

**CHRIST**(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
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Notice for the PhD Viva Voce Examination

Ms Asha P P, Registration Number: 2190158, PhD Scholar at the School of Psychological Sciences, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), will defend her PhD thesis at the public viva-voce examination on Friday, 11 September 2026 at 10.00 am in Room No. 044, Ground Floor, R&D Block, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru - 560029, Karnataka, India.

Title of the Thesis : **The Role of Spiritual Beliefs and Meaning in Quality of Life among Transgender (Hijra) Women in South India**

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The members of the Research Advisory Committee of the Scholar, the faculty members of the Department and the School, interested experts and research scholars of all the branches of research are cordially invited to attend this open viva-voce examination.

Registrar (Academics)

Place: Bengaluru

Date: 27 August 2026

ABSTRACT

Transgender (Hijra) women in South India continue to experience profound systemic marginalisation, including social stigma, family rejection, economic instability, healthcare discrimination, and psychological distress, regardless of constitutional status and legal changes to protect their rights. The research study examines the role of spiritual beliefs and meaning in life in shaping the quality of life among transgender (Hijra) women in South India. The literature that has already been developed in the Indian situation has mainly focused on HIV risk, sexual health, and stigma, while largely overlooking positive psychological and spiritual determinants of well-being. The present research fills this gap by exploring how spiritual belief and meaning in life function as mediating and protective factors in the relationship between psychological distress and quality of life.

Grounded in minority stress theory and existentialism research, this conceptualisation of spiritual belief and meaning is not merely a coping mechanism but a transformative resource that enables well-being, identity affirmation, and existential coherence. Spiritual belief within the Hijra community is deeply embedded in cultural-religious traditions, including devotion to deities (Bahuchara Mata) and symbolic representations of gender fluidity (Ardhanarishvara). Faith practices, guru-chela kinship relations, and ritual performances provide not only livelihood but also divine legitimacy, a sense of belonging, and dignity. At the same time, religious spaces may serve as sites of both affirmation and exclusion, making the relationship between spirituality and well-being complex and context-dependent.

The study employs a sequential explanatory mixed-method design to examine the relationship between depression, anxiety and stress (DAS), spiritual beliefs, meaning in life, and quality of life. Quantitative analysis determines the mediating effects of spiritual beliefs and meaning in life, the relationship between psychological and overall well-being. Qualitative stories are more insightful into experiences of faith, identity negotiation, and existential development. The study aims to determine the strongest predictors of quality of life and examine the relationship between internal resources and structural stressors.

Theoretically, therefore, the findings should help apply existential and minority stress frameworks in non-Western, faith-based contexts. The empirical nature of the study contributes to what little Indian research on transgender well-being has to say by presupposing spiritual belief and meaning as key aspects of quality of life. In practice, the study provides recommendations to culturally sensitive mental health care, integrative religious practices, and policy changes to appreciate the agency and sacred singleness of the Hijra women. This research confirms the role of spiritual belief and meaning as essential avenues for psychological wellness, dignity, and holistic well-being, challenging deficit-based accounts of one of the most historically marginalised populations in India through a strength-based approach.

Keywords: *existentialism, Hijra women, meaning in life, minority stress theory, quality of life, spiritual belief*

Publications:

1. **PP, A., & Arur, A.** (2026). Meaning in life buffers mental health risks in South Indian transgender (Hijra) women. *Mental Health and Social Inclusion*, 30(1), 57–71. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MHSI-02-2025-0058>
2. **Paul Pudushery, A., & Arur, A. A.** (2025). Exploring spiritual beliefs and quality of life among transwomen (Hijra) in South India. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 1- 14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2025.2533246>
3. **Paul Pudushery, A., & Arur, A. A.** (2025). Transgender women as ‘knights of faith’: Navigating ethics between national conservatism and radical gender ideology. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19349637.2025.2587953>