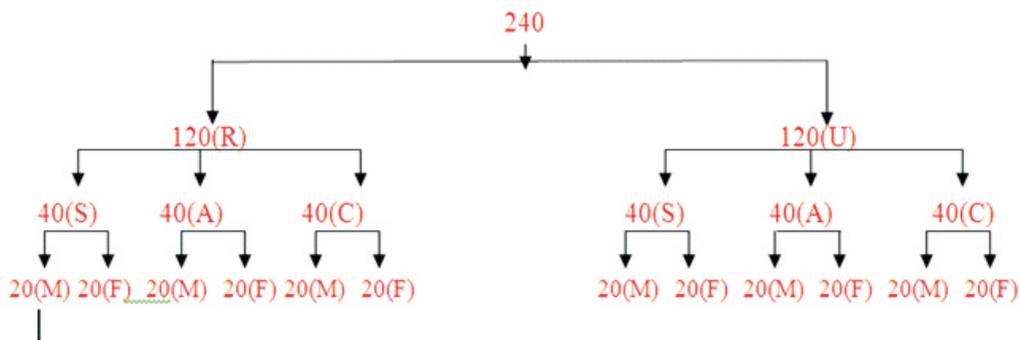
- Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony
- Gender (Male and Female)
- Streams (Arts, Science and Commerce)
- Locality (Rural and Urban)

Attitude towards Inter-Religion Harmony: Attitudes are the hypothetical constructs; they are manifested in conscious experience, verbal reports, gross behaviour and psychological symptoms. Students of under graduates may have different attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony. This was measured by the tool titled "Attitude towards Inter- Religions Harmony Scale' which was constructed by the investigator.

Gender: Males and Females between the age of nineteen and twenty-one years. They belonged to Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other religions from Urban and Rural areas.

SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The sample of the study involved students studying in under graduation courses of different colleges in Shimoga district of Karnataka State. A Stratified Random Sample of two hundred and forty (N=240) was drawn from Ten colleges. Out of two hundred and forty (N=240) students 120 were Rural and 120 were urban Students. (S=Science; A= Arts and C= Commerce)



TOOLS USED IN THE STUDY

Following were the tools specially designed by the investigator for the present research study.

Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony Scale: It was developed by Investigator, which was standardized with the purpose to assess the Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony. The scale has 40 items. The positive item has a response choice, given as Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree which carries the score as 5,4,3,2 and 1. The minimum score obtained can be 40 and the maximum can be 200.

Validity: The scale is said to be valid, when it measures what it is supposed to measure. Opinions of the 10 experts were sought for the content validity of the scale, which included 80 questions. The validity of the scale was established by collecting the opinion of the experts. The experts agreed that the items in the attitude scale are relevant and worthwhile for collecting the data and considering the suggestions of the experts, some of the items and responses were deleted, modified and rewritten and finally 40 items were finalized.

Reliability: A scale is said to be reliable when it measures what it is intended to measure. Reliability refers to the accuracy or internal consistency or internal stability of measurements by a test. The reliability co-efficient was found to be 0.78, that depicted the high reliability of the tool. The final form of the scale holding 40 items was used as an Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony Scale.

PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION

The investigator collected the data in three phases, which were described below:

Phase One: A list of collected from Pre- University Board office.

Phase Two: The investigator visited the under-graduate colleges about the purpose of the study. He requested them to grant permission to administer the attitude towards Inter- Religion Harmony Scale for the students of under-graduate. Having obtained the permission, the Scale was administered on the students of the under-graduate.

Phase Three: The data so received has recorded and analyzed by the investigator.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED:

The hypotheses were tested by analyzing data by applying appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics.

- Descriptive statistics, Mean and Standard Deviation were used for the different variables in the study.
- 't' test was employed to study the significance of difference between the means of scores of students.
- Fisher's One Way Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was done to find the significant difference between the means of scores.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

Objective 1: To measure and analyze the Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony among under-graduate students.

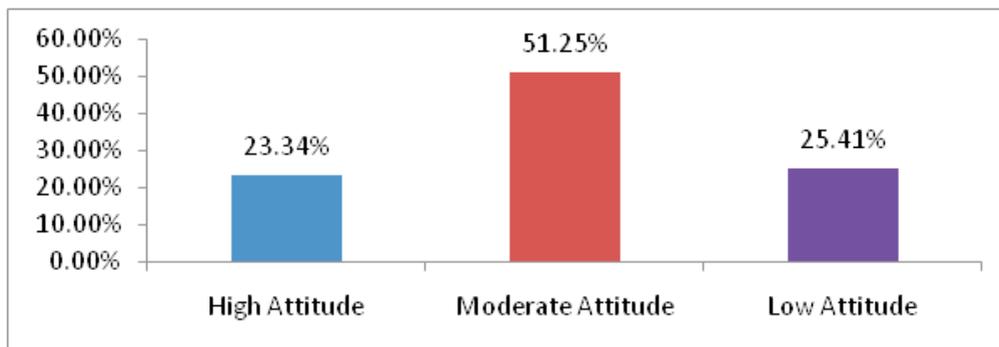
The category, range and percentage of under-graduates under different levels of Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony

Sl. No	Range	Level	f	%
1	120 and above	High Attitude	56	23.34
2	95 to 119	Moderate Attitude	123	51.25
3	94 and below	Low Attitude	61	25.41
Total			240	100.00

Above table reveals that, 23.34% of the under-graduate students having high attitude, 51.25% of the under-graduate students having moderate level of attitude and remaining 25.41% of the under-graduate students having low attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony. Thus, we concluded that majority of the Students having normal attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony.

Graph 1

Graph shows different levels and their percentage of under-graduate student's attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony



Objective-2: To find the difference, if any, between the means of scores on Inter-Religious Harmony test among a) boys and girls (Gender) b) students from different Streams (Arts, Science and Commerce) and students from different Locality (Rural and Urban).

In order to test this objective, three null hypotheses were formulated as given below.

Hypothesis 1: There is no Significant Difference in Attitude towards Inter-religious Harmony among under-graduate students with respect to gender.

Table showing the t test result between under-graduate students Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Male students	120	106.6583	22.06350	0.796	Not Significant at 0.05 level
Female students	120	104.5333	19.17059		

The analysis and interpretation of the data related to the hypothesis was done with the help of 't' test. The table value of 't' is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. The obtained 't' value is 0.796 which is lower than the theoretical table value so accept the null hypothesis i.e., "There is no Significant Difference in Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony among under-graduate students with respect to Gender"

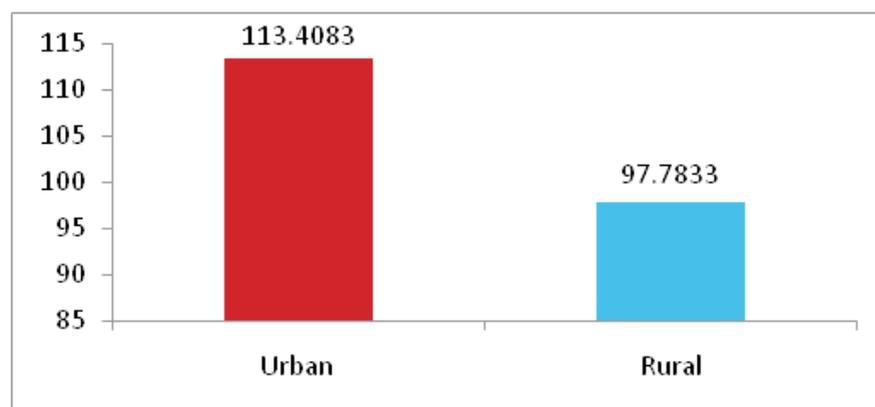
Hypothesis 2: There is no Significant Difference in Attitude towards Inter-religious Harmony among under-graduate students with respect to their Locality.

Table showing the t test results of under-graduate students Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony based on Locality

Locality	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Urban	120	113.4083	23.01278	6.320	Significant at 0.05 level
Rural	120	97.7833	14.27943		

Graph 2

Graph showing mean difference in attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony among under-graduate students with respect to their locality



The analysis and interpretation of the data related to the hypothesis was done with the help of 't' test. The table value of 't' is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. The obtained t value is 6.320 which is higher than the theoretical table value so rejects the null hypothesis and formulates the alternative hypothesis i.e., "There is a Significant Difference in Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony among under-graduate students with respect to locality". Thus, it is concluded that the urban students are high

attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony compare to the rural Students.

Hypothesis 3: There is no Significant Difference in Attitude towards Inter-religious Harmony among under-graduate students with respect to their Streams.

Table showing the ANOVA results of under-graduate students Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony based on Streams

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3046.233	2	1523.116	1.811	0.166
Within Groups	199314.193	237	840.988		
Total	202360.426	239			

The obtained F value is 1.811 which is less than the theoretical table at 0.166 level of significance, so accept the null hypothesis i.e., "There is no Significant Difference in Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony among under-graduate students with respect to their streams".

FINDINGS:

1.23.34% of the under-graduate students having high attitude, 51.25% of the under-graduate students having moderate level of attitude and remaining 25.41% of the under-graduate students having low attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony. Thus we concluded that majority of the Students having normal attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony.

2."There is no Significant Difference in Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony among under-graduate students with respect to gender"

3."There is a Significant Difference in Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony among under-graduate students with respect to locality". Thus, it is concluded that the urban students are high attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony compare to the rural Students.

4."There is no Significant Difference in Attitude towards Inter-Religious Harmony among under-graduate students with respect to their streams".

IMPLICATIONS:

- Special programmes can be organized to increase the knowledge about different religions of the students of under graduate students so as to develop Inter-Religious Harmony.
- Special Inter Religious Programmes in the form of discussion, Seminars, Symposium, Lectures can be organized for the students of graduation Level.
- Encourage must be given to the students to participate in Inter Religious harmony Programmes and Inter Religious dialogues.
- Students from Rural background are having lower level of Inter Religious harmony compared to urban background Students, Steps may be taken to enhance the Inter Religious harmony among them.
- Since important component of Inter Religious, harmony may be incorporated in the curriculum for the primary to Higher education level, with the objective of cultivating positive attitude towards Inter Religious harmony.

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