

# Perceived Self-Other Relatedness: A Cross Religion Perspective

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## Abstract

The present study endeavours perceived self –other relatedness among religious professionals of India viz: Hinduism and Christianity. An ex-post facto research with exploratory orientation was conducted on 50 religious professionals (25 Priests and 25 Pujaris) an effort was made to explore the perception of self in relation to significant others. To ascertain this information circle technique by Thrower, Bruce and Walton (1982) was used. results revealed a lack of control on one's life , perception of self as weak and insignificant in comparison to others, dominance of others in relations with an emotionally divorce type of relationship was evident for both Priests and Pujaris. The role of religious differences was seen regarding the significant others who emerged in life space.

**Keywords:** Priests, Pujaris, Circle Technique.

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## Introduction

Josselson (1996) states that people create their lives within a web of connections to others. These relationships provide a continual source of emotional support and are associated with an impressive array of positive outcome including good mental health.

It is also being realized that relatedness is central to physical health, to longevity, to meaningful social life and to growth and development of self (Josselson 1996) Thus the definition of self in terms of significant and powerful others becomes necessary (Ziller 1964).

The role of relationships becomes even more salient in the lives of persons serving as religious professionals. Since serving as a religious professional is a challenging and rewarding experience. The issues that confront most religious professionals are different than those experienced by other professionals and

they are amongst the most trusted professionals in society which makes high demands on their time and emotional resources and it have impact on the individuals who work as priest.

In the summary report of the NCCB Ad Hoc Committee for the study on priestly life and ministry, one reads, "The underdeveloped, emotionally immature priests represents a large segment of American priests and..... reflect the fact that a great many American males are also underdeveloped." The manifestation of this incomplete personal development is, "distant, unrewarding relationships and uneasiness about intimacy, which results in few close friends, difficulty with one's own personal identity, and lack of confidence." (Baars, 1971)

Thus, In our present day the people of God, priests included, suffer so acutely in their need for identity, self -worth, self-love and being

loved that there is a need for exposing the root causes of these problems in priesthood, and for that matter ,also in our society (Baars, 1971)

Understanding of the religious professionals is the need of hour and a number of researches have focused on it from different perspectives. (The study of the psychology of priests ( Eugene Kennedy 1972),Anglican clergy (Francis, Payne, & Jones, 2001; Francis, Craig, Whinney, Tilley, & Slater, 2007), Roman Catholic priests (Craig, Duncan, & Francis, 2006), are to name the few.

Ironically there is dearth of literature with psychological orientation towards understanding of religious professionals especially in Indian perspective. It Intrigues the researcher with the questions like -What are the impacts of being a priest on psychological aspects of the individual. Do religious professionals have a special kind of personality? Whether being religious relates to other aspects of personality to those stable dimensions or traits measurable and understood by psychologists? How do Religious professionals negotiate their unique individual identities in the face of strong social demands toward shared collective identity? What are the impacts of being a priest on individuals self and self other relatedness?

Since it was difficult to answer all of them so the present study focused on understanding the most basic of them all, that is the study of self other relatedness among priests and pujaris.

## **Methodology**

**Design:** The present study was an ex-post facto research with an exploratory orientation.

**Independent Variable-** Profession and Religion

**Dependent Variable-** Perceived self other relatedness

**Sample-** The sample of the study comprised of 50 religious professionals (25 Priests and 25 Pujaris) of Lucknow. Method of sample selection was based on purposive sampling. The sample age ranged from 50-75 yrs.

**Measurement Tool-** Circle Technique by Thrower, Bruce and Walton (1982) was used. It explores the relationship dynamics and systems with the help of circle drawings illustrated in a graphic form. The drawing serves a rich source of information concerning family dynamics and interpersonal relations.

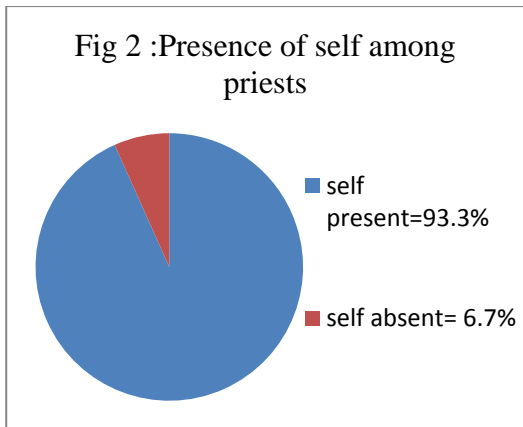
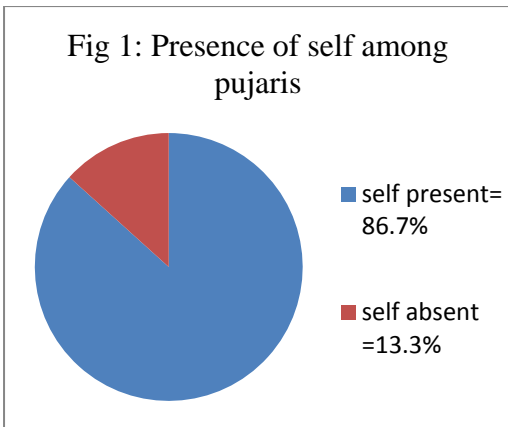
**Procedure:** The circle technique was administered individually to all the subjects.

**Data Analysis:** Data obtained was analyzed on following 6 dimensions and percentages were computed:-

1. Presence of self.
2. Centrality of self.
3. Size of self.
4. Most dominant person.
5. Significant others who emerged in life space.
6. Type of relationship.

## **Results and Interpretation**

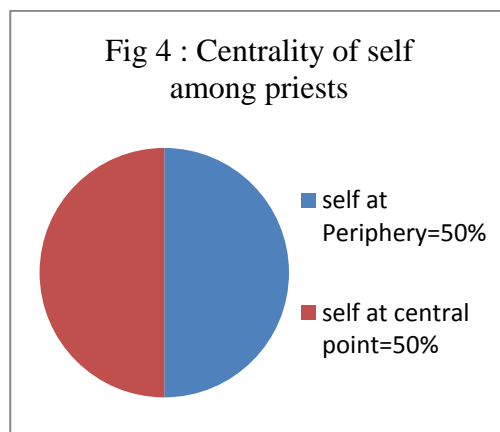
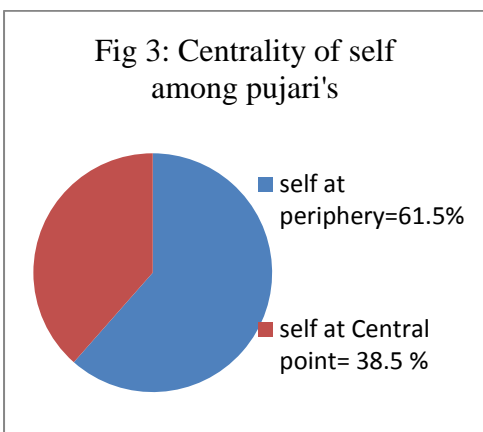
**1. Presence of self-** This dimension reveals the development of self image. Data analysis shows that among pujari's 86.7% of the respondents have represented their self in life space whereas 13.3% have not (Fig: 1), among priests 93.3% of the respondents did have represented their self in life space whereas 6.7% did not (Fig 2). Thus it denotes that majority of respondents have a developed self image.



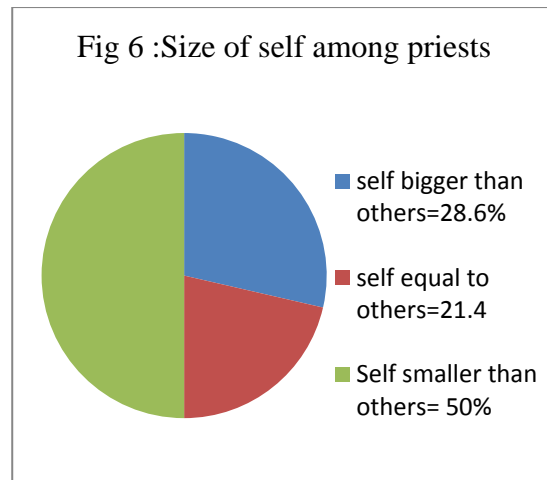
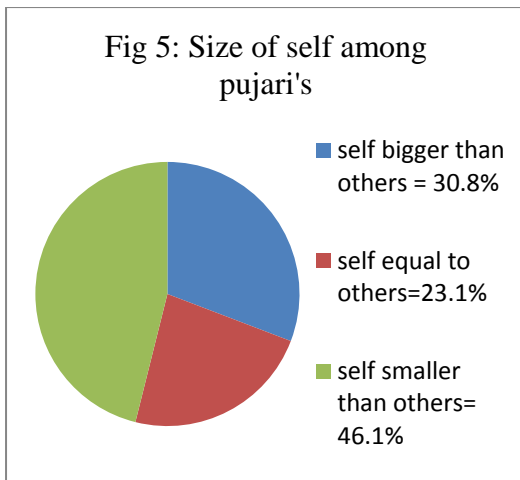
**2. Centrality of self:** - This dimension pertains to the position of self in the life space of person. Placement of self at central point shows extent of control one has in his life. Contrary to it, placement at periphery reveals inadequacy and insignificance of self.

Data analysis shows that among pujaris 38.5% have placed themselves at the central point

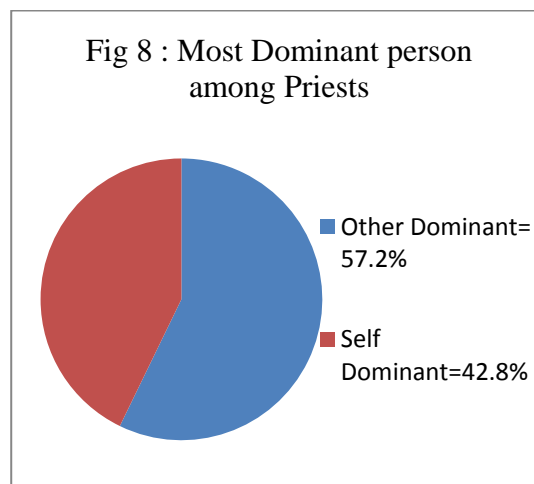
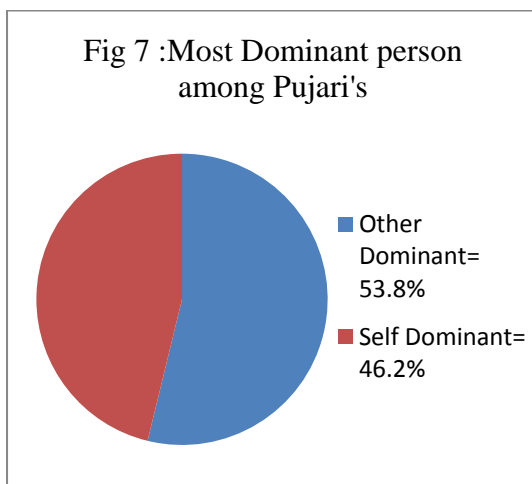
whereas 61.5% have placed the self at periphery (Fig: 3). Among priests 50% of the respondents have placed themselves at the central point and 50% placed the self at periphery (Fig: 4). This is suggestive lack of control on one's life and feelings of inadequacy and insignificance to be present in majority of pujari's and 50% of priests



**3. Size of self-** Size of self connotes the dominance of self in relation to others. Three categories generally emerge. "self smaller than others.", "self bigger than others.", "self equal to others."



**4. Most dominant person-** Dominant person is one valued most in one's life space.



The above figure (Fig:7) make it evident that among pujari's 53.8% respondents gave other dominant responses, whereas 46.2% respondents showed self to be the most dominant person. Among Priests 57.2% respondents gave other dominant responses, whereas 42.8% respondents show Self to be the most dominant person (Fig:8 ). This portraying indicates a feeling of inferiority towards self by comparatively little more respondents.

**5. Number of significant others emerged in life space** -This dimension indicates a kind of

emotional support, which is perceived from significant others.

Among Pujaris On this dimension 5 categories were emerged (Fig:9) , which were- Generic family (father, mother, brother, sister), Self Procreated family (wife, son, daughter), Divine figures (God, Goddess), Guru (Guru, Ramdev baba, Aasaram bapu), Others (friends, Society etc.)

Data revealed that highest incidence was received by Wife (11.4%) followed by devi maa (10%) ,Son/Daughter in law (8.9%) Guru/guru pita /guru maa(8.6%) and so on.

Fig 9: Percentages of significant others emerged in the life space of Pujari's

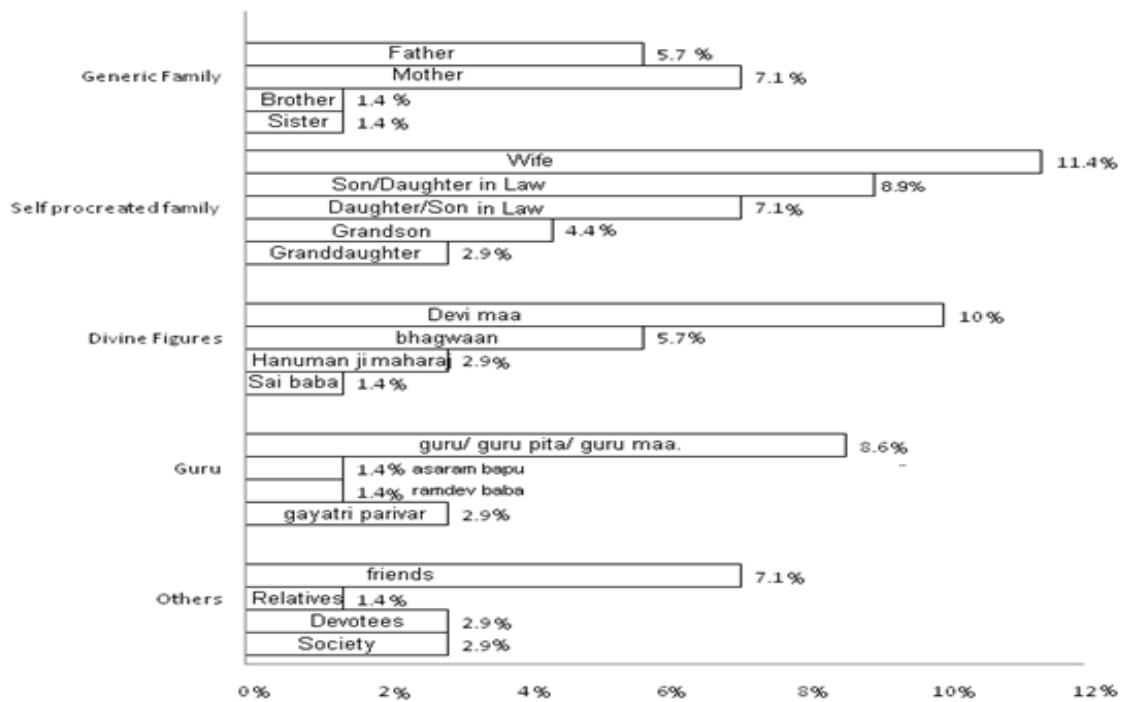
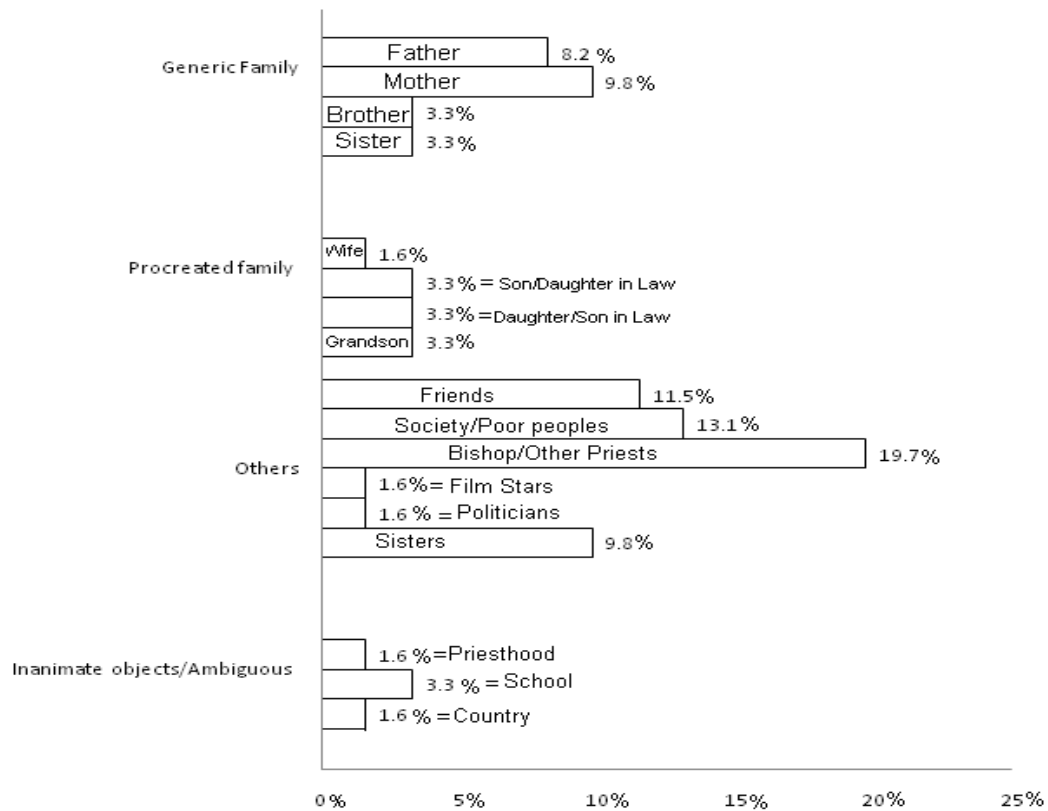


Fig 10: Percentages of significant others emerged in the life space of Priests



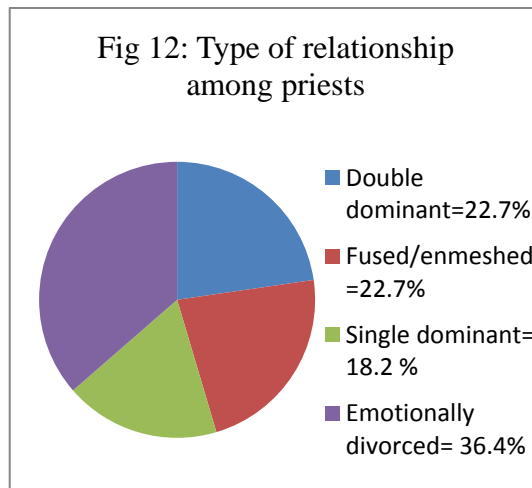
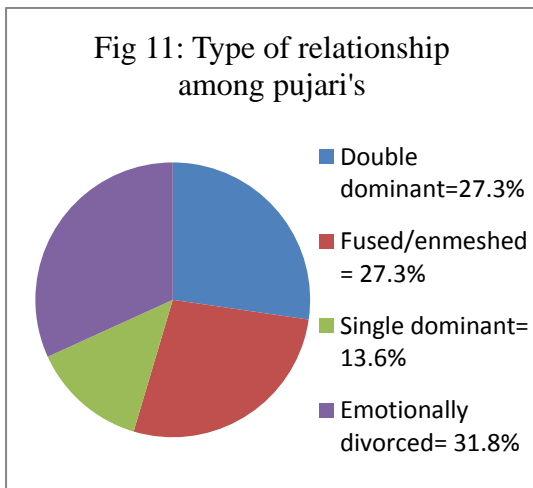
(Fig: 10) Among Priests On this dimension 4 categories emerged, which were- Generic family (father, mother, brother, sister), Procreated family (wife, son, daughter), Others (friends, society/poor people, other priests, film stars, politicians, sisters), Inanimate objects/Ambiguous (priesthood, country, school)

Data revealed that highest incidence was received by Bishop/Other Priests (19.7%),

followed by Society/Poor people's (13.1%), Friends (11.5%). And so on.

**6. Type of relationship-** Thrower, Bruce and Walton (1982) have given four category of relationships

- a) Fused/ enmeshed -Boundaries between self and significant others are not clear.
- b) Emotionally divorced -Self and significant others are emotionally separated and distant.
- c) Single dominated- Concentration of power in a single person.
- d) Double dominated-Power at two parallel levels.



The data obtained shows, among pujari's 27.3% responses were of enmeshed type portraying a fused relationship between self and others denoting boundaries between self and significant others are not clear. 31.8% responses showed emotionally divorced relations revealing a cut-off relationship from significant others. 13.6% of the responses were Single dominated whereas 27.3% of the responses were Double dominated denoting power to be at two parallel levels (Fig: 11)

Among Priests, 22.7% responses were of enmeshed type portraying a fused relationship between self and others denoting Boundaries between self and significant others are not clear .36.4% responses showed emotionally

divorced relations revealing a cut-off relationship from significant others .18.2% of the responses were Single dominated whereas 22.7% of the responses were double dominated denoting power to be at two parallel levels (Fig: 12)

**Conclusions:**

The analysis of the representations of pujari's and priests on circle technique reveals that majority of respondents have a developed self image but there was a lack of control on one's life, feelings of inadequacy and insignificance was present in majority of respondents. Further a large percentage of religious

professionals perceived self as small, weak and insignificant in comparison to others.

Protocols were mostly other dominant; most dominant person in the life space of pujaris was seen to be divine figures/guru, whereas for priests no such trends were observed as the most dominant other differed for different respondents.

Further, the pujaris perceive emotional support from their wife, devi maa, son/daughter in law, gauri /guru pita/ guru maa. And so on, whereas priests perceive emotional support from Bishop/Other Priests, Society /Poor People, Friends and so on.

Analyzing the perception of type of relationships with significant others revealed a mixed picture however emotionally divorced type of relationship was evident in many protocols,

Since there is paucity of researches on religious professionals in Indian Perspective the supportive evidence of obtained results cannot be provided

Thus the analysis of representations on circle technique revealed interesting results regarding the Perceived self other relatedness among priests and pujari's and further work is needed to explore the roots of cause of the problems in priesthood and provide necessary interventions.

### **Implications:**

The study is one of the first step of its own kind in trying to understand religious professionals who are most respected in the society but are often overlooked in terms of their personal, psychological and emotional needs, the community as a whole rely on these

professionals in various kinds of ceremonies and day to day advises, but the individual working at such a place have their own limitations and it would in turn will influence not only the individual but also community at large.

As evident in the study the religious professionals perceive a lack of control on their life it indicates a need to work for the providing necessary inputs for the same.

The findings of study in terms of other dominant emotionally divorced type of relationships, perception of self as insignificant and weak also makes it important to work for helping the professionals to develop better and healthy relationships with psychological inputs and interventions

Further the findings of study also indicates that religious differences are at superficial level as the in-depth analysis showed that the religious professionals of the two major religions have almost similar perception of self and significant others.

### **Few Suggestions for Policy makers:**

Programs for providing necessary psychological, emotional, social, and as needed support to religious professionals.

Considering setting up a qualification standard and structured selection pattern for a person to work as religious professional for the wellbeing of community as a whole.

Need to sensitize peoples at large about the religious differences to be superficial as indepth analysis showed rather similar perception of religious professionals of two major religions.

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