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Understanding Of Place Spirituality In Pakistan: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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Place Spirituality (PS) can be defined as an act of religious representation and behavior¹;31 which constitutes of emotional bonding to a place and spirituality-based attachment (i.e., attachment to GOD)^{2,3}. The present study used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to explore the concept of Place Spirituality on the Muslim population of Pakistan and to discover their concepts, attitudes, and perceptions about attachment to GOD and attachment to place. Two online and three face-to-face semi-structured interviews were taken. Analysis was done through thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke⁴. The study resulted in five major themes; spirituality, attachment to GOD in the context of religion and trauma, and attachment to place in the context of religion and trauma. These themes were followed by nineteen superordinate themes. The study will help understand place attachment with respect to religion and aid in developing quantitative measuring tools.

Keywords: place spirituality; attachment to GOD; attachment to place; Islamic spirituality; IPA; qualitative study.

Introduction

Over 90% of people worldwide agree that God or another similar spiritual force either appears to exist and might exist⁵. Though people's specific views of God differ, all cultures and religions share the idea that God is a strong supernatural entity⁶. Attention has been focused on attachment to God within the psychology of religion as a crucial new area for exploring individual differences in spirituality⁷. Some contend that attachment theory is a powerful and effective integrative framework that helps explain spiritual concepts (like conversion, devotional and prayers) as well as the effects of spirituality, like improved interpersonal relationships, coping mechanisms, and mental health⁸. While the subject of

Christians' experiences has been studied in relation to their attachment to God, some authorities have expressed doubt about the potential application of the attachment theory to Islamic spirituality. If the attachment construct is to contribute to a better understanding of Muslim spirituality and mental well-being, it is crucial to consider its relevance to Muslims.

There is little research on religious practices and beliefs. Most of the research that does exist focuses on the effects of religiosity, measures of how often people pray or attend religious services, or the significance they give to their religion, rather than how often people are exposed to the idea of God. Place spirituality continues to be a crucial, undiluted topic of discussion in psychology of religion studies. This is because the idea of PS can aid in our understanding of how the divine can be felt in a place through human experiences and how various fundamental elements of religious behavior serve as actual examples of PS. According to the current study, these encounters can offer a special window into the maturational components of adult attachment systems by illuminating the maintenance of relationships with physical environments and attachment to the religious objects.

Literature Review

Place Spirituality (PS)

Aspects like attachment-based spirituality⁸ and emotional ties to place² are essential for understanding Place Spirituality (PS) as a form of religious behavior and representation⁹. Mazumdar and Mazumdar investigated the association between religious beliefs and emotional attachment to place in domestic religious practice of immigrants¹⁰. They concluded that the meanings given to certain places may be an outcome of the divine status of these settings, which bring these people nearer to a divine entity or a sacred object. This study reflects this understanding of PS as an attachment-based model. The aesthetics and characteristics of a place can influence how religious believers and non-believers in each geographic setting connect to the sacred through events (such as military conflicts, terror attacks, crime, violence, and protest movements), ritual practices, artefacts, and narrative. Counted and Watts outlined how religious faith systems can transform attachment to any specific location and view place as the bi-product of an emotional connection to God¹¹. According to these conceptualizations, PS experiences are the bonds of attachment that are created between people, places, and their religious attachments. People can grow attached to the places they visit, the people who hold special meaning for them there, the architectural designs there, and the meanings they give to those places. All these relational ties may result in religious implication and meaningful spiritual encounters that are representation of life transitions, leading the individual to assume the place as an attachment object.

Understanding PS requires seeing how religious believers go back and forth between God and the opportunities around themselves (or towards God to escape a frightening world). When an object of attachment does not fulfil its relationship function, the attached person may

be forced to explore another object to maintain their sense of security and protection^{12, 8, 3}. When individuals believe a place to be unsafe and destructive to their wellbeing, particularly during war or conflict, natural catastrophes, terrorist attacks, police violence, and protests, among other circumstances, people may eventually turn to God. Such an attachment can be created by turning to prayer, demonstrating interest in religious engagement (such as visiting mosques, graves, or shrines), and reading holy texts or religious materials (such as the Quran and supplications). Place-related incidents can make people feel dissatisfied with their surroundings, which might lead them to seek solace in the supernatural to feel safe, emotionally fulfilled, recover, and find hope. Alternatively, when they feel God has abandoned them or they believe He doesn't exist, religious believers are more prone to turn to the social aspects and natural features of a place. People who were once drawn to an object of attachment may search elsewhere for connection if the object loses its magnetic pull.

Circle of Place Spirituality (CoPS) Model

The behavior of a religious believer is portrayed in a circular pattern of movement that starts and ends with the object(s) of attachment, which is a modification of the "Circle of Security" framework¹³. This circular movement pattern illustrates the interaction of the motivations of place-seeking and devotion to God (the inner representation of a divine object). An understanding of (a) how spirituality is a social reality in a place toward which individuals feel drawn and (b) attachment-related place spirituality, which is described as the interaction of place attachment and God attachment, offered by examining the concept of place and God as potential objects of attachment using the attachment theory. This understanding will inform on how place experiences encourage commitment and dedication to and experience of God.

The interaction of the attachment and exploration motivation systems results in a theory of adult religious behavior, in connection to the attachment bond whereby attachment to God and place exploration become realities. Through the attachment and exploration motivations, CoPS is a self-organizing system that promotes possibilities for good subjective needs and for personal progress, respectively. When an individual or individuals within a circle alternate between two attachments poles, it encourages attachment to a divine entity and geographic exploration. Both the physical location and the divine being might be thought of as secure grounds for attachment exploration. The interplay of the attachment-affiliation and exploratory assertion motivational systems —represented by this circular pattern of movement inside CoPS. The idea that place exploration and attachment to God (or/and other objects of attachment) are mutually reinforcing was derived from the notion that human behavior is structured in a circular movement that aims to satisfy both the need for safety and purpose and the determination to satisfy certain biological needs in the environment¹³. When the exploration motivation system is activated, the religious believer moves away from their relationship with God to experience the events and attractions in a place. The attachment system, on the other

hand, is engaged when a religious believer feels concerned and anxious about their interactions in a place, and they seek closeness to and emotional healing through God.

Methodology

Given the exploratory nature of the study, the current study was framed within the qualitative research paradigm. A thorough in-depth analysis was needed to explore the idea, attitudes, and perceptions of attachment to GOD and attachment to place, and this could only be done by qualitative research.

Since the objective of this study was to analyse peoples' actual experiences with the phenomenon, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was the method employed. Based on their own experiences, study participants provided a variety of responses that addressed place spirituality. Later, throughout the analysis phase, we attempted to interpret their responses. Additionally, we investigated the experiences of participants using interpretive analysis (i.e., how they theorized attachment to GOD and place attachment and how they inferred their lived experiences on this subject).

Sample

The participants for the present study consisted of five individuals from Pakistan, who have experienced place spirituality. Inclusion criterion for the participants was 18 years and above from different backgrounds; consequently, a convenient purposive sampling method was employed. One Mufti were selected as religious scholars for the sample. The sample consisted of two academic researchers with at least an M.Phil. and five years of teaching experience, while the other two individuals were from the community who have experienced attachment to place leading to attachment to GOD (traumatically or religiously) were incorporated in the study. Additionally, it was required of the scholars that they had prior teaching or academic research experience in the area of religion and spirituality.

Table 1

Description of Sample.

Case	Age	Gender	Occupation (education)	Religion (Sect)	Place	Event	Interview from (Language)
C1	35	Male	Khatib (M.A- Arabic)	Islam (Sunni)	All religious places	Incident of Al-Aqsa Mosque	Murree (Urdu)
C2	58	Male	Teaching (Ph.D. Islamic Studies)	Islam (Shia)	Mosque	APS Peshawar	Rawalpindi (Urdu)
C3	46	Male	Armed Officer (M.Phil Islamic)	Islam (Shia)	Mosque	Death of father	Abbottabad (English)

			Studies)					
C4	41	Female	Teaching (M.Phil Islamic Studies)	Islam (Sunni)	Holy Kaaba	Car accident		Islamabad (Urdu)
C5	52	Female	Administrator (M.Phil Islamic Studies)	Islam (Sunni)	Mosque	Death of father		Rawalpindi (English)

Notes. APS: Army public School, M.A: Master of Arts, Ph.D.: Doctor of Philosophy, M.Phil: Master of Philosophy

Data Collection Tool

In order to acquire data and information and to better understand the phenomenon of place spirituality as well as the ideas and viewpoints of different academics, semi-structured interviews were performed. After a thorough examination of the relevant literature, the interview was based on a few larger domains. Participants were interviewed semi-structurally using these domains in an unstructured, open conversation manner. Any new material obtained from the initial interviews was later added into the future interviews. The literature lacks comprehensiveness and provides a blurry image of each of these categories, especially since it excludes information on how Muslims of various sects understand and engage with this phenomena from their respective worldviews. Hence, then open-ended questions were generated through literature review and an expert opinion by Victor Counted (the pioneer researcher, who studied the concept of place spirituality) and other researchers. Twelve probing questions were also generated as a guide for discussion. Demographic information regarding age, gender, education, religion (sect), place of attachment, and any traumatic event experienced in life; was also collected. The information letter and consent form were also attached. The few broader guiding categories for interview protocol included: knowledge of spirituality and religion, attachment to place, attachment to GOD, trauma-based attachment to place, religion-based attachment to place, rituals of place spirituality etc. Interview guide was formulated in English language and translated by experts into Urdu language as well; so that a good rapport can be built and concerned persons easily understand and communicate during the interview, considering their ease of language.

Procedure

To develop a basic grasp of the phenomenon of place spirituality, literature on the topic was initially examined. The phenomenological study approach was used to investigate the phenomenon of place spirituality as experienced by the respondents, who included members of the community, religious leader, and academic researchers. The phenomenological approach tries to understand people’s perception, perspective and understandings of a particular situation or a phenomenon. The triangulation method was used; three face-to-face interviews and two online semi-structured interview were conducted. Place and Time/Date was selected on the convenience of the participants. Total time duration of interviews lasted from minimum 1.5 hrs

– 2.5 hrs. Consent for audio recording was asked, but none of the participant allowed to record. Note-taking was done by the two individuals (the main researcher and an added assistance by a fellow researcher).

Since the current construct of the study, i.e., Place Spirituality, lacks a substantial literature background, it was determined that this research technique was workable in order to thoroughly explore this phenomena. Semi-structured interviews with respondents with a variety of belief systems, educational backgrounds, and life experiences were used as the data collection instrument for this aim in order to understand the phenomenon of place spirituality from the perspective of experts. Participants were personally contacted, and they were informed of the study's goal. When the participants agreed, the detailed notes were taken. The interview was later transcribed using the notes as a guide.

The interviews' transcriptions and any notes made during or right after them made up the information that was evaluated. Thematic analysis was deemed the best method for the current study's data analysis since it employs an inductive methodology that adheres to a data-driven approach and avoids the use of preconceived conceptions. The researcher followed the recommendations made by Braun and Clarke⁴. The process followed following stages: first encounter with the text; where researcher read each transcript to familiarize herself with the data, keeping an open mind about what was being expressed. An additional reading followed, where initial thoughts about the data were recorded. Then preliminary themes identified; where Each transcript was thematically coded individually from this point. thirdly, grouping themes together as clusters as thematic coding phase; more than 150 themes were generated. Finally, tabulating themes in a summary table, resulting in a master structure of 19 superordinate and 43 subordinate themes. This step was created through evolving structure by researchers and then gaining insight on the placement of the themes by another researcher in the field.

The reliability and dependability of the information acquired always raised concerns with qualitative data. The problem was dealt with in two steps for the current study. First, during data collection, and then again during data analysis. In the first phase, the researcher held a debriefing session with the scholars and the other respondents at the conclusion of each interview in order to receive feedback on whether the material he/she had gathered differed from what was actually expressed by them. By identifying discrepancies between what is said and what is perceived, this method increased the validity and reliability of the qualitative data. The resulting categories were discussed with two independent evaluators who were psychology Ph.D. researchers during the second step following thematic analysis. Through the inter-coder reliability technique, this also addressed the reliability issue.

Discussion

This section reports the perception of the participants with reference to the concepts of attachment to place and attachment to GOD and the themes generated in the present study.

Spirituality

The main theme that originated was the concept of spirituality. How people conceptualize it and how they differentiate it from religion. Participants defined spirituality in their own individualized views. Spirituality is mostly explained philosophically, linking it to Sufism, mysticism, and some relate it to metaphysical concepts, or something supernatural¹⁴. Another explanation of spirituality defined it as purification of soul¹⁵. As reported by all the five participants.

“...following Shari'ah and Tariqat in such a way that it results in the purification of the soul, is also called as spirituality.” (C1).

“The world of human belief and thought is separate from the material world - and spirituality is the world of the supernatural.” (C2).

“The soul is from the world above.” ... “Human actually is combination of soul and material existence – and success of it is also spirituality” (C4).

“The beholder of this phenomena becomes a real ABDULAH – if you read the words of our Sufism, you can know that it is beyond the ordinary conception of spirituality, a feeling as if human is nothing – his heart opens for all and he becomes a source of love and care ” (C5).

Another perspective was highlighted which is explained by Vahedian-Azimi and Rahimi¹⁶, a study conducted in Iran addressing the concept and meaning of spirituality with respect to every individual. This perspective is also noted in the present study as one of the participant had his individualized explanation to spirituality which is a way leading to a higher state of self-actualization¹⁷.

“it creates sense of gratefulness and satisfaction and bestows upon man strength to overcome difficulties, stress, and sense of deprivation. Islamic spirituality is actually the presence of association with GOD that affects connection with other human beings, nature and self - actualization. It leads to sense of fulfillment beyond world” (C3).

While explaining the concept of Islam, most of the participants considered spirituality as a part of Islamic religion¹⁸;

“Religion is a spiritual need – spirituality cannot be separated from religion. If we say that the concept of religion can be explained without spirituality in some way, but the concept of spirituality is not possible in any way without Islam, then it will not be wrong” (C1).

“Islam and Islamic spirituality are closely knit to each other... Islamic beliefs and practices are body and spirituality denotes their spirit” (C3).

Spirituality is explained as the magnificent quality of human existence bestowed upon all people for them to travel the path of transcendence that is proximity to God (Allah)¹⁹. A study conducted by Wong and Yau has also reported a more elaborative explanation to the

concept of spirituality associated to religion²⁰, which is consistent with findings obtained in the present study.

“I think religion is a specific set of organized beliefs and practices and a large number of particular people observe it, whereas spirituality is more an individual practice, who is in search of peace and tranquility. It is not necessary that if you are a good practicing Muslim so you should also have a good spiritual understanding” (C5).

Some participants very strictly believed that spirituality is by ALLAH. A man cannot acquire it through any means. And some had a belief that it can be acquired through devotion and dedication.

Participants firmly believed that it is from GOD, and cannot be acquired otherwise. “in my point of view spirituality is not a knowledge, but it is a state of mind – in which happiness of Allah and the Messenger (P.B.U.H) is better than anything, and man's self-seeking comes with the help of Allah” (C1).

“Spirituality comes from Allah. When a person is a sincere seeker, then by the grace of Allah, he becomes spiritual.” (C4). He explained his response through an Urdu couplet; “muhabat kay liye kuch khas dil makhsus hoty hain – yeh voh naghma hai jo hr saaz par gaya nahi jata”; translated as; spirituality is GOD gifted element, God bestows HIS mercy on the selected ones. One can try to acquire it, but it is too difficult to ruin one’s ego and lust.”

Sacredness was described in terms of religious understanding. A place or an act related to GOD or religion makes it sacred²¹ as reported by the participants:

“If a place or a work is connected to religious worship, it becomes holy” (C2).

“association with the supreme being makes something sacred” (C3).

One of the participant associated sacredness to human welfare. As investigated that, we become more conscious of the inherent holiness of each person and each helping scenario when the helping connection demonstrates genuine respect and empathy²².

“Any place or work becomes sacred, when there is no evil or evil of any kind ... which is beneficial for yourself or someone else.” (C1).

Another participant explained sacredness in personalized terms by elaborating his experience as “your sacred beliefs and way of practicing those beliefs make a place sacred – they may not have any value in someone else’ eyes or opinion.” Explaining his state of sacredness he stated that “some people may find solitude in a mosque and another in a shrine. I feel attached to GOD especially after evening (maghrib) prayer in a particular corner of the mosque” (C5).

Emotional Insecurity

Emotional insecurity is experience during spiritual struggles by the religiously attached individuals which leads to certain categories of behaviors. It is a way in which people assess

and experience their spirituality, such as growing close to a Divine being, turning to the Divine in times of loss, and viewing God as a target for security, which are elements of religious attachment^{9 23}. Divine avoidance is also one of the behaviors, as expressing avoidance from GOD and having anxiety about God. As one participant reported:

“In state of emotional insecurity most people look towards GOD, whereas some people adapt to be rebellious towards GOD ... mostly I experience the same and feel myself lost.” (C2).

Anxiety in interpersonal relationships is linked to anxiety in respect to God, and avoidance in interpersonal relationships is linked to avoidance in relation to God and to a largely unloving conception of God²⁴. Some behaviors characterize as questioning GOD as a response of emotional insecurity and projecting it to their own flaw;

“emotional insecurity deepens because of my own weak belief and I start questioning about nature’s rule. The more I feel weak and insecure, the more suspicion attack my mind and sometimes even I feel that I may totally be distracted from right path” (C5).

Proximity to God is another behavior which states as in response to loss, turning to the Divine and seeing God as a target for security;

“...in case of spiritual struggle I tend to turn more towards GOD for repentance” (C3)

Individuals on a religious path likely to have a connection with God that goes through ups and downs over time with subject to the existing need to regulate pain and sufferings. Some people are more likely to experience rapid rises in religiousness than others, especially those who have interpersonal attachment orientations that are insecure, nervous, or ambiguous²⁵, and these peaks are frequently accompanied by very emotional life events, most notably marital problems²⁶.

Zarzycka et al. explains growth and wellness following religious/spiritual struggles as well as religious support and meaning making associated with well-being, depends on the experiences of the religious/spirituals struggles²⁷. As three participants believed that emotional insecurity led them to spiritual growth.

“encountering emotional insecurity makes me be on the journey of spiritual struggle” (C1)

“... it helps me recover from the traumatic experience of struggle leading to religious attachment” (C3)

“Though now even being over 50, emotional insecurity has its’ effects and I try to get myself rescued with the help of ‘ASTAGHFAR’ (forgiveness) and “DAROOD PAK” (holy recitation)” (C5).

One of the participant while explaining his state of emotional struggles, identified his personal weaknesses, which helped him in striving for spiritual growth;

“... it confronts me with my flaws.” (C1).

Place Shaping Religion

Experience of place shaping religion describes how religious people frequently ascribe special spiritual significance and worth to specific activities and rituals, material belongings, and physical environments²⁸.

Participants reported that remembrance of ALLAH and Prophet (P.B.U.H) in any place, makes it religious place.

“Any place where it is possible for you to pray to Allah and the Messenger of Allah, becomes a holy place” (C1)

“A holy place becomes sacred by its purposeful existence” (C4)

Some reported that a place which keeps you close to ALLAH strengthen religious experience. Throughout the history of religion, certain locations, structures, and possessions have attained a spiritual significance that gives them a unique emotional resonance¹¹.

“...experiences of a holy place strength a persons’ actions and beliefs ... and the nearness of the holy place provides itself to firmness of our faith” (C2).

“Experience of mosque as a place helps me in advancement of relationship with ALLAH due to its calm, serene and peaceful ambiance ...It deepens bondage of a man with GOD as well as other human beings” (C3).

Another unique explanation considering place making you religious is based on the belief system of the individual. According to research, certain religious belief systems may transcend connection to any particular location¹¹ and explain place as the result of an emotional relationship to God⁹. A participant’s point of view:

“religious experiences at a particular place basically is an encounter of a human being with a supernatural being. Experiences of this kind shape ones’ religious beliefs in a way that in some cases he/she even consider others as infidel Those who are attached with Sufism and shrine, they consider whole humanity as creature’s family and label others’ as kafir. It totally depends how you are being carved by the mentor you are following” (C5).

Religion Shaping Place

Experience of religion shaping place experiences explains the memories and experiences a person has in connection with God that are associated with a holy location would account for the connection they feel towards the location. This is consistent with studies on geographical locations, which demonstrate that a person's perception of a place's valence is influenced by memories of that particular location²⁹.

“religious belief make a place sacred... a place where religious figures are mentioned and their teachings.” (C1).

A participant had a different explanation to place attachment as “in accordance to Islamic connotation if a place is declared as masjid, it will not be changed to another purpose. For a common Muslim masjid is a sacred place, however few people would prefer shrine as a

sacred place. With the passage of time the simplicity of Islam has gone and taken over by the opportunists, who are re-shaping religious beliefs and also redesigning the sacred places” (C5).

As Voas and Fleischmann described that the "scared canopy" of Islam that existed in the nations of origin vanishes, and also in the host communities, being religious, let alone Muslim, is frequently not widely accepted³⁰. People are reminded of their own power to make decisions rather than being continuously reminded that the future is in God's hands.

Geographical Experience

Geographic of place were associated to religion and had positive behavioral and psychological effects. At the level of geographical experience, a place is made up of both its physical characteristics and the social and cultural processes that occur there³¹. The participants reported physical experience and surroundings of a sacred place as an important element to influence their belief systems.

“...religious belief attached to a geography of a place works as wisdom with knowledge” (C1)
 “Geography of a place has an important role in shaping my religious beliefs. In case of any fear or danger I seek strength from the dictum, which I have been taught by my religious surroundings” (C5).

According to Counted et al., adult attachment processes, which can help people cope with stress, are defined in terms of two dimensions: connection to one's surroundings geographically and attachment to a divine entity¹. Subsequently participants of the present study explained these adult attachment processes.

“history associated to the geography of a sacred place is always a common guide for me” (C1)
 “religious beliefs, the religious rituals and practices associated to the geography of the place make people spiritually and psychologically engrossed ... surroundings matter as I feel the difference between praying at home and praying in congregation ... sacred surroundings reinforces our faith and reflects human nature, temperament, upbringing and thinking” (C2)

“sacredness of the geographical places like Holy Kaaba, shrine of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) and other Prophets, Ahle Bait, companions and AuliyAllah are greatly admired by the Muslims... Visiting such places deeply impact spiritual sentiments of a person and in my case it transforms my attitude and behavior towards life and other human beings surrounding me” (C3).

According to participants the emotional attachment results from the spatial features of the place or religious association to a particular place. Place is examined in terms of its physical and geographical pull as an attachment setting, highlighting how people may develop a strong connection with a place's physical characteristics³².

“the deeper a place has a relation with any religious personality or event, the more it tends to develop love and respect for the spatial features of the place” (C3).

Behavioral Dependence

Behavioral dependency is explained as place dependency on events, possessions and activities in a particular geographic place, and is explained through either religious attachment or place attachment; describing what people do in the place rather than the physical characteristics. Mazumdar and Mazumdar believe that religion promotes place attachment, playing a part in people's everyday lives and impacting their relationships with both local and global environments¹⁰. Because of their faith, the observant actively follows a series of customs that are only related to a certain place. For instance, people frequently worship together at a church, temple, synagogue, or mosque³³. As reported by the participants.

“In my opinion, for the clarity of a place; if its’ activities, issues, values and quality of the place are consistent with our religious beliefs, then the place is good and otherwise not.” (C1).

“The explanation of a place is done on the basis of its practices, objects, history, scenery, beliefs related to it and the geography of place and surroundings.” (C2).

“In abstract terms, respect itself is associated with a sacred place, however particular activities on such places help furthering the religious bondage” (C3).

Even the act of praying at home is closely related to physical signals, such as the carpet or the way one faces a certain location (e.g. Mecca)¹⁰.

Cognitive Development

Cognitive development has to do with how a person personally reflects the nature and way of life of a place. Most of the participants explained association to religious aspect of the place in terms of the cognitive beliefs. Religion is transmitted and learn through highly localized methods including ritual, tale, text, theatre, experience, and pilgrimage. In various faiths, place tales, hymns, and myths play a significant role in socialization. They aid in the instruction, explanation, and clarification of place meaning, whether they are given orally via song and storytelling or textually through written literature¹⁰.

“As a Muslim, I see myself in one place in terms of my religious practice, dress, customs, and religious worship.” (C2)

“Beliefs make the place sacred and the personality comes into existence due to attachment to the sacred place ... such as Muslims seeking a mosque and Hindus worship in temple...distance from the holy place damages our religious identity” (C4)

Place identity is seen as the cognitive aspect of the link between a person and a place, contributing to the definition of an individual's identity together with personal and social identity³⁴. According to its definition, it refers to memories, concepts, interpretations, thoughts, and related sentiments toward particular physical surroundings as well as types of settings³⁵. Participants described their place identity as following.

“Three things are important to my religious identity. And these three things have influenced my place identity... respect for humanity, Islamic teachings and pillars of Islam” (C1).

“Place helps a lot in shaping the personality ... the environment directly impacts your mood. The serenity in a religious place increase your efficiency and attachment” participant reported an event explaining how place affects his religious identity “... during my visit to Iran I felt offended the way I was offering prayers, which was different from their sect. when I am here with my sect fellows and mosque I feel confident and safe” (C5).

Loss of Spiritual Object

It is characterized as fear of being abandoned by God or losing one's connection to Him in the context of a religious attachment³⁶, and it frequently results in struggling spiritually and being unhappiness³⁷. A similar study by Davis et al., found that feeling secure in divine attachment helped people process their emotions and find spiritual significance, which helped them see the calamity in the context of God's goodness and providence³⁸. All the participants reported agony, distress and pain with the loss or damage of the spiritual object.

“The spiritual loss may not affect my faith, but it definitely affects my identity and religious affiliation.” (C1).

“...such a loss hurt my emotions and feelings” (C2).

“...destruction and dishonor towards sacred places extremely hurt me” (C4).

“Sacred places are symbol of a particular religion. They affect one's belief. I was disturbed when in my youth Babri masjid was destroyed... destruction of a place has adverse effects in long run” (C5).

Whereas, believers may experience God as distant and struggle to achieve symbolic proximity to the divine when places of worship sustain physical damage or holy ritual objects are destroyed; the individual seeks a new relationship with God, or to place³⁶. As reported by one of the participants, forming a stronger bond with God as a result of spiritual struggling.

“violation of any religious personality, place, or thing is strongly condemned in Islam. As such happenings cause deep anguish and unrest to me. And in turn it makes my belief even stronger than before” (C3).

Differential Outcome of Trauma

In divine scriptures different outcomes are linked to both positive and negative beliefs, such as "God is with me" and "God is punishing me," respectively. All the participants took both the outcomes positively. Reported either ALLAH being with them always or considered punishment positively. There is evidence that experiencing religious assistance and being able to find spiritual significance in a tragedy can alleviate the adverse effects of loss of resources by preventing traumatic stress and depression^{39, 40}.

“.. any of such situation I trust my GOD” (C2).

“I apologize for my sins and seek help from Almighty Allah” (C4).

“I even consider it a help of Allah ... a jolt caused by the weakness of my actions” (C1).

“generally, both the sentiments alternate each other. It depends upon the situation. In any case it

never generates despair or hopelessness” (C3).

“many times it happens that in time of trauma it comes in my mind that I have been left alone and GOD forbid, even HE is angry with me, whited into mental dissatisfaction and even forced me not to offer prayers or do zikar; luckily it did not last prolong...” (C5)

As supported by a study, identifying religious beliefs about the disaster's cause (that God did not directly cause it but rather permitted it to occur), purpose (that God used the disaster to promote greater beneficent purposes), and presence (that God has provided survivors with love, contentment, power, and hope); all promote resilience³⁸.

Spiritual Social Support

It is defined as a support from one's religious group, including emotional and material support, participation in group activities like worship services and prayer groups, as well as specialized rituals of mourning. Most of participants reported support having buffering effects after a trauma. Amidst the post disaster, the actual presence, emotional support, and practical assistance of local religious communities can foster fortitude and resilience in the face of chaos that can cause spiritual doubts and uncertainty⁴¹.

“social support that is the presence of family and friends on such occasions and religious activities like Quran Khanwani, Naat, Dua etc go long way to deepen relationship with GOD. It alleviates the sense of loneliness and deprivation besides giving hope to live. The faith refreshes by recalling that ‘To ALLAH we belong and to Him we shall return’” (C3).

“it helped me a lot ... support from peers and advices from Imam Sahib played a positive and portal role in overcoming the trauma ... attached me to the ALLAH will. Helped me to face the difficult times with courage and patience” (C5).

Participant stated that the support from other religious communities also aided during spiritual struggle. As reported by Smith, working with Muslims to build deeper, aligned connections; non-Muslim social workers would be wise to employ critical reflection, person-centered, and social justice practicing concepts⁴².

“... At the time of trauma, social support gives love, and for this, not only religious support, but also non-religious support helped me a lot.” (C1).

Seeking Security

It is explained as an attachment connection created between a human being and a divine being with the explicit purpose of managing separation anxiety and sustaining proximity to GOD after a trauma. All the participants expressed ALLAH as safe haven in traumatic experience.

“ ... My experience has definitely been positive because whatever I prayed for was granted by my GOD. After every pain my heart turns to ALLAH” (C1).

“...after every loss, attachment to GOD has always given me strength” (C2).

“I think loss of dear ones and valuables generally draw a person near to GOD because it breaks

ones' heart and tend him to express his grief towards the All-living, All-hearing and All-seeing" (C3).

"... I always felt like I am not alone and there is someone to help me out from this situation." (C5).

The typical ways in which people assess and experience their spirituality, such as growing close to a Divine being, turning to the Divine in times of loss, and viewing God as a focus for security, are reflected in religious attachment^{23 36}. It is predicted that traumatized individuals who become the focus of discrimination, marginalization, and tyranny in a society may need to cope with such challenges by using a type of religious coping that involves looking to God as their safe haven and spiritual resources¹.

Proximity to GOD through Religious Behaviors

Proximity to God after a trauma is also accomplished by religious practices that bring one nearer to God, such as fasting, meditation, devotionals, prayers, reading holy texts, and participating in religion activities. Captari et al. stated a framework in which survivors might personally and collectively search for closeness to a stronger attachment figure (God), through members of community and the particular physical space of the mosque, which serve as a secure base and a safe haven⁴³. Simpson et al. found that combined religious behaviors, particularly time in private religious activity, were related to a positive relationship with God⁴⁴.

Reading the scriptures is a tool for pursuing closeness and creating an optimistic view of God's presence⁴⁵. The person's interpretation and internalization of the scripture will be guided by the Holy Spirit, who is present during the scripture reading⁴⁵.

"Mainly I like to read holy texts (muqadas nasoob), I feel protected by ALLAH by doing so" (C1).

During calm moments, prayer also enables the worshipper to consider God as a firm base⁴⁶. Further study explain prayer effectively reducing worries and strengthening one's relationship with God⁴⁴.

As stated by a participant, "prayers and Duaas'... other than routine prayers, special prayers have been prescribed in case of any calamity, trouble and trauma... Dua has been termed as a shield against all odds in prophetic traditions" (C3)"

When people cry out to God for assistance during difficult times, they might engage in petitionary prayer to seek out a safe haven with Him⁴⁶.

"Namaz (obligatory prayers) is the best means of communication for me. Second thing is Zikr (Petitionary prayers) to achieve the proximity to GOD." (C5).

The mosque is also seen as a place of congregating, both for religious and secular purposes, in addition to being a place for prayers⁴⁷.

"Religious worships in mosque, recitations of holy texts and closeness to holy persons helps me to be closer to God." (C2).

“I always go to mosque and feel elevated over there – being relaxed” (C5).

Religious Emotional Identifications

Mazumdar and Mazumdar highlight the significance of believers' emotional identifications with holy buildings (such as temples, churches, and shrines), natural settings (such as rivers, mountain tops, and woods), and holy cities (such as Jerusalem, Mecca, and Rome)¹⁰. Following a tragedy, many survivors exhibit greater involvement with religious practises (such as prayer, charitable deeds) and religious participation (such as religious affiliation and involvement). It makes sense that one of the main reasons why people visit churches and other holy places (such as the miraculous places and places of vision) is because they physically and spiritually represent the divine existence for survivors who are looking for purpose and hope in life after the major trauma. The restoration of security and safety is another goal shared by disaster survivors. Sacred spaces may aid in developing the much-needed sense of shelter that survivors seek when catastrophes strike.

It explains the increase in participation in religious activities (such as prayer, charitable actions, and mosque attendance and involvement) in a place after a calamity. Most participants reported it as a result of help from ALLAH and others referred it as resulting in personal growth.

“Divine help from participation in religious activities does not only fill my heart with joy, but it also fills me with courage and enthusiasm.” (C1)”

“...I receive peace of mind and divine help.” (C2)

“Suffering and prosperity bring me closer to Allah, and Allah helps me” (C4)

“...in times of difficulty being a Muslim I believe ALLAH will help me out, if I pay more attention to prayers, do sadqa (charity), or help the needy ...” (C5)

Another explanation states that religion and spirituality aids people and societies in making sense of their lives and practices, maintaining a feeling of greater meaning in life and direction, while providing a sense of spiritual value and purpose³⁸.

“Prayer is the best mean of overcoming any traumatic situation for me ... other righteous deeds also help me recover from grief and emotional imbalance” (C3)

“I have personal experience that all the good deeds which I have done, have been rewarded and it fortifies my belief. Helping people or praying relieves me from anxiety and strengthen my soul” (C5).

Place Attachment Transformed Trauma

Participants reported that experience of place attachment diverted them from traumatic experience and made them feel secure.

“attachment to religious place provides sense of nearness to GOD and diverts my attention from the traumatic incident ” (C3)

“its human nature that it feels secure with supernatural objects... in times of grief, attachment with a particular sacred place brings feeling of solitude ... I personally in this state bury my grief in tears and prayers. Holy places transform individuals and provide a sense of security” (C5)

In traumatic situations, a place is viewed as a safe haven, encouraging the exploration, development, and growth of believers. After being reminded of God, people do feel more safe and are hence more prepared to take risks^{48,49}.

“I instinctively look for a quiet and private place in times of loss... where I can ask Allah for help.” (C1).

“... association to mosque (Masjid), activities of worship and supplication there and by gatherings of religious knowledge (Alam) – high my spirits and give me patience.” (C2).

“...attachment to mosque increases my faith and provides significant relief from trauma” (C3).

Place as a Healing Entity

Participant reported positive emotions that individuals can have for the place with which they identify or are associated to.

“I am associated with the mosque as an imam or a religious scribe, my life is attached to the mosque in every way... and this attachment makes me happy” (C1).

“It is all about your mental state that you feel relax and comfortable in mosque so after any loss I feel spiritually elevated there” (C5).

A study Saadati et al. stated sitting in religious places, because religious places such as mosques and shrines make you relaxed⁵⁰. Every religious people pray to God when they are in trouble. Therefore, it is possible to think of both geographical locations and Divine beings as objects of attachment in this context. Support from religious institutions has offered equally emotional and pragmatic resources, such as financial aid and job details⁵¹, empowering people and tying them to a community that may provide psychological stability⁵².

“mosque is the place which always helped me improve my relation with GOD. Presence in mosque always gives the sense of nearness to God and rejuvenates spirits. It provides a relief from the environment filled with grief and shock” (C3).

Conclusion

The present study is one of the few studies to address the idea of attachment to God and attachment to place in Pakistan. The conclusions drawn from this study indicate the necessity of conducting empirical research into various aspects of place attachment regarding trauma and religion.

Some problems faced in the study need to be mentioned. First and foremost, mapping and identifying the particular participants were quite a task, as many people did not know about this concept before and people are more reluctant to respond about religious experiences. Moreover, travelling and contacting, to find and approach the particular participants and

interviewing on them on availability was laborious part of the study. Lastly more diverse and categorized sample can give in-depth insight into the concept of Place spirituality.

This study points towards empirically studying domain psychology of religion and spirituality. Theoretically it tests the attachment theory in adult population with a unique conceptualization. Practically it will help in identifying how place is an important element in faith and belief systems of individuals. With respect to research this study will aid in developing measuring instruments to study this concept more objectively. It seems logical to assume that religious settings increase willingness to explore because they likely do increase feelings of being closer to God and do offer a space for exploration, although more research is needed to confirm this.

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