A Study of Religious Attitude among School Students in Jaffna District, Srilanka

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Abstract: *Religion is an important social force which influences human behaviour from the very beginning of human history. Man believes in supernatural power which he names as "God", and takes all efforts to please that power through the medium of song, dance, ritual, ceremony and sacrifice. Religious practices helps man in his social and economic life and the religious emotion of man may be perceived as it is manifested in art and literature. The present study is to find out the religious attitude of the school students of different social and educational background, and to know whether the religious behaviour of the people is influenced by their sex, educational, religious and cultural differences. The obtained data were statistically analysed. The main finding of this study is that there is gender difference in religious attitude. Subject, parental religiousness and birth order are not influence religious attitude. But nativity, parental education and religion influence religious attitude among school students.*
Key words: *Religion, Students, Attitude*

I.   Introduction

Religion is a widespread and significant social force. Religious doctrines may differ and activities based on these may vary but Religion itself has been dominant factor in the life of man. From the very beginning of human history man is found supplicating some unknown power through the medium of song, dance, rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices. The nature of this unknown poser differs according to the nature of the contemporary conditions. This unknown power is named variously as God, Spirit or Ghost. Religious practices colours both the social and the economic life of man. Art and literature owe much to the ecstasy of religious emotion.

An attitude can be defined as an enduring organization of motivational, emotional, perceptual and cognitive processes with respect to some aspect of the individual's world. Attitudes themselves are not actions. The overt behaviour of an individual is the manifestation of his attitude. It is also a mental and natural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a direct influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situation with which it is related. Attitude involves some action either overtly on in his/her entity positively or negatively.

Attitudes are formed in an individual in the process of his inter correlation with human beings and with some social institution. Selectivity is an important factor in the formation of attitudes. Attitudes are formed by integration of numerous specific responses of similar type. Attitudes are inner fined, diffused and nonspecific and are regulated suitable to the individual's behaviour. Dramatic experiences may be the root cause of some permanent attitudes in an individual. An attitude may also be gained by adopting the readymade attitudes of parents, teachers or playmates, culture, family, personality, learning, and religious, and suggestion are some of the factors operating in the formation of attitudes. Summen was the first psychologist to study attitude by using the questionnaire method. He conducted an investigation in 1998 for the study of beliefs. He framed 25 questions such as "will the death penalty for murders always be held justifiable among civilized people" and asked his subject to rank the questions on the basis of the answers:

He used both direct and indirect forms of this method to measure attitudes. In its direct form the subjects were asked to rank the statements which express their own attitude towards the problem from most favourable to most unfavourable or they were asked to state intensity and certainty of their opinions towards issues. Children were put under strict discipline and adults were expected to take part in various aspects of Formal religion irrespective of their personal inclination. In U.S.A it was found that there was a decline in adult church membership, Sunday school membership and voluntary contributions to church during 1900-1940. Decline of religious activity in the United States during this period was due to social change and the change of attitude towards religious authority.

Objectives of the study:

The main objective of this study is to find out the religious attitude of the students of different social and educational background, and to know whether the religious behaviour of the people is influenced by their sex, educational, religious and cultural differences.

Hypothesis:
- Female students will have more religious attitude than male students.
- Science students will have more religious attitude than art students.
- Students from town areas will have will have more religious attitude than students from village areas.
- Students whose parents are religious will have more religious attitude than students whose parents are non religious.
- Students whose parents are illiterate will have more religious attitude than students whose parents are educated.
- First born will have more religious attitude than last born.

II.   Methodology

Sample

   The present investigation is concerned with the study of religious attitude among school students. The principal aim of the study is to find out whether sex, nativity, religion, birth order, subject, parental religiousness have any influence on religious attitude among school students. The study has been conducted among school students in Jaffna district school. Total numbers of students selected were 100 of which 68 were males and 32 were females. The students were selected on the basis of random sampling procedure.

Materials used

The materials used in the study by the researcher to collect data were:
i) Personal Information Schedule and
ii) Religious Attitude Scale
a. Personal Information Schedule – An information schedule was designed by the investigator to produce demographic and biographical information from the sample required for the study (see Appendix – I)
b. Religious attitude scale – In the present study a standardized questionnaire, Religious Attitude Scale was used to collect data from the selected samples. This Religious Attitude Scale was developed by Professor. Rajamanickam and it consists of thirty items in the form of statements. It is based on Likert scale technique. The thirty questions are under six headings namely (1) The nature of God, (2) Future life, (3) Priests, (4) The spirit world, (5) Personal religion and (6) Formal religion. There are five questions under each topic. This is a five point scale and the subjects were asked to underline any of the five alternatives which came nearest to their own views.

Procedure:

   The test was administered to the randomly selected subjects. Each subject was given a questionnaire and asked to fill up the personal data which had been enclosed with it. The following instructions were given to the subject "The scale contains thirty statements and you may agree or disagree with certain statements. Whether you agree or disagree please indicate your degree of agreement with statement by putting a tick (✔) mark on the appropriate squares provided on the questionnaire". No time limit was fixed for answering the questionnaire and the completed questionnaires were collected from the subjects.

Method of Scoring

   There were five possible views, which could be taken by the subject regarding each of thirty statements and they were strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. These views were given numerical values ranging from 1 to 5. There were both affirmative and negative questions. For the affirmative questions strongly agree received 1 mark, agree 2 neutral 3 disagree 4, and strongly disagree 5, and for the negative question strongly agree received 5 marks, agree 4, neutral 3, disagree 2 and strongly disagree 1. A low score indicated pro religious attitude, and a high score indicated anti religious attitude. According to the scores obtained the subjects were divided into the following categories.

Scores		Categories
0 to 30	-	Highly religious
30 to 60	-	Moderately religious
61 to 90	-	Neutral
91 to 120	-	Moderately anti religious
121 to 150	-	Highly anti religious

Design

The present study is an ex-post facto research whereby the researcher has no control over the variables in the study. It is a descriptive research where the researcher seeks to measure the variables (i.e. religious attitude) for testing the formulated hypotheses.

III. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Showing the mean, SD, t-value and level of significance of religious attitude among school students on the basis of gender.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	LS
Male	68	87.19	19.85	1.98	0.01
Female	32	79.19	18.35		

Table 1 showing the mean, SD, t-value and level of significance of religious attitude among school students on the basis of gender. From the analysis of the table, it is inferred that both males (87.19) and females (79.19) come under neutral category in religious attitude. As the obtained t-value (1.98) is statistically significant, there is significant difference between males and females in their attitude. Hence, it is inferred that gender influences religious attitude among school students.

Table 2: Showing the mean, SD, t-value and level of significance of religious attitude among school students on the basis of subject.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	LS
Arts	38	85.29	20.21	0.71	NS
Science	55	82.11	22.48		

Table 2 showing the mean, SD, t-value and level of significance of religious attitude among school students on the basis of subject. From the analysis of the table, it is inferred that Arts students (85.29) and science students (82.11) belong to neutral category in religious attitude. As the obtained t-value (0.71) is statistically insignificant, there is no significant difference between Arts students and Science students in religious attitude. Hence, it is inferred that subject do not influences religious attitude among school students.

Table 3: Showing the mean, SD, t-value and level of significance of religious attitude among school students on the basis of nativity.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	LS
Village	69	87.7	18.38	3.15	0.01
Town	29	75.31	17.35		

Table 3 showing the mean, SD, t-value and level of significance of religious attitude among school students on the basis of nativity. From the analysis of the table, it is inferred that students from village areas (87.7) and students from town areas (75.31) belong to neutral category in religious attitude. As the obtained t-value (3.15) is statistically insignificant, there is a significant difference between village students and town students in religious attitude. Hence, it is inferred that nativity influences religious attitude among school students.

Table 4: Showing the mean, SD, t-value and level of significance of religious attitude among school students on the basis of their parental religiousness.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	LS
Religious	87	83.69	18.22	0.98	NS
Non-Religious	13	91.31	27		

Table 4 showing the mean, SD, t-value and level of significance of religious attitude among school students on the basis of parental religiousness. From the analysis of the table, it is inferred that students whose parents are religious (83.69) belong to neutral category and students whose parents are non-religious (91.31) belong to moderately anti-religious category in religious attitude. As the obtained t-value (0.98) is statistically nonsignificant, there is no statistical difference between school students in religious attitude on the basis of their parental religiousness.

Table 5: Showing the mean, SD, t-value and level of significance of religious attitude among school students on the basis of their parental education.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	LS
Educated	79	82.54	18.55	2.21	0.05
Illiterate	21	93.48	20.51		

Table 5 showing the mean, SD, t-value and level of significance of religious attitude among school students on the basis of parental education. From the analysis of the table, it is inferred that students whose parents are educated (82.54) belong to neutral category and students whose parents are illiterate (93.48) belong to moderately anti-religious category in religious attitude. As the obtained t-value (2.21) is statistically significant, there is significant difference between school students in their religious attitude on the basis of their parental education. Table 6: Showing the mean, SD, F-ration and level of significance of religious attitude among school students on the basis of their religion.

Table 6 Showing the mean, SD, F-ratio and level of significance of religious attitude among school students on the basis of their religion

Gender	N	Mean	SD	F-ratio	LS
Hindu	88	86.76	159.7		
Muslim	6	55.67	151.3	9.2	0.01
Christian	6	72.83	362.8		

From the analysis of the table, it is inferred that Hindu students (86.76) and Christian students (72.83) belong to neutral category and Muslim students (55.67) belong to moderately religious category in religious attitude. As the obtained F-ratio (9.20) is statistically significant, there is significant difference between school students in their religious attitude on the basis of their religion. Hence it is inferred that religion influences the religious attitude among school students.

Table 7: Showing the mean, SD, F-ratio and level of significance of religious attitude among school students on the basis of birth order.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	F-ratio	LS
Ist born	25	83.48	160.5		
IInd born	22	81.27	187.8	0.41	NS
IIIrd born	23	85.70	251.5		
IVth born	24	86.96	105.2		

Table 7 showing the mean, SD, F-ratio and level of significance of religious attitude among school students on the basis of their birth order. From the analysis of the table, it is inferred that 1st born (83.48), 2nd born (81.27), 3rd born (85.70) and last born (86.96) belong to neutral category in religious attitude. As the obtained F-ratio (0.41) is statistically insignificant, there is no significant difference between school students in their religious attitude on the basis of birth order. Hence it is inferred that birth order do not influence the religion attitude among school students.

IV.   Conclusions

The present study was aimed to find out the religious attitude among the school student in Jaffna district. The study has led to the following conclusions.

- ➤ Gender influences the religious attitude among school students. Both Males and Females belong to neutral category in religious attitude. Female students are having more religious attitude than Male students.
- ➤ Nativity influences the religious attitude among school students. Students from Town and Students from village, both belong to neutral category in their religious attitude. Students from town areas are having more religious attitude than students from village areas.
- ➤ Parental religiousness has no influence on the religious attitude of school students.
- ➤ Parental education influences the religious attitude among school students. Students whose parents are educated belong to neutral category and students whose parents are illiterate belong to moderately anti religious category in religious attitude. Students whose parents are educated are having more religious attitude than students whose parents are illiterate.
- ➤ Religion influences the religious attitude among school students. Muslim students belong to moderately religious and Hindu and Christian student belong to neutral category in religious attitude.
- ➤ Birth order does not influence the religious attitude among school students.

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