



Prayer, Belief, and Faith: A study on the spiritual life of Christian communities in Guyana.

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study is to assess the spiritual life of Christian communities in Guyana. The study is done among the adults of Christian communities in different places in Guyana. A total of 93 respondents were administered a prepared questionnaire in their official dialects to assess their Christian faith. The data was collected and collated, and the results were compared to the published literature of Guyana and other countries. The interview questionnaire was distributed to men (35) and female (58) respondents. The respondents' age group ranged from 18 to 70 years. The study attempts were to find out the regularity of their faith practice, the time of choosing their faith, the idea of God, and the reason to believe in God. This study also tries to find out if the respondents have had any change in their lives through the practice of religion. 87.10 % of the respondents recorded that they go to church regularly. 77.42% saw a change in their life with the practice of religion. 76.34% reported praying every day.

Key words- Faith, Belief, Prayer, Christian Community, Spiritual life

1. INTRODUCTION

Guyana is located in the northeast part of South America, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean in the north and the east, Surinam in the southeast, Brazil to the south, and Venezuela in the west. It is one of the poorest countries in Latin America with a total population of 79,033 in 2021. Geographically it is divided into three regions; the coastal plain, the white sand belt, and the interior highlands.[8] Ninety percent of the inhabitants live on the narrow coastal plain, which has a population density of more than 115 inhabitants per square kilometer. Agriculture and Mining are some of the important economic activities. 39.8 % of the people have migrated from India, 29.3% of people have migrated from Africa and 19.9% are from mixed heritage. 10.5% of the Amerindian population lives in the interior part of the country. Guyana is divided into 9 Regions and the above study was conducted in regions No. 4, 5, and 6 where religion plays an important role in the identity of the society. Although Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam are mainly practiced in these regions, Christianity is the dominant religion in Guyana. Christians account for 57.4% of the population of the country. [3]

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY.

To assess the faith, belief, and prayer life of the people residing in the urban and semi-urban areas of the East coast, Berbice, and the east bank area of Guyana. To find out the idea of God according to the people of Guyana; the reason for their belief, the change that has come in their life after following Christianity, and how often they practice their faith.

MATERIAL AND METHODS.

The study was conducted at Diamond Grove, West Bank, a Better hope, Plaisance, Geoverwagting, Betterverwag, Portmoraunt, Hope Town, Bush lot, and New Amsterdam in Guyana. This interview was conducted from April 2022 to July 2022 during which a total of 93 people were interviewed in their respective local dialects after obtaining verbal consent. The Personal Data was collected under the following headings as location, name of worship, place, Region number, age, and gender. The General questionnaire was about faith, belief, and prayer assessed by administering nine General questionnaires.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

There is hardly any research study published on the spiritual life of the Christian communities in Guyana. Most of the participants revealed that going to church and practicing spirituality is important in their life. Religion influences morals and values through multiple pathways. It shapes the way people think and how they respond to the world. It fosters habits such as church attendance and prayer and provides a web of social connections. Most of the people (81%) go to church regularly and pray in the Guyanese context. The frequency

of prayer life is also high in the Christian community. According to Gallup surveys, 9 in 10 Americans say that they pray- the same proportion recorded in regular surveys taken over the last 4 decades. [4]

For the Guyanese, the church is a place for spiritual and social interaction. Worship place gives consolation to many research participants. [10] The church is an integral part of the lives of the people and the community. When faced with problems, the help of religious intermediaries is sought. Success is celebrated by giving thanks to God in the church. Religion is only one of the many social institutions used by the people in Frenton to meet their personal and social needs. [10] Many Latin American scholars of religion use the concept of “popular religiosity” to describe the particular interactions of religion and modernity in Latin America. This includes a wide range of devotions and practices that merge indigenous peoples’ spiritualities, popular culture, and Afro and Catholic traditions (Mariz and Campos 2011; Romero 2014; Sanchis 1997). [5]

DISCUSSION.

Spirituality was well accepted and a practiced reality in Guyana. Most of the participants spend some time in prayer and believe in God. It is also seen that in places of worship, more women are present in prayer programs and meetings. The United States is something of an outlier. A full 7 in 10 Americans say God plays an important role in their lives. A similar segment says religion is important to them, with nearly half (47%) saying it is “very important,” while 16 percent say it is “not at all important. [13] People in Southeast Asian and African countries are the most likely to say belief in God is necessary to be moral and have good values. More than 9 in 10 in Indonesia, Philippines, Kenya, and Nigeria agree, while more than 8 in 10 in South Africa, Tunisia, and Brazil say the same. [13]

Spiritual and religious practices appear to positively influence medical outcomes and coping. A National Health Interview Survey of 21,204 adults has demonstrated better physical and mental health outcomes and increased longevity in those who attended church weekly. [7]

The historical events of colonization have continuing effects on the Guyanese people. The effect of colonization can be reflected in Guyanese ethnicity, class, language, and immigration status. Women and men taking important steps to deepen the spirituality of the places. Women play an important role in the family and the local community.

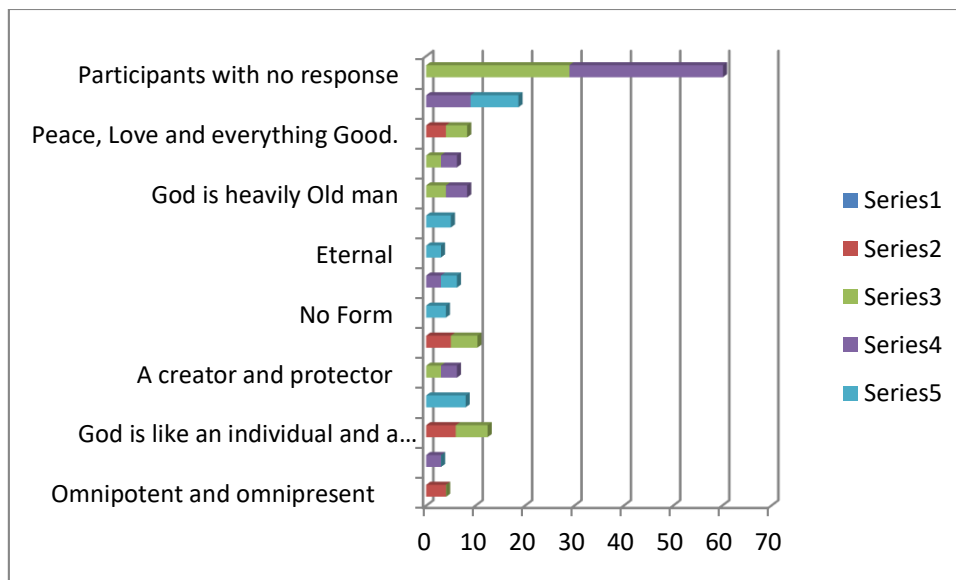
Thirty-nine percent of the women attended church services once a week or even more, while 64% engaged in daily prayer outside the church. The most frequent reason for church attendance was to obtain physical, emotional, or spiritual healing (58%), and the next most frequent reason was to feel close to God, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, or another divine being (55%). [6]

Based on the dialogue with the respondents, the researcher perceives that people come to Church to pray and to keep aside their political views, education, economic disparity, and racism. Religion has a more or less noticeable public presence in Latin America, while Latin Americans living in the BAC live their religious experience more privately, without seeking or wishing an increasing role of religious experience in public life (work, politics, etc.). [12] The Christian community is vibrant in many places in Guyana with a lot of activities. Lay leadership is effective and they are motivated to conduct church activities. Spirituality was an acceptable and motivational concept to include in a PA program, regardless of the participant’s religious beliefs. [7]

RESULTS.

The total number of people interviewed was 93 which include 58 females (62.37%) and 35 males (37.63%). The age ranged from 18–70 years. The data was collected from New Amsterdam, Hopetown, Bush Lot, Portmourent, Betteerverwarghting, Geoverwaring, Plaisance, Better hope, Diamond, West Bank, and Grove. People who go to church regularly are (81) and do not go to church regularly (12) Study shows that more women go to church than men. According to the data collected, 34 (36.56%) people received their faith traditionally from their parents. 27 (29.03%) of them received faith during infant baptism and 26 (27.96%) of the answerers chose their faith at the time of adult baptism. 4 (4.30%) responders who have faith are not yet baptized and the rest 2 (2.15%) respondents did not answer this question. 72 respondents reported that they have changed their life after accepting Christianity. 19 did not have any change after practicing religion and 2 did not answer. 71(76.34%) reported that they pray every day, 20 (21.50%) reported that they do not pray every day, and 2 (2.15%) did not respond to the question.

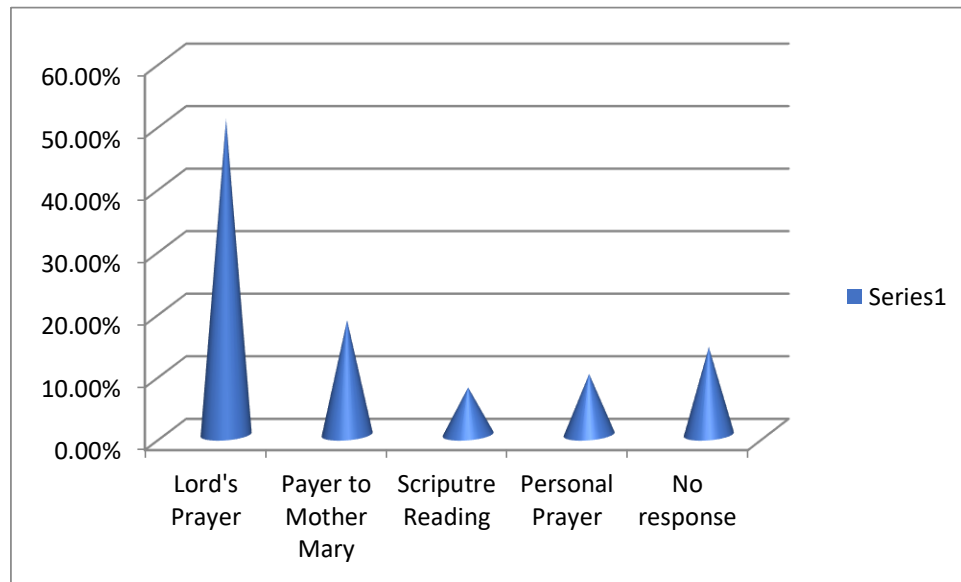
The idea of God	No of Participants	Percentage
Omnipotent and omnipresent	4	4.30%
Jesus Christ	3	3.23%
God is like an individual and a friend	6	6.45%
God is like us	8	8.60%
A creator and protector	3	3.23%
Magnificent being watching over us	5	5.38%
No Form	4	4.30%
Powerful Spirit	3	3.23%
Eternal	3	3.23%
A Bright Light	5	5.38%
God is a heavily Old man	4	4.30%
Old, Gray, and mixed race	3	3.23%
Peace, Love, and everything Good.	4	4.30%
No Idea about God	9	9.68%
Participants with no response	29	31.18%



The above chart indicates the participant’s idea of God.

22(23.665) respondents believe in God because they fear God. 3 (3.23%) believe in God to obtain some material benefits. 6 (6.455) respondents believe in God to seek personal needs, 12 (12.90%) believe in God due to inherited practices and 25 (26.88%) believe for some other reasons. 14 (15.05%) respondents did not give any answer. With this, we can learn that the main reasons for believing in God 11(11.83%) are to gain material and personal benefits, fear of God, and inherited practice.

The Lord’s Prayer is a favorite for 47 (50.54%) respondents whereas 17 (18.28%) pray to Mother Mary. 7 (7.53%) respondents use scripture for their prayer and 9.68% of the respondents have the habit of reciting a personal prayer. The remaining 13 (13.98%) did not answer.



The above chart indicates the participant's favorite prayer.

The Respondents were also asked a question on what was the main message of the Bible for them. To this, the researcher received different answers. 32.26% recorded that the main message from the Bible is 'Love God and love your neighbor'. 13.97% replied that it is 'Love, Mercy, Compassion, and Forgiveness'. According to 12.90%, the main message of the Bible is to 'be good and faithful'. 6.45% responded that it is 'trusting in God'. 6.45% commented that it is 'doing the will of God'. The remaining 27.96% did not answer this question.

The researcher also enquired to know which part of the Bible has mostly influenced the Christian faith of the respondents. 46.24% indicated that their Christian living has been greatly influenced by the New Testament, especially the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelations. 27.96% remarked that it was the Old Testament that has played an influential role in their Christian Life. Books of Job, Proverbs, Isaiah, Genesis, Ruth, Exodus, and very specially the Psalms are significant. 25.80% of the respondents were not sure and undecided.

CONCLUSION.

After this research, we can conclude that for the people of Guyana, Prayer is an activity widely used to obtain favours from God. The Guyanese society believes that Prayer is the solution to recover from any crisis. In times of sickness and crises, they seek assistance by making Petitions, Intercessory prayers, and reciting small prayers. Many believe that prayer gives consolation to their lives and helps them find a solution to their problems. 87.1% of Guyanese claim to go to church regularly. The present research has shown that 71% of Guyanese spent time in prayer every day. Several types of prayer are included in the survey and are seen as standard measures of religiosity.

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ABBREVIATIONS

P.A: Physical Activity

BAC: Basque Autonomous Community