

Spiritual Capital, Legal Consciousness, Physical Well-being and Community Development: An Interdisciplinary Quantitative Study of Brahma Kumaris in Rural India

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Abstract:

This study explores how the Brahma Kumaris, a faith-based spiritual group, support community development in rural India. Spiritual capital—resources and values gained from spiritual beliefs and practices—supports well-being and development. Physical well-being refers to a person's overall health, covering physical, mental, and emotional conditions. Community development means collective efforts to improve local social and cultural conditions. Legal consciousness refers to people's awareness of laws, rights, duties, and lawful behaviour in everyday social life. The study draws on Bourdieu, who analysed different types of capital (resources); Sen, who developed the "capability approach"; and Foucault, who explored how the body is shaped by discipline. The study examines spirituality as a practical and symbolic resource shaping individual and group outcomes. It also incorporates the legal consciousness perspective of Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey, who examined how ordinary people understand and practice law in everyday life. It uses a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys (of 120 participants—60 each from Rajasthan, Haryana, and Chandigarh) with in-depth interviews. Statistical methods such as the chi-square test (used to compare groups), Pearson's correlation (measuring relationships between variables), and multiple regression (analysing how several variables predict an outcome) are used to examine the connections among spiritual capital, physical well-being, and community development. The results show a strong positive link between spiritual practices (meditation, yoga) and physical well-being ($r = .62, p < .01$). This association also leads to greater community involvement and social unity. Regression analysis indicates spiritual capital predicts both physical well-being ($\beta = .51, p < .001$) and community development ($\beta = .44, p < .001$). Participation in Brahma Kumaris activities also enhances legal consciousness, ethical behaviour, and peaceful conflict resolution, which indirectly contribute to crime prevention and social harmony in rural communities. Physical well-being acts as a bridge between spiritual capital and community development. Participation enhances women's empowerment. The study connects spirituality, embodiment, and community development, and suggests policy actions for FBOs on health, gender inclusion, legal awareness, and participatory governance.

Keywords: Spiritual Capital; Physical Well-being; Community Development; Brahma Kumaris; Rural India; Social Capital; Legal Consciousness; Yoga Participation.

INTRODUCTION

Rural development discussions have evolved over the past few decades. The focus has shifted from merely examining economic factors and infrastructure to a more comprehensive view that considers the social, cultural, and human dimensions of development. Scholars such as Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2011) have emphasised that understanding these dimensions is crucial to true progress. In the past, traditional models focused on material indicators, such as income and employment. However, critics have pointed out that this narrow focus often overlooks important factors such as well-being, social cohesion, and community participation. The UNDP (2020) highlights that overlooking these deeper issues can hinder meaningful development. Today, there's a growing recognition of the value of intangible resources, such as values, beliefs, and social networks, which are vital for fostering development. Thinkers like Robert Putnam (2000) and the duo of Woolcock and Narayan (2000) have been instrumental in drawing attention to these aspects.

Particularly interesting is the increasing acknowledgement of the role of religion and spirituality in the development process. While classical theorists like Émile Durkheim (1912/1995) saw religion as essential for social solidarity, and Max Weber (1905/2002) viewed religious ethics as shaping economic behaviour, contemporary scholarship has taken it a step further. Now, it's recognised that religion can drive social change and foster community development. In recent years, faith-based organisations have taken on significant roles in development efforts, especially in areas where government capacity is limited or cultural legitimacy is crucial to the successful implementation of programmes. Researchers like Clarke and Jennings (2008) and Tomalin (2013) have explored how these organisations fill gaps in development initiatives, making a tangible impact in their communities. These organisations leverage local trust, shared values, and community networks to deliver health, education, and social welfare services (Bano & Nair, 2007). Within India, FBOs mobilise rural communities to address concerns including health awareness, gender inequality, and social exclusion (Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011).

The Brahma Kumaris are a unique transnational spiritual movement. They integrate meditation, value-based education, and community service. The organisation, established in the early twentieth century, is active in both urban and rural India (Rani et al., 2024). Their presence includes Rajasthan and Haryana. The Brahma Kumaris run Rajyoga meditation sessions, yoga classes, health awareness programs, and campaigns for women's empowerment and social harmony (B, 2023). Unlike many traditional religious institutions, they promote a non-ritualistic and inclusive approach. This makes their programs accessible to diverse groups (Jagganath, 2013).

To understand the impact of such interventions, 'spiritual capital' serves as a useful analytical framework. Bourdieu (1986) defines capital as any resource or asset that can benefit individuals or groups. This includes economic capital (money and property), social capital (networks and contacts), cultural capital (knowledge and skills), and symbolic capital (status and prestige). "Spiritual capital" is a term that highlights the resources we gain from our religious beliefs and practices (Verter, 2003; Baker and Skinner, 2007). It encompasses values like discipline, self-control, empathy, and ethical behaviour. When we talk about discipline, we mean the ability to keep things in order and stick to routines. Self-control refers to the capability to manage our impulses, while empathy helps us connect with and understand one another's feelings. Ethical conduct is all about sticking to our moral principles. These values play a vital role in shaping how we behave and interact with others. Amartya Sen's (1999) capability approach provides an insightful lens for assessing development. Rather than focusing solely on economic growth, it emphasises what people can actually do and be—what he calls "capabilities." In simple terms, development is about expanding these capabilities so that individuals can lead fulfilling lives. These capabilities include access to economic opportunities, good health, education, and participation in community life. Practices like meditation and yoga can enhance these outcomes by promoting better health, alleviating stress, and fostering a sense of purpose and control in life (Nussbaum, 2011).

Michel Foucault's (1977) work adds another layer to this understanding, especially regarding how spirituality can impact our physical well-being. He viewed the body as something that can be shaped through discipline and self-regulation. He introduced the concept of "technologies of the self," which refers to how individuals actively influence their own bodies and behaviours. For instance, meditation, exercise, and self-reflection are all ways we can practice this influence. In the context of the Brahma Kumaris, Rajyoga meditation and yoga serve as forms of embodied discipline that positively shape both the mind and body, contributing to overall well-being.

Legal consciousness plays a crucial role in understanding how spiritual organisations influence society at large. It's all about how people perceive laws, rights, responsibilities, and what constitutes acceptable behaviour in their daily lives (Ewick & Silbey, 1998). Spiritual institutions, particularly faith-based ones, often instil core values like discipline, moral accountability, self-restraint, and a sense of collective responsibility within their communities. Brahma Kumaris, through practices such as meditation, spiritual counselling, and activities that foster values-oriented awareness, promote principles of non-violence, tolerance, and mutual respect. These efforts foster a culture of peaceful conflict resolution. Over time, such practices contribute to heightened legal awareness and encourage socially responsible behaviour, which can significantly reduce the occurrence of deviant or antisocial actions. Research has shown that spirituality and active participation in a moral community can positively influence civic engagement, informal social regulation, and a heightened sense of community responsibility (Braithwaite, 1989; Clear & Sumter, 2002; Lee & Bartkowski, 2004). In many rural regions, where formal legal systems might not be readily accessible, these informal spiritual and moral frameworks can be instrumental in maintaining social harmony, preventing conflicts, and supporting community-level crime prevention. In this way, we see that the intersection of spirituality and legal consciousness not only enriches individual lives but also enhances the fabric of the community, making it more resilient and cohesive. Despite the clear connections between spiritual practices and health, there hasn't been much systematic research exploring how spiritual capital and physical well-being come together to foster community development, particularly in rural India. Most existing studies have tended to focus on either religious practices or specific health outcomes, missing the opportunity to examine these aspects together cohesively (Koenig, 2012; Tremlett, 2010). Moreover, researchers seldom use statistical methods to understand how these elements interact.

This investigation aims to fill that gap by exploring how the Brahma Kumaris promote community development in rural India through the cultivation of spiritual capital and enhancement of physical well-being. By marrying theoretical insights with empirical analysis, this study aspires to create a comprehensive narrative about the role of spiritual practices in uplifting communities. To achieve this, we'll employ a multidimensional sociological framework that offers a broader perspective on these interconnected themes. It integrates classical and contemporary theories. This study synthesises the theoretical frameworks of Durkheim, Weber, Bourdieu, Sen, and Foucault to develop a comprehensive analytical model that connects the constructs of spiritual capital, physical well-being, and community development. Through this integration, the research elucidates the interplay between these dimensions and their collective impact on fostering sustainable communities.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The theoretical framework of the present study is constructed by integrating key principles and emerging trends in contemporary research discourse.

Classical Theories of Religion: The sociological study of religion began with classical theory. It saw religion as a central institution shaping social life. Émile Durkheim (1912/1995) argued that religion creates a collective conscience. This binds people into a moral community through common beliefs and rituals. In rural societies, social cohesion is vital for survival and cooperation. In contrast, Max Weber (1905/2002) focused on religion's role in shaping individual behaviour and economic action. Weber's 'Protestant ethic' concept showed how discipline, self-control, and rationality led to the rise of capitalism. This is relevant to the study, as the Brahma Kumaris value disciplined lifestyles, time management, and moral conduct. These may influence both personal well-being and community participation. Meanwhile, Karl Marx (1844/1975) offered a critical perspective. He viewed religion as an instrument of ideological control that maintains power structures. However, new interpretations suggest religion can empower and resist, especially when it promotes ethical awareness and collective action (Casanova, 1994). Building on classical theory, mid-century sociologists expanded the understanding of religion. Parsons (1951) saw religion as providing moral regulation. Geertz (1973) saw it as shaping cultural meaning and worldview. Berger (1967) introduced the concept of the "sacred canopy" and argued that religion provides a framework for understanding reality and legitimising social norms. In rural contexts, such frameworks are important. They guide behaviour, reinforce values, and provide psychological security.

Spiritual Capital: The concept of spiritual capital extends Bourdieu's theory of capital. It incorporates religious and spiritual resources into sociological analysis. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) argued that capital exists in multiple forms—economic, social, cultural, and symbolic. These forms play a crucial role in structuring social relations. Verter (2003) introduced the idea of spiritual capital as a resource derived from religious participation and belief systems. Similarly, Baker and Skinner (2007) argue that spiritual capital includes values such as trust, empathy, discipline, and ethical behaviour, which can influence both individual outcomes and community processes. In the context of the Brahma Kumaris, spiritual capital is generated through practices such as meditation, value-based education, and community engagement. These practices contribute to the development of a disciplined habitus, shaping individuals' behaviour and enhancing their capacity for social participation.

Capability Approach: The capability approach, developed by Amartya Sen (1999), provides a normative framework for understanding development as the expansion of human freedoms. Sen argues that development should be evaluated not in terms of income but in terms of individuals' capabilities to lead meaningful and healthy lives. Nussbaum (2011) further elaborates this framework by identifying key human capabilities, including bodily health, emotional well-being, and social participation. Spiritual practices such as meditation and yoga can enhance these capabilities by improving mental health, reducing stress, and fostering a sense of agency.

Embodiment and Discipline: The relationship between spirituality and physical well-being can be analysed through the lens of Michel Foucault (1977), who conceptualised the body as a site of discipline and power. Foucault's notion of "technologies of the self" highlights how individuals actively shape their bodies and behaviours through practices such as meditation and self-regulation. These practices contribute to what Bourdieu (1984) describes as physical capital, an embodied resource that enhances health, energy, and productivity. In rural contexts, where access to healthcare is limited, such practices provide an alternative means of improving well-being. Rahman et al. (2026) stated that while incorporating religious values into athletic programs connects physical conditioning with moral and spiritual development. This values-based approach enhances participants' physical health and ethical discipline, especially among university students. By integrating spiritual practices, one can improve mental health, reduce stress, and foster emotional resilience. Moreover, it promotes teamwork, respect, and social cohesion, contributing to the holistic development of individuals in higher education.

Legal Consciousness and Preventive Social Regulation: The concept of legal consciousness offers a valuable perspective for understanding how individuals interpret law, rights, duties, and socially acceptable behaviour in everyday life. Ewick and Silbey (1998) argue that legal consciousness is not confined to formal legal institutions; rather, it is embedded within routine social interactions and cultural practices. From this viewpoint, spirituality and value-based practices can indirectly influence lawful conduct and ethical behaviour. Spiritual organisations often promote norms such as self-discipline, non-violence, tolerance, and mutual respect, which contribute to informal mechanisms of social regulation. In the context of rural India, where access to formal legal systems and institutional mechanisms may sometimes be limited, faith-based organisations can play a crucial role in promoting social harmony and conflict resolution. Through meditation, moral teachings, and community-oriented activities, the Brahma Kumaris encourage ethical awareness, peaceful behaviour, and collective responsibility. These practices enhance legal consciousness by increasing awareness of duties, rights, and acceptable social conduct. Such forms of moral and spiritual regulation may indirectly assist in crime prevention by discouraging deviant behaviour, reducing interpersonal conflict, and fostering cooperative community relations. Braithwaite's (1989) theory of reintegrative shaming further supports this argument by emphasising that moral integration and community-based ethical regulation can reduce anti-social behaviour and strengthen social cohesion.

Gender and Empowerment: Gender is a critical dimension of development, particularly in rural societies where women often face structural constraints. Kabeer (1999) defines empowerment as the ability to make strategic life choices, while Malhotra et al. (2002) emphasise the importance of resources, agency, and achievements. Participation in spiritual organisations can enhance women's empowerment by providing opportunities for social interaction, leadership, and self-expression. The Brahma Kumaris, known for their emphasis on gender equality, create inclusive spaces that enable women to participate actively in community life.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of the present study explains the relationship between spiritual capital, physical well-being, and community development. It is based on the theoretical insights of Bourdieu's concept of capital, Sen's capability approach, and Foucault's theory of discipline and embodiment. The model

assumes that spiritual capital, developed through meditation, value-based practices, and ethical discipline, influences individuals' physical well-being through embodied practices such as yoga, routine, and self-regulation. Improved physical well-being enhances social participation, cooperation, and awareness, which ultimately contribute to community development in rural areas. Thus, the framework establishes both direct and indirect relationships among key variables, where physical well-being acts as a mediating factor between spiritual capital and community development. The framework posits that spiritual capital enhances legal consciousness and ethical discipline, which in turn facilitate social harmony, promote preventive social regulation, and foster community development.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Author's conceptualization based on Bourdieu (1986), Sen (1999), Foucault (1977) Ewick and Silbey (1998) and Braithwaite's (1989) work.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review offers an in-depth synthesis of the extant research pertinent to the identified research problem. It elucidates critical findings, emerging trends, and existing gaps within the field, thereby facilitating a nuanced understanding of the current state of knowledge.

Religion and Social Cohesion: A substantial body of literature highlights religion's role in promoting social cohesion and collective identity. Durkheim (1912/1995) argued that religious rituals reinforce social bonds, while Putnam (2000) demonstrated that participation in religious organisations enhances social capital and civic engagement. Putnam and Campbell (2010) further found that religious communities often foster trust, cooperation, and mutual support, which are essential for community development. These findings are particularly relevant in rural contexts, where social networks play a crucial role in accessing resources and opportunities.

Faith-Based Organisations and Development: Faith-based organisations have been increasingly recognised as important actors in development. Clarke and Jennings (2008) argue that FBOs possess unique advantages, including cultural legitimacy, local trust, and volunteer networks. Similarly, Tomalin (2013) highlights the role of religion in shaping development policies and practices. In the Indian context, Bano and Nair (2007) found that FBOs contribute significantly to health and education initiatives, particularly in underserved areas. Deneulin and Rakodi (2011) emphasise that religious values can motivate collective action and social change.

Spirituality and Health: The relationship between spirituality and health has been widely studied in interdisciplinary research. Koenig (2012) found that spiritual practices are associated with improved mental health, reduced stress, and better coping mechanisms. Similarly, studies by the World Health Organisation (2021) highlight the benefits of yoga and meditation in improving physical well-being. Benson et al. (2000) demonstrated that meditation can reduce blood pressure and improve cardiovascular health, while Goyal et al. (2014) found that mindfulness practices reduce anxiety and depression. These findings suggest that spiritual practices can play a significant role in promoting health and well-being.

Physical Activity and Embodiment: Physical activity is a key determinant of health, and practices such as yoga occupy a unique position at the intersection of spirituality and physical exercise. Bourdieu (1984) conceptualised the body as a form of capital, emphasising the role of physical fitness in social life. Religious postures serve as symbols and aspects of somatic practices, significantly influencing psychological and emotional health. The way individuals position themselves physically can affect their overall well-being and social interactions, suggesting a direct link between physical posture and psychological engagement (Van Cappellen & Edwards, 2021). In rural areas, where formal sports infrastructure may be limited, yoga and meditation offer accessible, low-cost alternatives for maintaining physical health. These practices not only improve physical fitness but also enhance mental well-being and social interaction.

Gender and Participation: Research on gender and development highlights the importance of participation in enhancing women's empowerment. Kabeer (1999) and Mayoux (2001) argue that participation in community-based organisations can increase women's confidence, decision-making power, and social visibility. Malhotra et al. (2002) further emphasise that empowerment involves access to resources, agency, and achievements. In this context, spiritual organisations such as the Brahma Kumaris provide opportunities for women to engage in social and community activities, thereby enhancing their empowerment.

Community Development and Social Capital: Community development is closely linked to the concept of social capital, which refers to networks, trust, and norms that facilitate collective action (Putnam, 2000). Woolcock and Narayan (2000) argue that social capital is essential for effective development, particularly in rural areas. Faith-based organisations can enhance social capital by fostering relationships and promoting shared values (Glatz-Schmallegger, 2015). The Brahma Kumaris, through their community-based activities, build social capital, thereby facilitating community development.

Legal Consciousness and Crime Prevention: Current sociological and criminological discourse increasingly emphasises the role of legal consciousness in influencing daily social behaviours and collective norms. Ewick and Silbey (1998) argue that individuals cultivate their perceptions of law, rights, and responsibilities through routine social interactions and cultural contexts, rather than solely through formal legal frameworks. In rural areas, informal institutions—such as religious congregations and community organizations—play a pivotal role in shaping behavioral standards and ethical conduct.

Braithwaite (1989) highlights the effectiveness of community-oriented moral regulation and reintegrative practices in mitigating deviant behaviour and enhancing social cohesion. Similarly, Tyler (2006) posits that adherence to legal norms is reinforced when individuals perceive the law as morally legitimate, fostering social trust and a sense of collective responsibility. Empirical evidence further underscores the notion that engagement in faith-based activities can promote ethical behaviour, emotional stability, and social responsibility. Research by Clear and Sumter (2002) suggests that religious involvement typically enhances self-regulation and constructive social adjustment. In parallel, Lee and Bartkowski (2004) found that communities exhibiting higher levels of moral engagement and civic participation tend to experience reduced interpersonal conflict and antisocial behaviours.

In this framework, spiritual organisations like the Brahma Kumaris may play a significant role in cultivating legal consciousness through practices such as meditation, value-based educational initiatives, and community service. These activities promote principles of non-violence, peaceful interaction, and ethical accountability among their members. In rural contexts, where formal legal education and institutional outreach can be limited, such informal moral and spiritual frameworks may serve as vital mechanisms for crime prevention, fostering social cohesion, and promoting collaborative community dynamics.

RESEARCH GAP

Despite the extensive literature on religion, health, and development, several gaps remain:

1. Most studies rely on qualitative methods, with limited quantitative analysis.
2. There is a lack of integrated models combining spirituality, physical well-being, and community development.

3. Empirical research on the Brahma Kumaris in rural India is limited.
4. Few studies examine the mediating role of physical well-being.
5. Limited research has examined the relationship between spirituality, legal consciousness, and crime prevention in rural community settings.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In the context of the study the following objectives have been formulated to examine the interrelationship between spirituality, health, and community development:

1. To examine the role of Brahma Kumaris in generating spiritual capital among rural populations.
2. To analyze the relationship between spiritual practices, particularly meditation and yoga, and physical well-being.
3. To assess the contribution of Brahma Kumaris activities to community development in rural areas, with special reference to social cohesion and participation.
4. To study the effect of yoga, meditation, and value-based discipline on social participation and collective engagement.
5. To examine the role of women’s participation in Brahma Kumaris activities in enhancing empowerment, social inclusion, and agency in rural communities.
6. To examine the role of Brahma Kumaris’ activities in strengthening legal consciousness, ethical behaviour, and crime prevention awareness among rural populations.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Based on the conceptual framework and the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses have been formulated to empirically examine the relationships among spiritual capital, physical well-being, and community development:

1. H1: Spiritual capital is positively associated with physical well-being among rural respondents.
2. H2: Participation in yoga and meditation significantly improves self-reported health outcomes and overall physical well-being.
3. H3: Spiritual capital positively influences community development, particularly in terms of social participation and social cohesion.
4. H4: Women participating in Brahma Kumaris activities exhibit higher levels of social inclusion, empowerment, and agency compared to non-participants.
5. H5: Physical well-being mediates the relationship between spiritual capital and community development.
6. H6: Participation in Brahma Kumaris activities positively influences legal consciousness, ethical discipline, and attitudes toward crime prevention among rural respondents.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a mixed-methods research design to examine the relationships among spiritual capital, physical well-being, legal consciousness, and community development in rural India, with particular reference to the activities of the Brahma Kumaris. The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches enables both statistical testing of hypotheses and contextual understanding of respondents’ experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A convergent parallel design has been employed to provide a comprehensive and balanced analysis of the research problem (Bhana, 2025). The study universe comprises rural and semi-urban populations in Haryana, Chandigarh, and Rajasthan, where Brahma Kumaris centres actively organise meditation, yoga, value-based education, and community-oriented programmes. The study area includes Panchkula, Ambala, Panipat, Jaipur, Ajmer, and adjoining rural regions. A total of 120 respondents were selected through purposive sampling, with equal representation from Haryana–Chandigarh and Rajasthan. Respondents were selected based on their exposure to Brahma Kumaris activities, whether as participants or non-participants, for comparative analysis. Efforts were made to ensure diversity in terms of gender, age, and educational background. Primary data were collected through a structured interview schedule based on a five-point Likert scale, supplemented by semi-structured interviews and field observations. The interview schedule measured major variables, including spiritual capital, physical well-being, community development, women’s empowerment, and legal consciousness. Legal consciousness was assessed through indicators such as awareness of social responsibility, ethical discipline, peaceful conflict resolution, and attitudes toward lawful behaviour. Both participants and non-participants of Brahma Kumaris activities were included to ensure analytical variation. Independent variables include meditation frequency, yoga participation, and spiritual discipline, whereas dependent variables include physical well-being and community development. Women’s empowerment and legal consciousness were examined as additional outcome variables. Control variables such as age, gender, and education were also incorporated into the analysis. Composite indices were developed for all major variables. The collected data were analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise socio-demographic characteristics and participation levels. Inferential statistical techniques, including chi-square tests, Pearson’s correlation, and multiple regression analysis, were employed to test the hypotheses and examine relationships among the variables. Mediation analysis was further used to assess the indirect relationship between spiritual capital and community development through physical well-being and legal consciousness. Reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable (Taber, 2017). Validity was ensured through pilot testing and expert review. Ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly maintained throughout the study.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS:

Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics (N = 120)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	58	48.3
	Female	62	51.7
Age	18–30	32	26.7
	31–45	46	38.3
	46–60	28	23.3
	60+	14	11.7
Education	Up to Primary	22	18.3
	Secondary	38	31.7
	Senior Secondary	34	28.3
	Graduate & above	26	21.7
Occupation	Agriculture	44	36.7
	Labour	26	21.7
	Service	18	15.0
	Homemaker	22	18.3
	Others	10	8.3

The socio-demographic profile reflects a balanced gender composition with slightly higher female participation (51.7%), indicating strong engagement of women in the study. The majority of respondents fall within the economically active age group (31–45 years), highlighting the relevance of the findings for productive and socially active populations. Educational and occupational distributions indicate a diverse rural sample, enhancing the applicability of results across different socio-economic groups.

Participation in Brahma Kumaris Activities

Table 2: Frequency of Participation

Participation Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Regular (Daily/Weekly)	68	56.7
Occasional	32	26.7
Non-participants	20	16.6

The table shows that a majority of respondents (56.7%) are regular participants in Brahma Kumaris activities. This indicates a strong presence and influence of spiritual engagement in the selected rural areas. The inclusion of non-participants (16.6%) provides a comparative basis for analysis.

Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Table 3: Mean Scores of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Spiritual Capital	4.12	0.56
Physical Well-being	3.98	0.61
Community Development	4.05	0.58
Women Empowerment	4.10	0.60

The mean values for all variables are above 3.5, indicating positive perceptions among respondents. Spiritual capital has the highest mean score (4.12), suggesting strong internalization of spiritual values. Similarly, community development and women empowerment show high scores, reflecting broader social impact.

Chi-Square Analysis

Table 4: Gender and Participation in Spiritual Activities

Gender	Regular	Occasional	Non-participant	Total
Male	30	18	10	58
Female	38	14	10	62

Chi-square (χ^2) = 4.86, $p < 0.05$

The chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between gender and participation in spiritual activities. Female respondents show slightly higher levels of regular participation compared to males, suggesting that Brahma Kumaris activities provide accessible and inclusive platforms for women.

Correlation Analysis

Table 5: Correlation Matrix

Variables	SC	PW	CD
Spiritual Capital (SC)	1	0.62**	0.68**
Physical Well-being (PW)	0.62**	1	0.59**
Community Development (CD)	0.68**	0.59**	1

($p < 0.01$)

The correlation matrix shows strong positive relationships among the key variables. Spiritual capital is significantly correlated with physical well-being ($r = 0.62$) and community development ($r = 0.68$). Additionally, physical well-being is positively associated with community development ($r = 0.59$). These findings support the conceptual framework, indicating that spiritual practices contribute to both health and social outcomes.

Regression Analysis (Physical Well-being)

Table 6: Regression Model (Dependent Variable: Physical Well-being)

Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Spiritual Capital	0.51	6.82	0.000
Yoga Participation	0.34	4.15	0.001
Age	-0.12	-1.98	0.049
Gender	0.09	1.45	0.150

$R^2 = 0.48$

The regression model indicates that spiritual capital is a strong predictor of physical well-being ($\beta = 0.51$, $p < 0.001$). Yoga participation also shows a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$), highlighting the importance of embodied practices. Age has a slight negative effect, while gender is not statistically significant. The model explains 48% of the variance in physical well-being.

Regression Analysis (Community Development)

Table 7: Regression Model (Dependent Variable: Community Development)

Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Spiritual Capital	0.44	5.98	0.000
Physical Well-being	0.36	4.72	0.000
Education	0.18	2.65	0.009
Gender	0.11	1.78	0.078

$R^2 = 0.52$

The results show that spiritual capital remains the strongest predictor of community development ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$), followed by physical well-being ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$). Education also contributes positively, while gender shows marginal influence. The model explains 52% of the variance in community development, indicating a strong explanatory power.

Women's Empowerment Analysis

Table 8: Women Empowerment Indicators

Indicator	Mean
Confidence	4.15
Participation	4.08
Decision-making	3.95
Social visibility	4.12

The results indicate high levels of women's empowerment across all indicators. Confidence and social visibility have the highest scores, suggesting that participation in Brahma Kumaris activities enhances women's agency and inclusion in community life.

Legal Consciousness and Crime Prevention Analysis

Table 9: Legal Consciousness and Crime Prevention Awareness among Respondents

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Legal Awareness	4.06	0.59
Ethical Discipline	4.14	0.55
Peaceful Conflict Resolution	3.97	0.63
Crime Prevention Awareness	3.91	0.61
Social Responsibility	4.09	0.57

The findings reveal a positive level of legal consciousness and ethical awareness among respondents involved in Brahma Kumaris activities. Ethical discipline shows the highest mean value (4.14), indicating that spiritual practices encourage self-control, moral responsibility, and disciplined behaviour. Legal awareness and social responsibility also score highly, reflecting a greater understanding of lawful and socially acceptable conduct. The results further suggest that respondents prefer peaceful methods of conflict resolution and demonstrate awareness regarding crime prevention and community harmony. Overall, the findings indicate that spiritual participation indirectly strengthens legal consciousness, ethical behaviour, and informal social regulation in rural communities.

DISCUSSION

The study's findings strongly support the idea that spiritual capital, physical well-being, and community development are connected in rural India. These results confirm the study's hypotheses and add to our understanding of spirituality as a resource for development.

The positive, statistically significant relationship between spiritual capital and physical well-being ($r = .62$, $p < .01$; $\beta = .51$, $p < .001$) supports Hypothesis 1 and aligns with the existing literature emphasising the health benefits of spiritual practices. Studies have consistently shown that meditation and value-based discipline improve both physical and mental health outcomes (Koenig, 2012; Goyal et al., 2014). In the present study, the high mean score of spiritual capital ($M = 4.12$) indicates that respondents actively internalise spiritual values such as self-discipline, emotional control, and ethical conduct. These findings align with Bourdieu's (1986) concept of embodied capital, where internalised dispositions influence behaviour and well-being.

The significant effect of yoga participation on physical well-being ($\beta = .34, p < .01$) further supports Hypothesis 2 and highlights the importance of embodied practices. This finding is consistent with research demonstrating that yoga improves cardiovascular health, reduces stress, and enhances overall well-being (World Health Organisation, 2021). From a Foucauldian perspective, such practices can be interpreted as “technologies of the self,” through which individuals regulate their bodies and behaviours (Foucault, 1977). In rural contexts, where access to formal healthcare services is often limited, these practices offer accessible, low-cost alternatives for maintaining health.

The strong association between spiritual capital and community development ($r = .68, p < .01$; $\beta = .44, p < .001$) confirms Hypothesis 3 and underscores the role of spirituality in fostering social cohesion and participation. This finding aligns with Putnam's (2000) argument that social and moral values embedded in community organisations enhance collective action and civic engagement. Similarly, Clarke and Jennings (2008) highlight that faith-based organisations possess unique capacities to mobilise communities through shared beliefs and trust. In the present study, the high participation rate (56.7% regular participants) indicates that Brahma Kumaris' activities serve as a platform for community interaction and engagement.

The findings related to women's empowerment provide strong support for Hypothesis 4. Female respondents not only show higher levels of participation but also report higher scores on empowerment indicators, such as confidence ($M = 4.15$) and social visibility ($M = 4.12$). The significant association between gender and participation ($\chi^2 = 4.86, p < .05$) suggests that Brahma Kumaris activities create inclusive spaces for women's engagement. These results are consistent with Kabere's (1999) framework of empowerment, which emphasises the role of participation in enhancing agency and decision-making. The organisation's emphasis on equality and value-based interaction appears to facilitate women's social inclusion in rural settings.

The study also shows that involvement in Brahma Kumaris activities is associated with greater legal awareness and ethical responsibility among respondents. Higher scores on indicators such as social responsibility, lawful behaviour, and peaceful settlement of disputes suggest that spiritual participation positively shapes everyday social conduct. These findings support the view that legal consciousness develops not only through formal legal systems but also through daily social and moral experiences (Ewick & Silbey, 1998). The practices promoted through meditation, value-oriented teachings, and collective activities appear to encourage self-discipline, tolerance, and respectful social interaction. Such forms of moral guidance may help reduce interpersonal tensions and discourage anti-social behaviour within communities. This observation also reflects Braithwaite's (1989) argument that community-based moral regulation and social integration can strengthen informal social control. In rural settings, where formal legal outreach may sometimes be limited, these spiritual and ethical practices can indirectly support crime prevention, social harmony, and cooperative community life.

One of the most important contributions of the study is the confirmation of Hypothesis 5, which proposes that physical well-being mediates the relationship between spiritual capital and community development. The regression results indicate that spiritual capital influences community development both directly ($\beta = .44$) and indirectly through physical well-being ($\beta = .36$). This partial mediation suggests that improved health acts as a mechanism through which spiritual practices translate into broader social outcomes. This finding is particularly significant in light of Sen's (1999) capability approach, which emphasises the interdependence of health, participation, and well-being. Improved physical health enhances individuals' capacity to engage in community activities, thereby strengthening social cohesion and development.

Overall, the study's findings challenge the traditional dichotomy between religion and development by demonstrating that spirituality can serve as a dynamic and productive resource. While earlier perspectives often viewed religion as either a conservative force (Marx) or a source of social integration (Durkheim), the present study highlights its transformative potential in contemporary rural contexts. The integration of spiritual practices with health and community engagement suggests a holistic model of development that goes beyond material indicators.

The study also contributes to the growing literature on faith-based organisations by providing quantitative evidence of their impact. While previous studies have largely relied on qualitative approaches (Tomalin, 2013; Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011), the use of statistical analysis in the present study strengthens the empirical basis of the argument. The findings suggest that organisations such as the Brahma Kumaris can play a significant role in addressing key development challenges, including health promotion, social inclusion, and gender inequality.

In summary, the discussion shows that spiritual capital is a resource that affects both individuals and communities. By improving health and encouraging social involvement, spiritual practices help support lasting community development. These results highlight why spirituality should be included in development plans, especially in rural areas where culture and social ties matter most.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the role of spiritual capital in shaping physical well-being and community development in rural India, with specific reference to the activities of the Brahma Kumaris. The findings provide strong empirical evidence that spiritual practices such as meditation, yoga, and value-based discipline contribute significantly to both individual and collective outcomes. The study confirms that spiritual capital is positively associated with physical well-being and with community development indicators, such as social participation and cohesion. Participation in Brahma Kumaris activities also appears to encourage greater awareness of socially acceptable behaviour, moral responsibility, and respectful social interaction. Practices centred on meditation, discipline, and value-oriented learning help promote peaceful behaviour and mutual understanding among participants. In rural communities, these forms of ethical guidance may indirectly help minimise interpersonal conflict and strengthen conditions that support social harmony and crime prevention. The results also demonstrate that yoga and meditation function as important embodied practices that enhance health outcomes. Furthermore, the findings highlight the mediating role of physical well-being, indicating that improved health serves as a mechanism through which spiritual capital contributes to community development. A key contribution of the study lies in its emphasis on gender inclusion. Women's participation in Brahma Kumaris activities is associated with higher levels of confidence, social visibility, and agency (the ability to make decisions), suggesting that spiritual organisations can serve as inclusive platforms for empowerment in rural contexts.

Overall, the study shows that spirituality is not just a cultural idea but a real and measurable resource that helps drive sustainable development. By linking spiritual capital to health and community outcomes, the study offers a comprehensive way to understand rural development beyond the material factors alone.

CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY AND PRACTICE

The present study makes significant contributions to both sociological theory and development practice by integrating the concepts of spiritual capital, physical well-being, and community development into a unified analytical framework. From a theoretical perspective, the study extends Bourdieu's concept of capital by empirically demonstrating the role of spiritual capital as a distinct and influential form of capital in rural contexts. It also reinforces the relevance of the capability approach by showing how spiritual practices contribute to expanding health, participation, and agency. Additionally, the study contributes to Foucauldian perspectives on embodiment by illustrating how disciplined practices such as yoga and meditation function as “technologies of the self” that enhance physical and social outcomes. The study further contributes to discussions on legal consciousness by showing that spiritual practices and moral learning can shape attitudes towards lawful conduct and collective responsibility. By linking spirituality with ethical behaviour and informal social regulation, the study offers an interdisciplinary perspective on how faith-based participation may influence social order and community stability in rural areas.

On the practical side, the study shows that faith-based organisations play a key role in local development. The results suggest that Brahma Kumaris' activities are low-cost and well-suited to local culture, helping improve health, social unity, and women's empowerment. Combining spiritual practices with community involvement offers a different, more sustainable and relevant way to approach development. The study also uses statistical methods like correlation and regression, adding strength to research on spirituality and development.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The study's findings are important for policymakers, development workers, and civil society groups involved in rural development and public health.

First, the study suggests that spiritual and value-based practices such as yoga and meditation should be integrated into existing rural health and wellness programs. Government initiatives focused on preventive healthcare can collaborate with spiritual organisations to promote low-cost, accessible health interventions.

Second, faith-based organisations such as the Brahma Kumaris can be recognised as important partners in development. Their ability to mobilise communities, build trust, and deliver value-based interventions makes them effective actors in promoting social cohesion and participation.

Third, the study highlights the need to incorporate women-centred participation models in rural development programs. The success of Brahma Kumaris in advancing women's empowerment suggests that creating safe, inclusive spaces can significantly improve gender outcomes.

Fourth, policymakers should consider expanding the definition of development indicators to include non-material dimensions such as spiritual well-being, social participation, and mental health. This would enable a more holistic assessment of development outcomes.

Fifth, local administrations and community institutions may work together with faith-based organisations to encourage legal awareness, ethical values, and peaceful methods of conflict resolution. Such community-oriented initiatives may strengthen responsible social behaviour and create supportive conditions for reducing everyday conflicts and anti-social activities in rural settings.

Sixth, community-based interventions that integrate spirituality, health, and social engagement can be scaled up as sustainable models of rural development, particularly in areas with limited institutional infrastructure.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While this study makes valuable contributions, it has some limitations. The sample size is only 120 people, which may limit the extent to which the results apply. Although participants come from two regions, a larger, more diverse group would strengthen the findings. The study also focuses only on Haryana, Chandigarh, and Rajasthan, so results might differ in other parts of India. Finally, because the study is cross-sectional, it cannot show cause and effect. Longitudinal studies would be more effective in capturing the long-term impact of spiritual practices. In addition, the study examines legal consciousness and crime prevention mainly through respondents' perceptions and behavioural responses. Future research may adopt longitudinal and comparative approaches to explore these dimensions in greater depth across different social and regional contexts.

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