EXPLORING YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF SPIRITUALITY AND THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY CHOIR: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM CHRIST UNIVERSITY AND VIT STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore young people's perceptions of spirituality and the role of the university choir in India. A survey was conducted among Choir group students of Christ University and Non-Choir group students of Christ University and Vermana Institute of Technology in relation to four dimensions of spirituality—self-awareness, spiritual beliefs, spiritual practices and spiritual needs. The survey results were analyzed to determine if there was any significant difference between the two groups in each dimension of spirituality. The analysis confirmed that there were significant differences between the two groups in the dimensions of spiritual beliefs and spiritual needs. In both cases, the Choir group obtained higher spirituality scores. A further analysis was carried out of data from focus group discussions in order to explore the different perceptions of spirituality among the students. Four different groups of spiritual perceptions were identified—*religious and open spirituality, religious and closed spirituality, secular and open spirituality* and *secular and closed spirituality*. Finally, the role of the university choir in all these groups was redefined based on the research findings.

Introduction

India has a rapidly growing young population, as evidenced by the National Census Bureau. Thirty percent of the population is aged between ten and twenty-four years (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner 2011). It is also a multilingual society with over 780 languages spoken used (Bhasha Research and Publication Centre 2014). Besides this, there are 5.2 million foreign-born persons living in India (Population Division of the United Nations: Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015). Along with globalization and open markets, there has been an influx of professionals and students from Asian, African, European and other cultures. This influx has exposed Indian youth to opportunities to share diverse experiences, but also to the challenges of competition. Rising mental health problems, addictions, loosening ties with social support systems and growing preoccupations with career goals have led young people to become increasingly lonely and anxious. As per the WHO Report of 2015, more than 2.6 million young people aged between ten and twenty-four years of age die each year in the world, mostly due to preventable causes. About 16 million girls aged fifteen to nineteen give birth every year. Young people, fifteen to twenty-four years old, account for 40 percent of all new HIV infections among adults. In any given year, about 20 percent of adolescents will experience a mental health problem, most commonly depression or anxiety. An estimated 150 million young people use tobacco,

negatively affecting their health. Approximately 430 young people aged ten to twenty-four die every day through interpersonal violence (World Health Organization, Western Pacific Region, 2015). These statistics are not very different for many Asian countries, including India.

In this destructive environment, where does spirituality stand amongst young people of today? There is no single definition of "spirituality" (McSherry and Draper 1998). Spirituality is complex, highly subjective, and difficult to measure (Coyle 2002). While religion is an aspect of spirituality for many people, spirituality is not limited to religious beliefs or practices. It involves the human quest for meaning in life that goes beyond religion (Tanyi 2002). In the context of relationships, spirituality can mean a sacred relationship with the Divine, a social relationship with others, an inner relationship with self or a universal relationship with the totality of being. In order to quantify these relational dimensions of spirituality, a survey tool developed by Parsian and Dunning was employed for this study (Parsian and Dunning 2009). The tool measures a person's Self-Awareness, Spiritual Beliefs, Spiritual Practices and Spiritual Needs. Apart from this quantitative approach, focus group discussions were conducted in order to measure the relational dimensions of spirituality in a qualitative manner. These multifaceted observations provide better understanding about the perceptions of spirituality among young people in Indian universities. Based on this understanding, the role of the university choir can be redefined.

History of Western Music

It has long been agreed that music has the capacity to improve the mind and body and positively enhance spirituality. Plato, who had the same view on music, wrote in the Book III of *The Republic*, "Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful" (quoted in Theory of Music 2008).

According to Mocquereau, the Greeks had a high ideal of music and used it to lay the foundations of civilization and morality. Music was used as a source of peace, order for the soul, and beauty for the body (Mocquereau 1896, 1-2). The Bible also admonishes believers not to get drunk on wine, but to be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit (Eph. 5:18-19). The Church has stood on this teaching and used and developed music extensively throughout its history in order to nurture the spirituality of its members.

As the Christ University Student Choir mainly adopts western classical and popular songs in its repertoire, it is worth at least skimming through the history of western music. Western music developed along with the ancient civilizations of the Near East and Mediterranean regions, particularly ancient Greece and Rome (Hanning 2010). Aristotle believed that music could imitate and thus directly influence character and behaviour, and should play an important role in education (Pelosi 2010, 20). When the Romans came to power after the Greek empire, they did not hesitate to adopt the legacy of Greek musical culture. Music played an important role in religious rituals, military events, theatrical performances, private entertainment, and youth education. As the Roman Empire declined, the Church came to center stage as a unifying force and channel of culture in Europe until the tenth century. The Church saw in music the power to inspire divine thoughts and to influence the character of its listeners (Pelosi 2010, 21-22). In fact, St. Augustine, one of the early Church fathers, wrote in Book 10, Chapter 33 of his *Confessions*, "When they are sung in a clear voice to the most appropriate tune, I again acknowledge the great value of this practice" (quoted in Chaplain Mike 2011).

As the early Church spread from Jerusalem to Asia Minor, North Africa, and Europe, it expanded its influence by absorbing other musical dynamics. During the ninth century, Frankish monks and nuns—from modern day Switzerland, France, and western Germany—played a crucial role in the preservation of these musical influences by laboriously notating the texts and melodies

into manuscripts that were housed in monastic libraries. The repertory of melodies thus transmitted in writing is known as Gregorian chant (Pelosi 2010, 22-24). Until the beginning of the fifteenth century, Western Europe music remained religious. Then, during the fifteenth century, it began to cultivate secular genres with the contribution of English composers. Another change took place in the sixteenth century after the Reformation. In early Christian services, all those present had sung the hymns and psalms, but by the late Middle Ages the music in Catholic services was assigned to the celebrants and choir alone. Then Martin Luther sought to restore the congregation's role in church music when his new church was established (Pelosi 2010, 152). Coming to the seventeenth century, a delightful, theatrical and expressive music began to prevail, known as Baroque, which laid a systematic foundation, not only for sacred, but also for secular music. Baroque composers strived to express a wide range of feelings vividly and vigorously. It was in this era that the early operas were staged. The eighteenth century, often called the Age of Reason or Enlightenment, is also known in music history as the classical era. The word "classical" is used because of the mature styles of the century's composers, such as Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. In music history, the nineteenth century is known as the Age of Romanticism. Romanticism transgressed the rules and limits set by its predecessors and went on to introduce distant, legendary, fanciful, and imaginative music (Pelosi 2010, 303, 399). From the twentieth century to the present is the Age of Modern music, where the stride of technological and social change has been more rapid than in any previous era, and music has not escaped its direct impact. In this present era, popular and classical music began to separate. Some composers even abandoned the precision of music notation that many Romantic composers prided themselves in (Pelosi 2010, 517). The student choir of Christ University stands in the stream of this long history of western music and has adopted not only so-called sacred and classical music, but also popular music.

Christ University and the Student Choir

Christ University was established in July 1969 by the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI), the first indigenous congregation of India. Located in Bengaluru, the capital of Karnataka state in South India, the University has been continually rated among the top ten educational institutions of India. In spite of being established by a Christian organization, the University is secular in its outlook and welcomes students from all castes, religions, creeds, and languages. Currently, the University has about 20,000 students in its undergraduate, postgraduate, M.Phil. and Ph.D. programmes. The gender ratio is equal between male and female students. Characterized by religious diversity, 64 percent of students identify themselves as Hindus, 25 percent as Christians, 4 percent as Jains and 6 percent as Muslims, Buddhists or the believers of other religions. Only 1 percent of students identify themselves as atheists. The University also reflects regional diversity, with 67 percent of its students from South India, 23 percent from North India, 6 percent from East India and 4 percent from West India. About forty national and international languages are spoken daily on the campus—English being the most predominant, followed by Hindi, Malayalam, Kannada, and Tamil. A total of 630 foreign students add an international flavour to this multicultural, multilingual, multiregional and multi-religious environment (Christ University 2016). Having the advantage of such a dynamic, the University initiates various inter and intra-collegiate cultural festivals. It also actively encourages mega theatrical productions in which about 200 students from different deaneries, religions and cultures take part.

The University is proud of its Student Choir, which was established in the year 2000 and now has 160 members from diverse backgrounds. The majority of its members come from South India (75 percent), followed by North India (16 percent), East India (5 percent), and West India (4 percent). In terms of social category, 92 percent of members are from the General category followed by OBC/SC/ST category (6 percent) and others (2 percent). The choir reflects also a very diverse spectrum of mother tongues, beginning with Malayalam (41 percent) followed by Tamil (14

percent), Hindi (14 percent), English (7 percent), Konkani (7 percent), Bengali (5 percent), Kannada (3 percent), Telugu (3 percent), Marathi (2 percent), Nepali (2 percent) and Odiya (2 percent). In terms of religious diversity, the majority of the members are Christians (71 percent), followed by Hindus (27 percent) and Buddhist (2 percent) (Yeon 2016). Though the Choir members have extremely diverse backgrounds of region, class, language, religion, culture and music, they learn to be in tune with each other through choir training. On average, the Choir sings twenty songs per year, of which 60 percent are Christian. However, the Choir has also been performing pieces ranging from classical to contemporary, that is, from Handel to TOTO, Sting and the Police, Michael Jackson and many more. The Choir travels, not only to participate in competitions, but also to serve children in orphanages and elderly people in old age homes as noble social causes. Music practices may improve their spirituality, which motivates them to demonstrate their genuine concern for the underprivileged. An investigation into music as a vehicle for service is outside of the scope of this study, however, and would require further research. The conductor of the Choir nevertheless believes that students develop character, conduct and discipline through their tenure in the Choir (Jason Kishander, unpublished data, March 24, 2016).

Vemana Institute of Technology (VIT)

The Institute was established in 1999 and is located in Bengaluru. Because situated in the heart of the Silicon Valley of India, the Institute has good interaction with various IT Companies (Vemana Institute of Technology n.d.). This provides extra exposure to western culture to a certain degree. In addition to the survey of the 220 students of Christ University (85 from the Student Choir and 135 from the Non-Choir group), 100 VIT students were also selected for the survey so as to maintain more balanced perceptions of spirituality, especially among the Non-Choir group.

Methodology

A Spiritual Self-Assessment Survey was conducted among 320 students from convenient sample groups: 220 from Christ University (85 from the Student Choir and 135 from the Non-Choir group) and 100 Non-Choir group students from Vemana Institute of Technology, Bengaluru. The students were given a questionnaire developed by Parsian and Dunning, which was originally devised to measure the spirituality of young adults with diabetes in Australia. The authors confirm that the questionnaire is a valid and reliable research tool that can be generalized to a wider population of young people with or without diabetes (Parsian and Dunning 2009, 7). Parsian and Dunning have defined spirituality as a "concept encompassing the search for meaning in life, self-actualisation and connection with inner self and the universal whole" (Parsian and Dunning, 2009, 2).

The final questionnaire has a total of twenty-nine questions divided into four dimensions: Self-Awareness, Spiritual Beliefs, Spiritual Practices and Spiritual Needs. The dimension of Self-Awareness, like one's brain, involves conscious knowledge of one's own character, feelings, motives, and desires. Thus the questionnaire asks about satisfaction with self, quality of life, positive attitude, self-esteem, self-confidence, meaning in life, equality with others, compassionate character, and meaning in difficult situations. The dimension of Spiritual Beliefs, akin to that of the heart, involves inner attachment to the Divine or to the self. In this questionnaire, the latter is emphasized. Thus it questions life goals, self-realization, life approaches, and life integration. The dimension of Spiritual Practices, like a person's hands and feet, involves actions taken to improve one's spirituality. The questionnaire asks about environmental friendliness, reading books about spirituality, achieving inner peace, living in harmony with nature, taking the opportunity for spiritual enhancement, and meditation. The dimension of Spiritual Needs, like one's life, involves various aspects of spiritual survival. The questionnaire asks about life purpose, the role of music,

the mysteries of life, relationships, inner peace, beauty, connections with people, evolving life, and a meaningful life. This tool was re-examined from the perspective of Indian university students on the hypothesis that the Choir group students would obtains higher spirituality scores than the Non-Choir group students in all four dimensions.

Responses provided by students in a casual manner, such as not answering some of the mandatory questions or providing false information, were discarded. As a result, 278 out of 320 cases were taken for analysis. Through Factor Analysis, it was found that three questions had collected invalid data and Cronbach's Alpha test indicated that the data collected for the dimension of Spiritual Practices was not reliable. Further analysis was conducted excluding these data. The average scores were computed on each of the three remaining dimensions. A boxplot was used to check outliers and extreme values. The Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted on the average scores of each dimension to measure the normality of data. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the data was not normal across all dimensions for each group. Thus a Mann-Whitney U test was used for two independent samples of non-parametric data. Kruskal-Wallis' One Way ANOVA test was employed for three or more independent samples of non-parametric data. Not only Choir vs Non-Choir group variables, but also Gender, Age, Religion and Spiritual Inclination group variables were considered in order to measure statistically significant differences across the spiritual dimensions.

The total spirituality score was computed by taking the average score of all dimensions. Based on the result, the students from Christ University were divided into four focus groups: Choir group with High Spirituality, Choir group with Low Spirituality, Non-Choir group with High Spirituality, and Non-Choir group with Low Spirituality. Thirteen students representing each group were then called for focus group discussions—first the Choir group and second the Non-Choir groups (Yeon and GS. 2016). Data from the focus group discussions was carefully examined to find reasons behind spirituality score differences and the diverse perceptions of spirituality amongst the young students.

Findings

Survey Data Analysis

Factor Analysis results indicate that three questions have collected invalid data.

Table 1. Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component			
	1 (SB)	2 (SA)	3 (SN)	4 (SP)
SA9				
SP2	.599			.380
SP5	.692			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
Suppressed coefficient values less than .3.
[a] Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

The responses collected for the ninth question on Self-Awareness, that is, "I find meaning in difficult situations," had less than a .3 factor loading coefficient value, which means they were not valid for any dimensions (Table 1). The variable was thus discarded. The responses collected for the second and fifth questions concerning Spiritual Practices, i.e., "I read books about spirituality" and "I try to find any opportunity to enhance spirituality" had a greater than .3 factor loading

coefficient values (SP2 loading = .599, SP5 loading = .592). However, their loadings were found to be more valid for Spiritual Beliefs (Table 1). As reading books about spirituality and trying to find opportunities for spiritual enhancement evidently belong to Spiritual Practices, these two variables were also discarded.

Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted on the revised data set for each of the four dimensions, and its results indicated that the data set collected for Spiritual Practices was not reliable ($\alpha < 0.7$) (Table 2).

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.620	4

Table 3. Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
P1	8.65	2.772	.348	.586
P2	9.11	2.349	.407	.549
P3	8.38	2.637	.548	.462
P4	8.32	2.711	.332	.599

The "Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted" field suggested that the deletion of any of the four questions would not improve Cronbach's Alpha value for Spiritual Practices (Table 3). The data set for this dimension was thus discarded.

A boxplot was used to check outliers and extreme values. Yet even after deselecting the outliers and extreme values, the Shapiro-Wilk test result indicated that the data sets of all three dimensions were not normally distributed over the Choir vs Non-Choir group variable ($p < 0.05$) (Table 4). It was the same for all other groups variables—Gender, Religion, Age Group and Spiritual Inclination. As a result, Non-Parametric Tests had to be conducted for mean rank comparison analysis.

Table 4. Test of Normality

	Choir vs Non Choir	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Self_Awareness	Choir	.174	78	.000	.956	78	.009
	Non Choir	.093	200	.000	.973	200	.001
Spiritual_Beliefs	Choir	.128	78	.003	.920	78	.000
	Non Choir	.132	200	.000	.952	200	.000
Spiritual_Needs	Choir	.119	78	.008	.938	78	.001
	Non Choir	.089	200	.001	.968	200	.000

The Mann-Whitney U test result indicated that there was no significant difference between the Choir group (Mean Rank = 141.49) and the Non-Choir group (Mean Rank = 138.72) in the dimension of Self-Awareness (U = 7,645, $p > 0.05$) (Table 5, Table 6). This meant whether a person

joins the Choir or not, he or she would obtain more or less equal scores of Self-Awareness with the people in the other group.

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Summary (Self-Awareness)

| SlNo	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Self Awareness is the same across categories of Choir_NonChoir.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.796	Retain the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Spiritual_Beliefs is the same across categories of Choir_NonChoir.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.001	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Spiritual_Needs is the same across categories of Choir_NonChoir.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.036	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significance are displayed. The significance level is 0.05.

Table 6. Choir and Non-Choir Mean Rank Comparison (Self-Awareness)
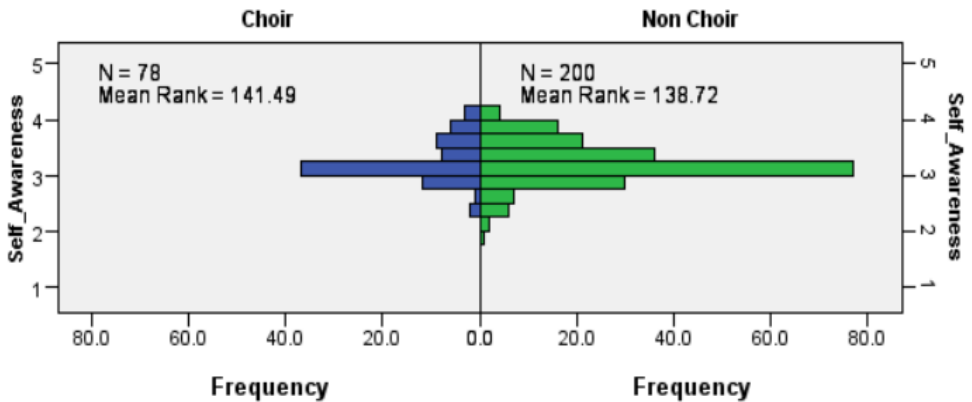
The Choir group (Mean Rank = 164.60) was statistically significantly higher than the Non-Choir group (Mean Rank = 129.71) in the dimension of Spiritual Beliefs (U = 5,842, p = .001) (Table 7). However, it did not confirm any causality between the Choir group and spiritual beliefs. In other words, we cannot say that the Choir students obtained significantly higher mean rank for Spiritual Beliefs because they had joined the Choir. The same type of interpretation was applied to all the following Mean Rank Comparison analyses.

Table 7. Choir and Non-Choir Mean Rank Comparison (Spiritual Beliefs)
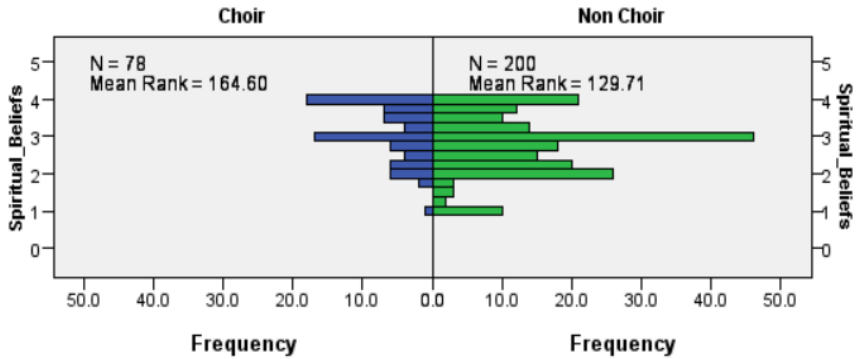
The Choir group (Mean Rank = 155.64) was again statistically significantly higher than the Non-Choir group (Mean Rank = 133.20) in the dimension of Spiritual Needs (U = 6,541, p = .36) (Table 8). The Choir group students felt significantly greater spiritual needs than the Non-Choir group students. This did not confirm that the difference was caused by the Choir group students joining the Choir.

Table 8. Choir and Non-Choir Mean Rank Comparison (Spiritual Needs)
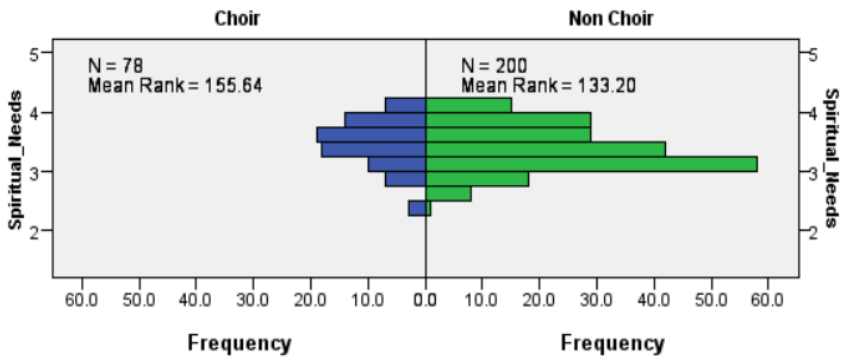
The Mann-Whitney U test result on Gender indicated that there was no significant difference in all three dimensions. The Kruskal-Wallis One Way ANOVA test result on Age Group (17-18, 19-20, 21-22, 23 and Above) indicated that there were statistically significant differences in all three dimensions (Self-Awareness: p = .003, Spiritual Beliefs: p < .0005, Spiritual Needs: p = .037). The oldest age group (23 and Above) scored the highest spirituality mean rank for each dimension. The Kruskal-Wallis One Way ANOVA test result for Religion (Christianity, Hinduism, Others) indicated that there was no significant difference in all three dimensions. The Kruskal-Wallis One Way ANOVA test result on Spiritual Inclination (mild, moderate, strong) indicated that there was no significant difference in the dimension of Self-Awareness (p = .204). However, there were statistically significant differences in the other two dimensions (Spiritual Beliefs: p < .0005, and Spiritual Needs: p = .008). Those who had strong spiritual inclinations obtained the highest spirituality mean ranks in the dimensions of Spiritual Beliefs and Spiritual Needs.

This quantitative analysis brought to our notice that there were significant differences between the Choir group and the Non-Choir group in the dimensions of Spiritual Beliefs and Spiritual Needs. In other words, the Choir group had stronger spiritual beliefs and greater spiritual needs. Where do

these significant differences come from? The answer was sought through qualitative analysis of the focus group discussion data.

Focus Group Discussion Data Analysis

According to the analysis of the survey data, the Choir group had stronger spiritual beliefs and felt greater spiritual needs. Yet when the focus group discussion data was analyzed, it gave an entirely new insight into the perceptions of spirituality among Indian University students. Out of thirteen students who came for the focus group discussions, two were from the Choir group with high spirituality scores (Group 1), four from the Non-Choir group with high spirituality scores (Group 2), three from the Choir group with low spirituality scores (Group 3) and four from the Non-Choir group with low spirituality scores (Group 4) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Groupings for the Focus Group Discussion

Choir group with High SC (Group 1)	Non-Choir group with High SC (Group 2)
Focus Group Discussion	
Choir group with Low SC (Group 3)	Non-Choir group with Low SC (Group 4)
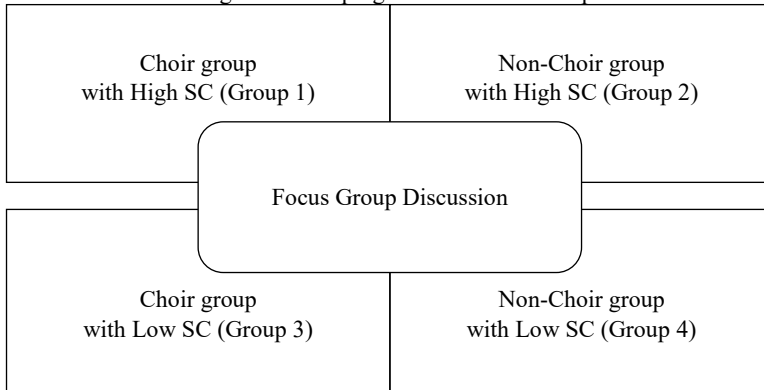
The following four students connected their perception of spirituality to religious beliefs and practices. A student from the Choir group with high spirituality scores (Group 1) said,

> The most important factor on the basis of which I can call myself a spiritual person is that I always look forward to a supreme force that is supervising me and guiding me in everything I do.

Another student from the Non-Choir group with high spirituality scores (Group 2) said,

> [I call myself spiritual because] I think the Creator is there to guide me in all my ways. Even if bad things happen, I will obey the Creator.

A student from the Choir group with low spirituality scores (Group 3) said,

> [I'm not spiritual because] I don't remember to put God before everything else. I haven't made it a habit to read the Bible every day.

He thinks he is not spiritual simply because he does not read the Bible every day. Another student from the Non-Choir group with low spirituality scores (Group 4) said,

> [I am not a spiritual person because] I am a non-religious person. I'm not sure if I believe in God. I do not believe in destiny or fate. And I'm not very interested in religious rituals.

She considers herself not spiritual because she does not have a religious inclination. These four students draw their concept of spirituality from religiosity. They can thus be defined as Religious Spirituals whose spirituality is perceived in connection with a sacred relationship with the Divine within a particular religious tradition (Phan 2014). The reason why some of the so-called Religious Spirituals obtained low spirituality scores was that they considered themselves not religious enough, even though they might be excellent in their self-actualisation.

Another group of students perceive their spirituality from a different perspective. A student from the Choir group with high spirituality scores (Group 1) said,

> It's important to understand that being spiritual is more important than being religious.

He clearly differentiates spirituality from religiosity. Another student from the Non-Choir group with high spirituality scores (Group 2) said,

> I believe in self-discovery and am in constant process of it. I am not materialistic and try to see the good and uniqueness in each person.

Her perception of spirituality is not restricted to religious inclination. She instead considers self-discovery an essential factor in becoming spiritual. One more student from the same group made a stronger statement,

> A spiritual person does not have to be a religious one. I am agnostic and have distinct thoughts about the existence of God, the cosmos, and the society. I meditate to be lost and found in my world. I help people in every opportunity because I am able to understand and empathize.

The student seeks spirituality not from religion but from her meditation in which she is lost and found in her world. She also performs her own spiritual practices by closely connecting herself with others. A student from the Choir group with low spirituality scores (Group 3) followed the same line of thought when she said,

> I just believe in doing what I love and not harming anyone. I believe in actions and kindness rather than praying.

The perception of spirituality of these four students was not limited to or connected to religiosity. Their spirituality was constituted by a social relationship with others, an inner relationship with self, and a universal relationship with the whole of being. This group of students can be classified as the Secular Spirituals. Crawford and Rossiter explain the social background of Secular Spirituals as follows:

> Youth in industrialised, urbanised societies see people negotiating life and forming values more from their own initiative, with less dependence on traditional religious guidance. For them, religion no longer speaks with relevance or authority; if they have concerns about the environment, human rights, personal relationships and sexuality, they are more likely to refer to organisations in society which are unaffiliated with religion. In their self-understanding and self-expression many youngsters are eclectic, drawing on elements in trans-cultural, trans-ethnic and trans-religious ways—the mass medias are significant sources. (Crawford and Rossiter 1996)

Some of the so-called Secular Spirituals obtained high spirituality scores when they realised that their self-actualisation was an essential aspect of spirituality. Based on this observation, not only the Religious Spirituals, but also the Secular Spirituals have full potential to improve their spirituality. It is important to educate them to pursue spiritual growth in their social relationships with others, their inner relationship with self and their universal relationship with the whole of being. It is also interesting to observe the frequency of particular words used by the Religious Spirituals and the Secular Spirituals in the form of word clouds (Davies n.d.). Commonly used words such as "music," "spiritual" and "life" were not counted. The Religious Spirituals frequently use the words "God" or "understanding" (Figure 2), while the Secular Spirituals preferred to use the words "people" or "experience" (Figure 3). The word frequency of each group was not much different from the characteristics of each group.

Figure 2. Word Cloud for the Secular Spirituals

Figure 3. Word Cloud for the Religious Spirituals
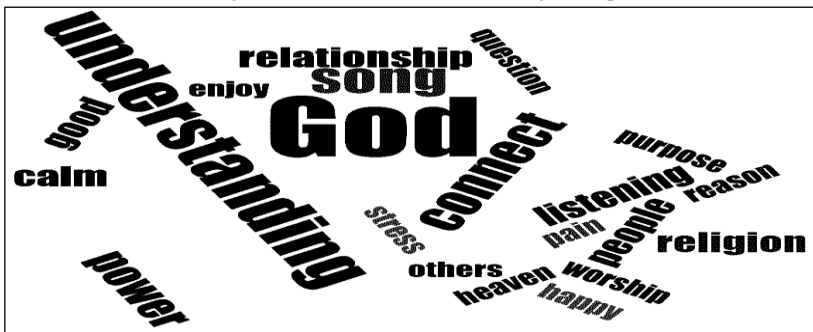
As the focus group discussion data was more closely examined, two subgroups were discovered under each group. The two subgroups may be classified as Open Spirituals and Closed Spirituals. A student who belongs to Open Spirituals said,

Understanding God Almighty can be achieved through constant prayers. [But at the same time] it's important to understand that being spiritual is more important than being religious.

He is a Religious Spiritual and at the same time an Open Spiritual. Another student talks only about God and religious activities in all his responses. He is quite close to the group of Closed Spirituals. One student said,

> I'm not a spiritual person. I believe in actions and kindness rather than praying. [But] I do respect the people who believe in spirituality.

She is a Secular Spiritual and at the same time an Open Spiritual. Yet another student said,

> Despite having had supernatural experiences in nature, I have remained a cynic for a simple reason that how my destiny should unfurl is to be in my hands. It is to be in my hands, and in my hands alone.

He is a Secular Spiritual and likely to be a Closed Spiritual. These observations disclose how Indian youth position themselves in the context of spiritual perceptions.

Conclusion

In a broad sense, Indian university students position themselves in the spiritual arena of COOC—*Closed Religious Spirituals, Open Religious Spirituals, Open Secular Spirituals,* and *Closed Secular Spirituals*. There is an ideological interaction between *Closed Religious Spirituals* and *Open Religious Spirituals,* because they share the same perceptions about religious spirituality. In the same manner, there is an ideological interaction between *Open Secular Spirituals* and *Closed Secular Spirituals,* because they have the same perceptions of secular spirituality. There is also an ideological interaction between *Open Religious Spirituals* and *Open Secular Spirituals* because of their openness towards each other. But *Closed Religious Spirituals* do not interact ideologically with *Closed Secular Spirituals*, and vice versa, due to their closedness to each other.

What then is the potential role of the University Choir in this context? Surprisingly, all thirteen students but one agreed that music was essential for their religious pursuit or self-actualisation. This is where the University Choir can play a crucial role. Westermeyer says that music and spirituality are inextricably interwoven (Westermeyer, 2013). Music can be personally enjoyed and used to improve individual spirituality. Young people, through active and collective activities, strengthen their selves and collective efficacies (Dunne, Murphy, and Golubeva 2014, 150). As shown in the COOC-Music diagram (Figure 4), music in the form of a collective activity, such as a University Choir can provide a space for all the four spiritual groups to interact with each other and nurture their relational spiritualities.

Figure 4. COOC-Music Diagram
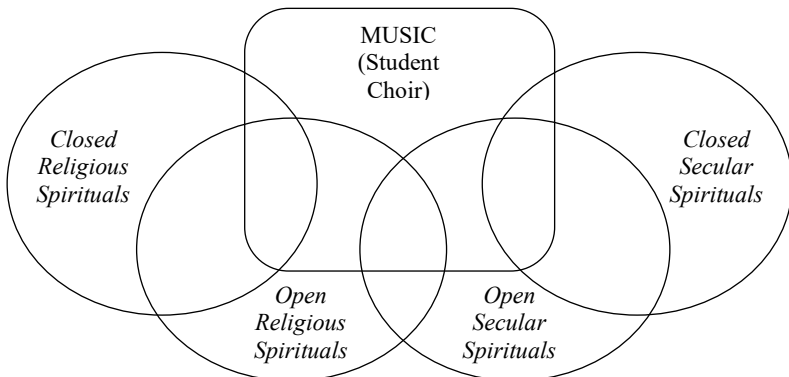
Mr Jason Kishander, the present conductor of Christ University Student Choir, notes,

A music piece that has good moral values [for self-actualisation] and/[or] [good spiritual values] that can connect us to God has definitely impacted and transformed many lives. The vision for the Choir is not just to sing but to unite the hearts and minds of students and give them something that is so unique and life changing. (Jason Kishander, unpublished data, March 24, 2016)

When the University Choir embraces all four spiritual groups, youth in a destructive environment have a higher chance of becoming positive and collaborative spiritual adults. This research has found that the existing survey tool for assessing spirituality is neither sufficiently adequate for identifying different spiritual groups among the Indian university students nor is it designed to measure the impact of collective activities of the youth. Therefore, a new tool is to be developed through inter-disciplinary collaboration and applied to the various youth activities of Indian universities. This paper concludes with remarks from Nicholas Cook: "Through a combination of pitches, rhythms, timbres, durations, and dynamics, music can unlock the most hidden contents of one's spiritual and emotional being" (Cook 1987, 1).

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