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Children'S Conception of God: A Comparative Analysis on the Basis of Gender

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Abstract:

This present paper based on a research study tries to make a comparative analysis of Indian children's conception of God on the basis of gender. It was found through a profound literature study that children's common daily life experiences, which they get through normal participation in family and community activities and practices, are influenced through the process of primary and secondary socialization. This socialization involves learning appropriate role behaviours and the most significant of these behaviours involve sex and age roles. Studies show that from the very beginning children experience gender based socialization. The objective of this study was to make a comparative analysis of children's conception of God on the basis of gender to see if there exists any pattern amongst children's conception of God on the basis of gender. The sample of the study consisted of 420 children of East Delhi and NCR from I-VIII grades, both male and female and from the government and private schools. In the present study different researcher made tools were used for the children of different grades I-III, IV-V, VI- VIII. For the VI-VIII and IV-V grades children, the tools were in the form of interesting stimulating stories which associated children with the characters of the stories followed by a set of questions exploring and uncovering children's innermost feelings, thoughts and views about God. For the children of I-III grades the tools were in the form of visual clips followed by oral interaction. In the present study, qualitative method of analysis was used. The findings of the study showed on the basis of the gender there is no major difference in the conception of children about God. However, a marginal difference may be noted as more girls share their experiences of celebrating festivals in the school and singing religious songs on different occasions than boys. The reason behind it, may be the gender socialization, the process that starts at birth and involves learning cultural roles according to one's sex. Hence, parents, teachers and society need to be more sensitive and aware towards gender stereotypes so that both the male and female children could get equal opportunities for the all round development.

Keywords: God, children, gender roles, socialization

1. Introduction

"It is not only that we affix specific gender roles from birth and that we expect each of the gender roles to present discrete and pure models; we also create a hierarchy of masculine and feminine traits regardless of who they are attributed to. In other words, being tough (a masculine trait) is usually ranked as a more elevated trait than being considerate in the global value system of today ...whereas being loving, sensitive or considerate is viewed as weak, and of course more so for men."

-Zalouk M. (2006) in D.E. Campbell, In 'Gender Roles and Schools' (2010)

The above given quote signifies that children experience gender based socialization from a very early stage. Much of the socialization that takes place with respect to gender involves learning appropriate role behaviours and associated traits which are also generally placed in a hierarchy. In other words, through their common everyday experiences children learn to behave as per their gender roles and are also conditioned to think in terms of their gender with respect to their expectations as well as the expectations that the society has from them. Thus, gender is considered to be a social construct through which a society describes what it means to be a girl or a boy. There are studies (Eccles, Jacobs, Harold 1990) as cited by Witt S.D. (1997) showing that parents encourage their sons and daughters to participate in sex -typed activities including doll- playing and engaging in house keeping activities for girls and playing with trucks and engaging in sports activities for boys. Fagot, Leinbach and Boyle (1992) as cited by Witt S.D. (1997) found through their study that children are likely to generalize gender stereotypes to a variety of activities, objects and occupations and use gender stereotypes in negotiating their world at 2-3 of age. Witt S.D. (1997) gives the example of Basow (1992) who depicts through his

study that girls are likely to have domestic chores such as cooking and doing the laundry while boys are more likely than girls to have maintenance chores around the house, such as painting and mowing the lawn. Thus, this gender specific socialization effects the concept formation process of male and female children.

Children develop everyday concepts from their daily life experiences (Vygotsky 1986) through normal participation in family and community activities and practices. Concept of God is a very broad concept, including various aspects like faith, beliefs, spirituality, religion, family rituals, religious practices, prayer, religious books, mythological stories and religious teachers and so more. These different aspects are the part of children's daily life common everyday experiences from the very beginning directly or indirectly. Hence, these genders based early childhood experiences during primary and secondary socialization may influence children's conception of God. Though there are studies (e.g. Dickie et al.1997, Petrovich 1999, Barrett et al.2001,Barrett and Richert 2002, Woolley D.J. 1997, Keleman 2004, Roos 2004) exploring children's conception of God but not much work has been done in studying comparatively children's conception of God on the basis of gender. Hence, this present research study is an attempt to make a comparative analysis of Indian children's conception of God with the objective to explore if there exists any pattern amongst children's conception of God on the basis of gender.

2. Materials and Methods

The present study is qualitative as well as exploratory. The sample of the study consisted of children from I-VIII grades of schools from Delhi and NCR region. The total size of the sample was 420 out of which 210 girls and 210 boys were selected to make a comparative study of children's conception of God on the basis of gender. 35 girls and 35 boys from each group of grades/ age i.e. I-III, IV-V, VI-VIII were taken. The sample of the present study included both male and female students in equal numbers so that a comparative analysis of the data could be done to study if there existed any pattern with respect to conception of 'God' amongst male and female students. This research assumption vis-à-vis objective was undertaken as a profound study of related literature showed that different studies (e.g. Fagot, Leinbach and Boyle1992, Lauer &Lauer 1994, Santrock1994, Kaplan1999, Eccles, Jacobs & Harold 1990, Basow1992) suggested that children's experiences during primary socialization were different on the basis of gender to which they belonged. Such as, Thorne (1993) has shown through his study that parents treat sons and daughters differently, dressing infants in gender specific colours, giving gender specific toys and expecting different behaviours from boys and girls. Also similar findings were found by Kaushik S. (1993) in her studies in Indian context showing that identification with their role images and gender stereotyping in household activities had made many girls performing quite a lot of domestic work. Also the literature reviewed and studied related to concept development in children showed that their experiences played a major role in concept formation and there are several factors in child's surroundings that influenced their concept formation. For example Vygotsky (1986) argues that development is shaped by cultural- historical inheritances. He gives value to children's early experiences which they have in their families and communities and considers them as a foundation for later cognitive development. Bandura(1961) also emphasizes that children learn new behaviour through observing and imitating role models.

3. Tools

To conduct this study, self constructed tools were used by the researcher. The study was conducted using researcher-made tools as tools had to be designed as per the understanding of the conception of 'God' that was gathered through the review of related literature and also specific for each group of children taken for the study. Children of three different age groups that were from grades I-III, IV-V, VI-VIII were taken for the study which required construction of three different types of tools.. For the children of VI-VIII and IV-V grades different stimulating stories were used specific to their age groups. These stories were followed by a questionnaire aiming at exploring and discovering children's inward feelings, thoughts and ideas about God. These stories used were designed in such a manner that children could relate themselves with the characters of the stories. The protagonist of the story was also a child similar in age to the responding child itself to make an association between the protagonist and responding child. The questions were open ended with a criterion situation, trying to explore children's conception about God. After reading these stories children were expected to write their responses to different questions related to the stories as per their own thinking. It was also observed that almost all the research questions could be covered through the questionnaire. For the children of I-III grades, five different visual clips were shown to the children related to different aspects of God e.g. worship places of different religions, symbols related to God, images related to God, pictures of different festivals celebration, pictures of children worshipping followed by an oral interaction. The basic assumption behind using visual clips for the youngest group of children (I-III grades) was that children of this age might be more interested in enjoying pictures than in written stimulus. Moreover, they might not have responded very effectively in writing than expressing during close interaction with them. Before the actual investigation, these tools were tested through a pilot study and were validated by two experts.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

for the analysis of the data, researcher used grounded theory method of research. It is a systematic method of research as says Strauss and Corbin (1998) '*consisting of systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analyzing data to build theoretical frameworks to explain the collected data*'. First the responses of the children were read sentence by sentence. Then the key points were marked that were extracted from the responses of the children from the data collected. After the key points were grouped into similar concepts. From the concepts, various themes were identified on the basis of theoretical studies related to the concept of God. Within each theme, various categories as well as subcategories were formed on the basis of responses given by the children. Written data from transcripts were also grouped into similar concepts and it was done sentence by sentence to define actions or events within data. Now, these

categories were sorted, compared and contrasted until all the data were accounted for in the core categories as well as subcategories and no new categories as well as subcategories could be produced. Now to make a comparative analysis of children's conception of God gender wise children's responses for all the 12 themes (which emerged during the present study) were analyzed on the basis of gender .

5. Comparative Analysis & Interpretation of Children's Conception of God as Expressed through Their Responses Gender wise:

5.1. Theme 1 - Existence of God

Responses	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
1) Yes	100	100

Table 1: Children's responses related to the theme 'Existence of God' gender wise -

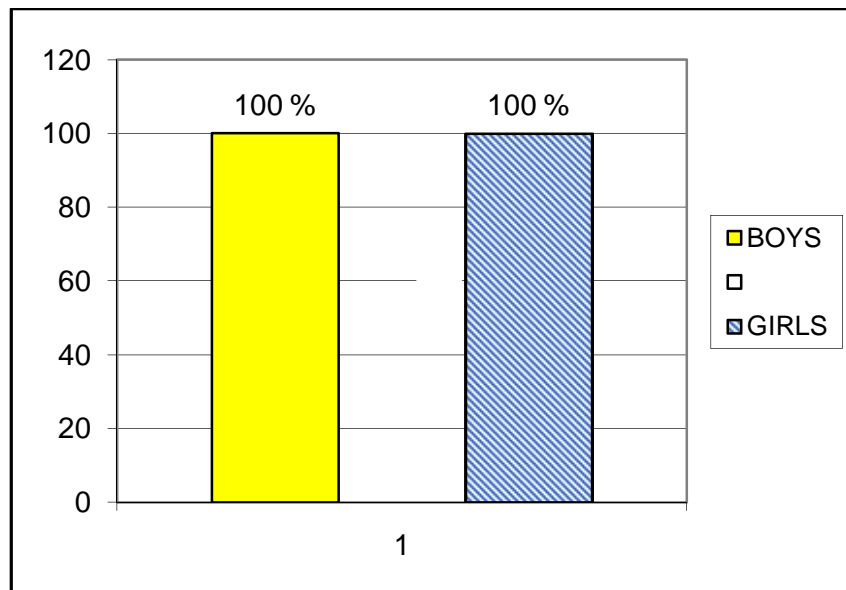


Figure 1: Graphical Presentation of Children's Responses Related to the Theme 'Existence of God' genderwise

Table 1 and bar graph show that 100% boys and 100% girls share their conception about the existence of God e.g. - "Ishwar suchmuch hote hain. Ishwar hi shresti ke rachyita hain. Vo hain to sansaar hai," "Ishwar suchmuch hate hain. Ishwar na hote to rakshasho ne saari prithvi nast kardi hoti." "Han Ishwar hote hain , yadi na hote to insaan ko sadbuddhi kaun deta ? path- pradarshan kaun karta?" "Haan Allah hote hain -Allah ne hi sansaar ko banaya hai ye insaan nahin bana sakta. Insaan to sirf putle bana sakta hai" "Bhagwaan sab jagah hote hain aur hame gyan dete hain" "Yadi Bhagwaan na hote , to kaoi bhi nahi hota, main bhi nahi, aap bhi nahi, duniya bhi nahi hoti, hum hain, matlab bhagwan hain."

- INTERPRETATION OF DATA :-The analysis of the above data shows that all the boys and all the girls believed in the existence of God. Through their personal examples and views shared in their responses all the girls & boys have expressed their belief in the existence of God and have specified different reasons for their belief in the existence of God.

5.2. Theme 2: Form of God

	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
(1)Helping common man/ human form	36	29
(2)Superman	4	12
(3)Formless/good qualities/light/nor	42	49
(4)Don't know	7	4
(5)Left out	6	3
(6)Statues of temples	5	3

Table 2: Children's responses related to the theme 'Form of God' gender wise-

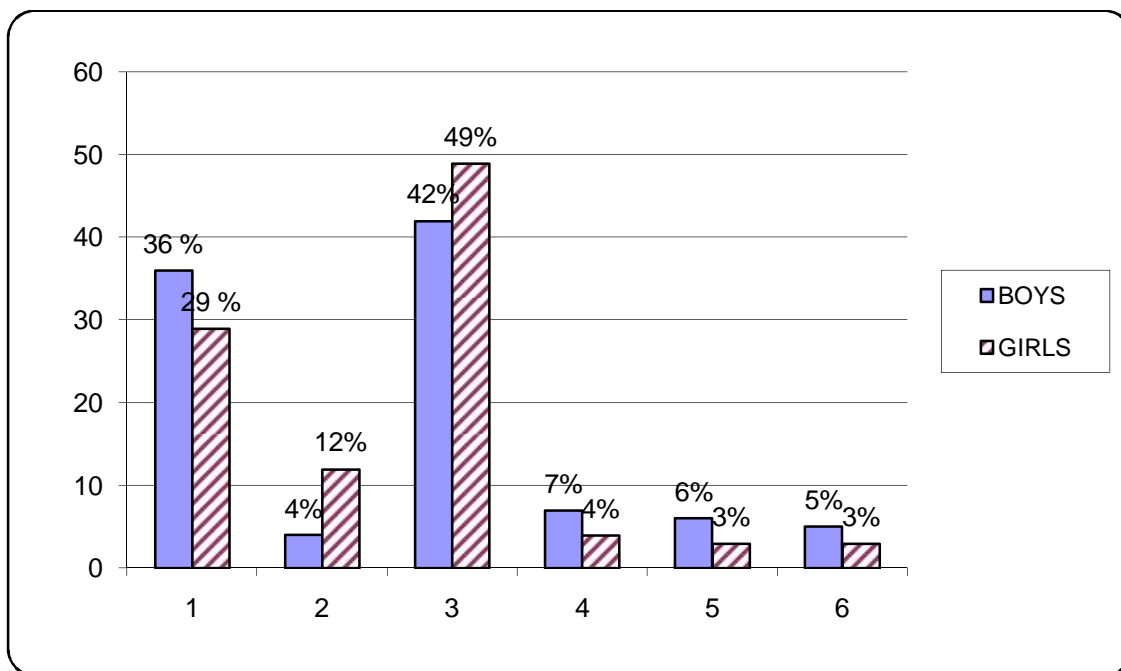


Figure 2: Graphical Presentation of Children's Responses Related to the Theme 'Form of God' Gender wise

Table 2 and bar graph show that 36% Boys & 29% girls say that God is common human being in the form of parents or any other helping on e.g.- "Hamare anusar Bhagwan manushaya hi hote hain par unme kai shaktiya sammilit hoti hain." "Hamein apne mata pita mein hi ishwar dikhai date hain." "Bhagvan mata pita hi hote hain jo Hamare patte paste hain." "Hamare mummy papa hi Hamare Bhagwan hain our teacher bhi." 42% boys and 49% girls express through their response that God is form less. He is light / noor lying is good qualities- e.g. -"Bhagwan prakriti ko kehte hain. Jaise-Bhumi, Gagan, vayu, Agni, jal. in sabhi tatvon ko Bhagwan kehte hain." "Allah kewal ek noor hai." "Bhagwan ka koi Roop nahi hai." "Khuda ko chaho jaise maano,vo Hamesha help karne aate hain." 4% boys and 12% girls say that God is a superman e.g. "Bhagwan superman ki tarah sabki sahayata karte hain." "Bhagwan mein vo shakti hai jo insaano mein nahi hai." 5% boys and 3% girls say that God is in the statues of worship places e.g.- "Bhagwan mandir jaise pavitra jagah rahte hain, Isliye mandir mein chappal pahankar nahi jaate". "Mummy roj mandir jaate hain kyunki vahan Bhagwan ka vaas hai." 7% boys 4% girls say that they don't know about the form of God and 6% boys & 3% girls did not respond the question.

- INTERPRETATION OF DATA:- The analysis of the above data shows that almost half number of girls have expressed that God is formless whereas 42% boys have expressed the same. There was not much substantial difference in the responses of girls and boys.

5.3. Theme 3 - Place Of God

Responses	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
1)Everywhere	47	48
2)Specific place	52	51
i)Hearts	15	16
ii)Sky & Rivers	15	14
iii)Worship places	19	16
iv)Patallok & survlok	-	0.48
v)Surely don't know	3	5
3)Left out	0.48	0.48

Table 3: Children's responses related to the theme 'Place of God' Gender wise

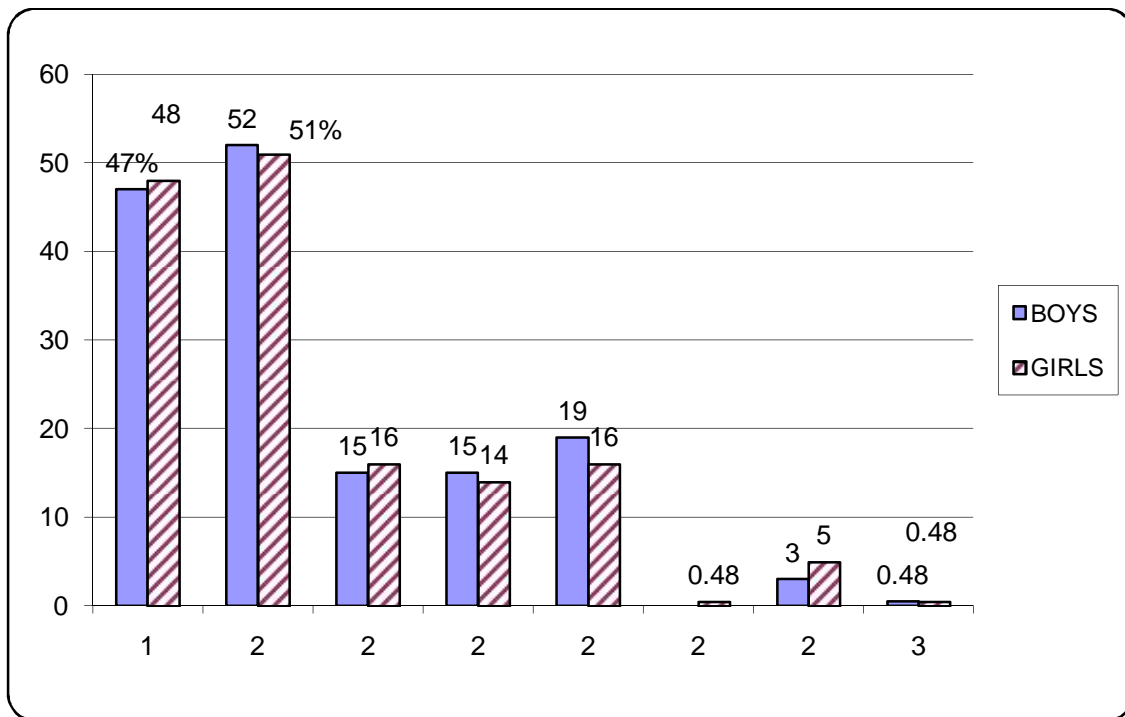


Figure 3: Graphical Presentation of Children's Responses Related to the Theme 'Place of God' Gender wise

As table 3 and bar graph show 47% boys and 48% girls say that God is everywhere while 52% boys and 51% girls say that God is at the specific places e.g.: "Bhagwan Har jagah hote hain.manushya,per-pavdhe,surya,chandrma sab mein." "Pathar ko jab Hum Bhagwan maankar poojte hain to pata chalta hai ki Bhagwan kan-kan mein Hain." Out of these specific places 15% boys & 16% girls express through their responses that God lives in the hearts of living beings- "Hamare man ke andar hi Bhagwan ka vaas hai." "Sacche man se jaau bh kar dekho Bhagwaan andar hi hai." "Ishwar is jagat ke har prani ki anteratma mein vidyamaan hain." 15% boys and 14% girls say that God lives in the sky & rivers-"Bhagwaan aasman mein rahte hain." "Bhagwaan pehle dharti par the, par ab aakash mein Rahte hain." "Rakshou ko maarker Bhagwaan devlok chale Gaye." "Ganga ji ke ander Bhagwaan rahte hai aur subse upper bhi." 19% Boys & 16% girls say that God lives at the worship places- "Teerthsthanon par Ishwar ka niwas hai." "Bhagwaan murti mein bhi hai." 3% boys & 5% girls say that they don't know where does God live and 0.48% boys & 0.48% girls did not respond the question while 0.48% girls say that God lives in patal lok & surlok.

- INTERPRETATION OF DATA :- The analysis of above data shows that almost half number of children of each gender (male and female) said that God was everywhere while almost half number of girls & boys say that God lived at the specific places .There was no major difference is the conception of children about the place of God on the basis of gender as almost the same number of girls & boys have responded to each category and subcategory of responses i.e. in the hearts, in the sky and rivers, at the worship places.

5.4. Theme 4 – Oneness/ Multiplicity of God

Responses	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
1) One in different form	68	72
2)Many	27	27
3)Left out	5	0.96

Table 4: Children's responses related to the theme 'Oneness/multiplicity of God' gender wise:-

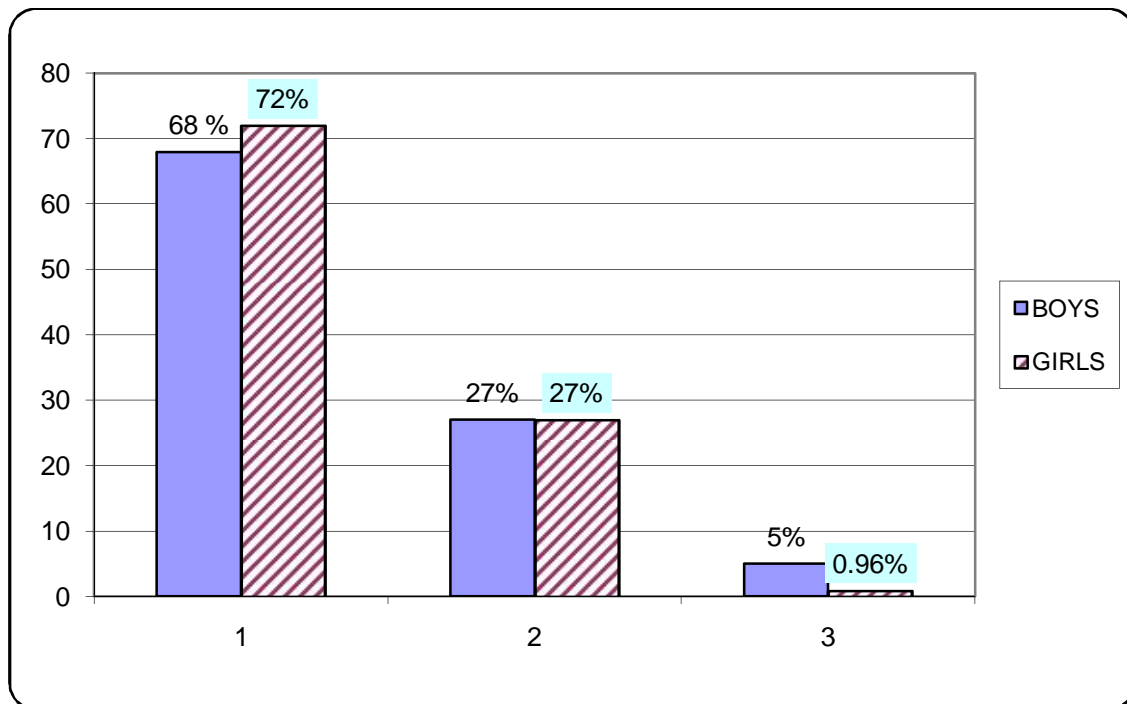


Figure 4: Graphical Presentation of Children's Responses Related to the Theme 'Oneness/multiplicity of God' gender wise

As table 4 and bar graph show 68% boys and 72% girls say that God is one in different form e.g.-"Bhagwaan ek hi hai kintu apne dharma ke anusaar log unhe anek namon se pukarte hain jaise- Ishwar, Allah, vaheguru, jesus etc." "Bhagwaan ek he hote hai. ek mein hi Hum saare Bhagwaan ko dekh sakte hain," "Khuda kewal ek tha, ek Hai aur ek hi Rahega." "Ishwar kewal ek hi hote hai.unhone is sansaar mein anek atmaon ko anek roop alag-2 diye hain aur ek-ek karke poora sansaar banaya hai." 27% boys and 27% girls say that God /gods are many-"Hinduon ke tatis crore Bhagwaan hote hain." "Mere anusaar to bhagwaan bahoot saare hote hain." "Hinduon mein bahut saare Bhagwaan ko mana jata hai." 5% boys and 0.96% girls did not respond the question.

- INTERPRETATION OF DATA:- The analysis of the above data shows that almost equal number of children of each gender (girls & boys) said that God was one having different forms. Also equal number of girls and boys have responded that God / gods were many. So, there was no major difference in the conception of children with respect to the oneness/multiplicity of God on the basis of gender as almost the same number of girls & boys have responded to each category of responses .However, it is seen that the number of boys was higher than that of the girls who have not responded the question

5.5. Theme 5- Gender of God

Responses	Boys(%)	Girls(%)
1) Male	9	10
2) female	2	2
3) Both	62	73
4)None/ formless	25	13
5) Left out	2	2

Table 5: Children's responses related to the theme 'Gender of God' gender wise :

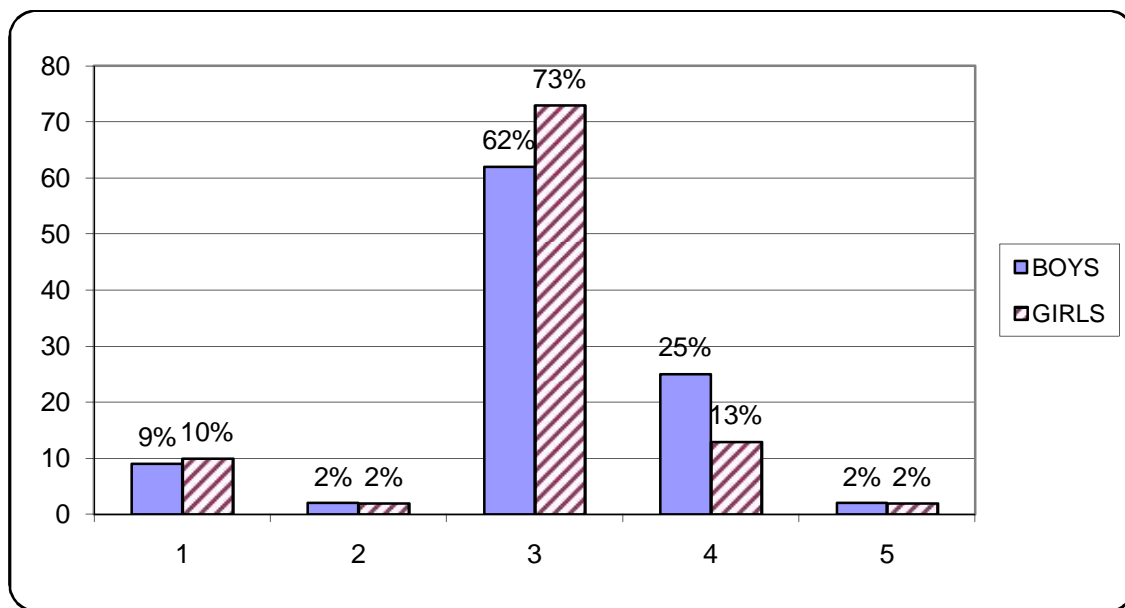


Figure 5: Graphical Presentation of Children's Responses Related to the Theme 'Gender of God' gender wise

As table 5 and bar graph show 9% boys and 10% girls response that God is male-“Bhagwaan sirf purush hain.” “Allah To sirf male hi hote hai.” 2% boys & 2% girls response that God is female-“Ishwar mata hi hote hain kyunki do pita milkar bhi ek mata ka nirmaan nahi kar sakte.” 62% boys and 73% girls express through their responses that God is both male and female-“Ishwar mata-pita dono hote hain.” “Bhagwaan istri aur purush dono hi hain” “ Bhagwaan ka koi ling nahi hota.” “Bhagwaan mata pita dono hote hain, Bhagwaan har jagah nahi aa sakte,Isliye unhone mata pita ko Banaya.” 25% boys and 13 % girls say that God is neither male nor female but is formless- “Khuda ek noor hai to Hum sabhi ke dil mein barta hai. Na vo istri hai aur na purush.” “Ishwar Na istri hai aur na purush. Ishwar ko aaj Tak kisi ne nahin dekha hai.” “Allah To ek noor hai.Na vo istri hai,na purush.” “Ishwar na istri na purush hai vo ek Noor hai jo saare sansar mein jhalka hai.” 2% girls and 2% boys did not answer the question.

- **INTERPRETATION OF DATA:-** The analysis of the above data shows that most of the girls as well as boys said that God was both male and female, though more number of girls responded so than the boys. Some of the girls as well as boys have responded that God was neither male nor female but formless ,though comparatively boys responding so were more in number than the girls. There was no major difference in the responses of children about the gender of God on the basis of gender except that more boys said that God was formless and more no. of girls said that God was both male & female.

5.6. Theme 6- Role of God

Responses	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
1)Helps, guides, cheeks & judges us	50	66
2) Generator/operator of the world/Depends everything on Him	40	24
3) Superman	5	3
4) To make Himself worshipped	2	4
5) Left out	0.96	3
6) IIIrd position of God (After parents)	2	0

Table 6: Children's responses related to the theme 'Role of God' gender wise-

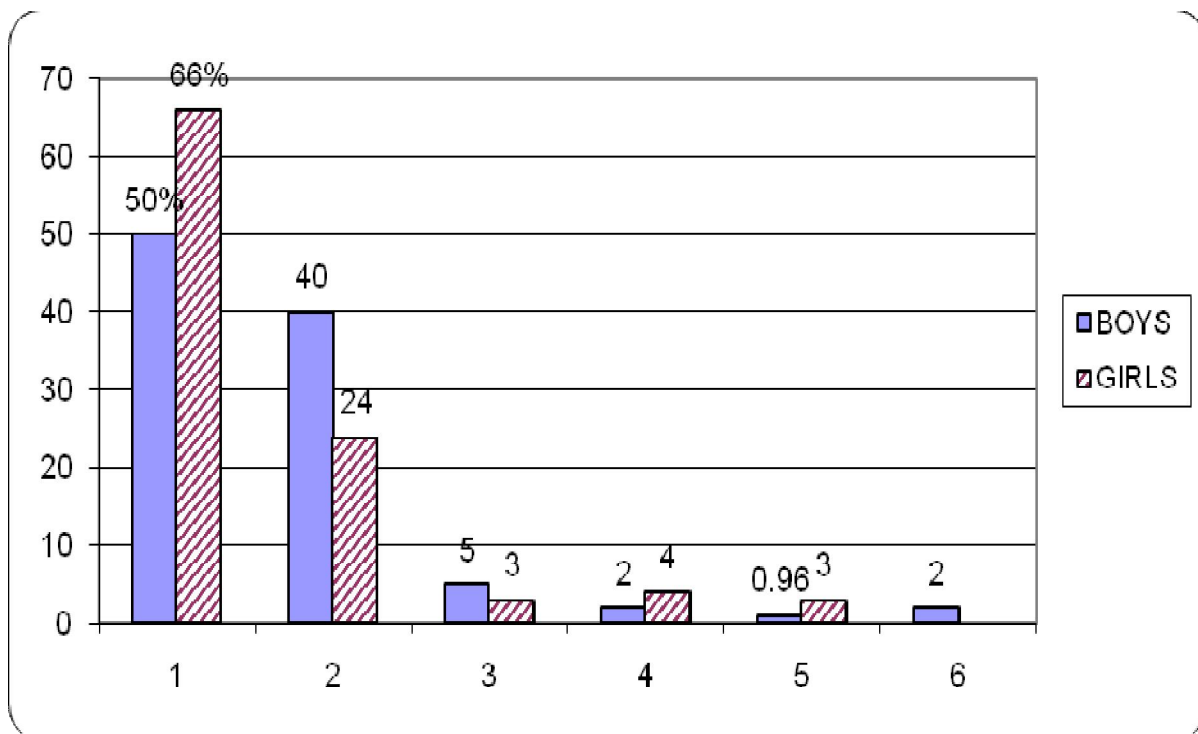


Figure 6: Graphical Presentation of Children's Responses Related to the Theme 'Role of God' Gender wise

Table 6 and bar graph show that 50% boys and 66% girls express through their responses that the role / work of God is to help the people in the hour of need, to guide them wrong, to judge them for their deeds and misdeeds and to fulfil the wishes of the people- "Jaroorat mando ki sahaya, paap ko dharti se mitana aur hame sanmarg par chalana hi ishwar ko karaya hain" "Sansaar mein sahi raasta dikhana, sadbuddhi dena, sahi kaarya karne ke liye prerit karna, bure kaaryon se rokna Ishwar ke liye kaarya hain." "Bhagwaan har shubh kaam mein hamara saath dete hain aur ashubh kaam karne se rokte hain." 40% boys and 24% girls say that God is the generator & operator of this world and everything depends on him- "janam aur maran ka nirdharan hi Ishwar ka kaam hai." "Shristi ka laalan-palan karna Ishwar ka kaam hai jagat mein bina uski marji ke patta bhi nahi tut sakti." "Bhagwaan ka kaam hai- jeevan maran ka santulan banaye Rakhna." "Shristi ka sanchalan hi Ishwar ka kaam hai." 5% boys and 3% girls say that the role/work of God is to help everyone like a superman. 2% boys and 4% girls say that the work of God is to make Himself worshipped. "Bhagwaan ka kaam insaano se apni pooja karwana hai." 0.96% boys and 3% girls did not respond the question while 2% boys have assigned 3rd place to God after parents in their lives while none of the girls has responded so.

- INTERPRETATION OF DATA:- The analysis of the above data shows that most of the girls and boys have expressed through their responses that the role of God is to help, check, judge & guide the human beings though more number of girls responded so than the boys. Some boys as well as girls say that God was the creator and operator of the world though more number of boys have responded so than the girls. Thus, there was not any significant difference in the conception of children about the role of God on the basis of gender, except that more percentage of girls expressed that God helps, checks & guides us and more boys saw God as the creator & operator of this world.

5.7. Theme 7 - Omnipresence of God

RESPONSES	BOYS (%)	GIRLS (%)
(1) YES	89	91
(I) God helps, guides, checks in the form of inner voice	60	60
(II) Don't feel fear when remembers God	7	20
(III) Natural procedures show	12	11
(2) Don't think so/don't know	6	5
(3) Left out	5	4

Table 7: Children's responses related to the theme 'Omnipresence of God' gender wise

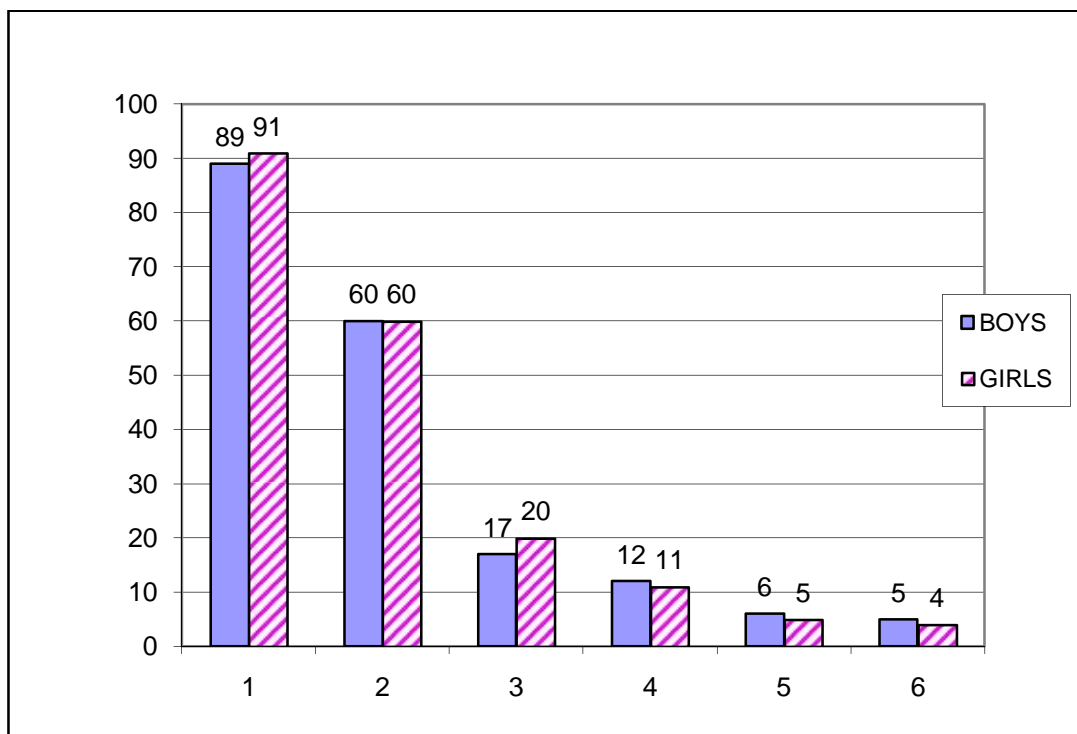


Figure 7: Graphical Presentation of Children's Responses Related to the Theme 'Omnipresence of God' Gender wise

Table 7 and bar graph show 89% boys and 91% girls say that God is omnipresent out of which 60% boys and 50% girls say that they have experienced the omnipresence of God in the form of inner voice checking them from doing wrong & guiding them to the right path e.g.:-"Kisi ko satate samay jab man mana karta hai to lagta hai ki Bhagwaan sab jagah hai,""kisi bhi bure kaam ko karte samay lagta hai ki Bhagwaan mujhe dekh rahe hain jaise ek baar main ek doggy ko maar raha tha,to meri mummy ne aise kaha." "jhaanko,sahi-galat ka bhed Batate vo vahi milenge." 17% boys and 20% girls say that while thinking that God is everywhere with them taking care of them they don't feel fear e.g.:"Bhagwaan Hame har musibat se bachate hai to him bina chinta ke rahte hai." "Jab bhagwan ko yaad karne se dar nahin lagta, to pata chalta hai ki vo sab jagah se hamari Raksha karte hain." 12% boys and 11% girls say that natural processes have made them belief about the omnipresence of God-"Prakratik kiryakalapon ka hona - jaise Baarishhona,phool khilna,sujaj nikalna,se pata chalta hai ki Bhagwaan saari shrusti mein samaye hai,""Peron mein Bhagwaan, nadiyon mein bhagwaan, kan kan mein bhagwaan." 6% boys and 5% girls say that they don't think that God is omnipresent while 5% boys and 4% girls have not responded the question.

- INTERPRETATION OF DATA:-The analysis of the above data shows that most of the girls and boys demonstrated through their responses the omnipresence of God. Most of the girls and boys have expressed it in the form of inner voice. There was no difference in the conception of children about the omnipresence of God on the basis of gender as almost equal number of children of both the gender have responded to each category of responses.

5.8. Theme 8- Factors Influencing Children's Conception Of God

	Responses	Boys(%)	Girls(%)
1	Family members & neighbours.	60	59
2	School teachers, religious teachers & Religious practices	19	14
3	Religious books, myths in T.V.	8	11
4	Self experiences	11	12
5	Worship places are proof	0.96	3
6	Left out	-	-
7	By Natural cycle	0.48	0.96

Table 8: Children's responses related to the theme 'Factors Influencing Children's Conception of God' gender wise:

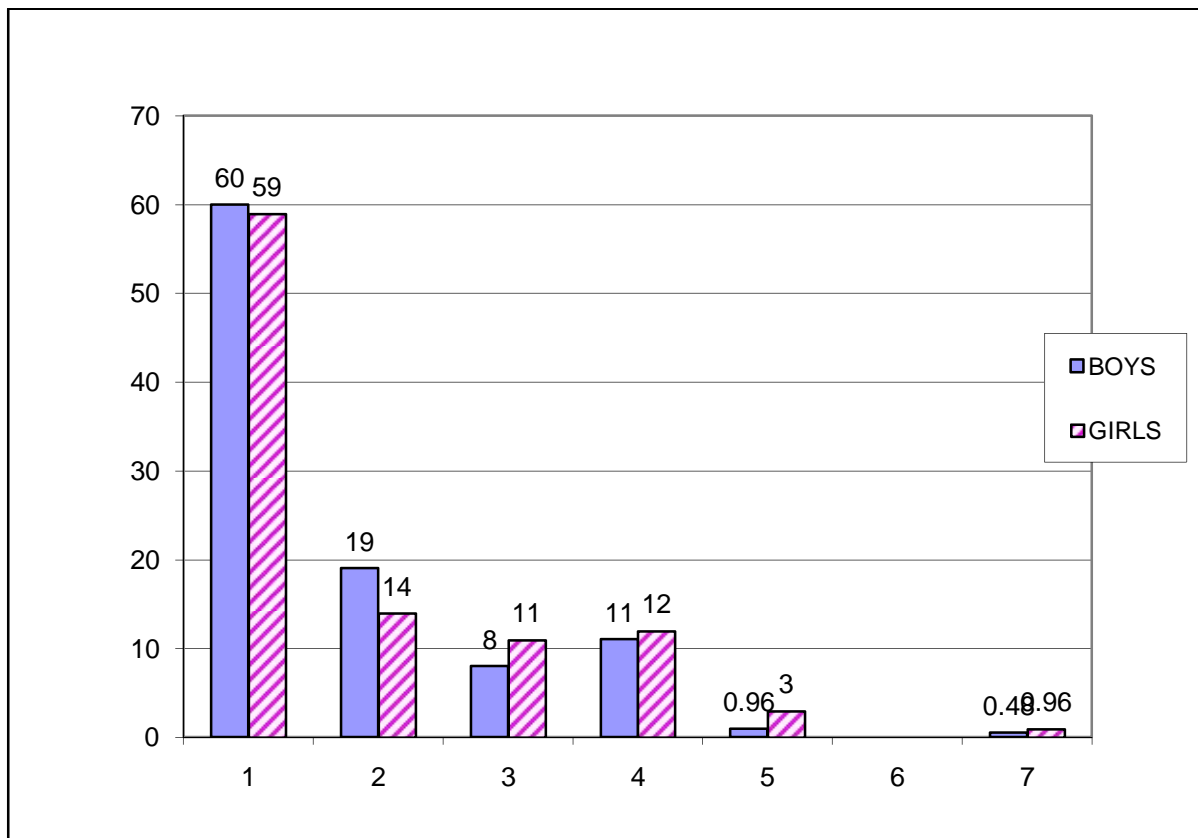


Figure 8: Graphical Presentation of Children's Responses Related to the Theme 'Factors Influencing Children's Conception of God' Gender wise

As table 8 and bar graph show 60% boys and 59% girls express through their responses that they were told about God by their family, parents and neighbours e.g.-"Ishwar ke baaren mein hamein itna gyan ane mata pita parijano ke saath baithkar hua." "Bhaiya ne kahani mein dikhakar Laptop par Bataya tha." "Madam ne aur mummy,papa aur Baiya ne Bataya." 19% boys and 14% girls express that school teachers, religions teachers and Religions practices told them about God – 'Bhagwaan ke Baare mein satguru,Guru Mahraj ji aur satsang se pata chala." "Ishwer ke bare mein pooja-path,yagya-Hamen satsang aadi dekhkar aur baron ke saath mandir jakar pata chala." While 8% boys and 11% girls say that through religious books, mythological stories in T.V. serials, movies etc. they came to know about God-"Ishwar ke vishay mein dharmik kitabon aur T.V. serial se pata chal." "Meri dadi ke saath T.v. par karyakaram dekhkar maine dadi se puchha to uhone mujhe bataya." 11%boys and 12% girls say that they came to know about God through their self experience -"Kai baar Bhagwaan ne meri help ki to mujhe khud se pata chala ki bhagwaan sabki sahayata karte hain." 0.96% boys and 3% girls say that through worship places they came to know about God while 0.48% boys and 0.96 % girls say that through natural cycle/processes they came to know about God- "Prakriti ke kaarya dekhkar vishvas hota hai ki Bhagwaan hi sabko chalata hai."

- INTERPRETATION OF DATA:- The analysis of the above data shows that most of the girls and boys expressed through their responses that their parents, family members and neighbours told them about the conception of God depicting the influence of primary socialization. There was no substantial difference in the conception of children about the factors influencing their conception of God as almost equal number of girls and boys have responded to all the categories of responses that were school teachers, religious teachers & religious practices, religious books, mythological stories in T.V serials and their self experiences.

5.9. Theme 9: Children's Experiences of God Related Practices In Family:

	Responses	Boys(%)	Girls(%)
1	Worship on different festivals	72	73
2	Singing Religious songs	-	0.48
3	Greatest festivals-jal Divas ,Bhumi Divas, plantation Day	-	0.48
4	Pray for wisdom	7	4
5	Daily worship & Religious practices	20	17
6	Left out	0.96	5

Table 9: Children's responses related to their 'Experiences of God Related Practices in Family' gender wise:

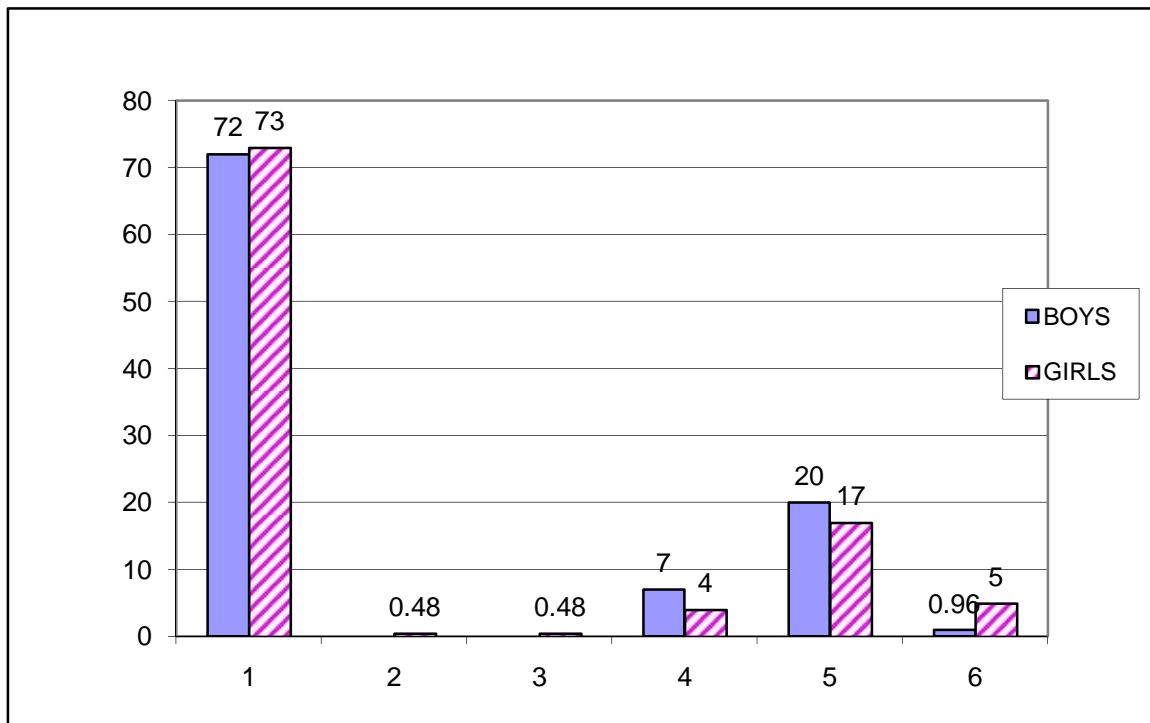


Figure 9: Graphical Presentation of Children's Responses Related to their 'Experiences of God Related Practices in Family' Gender wise

As table 9 and bar graph show 72% boys and 73% girls share through their responses their experiences of worship on different festivals in their family -"Navratri par Durga ji,Mahashivratri par shiv ji ki upasana ki jati hai." "Bhagwaan ka kartavya hota hai.Ghar mein sunderkand hota hai." "Namaj parte hain roja rakhte hain aur khairat bhi karte hain." 7% boys and 4% girls say that they experience & pray and worship to God to get wisdom while 20% boys 17% girls show their experiences of daily worship & religious practices in their family e.g.: "Subhah shaam Ishwar ki pooja ,aarti ki jaati hai." "Nitya pratidin pooja hota hai,phir prasad Baant jata hai." "Mangalwaar ko mandir jaate hain aur roj subha pooja karte hain."0.48% girls say about their experience of singing religious songs on different occasions and 0.48% girls say that for them the greatest festivals are Jal Divas, Earth Day and plantation day while none of the boys say so. 0.96% boys and 5% girls have not responded the question.

- **INTERPRETATION OF DATA :-**The analysis of above data shows that most of the children of both the gender (girls & boys) shared their experiences of different types of worship & religious practices on different occasions/festivals. There was no difference in the conception of children about their experiences of religious practices in their family on the basis of gender as almost equal number of girls as well as boys have responded to all categories, except that a very nominal number of girls shared their experience of singing religious songs on different religious occasions.

5.10. Theme 10 : Children's Experiences Of God Related Practices At School

	Responses	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
1	Festival celebration & morning prayer	67	78
2	Daily morning prayer	28	18
3	Left out	3	3
4	Moral Education with reference to God/Geeta Gosthi	2	0.96

Table 10: Children's responses related to their 'Experiences of God Related Practices in School ' gender wise:

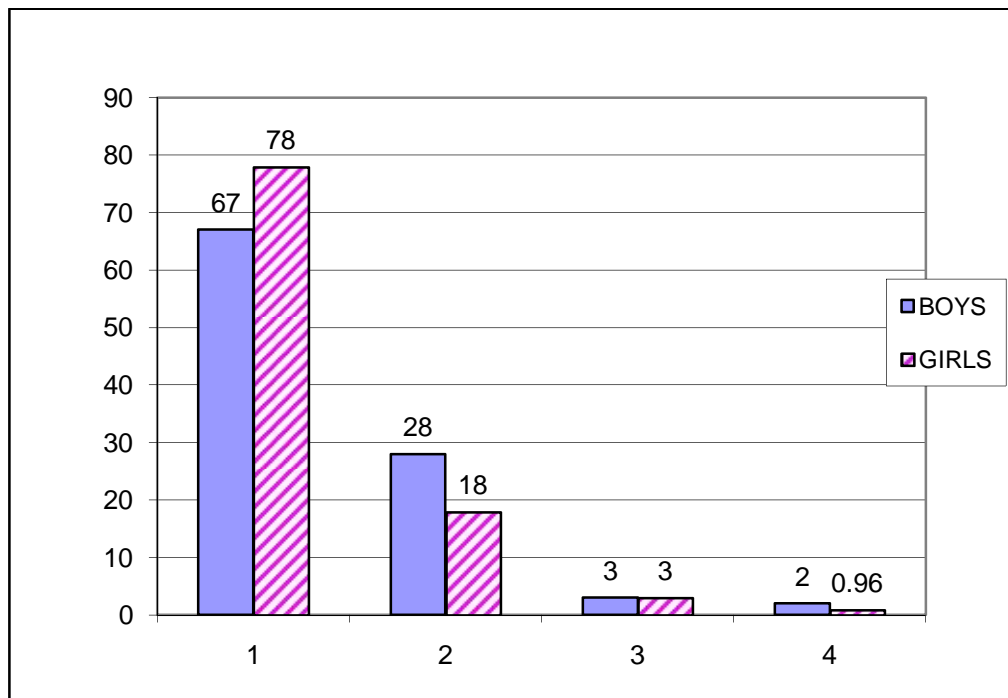


Figure 10: Graphical Presentation of Children's Responses Related to their 'Experiences of God Related Practices in School' Genderwise

As table 10 and bar graph show 67% boys and 78% girls say that they experience festival celebration and morning prayer like practices in their school e.g.: "Geet hote hain, jinhen hum roj yaad karte hain jinse hum Bhagwaan ka aadar karna seekhte hain." "subha ke samay saraswati vandana aur Bhagwaan ke Geeton ka gaayan programon Bhagwaan, Radha-krishna aadi Bankar Bhaag lete hain" "Bhagwaan se related Kathon ko naatak banakar dikhate hain." While 28% boys and 18% girls share their experiences of daily morning prayer in the school "Gayatri mantra ka jaap hota hai. sabhi bachche panktibadh hokar prathna karte hain." "Vidhalaya mein rojana prathana hoti Hai." 2% boys and 0.96% girls say about their experiences having moral education with reference of God is the school and 3% boys and 3% girls have not responded the question.

- **INTERPRETATION OF DATA:-** The analysis of the above data shows that most of the children of both the gender shared about their experiences of celebration of different festivals along with worship of different gods on different festivals and daily morning payer, though the girls showing such experiences were more in number than the boys. Same number of the boys & girls shared their experiences of daily morning prayer only though the boys saying so are more in number than the girls. Thus, there was no significant difference in the conceptions of children about their experience of God related practices in the school except that more number of girls shared their experiences of celebrating different festivals in the school.

5.11. Theme 11 : Doubts About God

Responses	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
1) Why has God made my mind so slow working?	-	0.48
2) Who created God/gods differently?	4	5
3) Does He demand money from us?	2	2
4) Why no visible?	27	29
5) Why is there disparity among people?	16	7
6) No doubt	20	12
7) Left out	6	4
8) How is He in reality?	10	12
9) Why does He give us so suffering?	2	4
10) Have we been told reality about God?	-	0.96
11) Why does evil win & Good suffer?	7	16
12) How can he be in non vegetarian & sinful people?	0.48	-
13) How does He face winter/summer/Rain?	4	6
14) Will He punish us for our misdeeds?	0.96	3
15) Why did Lord Ram ask Sita for agni pariksha?	0.48	-
16) Bookish knowledge v/s myths.	-	0.48

Table 11: Children's responses related to the theme 'Doubts about God' gender wise:

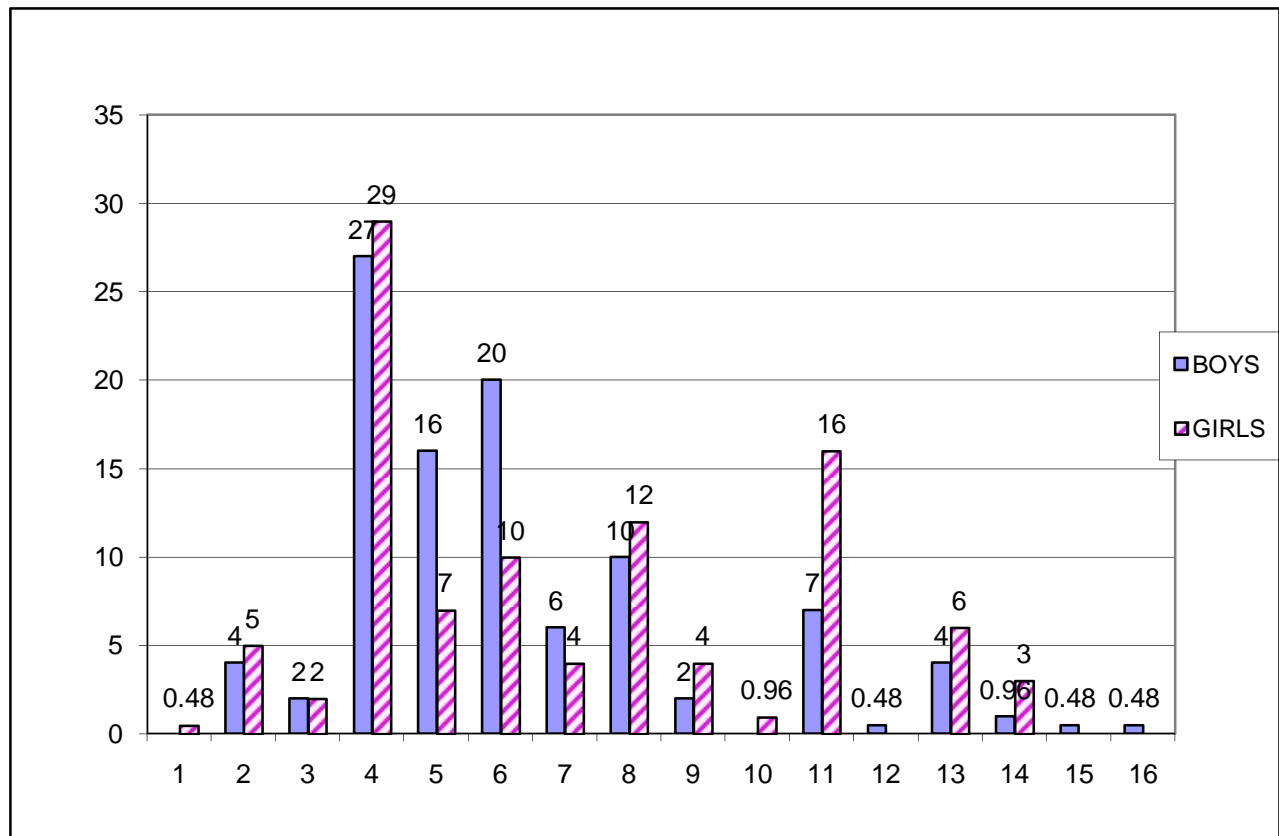


Figure 11: Graphical Presentation of Children’s Responses Related to the Theme ‘Doubts of God’ Gender wise:

Table 11 and bar graph show that 4% boys & 5% girls ask the question who made God/gods so differently- "kya Ishwar ne hi samar ko banaya hai? yadi Haan to Ishwar ko kisne tbanaya vo bhi itne saaro ko?" 27% boys & 29% girls raise the doubt why is God no visible to them-"Bhagwaan hote hain to dikhte kyon nahin?" "Bhagwaan dikhai kyon nahin dete?kya unhe sankoch hota hai ya Hum unke Bhakt nahin?" 16% boys and 7% girls want to know why has God created such a discrimination among people- "Bhagwaan garibon ki prathana kyon nahi sunta?" 10% boys & 12% girls want to know how is He in reality- "Bhagwaan kaise hote hain?Main yaha jaana chahti Hoon." "Ishwar vaastav mein kaise hote hain aur vo kahan rahte hain?" 7% boys and 16% girls ask why does Evil win & good suffer if God is there-"Sansar mein Apradh Barte hi hain.Bhagwaan duston ka jaldi sudhaar kyun nahin kar dete?" "Bhagwaan papion ka saath kyun dete hain?" 2% boys & 4% girls want to know why does He give so suffering to the people. 20% boys and 10% girls say that they don't have any doubt about God and 6% boys and 4% girls have not responded the question.2% boys & 2% girls want to know if God really demands money from the people and 4% boys & 6% girls ask how does God face summer, winter and rain in the sky e.g.: "Bhagwaan aakash mein,thand mein,Garm kapde kahan se late honge?" 0.48 % boys raise the question of scientific knowledge vs. myths and 0.96% girls want to know if they have been told reality about God or all is fairy tale to make them disciplined.

- INTERPRETATION OF DATA:- The analysis of the above data shows that there was a variety in children’s doubts/questions about God although there was no significant difference in their conception on the basis of gender. A variety of the doubts/questions raised by girls as well as boys was there, but on the basis of gender no significant difference was found. However, it may be interpreted that the doubts raised by children of both the genders represent deeper philosophical aspect of children’s thinking.

5.12. Theme 12 (A): Children’s Experiences of Nature Worship

Responses	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
1) Yes	68	67
A) Surya namaskar, Tulsi Pooja for scientific reasons	49	51
B)Mother makes us to do	7	5
C)To please them	12	11
2) No	28	27
3) Left out	4	6

Table 12(a): Children’s responses related to their ‘Experiences of Nature Worship’ gender wise:

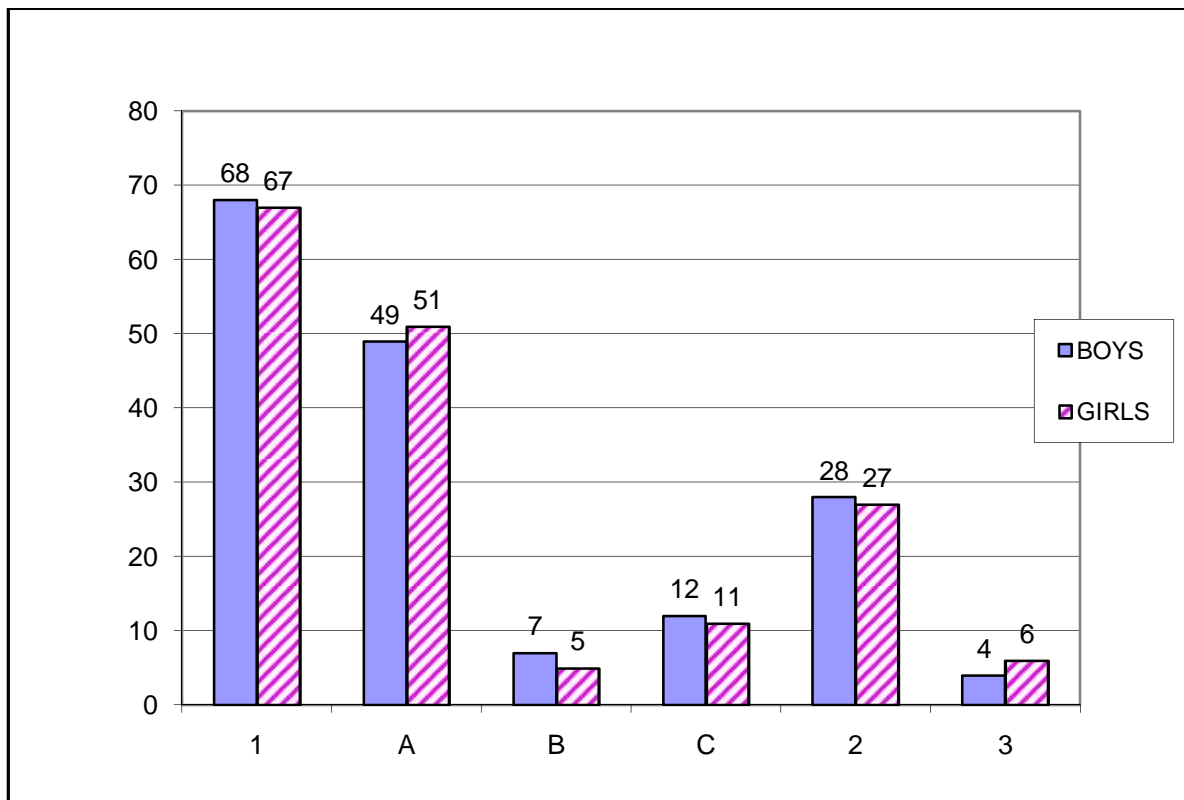


Figure 12 (a): Graphical Presentation of Children's Responses Related to their 'Experiences of Nature Worship' Gender wise

Table 12 (a) and bar graph show that 68% boys & 67% girls share their experiences of nature worship in family out of which 49% boys and 51% girls say through their responses that for scientific reasons, they worship nature-"Hum peron ki pooja karte hain kyonki per Hamen phal,phool aur chhaya pradan karte hain." "Subah nahakar Surya Bhagwaan ko jal charata hoon jisse poora din Achchha Bite aur buddhi mile." 7% boys & 5% girls say that they experience nature worship as mother asks them to do so-"Meri mummy Tulsi mata ko jal dene ko kahti hai." "Mummy janamaashtmi par chandrama ko jal dene ke liye uthati hain." 12% boys and 11% girls say that they worship nature at elements to please them as -"Chandrama ki pooja karke unko khush kiya jata hai taki vo manokamnayen poori karen." "Meri mummy karva chauth par papa ki bari umar ke liye chandrama ki pooja karti hain." 28% boys & 27% girls say that they do not have the experiences of nature worship in their family and 4% boys and 6% girls have not responded the question.

- INTERPRETATION OF DATA:-The analysis of the above data shows that most of the children of both the gender have said that they have experiences of nature worship in their family and they did so for the scientific reasons. No significant difference was found in the experiences shared by children about nature worship practices on the basis of gender as almost same number of girls & boys have responded to each category of response .

5.13. Theme 12 (B): Reason of Nature Worship

Responses	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
1)scientific Reasons	48	51
2)As they are gods/Gods lie in them	17	14
3)For the peace of mind	9	8
4)Due to superstitions	11	8
5)To enjoy(at Gangasnan)	2	3
6)Don't know	4	4
7)Left out	6	6
8)Due to customs	3	6

Table 12(b): Children's responses related to the Theme 'Reason of Nature Worship' gender wise

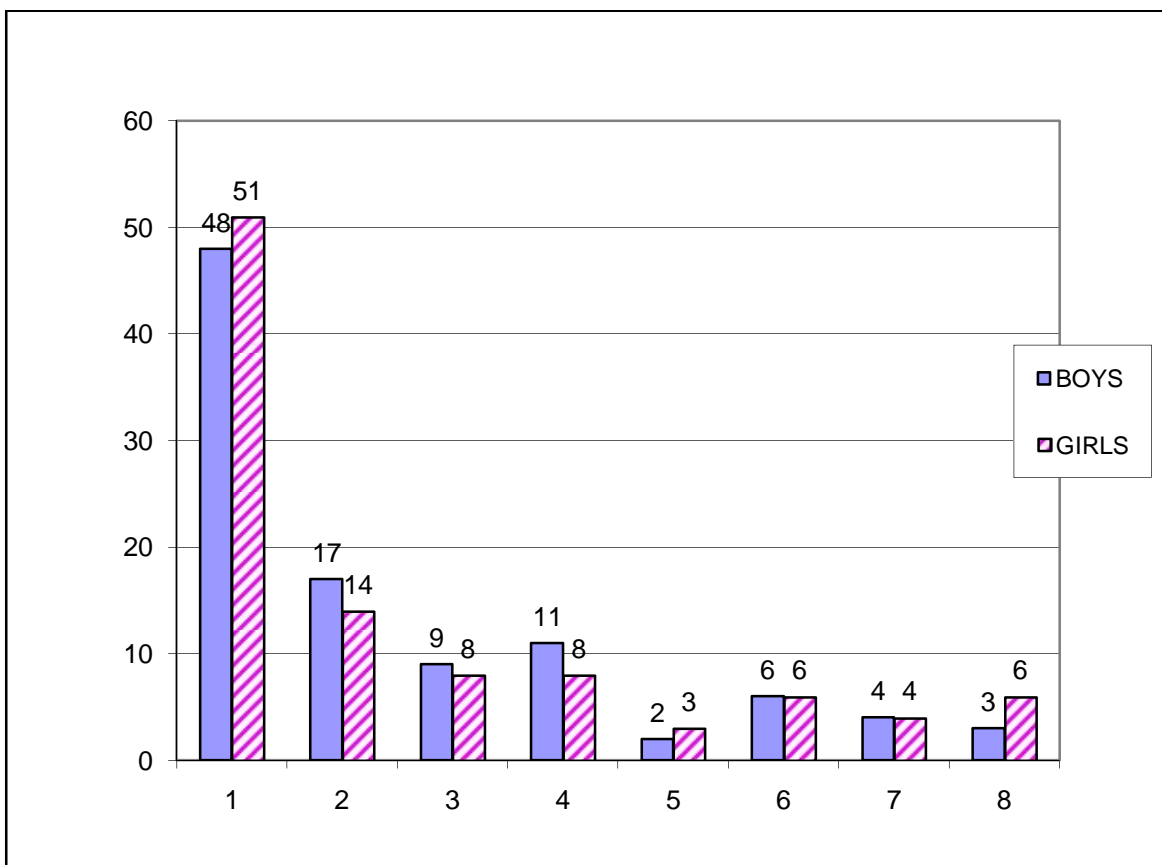


Figure 12(b): Graphical Presentation of Children's responses related to the Theme 'Reason of Nature Worship' Gender wise:

The table 12(b) and bar graph show that 48% boys and 51% girls say through their responses that nature is worshipped due to scientific reasons-"Main nityaprati suryadev ki pooja karte hoon,isse man shant rahta hai aur chetanta aati hai." "Surya aur chandra ki pooja main karta hoon kyunki Din aur Raat ye parivartit karte hain." 17%boys and 14% girls say that nature is worshipped as gods/God lie ill them as -"Hum tulsi aur Gau ki pooja karte hain kyunki unme Bhagwaan vidyamaan Hain." 9% boys and 8% girls say that for the peace of mind nature is worshipped as -"Man ki shaanti ke liye main chandarma ki pooja karta Hoon." 11% boys 8% girls say that natural elements are worshipped due to the superstitions of the people e.g.-'Andhvishvaasi manushay hi aise pooja karte Hain." "Kyunki log andhvishvaas mein doobe hue hain." 2%boys and 3% girls say that natural elements are worshipped to enjoy at different occasions as Ganga snan. 3%boys and 6%girls say that due to customs, people worship natural elements as -"Riti Rivajo ko poora karne ke liye log unki pooja karte hain." 4% boys & 4% girls have not responded the question while 6% boys & 6% girls say that they don't know the reason of nature worship.

- INTERPRETATION OF DATA:- The analysis of the above data shows that almost half of the children of both the genders expressed through their responses that nature is worshipped for the scientific reasons. No significant difference was found in the children's conception about nature worship on the basis of gender as almost same number of girls and boys have responded to each category of responses.

6. Findings of the Study

The findings of the study showed all the children of both the genders (male and female) believed in the existence of God. There was not much substantial difference in the responses of girls and boys about the form of God, place of God, oneness/multiplicity of God, gender of God, factors influencing their conception of God, experiences of religious practices and nature worship practices. There was no major difference in the conception of children about their experiences of religious practices in their family on the basis of gender as almost equal number of girls as well as boys have responded to all categories, except that a very nominal number of girls shared their experiences of singing religious songs on different religious occasions. There was seen a lot of variety in children's doubts/ questions about God although there was no significant difference in their responses on the basis of gender.

7. Discussion for the Findings

As findings of the study showed there was no major difference in children's conception of God on the basis of gender as both boys and girls in the sample have contributed to each category of responses under each theme almost similarly. This signifies that both boys and girls have almost similar experiences with respect to God related activities or practices. However, a qualitative difference that was found in children's responses was that more girls share their experiences of celebrating festivals in the school. The girls have associated these celebrations with singing of religious songs on different occasions unlike boys who have associated it with morning

prayer and chanting of mantras. The reason behind it, may be the process of gender socialization, that starts at birth and involves learning cultural roles according to one's sex. From the starting the girls and boys are treated differently by the people in their environment. Different parental and societal expectations of girls and boys and giving children gender specific toys or gender based assignments create such differences among girls and boys. Kaushik S. (1993) in her survey has studied the comparison of boys and girls in skill training which shows that out of 600 children of both the genders 13 boys and 257 girls got the training of music while 8 boys and 272 girls got the training of dance. Similarly, when asked to the mothers of the children in the same study, it was told that 9% girls and 27% boys visit festivals while 10.7% girls and 1.5% boys visit friends. This may be the reason behind the finding that more number of girls share their experience of celebrating festivals in the school and singing religious songs on different occasions than boys. Several examples have been provided by the report presented by EFA (UNGEI) (2006) from different parts of the world which confirmed that gender socialization is intertwined with the ethnic and religious values of a society. A study done by Fagot, Leinbach and Boyle (1992) as cited by Witt S.D. (1997) tested gender stereotypes and labelling within young children. Their study showed that children at the age of 2-3 use gender stereotypes in negotiating their world and are likely to generalize gender stereotypes to a variety of activities, objects and occupations. In the survey by Kaushik S. (1993) more girls say that they participated in games, dance and songs than in dramatics or debates. Not only in family, but in schools also children experience gender based socialization. Campbell D.E. (2010) says :- "The school site is a stage on which gender roles are developed in our society, and thus schools contribute to the assignment of unequal status and work opportunity in our rapidly changing economy". Hence, such a kind of gender based socialization may be the reason behind the findings that more girls share their experiences of celebrating festivals in the school and singing religious songs on different religious occasions and they are relating God more with the activities like singing religious songs than boys.

8. Conclusion

To conclude, in spite of all efforts by the society and government to for providing equal opportunities to all, there is still difference on the basis of gender. Hence, parents, teachers and society need to be more sensitive and aware towards gender stereotypes so that both the male and female children could get equal opportunities for the all round development as school text books, co-curricular activities at school as well as media are found influencing children's concepts.

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