



Association between Strength of Religious Faith and Generative Altruism among Mizo Adults

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to find out the association between strength of religious faith and altruism among Mizo adults. Samples consisted of 120 adults from Mizoram, comprising of 60 males and 60 females divided into three age groups: young aged adults (20-39 years); middle aged adults (40-59 years) and old aged adults (60 and older). The results of the correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation ($r=.321$, $p<.01$) between the variables. Descriptive statistics indicated average levels of altruism and high strength of religious faith among Mizo adults. Independent Samples t-test revealed significant difference between males and females in strength of religious faith ($p<.05$), where females scored slightly higher in strength of religious faith than males. The results of One-Way ANOVA in the three age groups indicated no significant age group differences in strength of religious faith and altruism. It can be concluded that association between strength of religious faith and altruism exist among Mizo adults and significant differences in strength of religious faith exist between males and females of Mizo adults.

Keywords: Altruism, Religious Faith, Mizo Adults.

Introduction

According to Cambridge Dictionary faith is defined as great trust or confidence in something or someone (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021) *Almanac Britannica* also defines faith as an inner conviction a trust between human beings to a supreme God or an ultimate salvation. In religious teachings and traditions, it is an inner certainty an attitude of love granted by God himself. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017*), according to the *APA dictionary* it is a belief and trust in a deity or other super natural force, or entity seen as setting rules of conduct, responding to prayers, and typically assuring the ultimate triumph of good over evil. Faith may be an intensely private and personal in some of its aspects and features but usually involves the believer's devotion to a particular religious institution or body and an organized system of traditional ceremonies and doctrines. Most theologians in

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monotheistic traditions insist that faith involves an orientation of the entire person's personality toward God or an entity rather than merely acceptance of certain teachings and doctrine (American Psychological Association Dictionary, 2021).

There is no denying faith is a complex psychological phenomenon, Psychologist or Researchers generally agree with the notion that a tendency to engage in religious behaviour or faith to some sort of entity evolved early in human history. However, there is some disagreement on the exact mechanisms or process that drove the evolution of the religious mind. There are two schools of thought within science and psychology, specifically evolutionary psychology that faith and religion evolved due to natural selection and is an adaptation, in which case faith or religion put forward some sort of evolutionary advantage in it. The other is that religious beliefs and behaviours, such as the concept of a God and faith in such entity, may have emerged as by-products of other adaptive traits or qualities without initially being selected because of the benefits it holds for survival (Sosis, R et al., 2013).

Altruism is behaviour or actions intended to benefit another, even when this behaviour action risks possible sacrifices to the welfare of the actor of altruism. There are several critical aspects or properties to altruism. (a) Altruism must involve action. Good intentions or positive thoughts do not constitute as altruism. (b) The action is goal-directed or oriented, although this may be either be done knowingly or reflexive by the actor. (c) The goal must be to further the welfare or be helpful to another. If another's welfare is merely an unintended secondary consequence of behaviour designed primarily to further the individual's own welfare and state, the act than by that person is not altruistic. (d) Altruism sometimes carries possible risk and danger to the actor's or individuals who followed altruistic behaviour own welfare. (f) Altruism sets no conditions or boundaries, its purpose is to further the welfare of another individual or community, without expectation of reward for the altruistic behaviour done (Monroe, K. R. 2001).

There is a debate regarding the meaning and development of altruism in the scientific community and its use for the society or community and individuals, from the viewpoint of evolutionary biology, altruism exists because altruistic behaviour or action minimizes the fitness of the actor or the person who did the altruistic behaviour but increases the fitness of the person he or she helped and benefits or increases the survivability of the community as a whole (West, Gardner, and Griffin 2006). Whereas, philosophical and psychological explanation refers to intentions and motives rather than evolutionary or survivability usefulness for self or others (Hoffman, 1981). Altruism goes beyond benefitting of family or cooperativeness, which intends to benefit both the receiver and the actor of the altruistic behaviour and could thus sometimes be somewhat interpreted as selfishness (Macaulay and Berkowitz 1970; Hoffman 1981, 1982; Krebs 1982; Piliavin and Charng 1990). This ideal concept of pure love has found its secular translation into the definitions of altruism, this definition of altruism excludes any satisfaction for the altruistic actor, second order satisfaction or gratification is considered to be behaviour that satisfies one's self-concept or identity. To a more realistic point of view, Wilson stated that a person is altruistic only if

he/she sacrifices some sort of interest of possession, time or money or energy, own needs, or desires in the interest of other people (Wilson 2004).

Another concept that may have relation to the term of altruism is 'prosocial behaviour'. This behaviour seemed to be fostered during a child's growth or upbringing in order to develop good and desirable traits that are vital for the proper functioning of society and the community (Knafo and Plomin 2006); it relates to fairness and requires a sense of morality by the altruistic actor. Pro-social orientation or altruism can also be defined as internal psychological states like attitudes, values and emotional reactions or thinking that value other people and especially others in need (Benson, Clary, and Scales 2007). Therefore, altruism can be considered as pro-social behaviour to benefit others, yet it also goes beyond this, in social psychology differentiation between helping behaviour, pro-social behaviour and altruistic behaviour is present. Prosocial behaviour acts to improve the situation of the recipient; the motivation of the altruistic actor is not actually to fulfil professional duties (Bierhoff, 2002).

Rationale of the Study

Numerous research regarding association between strength of religious faith and altruism among other cultures and ethnic groups can be found, through a thorough review of literature, but a psychological and quantitative research regarding association between strength of religious faith and altruism among Mizos or Mizo adults is extremely rare or not existing at all, and as religious faith and altruism is seen as the main pillars or foundation in Mizo culture or identity, research in such topic is highly sought for.

Objectives of the Study

- a) To find out the strength of religious faith and levels of altruism in Mizo adults
- b) To find out if significant gender differences exist in Mizo adults, with the measures of strength of religious faith and levels of altruism
- c) To find out if significant correlation between strength of religious faith and levels of altruism exists.
- d) To find out if significant differences exist between the three age groups of young aged, middle aged and old aged Mizo adults.

Hypotheses

- 1) It is expected that strength of religious faith and levels of altruism to be high among Mizo adults
- 2) It is expected that significant gender differences to exist in the measures strength of religious faith.
- 3) It is expected that no significant gender differences to exist in the measures of altruism
- 4) Significant positive correlation is expected to exist in the measures of strength of religious faith and levels of altruism
- 5) It is expected that significant age groups differences to exist in the measures of strength of religious faith and levels of altruism.

Methodology of Study

Quantitative research methods were utilized where objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical data were collected through questionnaires, and analysed through computational techniques. For testing the hypotheses in the study, appropriate statistical methods were applied, and data analysis was conducted using SPSS 19.

Sample of Study

120 (60 male and 60 female), divided into three age groups: young adults (20-39 years); middle aged adults (40-59 years) and old aged adults (60 and older). Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling procedure was employed, and the data collection was conducted online using Google forms following all ethical considerations.

Tools Used

The Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSRFQ, Plante, T, 2010) is a validated and reliable questionnaire that assess the strength of religious faith. It possesses 10 items, scored at a 4-point Likert type scoring scale. Generative Altruism Scale (GAS, Büssing, A. et al., 2021) is a validated and reliable scale that assess generative altruism, it possesses 9 items, scored at a 3-point Likert type scoring scale.

Statistical Treatment of Data

As the data acquired had acceptable normality (skewness, kurtosis), parametric statistical test or procedures were utilized, such as independent samples t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Pearson correlation.

Analysis and Interpretation

The findings of the present study and their interpretations are presented in the following in accordance with the objectives.

Objective 1: To find out the strength of religious faith and levels of altruism in Mizo adults.

The overall strength of religious faith and altruism levels among Mizo adults is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Generative Altruism	120	.0	20.0	10.867	4.0354	.195	.221	.252	.438
SCSRFQ	120	20.0	40.0	32.475	4.6832	-.200	.221	-.139	.438
Valid N (listwise)	120								

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics revealed that the strength of religious faith among Mizo adults is 32.47 from a possible maximum of 40 which falls in the category of high strength of religious faith, and it also revealed the score on generative altruism to be at 10.86 from a possible maximum of 27 which falls in the category of average generative altruism, therefore hypothesis no.1 is rejected which assumes both religious faith and levels of altruism to be high among Mizo adults.

Objective 2: To find out if significant gender differences exist in Mizo adults, with the measures of strength of religious faith and levels of altruism.

The mean gender differences in strength of religious faith and levels of altruism in Mizo adults is tested by applying independent samples t-test and is presented in the following table 2 and 3.

Table 2: Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Generative Altruism	Male	60	10.600	4.3538	.5621
	Female	60	11.133	3.7074	.4786
SCSRFQ	Male	60	31.067	4.7116	.6083
	Female	60	33.883	4.2430	.5478

Table 3: Independent Samples t-test

		t-test for Equality of Means				
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Generative Altruism	Equal variances assumed	-.722	118	.471	-.5333	.7382
	Equal variances not assumed	-.722	115.077	.471	-.5333	.7382
SCSRFQ	Equal variances assumed	-3.441	118	.001	-2.8167	.8186
	Equal variances not assumed	-3.441	116.729	.001	-2.8167	.8186

Table 2 and 3 (Group Statistics and Independent samples t-test) revealed that significant gender differences exist in the measures of strength of religious faith ($p < .05$) where females scored higher than males, but not in the measures of altruism, therefore hypothesis no. 2 is accepted which assumes significant gender differences to exist in the measures strength of religious faith and hypothesis no. 3 is also accepted which assumes no significant gender differences to exist in the measures altruism.

Objective 3: To find out if significant correlation between strength of religious faith and levels of altruism exist.

The correlation or association between strength of religious faith and altruism is presented in table 4.

Table 4: Correlations

		Generative Altruism	SCSRFQ
Generative Altruism	Pearson Correlation	1	.321**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
SCSRFQ	Pearson Correlation	.321**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 4 Correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation ($r=.321$, $p<.01$) between the variables of strength of religious faith and altruism, therefore hypothesis no.4 is accepted which assumes significant positive correlation to exist in the measures of strength of religious faith and levels of altruism.

Objective 4: To find out if significant differences exist between the three age groups of young aged, middle aged and old aged Mizo adults.

The analysis of variance for the three age groups is represented in table 5.

Table 5: ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SCSRFQ Total	Between Groups	10.950	2	5.475	.246	.782
	Within Groups	2598.975	117	22.213		
	Total	2609.925	119			
Generative Altruism Total	Between Groups	28.067	2	14.033	.860	.426
	Within Groups	1909.800	117	16.323		
	Total	1937.867	119			

Table 5 shows the results of the One-Way ANOVA for the three age groups, young aged adults (20-39 years); middle aged adults (40-59 years) and old aged adults (60 and older) and it indicated no significant age group differences in strength of religious faith and altruism, therefore hypothesis no.5 is rejected which assumes significant age groups differences to exist in the measures of strength of religious faith and levels of altruism.

Major Findings

From the present study, it has been found that strength of religious faith and altruism possess moderate positive association and correlation, such results has been replicated and found in the majority of similar studies in other population, country and culture, especially when the religious faith involved religions that teaches altruism or helping of others without reward, in a study conducted that involved 126 countries it was found that religious people or people with high strength of religious faith were more likely to help stranger or other people, individuals living in devout countries or places were more likely to help others even if they themselves were not religious. The data from the 126 countries showed that religion plays a role in promoting altruism and pro-social norms and values that motivate helping strangers (Bennett, M. R. et al 2017).

Christianity is the largest religion in Mizoram, 87% of the population follows the religion (Mizoram Census 2011). One reason for results of positive moderate association between strength of religious faith and altruism especially in the context of Mizoram and Mizo adults could be the following of Christian teachings, there are more than 34 verses associated to altruism (Open Bible) and the main teachings of Christ was based on altruism (Reiss, J. 2021). Other research also supports the notion that Christian teachings promote altruistic behaviour or action, results suggest that horizontal or “love-of-neighbour” faith is a powerful predictor of altruism. Intrinsic and orthodox religions are more aligned with positive views toward helping others (Ji et al 2006) such could also be the case in the Mizo adult population or it could be due to the cultural significance and importance of altruism and the religion in itself where the Mizo culture or population specifically developed a relationship between them and see it as an identity necessary of being a Mizo.

Independent Samples t-test revealed significant differences between males and females in strength of religious faith ($p < .05$), where females scored slightly higher in strength of religious faith than males, these results also supports other intensive research done worldwide in this area, in a worldwide study done by the acclaimed and renowned Pew Research Centre based in the United States of America, an estimated 83.4% of women around the world identify with a faith group, compared with 79.9% of men, In 84 countries for which data was collected, the average population of women who say they pray daily is 8 percentage points higher than the average share of men, even religiously unaffiliated women in some countries, including the United States and Uruguay, report praying daily at higher rates than unaffiliated men do. Across all measures of religious commitment and strength of religious faith, Christian women are more religious than Christian men, usually by a significant margin, in 54 countries where data were collected on Christian daily habits, Christian women report praying daily more frequently than Christian men by an overall average point of 10 percentage and Mizo female adults seem to be following the worldwide trend (Murphy, C. 2021).

Researchers of many fields have been looking into the possible reasons for the gender gaps in religious commitment and faith for some time, they have proposed many different theories and reasons, which covers a wide range of sources and fields including biology,

psychology, genetics, environment, social status, workforce participation and even a lack of existential security felt by many women as they generally are more impacted than men by poverty, illness, old age and violence, presently, a growing consensus in the academic world is that the religious gender gap or differences probably stems from a combination of multiple factors. But there is still no agreement on *exactly which* factors are most responsible for the gender differences. (Murphy, C. 2021), another major finding is the results of the analysis of variance where among the three age groups strength of religious faith shows no significant differences, according to a pew research centre study in 46 countries across the world, adults under age 40 are less likely to say religion is “very important” in their everyday life and endeavours as compared to older adults and the opposite is true in only two countries, in 58 countries, there are no significant age differences according to surveys conducted in more than 100 nations (Kramer, S., & Fahmy, D. 2021) and Mizo adults seem to follow the trend of the inhabitants in the 58 countries, as the Mizo culture is a very conservative culture since the advent of Christianity this could also have resulted in quite similar levels of strength of religious faith in the three age groups.

Limitations

Although the present study revealed robust results, it was not free from some limitations. As restrictive measures due to the pandemic prevented free movement, data had to be gathered through online mode, in specific through Google forms, which somewhat limited the heterogeneity of the samples and limited the sample size of the research to be small or lesser in number, as only individuals possessing machines (smart phones, computers etc) with good internet connectivity could participate in the research, individuals who are not familiar with the applications used in the research also could not participate in the research and some older aged adults needed helping answering the questionnaires, as such the results might not be a good representation of the whole population.

Conclusion

The present research analysed the association between strength of religious faith and altruism among Mizo adults and samples consisted of 120 adults from Mizoram, comprising of 60 males and 60 females divided into three age groups: young aged adults (20-39 years); middle aged adults (40-59 years) and old aged adults (60 and older), results revealed a moderate positive correlation or association ($r=.321$, $p<.01$) between strength of religious faith and altruism which is consistent with other Christianity dominated cultures and could be the case due to the teachings that takes place within the Mizo Christian community, Independent Samples t-test revealed significant differences between males and females in strength of religious faith where females scored slightly higher in strength of religious faith than males which is also consistent with numerous research in the area. The results of One-Way ANOVA in the three age groups indicated no significant age group differences in strength of religious faith and altruism. It can be concluded that moderate positive association between strength of religious faith and altruism exist among Mizo adults and significant gender differences in strength of religious faith exist in Mizo adults. The research findings is vital to further reinforce the scientific knowledge pool and literature in the context of the Mizo adults and the variables measured as no other research in this manner within the Mizo

context can be found. It also shows the positive side of religion, how altruism and strength of religious faith go hand in hand especially in the Mizo context, the research findings can also be used in future studies that further delves or look into the variables studied.

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