

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Reciprocal Determinism in Sita under the Crescent Moon by Annie Ali Khan: A Socio Cognitive Analysis

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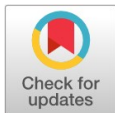
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Abstract— This study explores the concept of reciprocal determinism in Sita Under the Crescent Moon by Annie Ali Khan through a socio-cognitive lens, utilizing Albert Bandura's theory. The research examines how cognitive learning and environmental influences shape the characters' perceptions and social behaviors, particularly within the religious and cultural contexts of Sindh and Baluchistan. By employing Belsey's textual analysis methodology, the study highlights how societal norms, rituals, and folklore are transmitted across generations and integrated into individuals' belief systems. The findings reveal that spirituality, faith, and socio-economic conditions significantly influence human cognition and behavior, with pilgrims seeking solace in shrines and temples. The novel illustrates the interplay between personal agency, cultural traditions, and environmental factors, demonstrating how social cognition informs religious practices and daily life. This research contributes to understanding the socio-cognitive dimensions of faith-based traditions, offering insights into the psychological and cultural frameworks that shape individual and collective identities.

Index Terms— Reciprocal determinism, Socio-cognitive theory, Cognitive learning, Rituals and folklore, Spirituality and faith

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Introduction

This study examines reciprocal determinism in Annie Ali Khan's Sita Under the Crescent Moon. The research examines the psychological aspects of the novel's characters' roles and performances. In this story, environmental influences affect people's perceptions when they visit Sindh and Baluchistan's shrines and temples. Bandura's reciprocal determinism theory was used to analyze the novel's socio-cognition (Brezina, 2021). The researcher used Belsey's textual analysis methodology to overcome study obstacles. Bandura (1978) postulated reciprocal determinism, which states that an individual's activities impact their social environment (Cui et al., 2024). He says socio-cognitive theory originates in social learning to explain how several ramifications might affect a person's behavior (Malik et al., 2024). He also believes that a person's actions, intelligence, and emotions may impact the surroundings. Basic reciprocal determinism is a social science method that analyzes how environment, individual traits, and behavior affect human behavior. In addition, each of the three elements affects the others to varying degrees depending on the circumstances (Chai & Ye, 2024).

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Bandura's(1978) socio-cognitive theory states that environment and cognition affect behavior and learning. He believes observational learning happens when elders act and others follow them. Persons considered models (Drouin et al., 2021). These models are socially ubiquitous. At home, parents, brothers, relatives, schools, and other workplaces, students imitate their role models. Learners carefully observe and encode their actions. The activity may be 'gender appropriate' or not. Still, numerous factors improve the likelihood that a learner would emulate gender-appropriate conduct (Poppo & Schloemer, 2023).

Learners are more likely to observe and emulate someone like them. It's more inclined to imitate its gender. Second, the learner's environment rewards or punishes their imitations. When students copy a model's conduct and succeed, they're likely to continue (Li et al., 2022). External or internal reinforcement can be good or bad. Seeking parental or peer approval is an external reinforcement, whereas gaining approval brings satisfaction is an inside reinforcement. A youngster will act how they think is acceptable. Models with lovable traits are cherished. Students will identify with various role models. These persons might be actual, such parents or elder siblings, fictional, or media characters (Li, Li, Zhu, & Guo, 2020). Someone identifies with a model because it has a trait they wish they had. Acquiring the model's conduct, values, ideas, and attitudes involves identifying with that person. They both involve internalizing someone else's traits. The person may recall while imitating others. According to Bandura's hypothesis, identification may include adopting many behaviors, but fraud usually involves emulating one (Rašković, Haynes, & Vangeli, 2024).

Research objectives

- To examine how cognitive learning and the surrounding environment influence behavior in Sita Under the Crescent Moon.
- To analyze how Sita Under the Crescent Moon depicts the evolution of social standards (related to rites and rituals) and their transmission from generation to generation.

Research questions

- How do cognitive learning and environmental factors influence the perception and social behavior depicted in Sita Under the Crescent Moon?
- How are societal standards, particularly those that are related to rituals and folktales, developed and passed down from one generation to the next, as explored in Sita Under the Crescent Moon?

Literature Review

Sigmund Freud is credited with being the inventor of psychoanalysis, which is both a psychological theory and a method of treatment that was initially developed in the latter half of the 19th century (Freud, 1895). It is predicated on the idea that unconscious thoughts, feelings, and motivations drive human conduct and that resolving unconscious conflicts is essential to obtaining psychological health (Freud, 1989). Sigmund Freud developed this theory. His psychoanalytic theory states that human activity results from the interaction of three mental structures: id, ego, and superego (Freud, 1989). The ego is the logical, conscious component of the mind that strives to mediate between the id's demands and external reality. The ego mediates between the id and reality, whereas the id symbolizes our innate desires. Freud (1923) believed that the superego internalizes society norms and guides our behavior.

Bandura's (1978) social learning theory, which states that behavior is learned through observation and imitation and that cognitive processes are crucial (Bandura, 1998), has influenced the socio-cognitive approach. This technique is also influenced by Rotter's social learning theory, which stresses expectations' influence on behavior (Rotter, 1954). Cognitive psychology relies on the information-processing paradigm, which has also influenced socio-cognition. This is because socio-cognitive exercise focuses on social interactions. According to Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968), this paradigm states that cognitive processes are sequential and require attention, perception, and memory. The socio-cognitive approach has been applied to investigate a wide range of topics. Studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between social cognition and social behavior, such as compliance and obedience (Asch, 1951; Milgram, 1963), as well as the relationship between social interactions and cognitive processes, such as memory and attention (Anderson & Pichert, 1978; Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

Reciprocal determinism

Charpentier et al. (2020) concluded that learning plays a part in the formation of personality. In the same way, some people naturally acquire certain behaviors; others pick up new behavior patterns just by seeing how others behave, particularly models. Bandura (1998) claimed, concerning the ideas of behaviorists on reinforcement, that whether members of a society choose to imitate the behavior of a model that is determined by whether the model is given positive or negative reinforcement. Through observational learning, a person learns what activities are acceptable and rewarded in his culture. By witnessing what behaviors are punished, a person also knows how

to suppress aberrant or socially unacceptable behaviors. Observational learning is an integral part of human development. Insofar as the present research is concerned, it also centers on spiritual growth, indirectly related to reciprocal determinism to discover how a person can improve his spirituality. This research has been conducted to determine how people can increase their understanding of spirituality. As a result of the fact that the focus of this investigation is to investigate one facet of spirituality, it is essential to examine the body of work associated with the concept of "spirituality."

Theoretical framework

The study, titled "Reciprocal Determinism and Spiritual Growth: A Socio-Cognitive Analysis of Sita Under the Crescent Moon," draws on key psychological perspectives. Central to the analysis is Albert Bandura's theory of reciprocal determinism, which posits that human behavior emerges from dynamic interactions between personal variables, environmental factors, and actions (Bandura, 1978). Environmental stimuli trigger personal factors, leading to explicit behaviors (Fatima & Ajmal, 2012). Lashari and Amjad (2014) further elaborate that personal components include affective, cognitive, and personality traits, while behavioral factors encompass intentions shaped by past experiences.

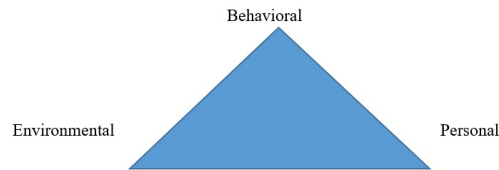


Fig. 1 Theoretical framework

Environmental factors

Environmental factors in socio-cognition impact one when confronted with a range of daily situations that are always changing and force them to make judgments. Even when environmental conditions change, humans can navigate the world since actions are neither intrinsic nor environmental. People may change outcomes, influence others, and coordinate their actions as active agents. Social cognitive theory (SCT) states that human behaviour is shaped by external factors as well as internal predispositions including cognition, emotion, and motivation (Bandura, 2008). These basic traits affect behavior. Khan's novel *Sita Under the Crescent Moon* links natural events to people's emotional states and the surroundings. The novel's pilgrims' ideals are shaped by their environment. These social, cultural, and religious values are passed down from generation to generation. Religious upbringing forces people to retain traditional customs. They have witnessed their forefathers honoring shrines, temples, and cemeteries with great devotion. The novel *Sita Under the Crescent Moon* shows how people's beliefs about saints' graces affect the environment.

Personal agency

Personal agency is the ability to imagine new events and actions and select one of them. It involves complex cognitive processing in perception, reasoning, and decision-making motivated by consequences. In *Sita Under the Crescent Moon*, Khan describes the individual's perception of their surroundings and how it ties to their own experiences and worldview. Most people's worldviews and actions stem from their particular beliefs and experiences of society. Bandura believed that an individual's wants drive their conduct, hence objectives or aspirations came before actions. Because of this, one's intentions to achieve anything may drive and result in actions. Different decision-making strategies are used to turn intents into objectives. The first examines distinct individual, proxy, and community agency. Individual agency, according to Bandura, is the conscious control of one's activities in the context of their environment. Individual agency is not isolated because people don't always act in their own best interests. The characters in *Sita Under the Crescent Moon* seem unconstrained by proxy roles like elders, ancestors, customs, societal conventions, or morality. Fresh perspective on conventional narratives. They rarely practice their forefathers' ceremonies. Since diverse surroundings fit different people, they work in different places. Without assistance, one's agency is limited. Proxy agency is using others to achieve one's aims. Interdependence and network activation are used to define "collective agency" as numerous people working together to attain a goal.

Cultural and environmental mediators

Culture and environment mediate agency. Hindu and Muslim cultural customs in Sindh and Baluchistan affect Sita Under the Crescent Moon. After independence, these groups split, but many traditional customs survived. Bandura classifies habitats as chosen, created, and enforced. Selecting actions that achieve goals in chosen situations maximizes agency. In contrast, imposed surroundings limit people yet allow them to interpret and respond (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

Methodology: Textual Analysis

This study employs Belsey's textual method to analyze Sita Under the Crescent Moon. Textual analysis, essential for cultural criticism, unpacks elements of human life—social, mental, spiritual, and economic. Belsey emphasizes the need to investigate unexplored texts by synthesizing existing and newly conceived ideas. Scholars engage with various resources, such as libraries, biographies, and online tools, to interpret textual elements. This method provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the novel's intricate interplay of spirituality, agency, and cultural norms.

Analysis

The novel Sita Under the Crescent Moon by Annie Ali Khan offers a critical textual analysis within the socio-cognitive framework prescribed by Bandura (1986). The narrative reflects stories of reciprocal determinism, social growth, and cognition, as the author embarks on a spiritual journey, traveling with pilgrims to remote areas of Sindh and Baluchistan. Accompanying women pilgrims who frequently visit shrines, the author seeks truth and reality. Her first destination is Hinglaj in Baluchistan, followed by visits to Karachi and coastal areas of Sindh. The text explores cognitive learning and environmental factors influencing perception and social behavior.

Influence of cognitive learning and environmental factors on perception and social behavior

Cognitive learning is a process of acquiring knowledge and perceptions through experiences, thoughts, and senses, enabling individuals to control biases and interpret sensory data meaningfully. Environmental factors play a crucial role in shaping this process, as perception is subjective, active, and influenced by one's goals, experiences, culture, and daily activities. The environment's influence on social cognition is evident in the characters of Sita Under the Crescent Moon. The author observes how women pilgrims lead their lives within specific environments and how these surroundings alter their views on social life.

The novel presents how pilgrims of diverse sects and religions repeatedly visit shrines, considering it a sacred duty to connect with saints and God. This knowledge is transferred across generations through religious teachings, emphasizing reverence for tombs and readiness for sacrifices. "When the pilgrims made the journey on foot, they were said to carry funeral shrouds with them... the chances of coming back were slim" (p. 20). The concept of reciprocal determinism highlights the dynamic interaction between individuals and their environments, such as walking barefoot as a sacred tradition. Cultural and religious norms inherited from ancestors remain integral to pilgrims' cognitive and social learning. For instance, "The pilgrims performed a series of prayers and sang bhajans Hindu devotional songs, covered head to toe with mud. They smeared their bodies with the sacred ash and prayed to the clay forms" (p. 22). These rituals reflect how religious beliefs and cultural practices are deeply embedded in the environment and transferred across generations. As Bandura's theory suggests, individuals learn from their surroundings, shaping their ideology and vision of social life.

The narrative further depicts the faith and spiritual pursuits of individuals, as seen when the author encounters a woman from Karachi who seeks solace at Durga's temple after being robbed. "She had come not so much to ask for anything, as to seek solace at the temple. It is so peaceful here. I am going to bring all my children with me next time" (p. 24). This demonstrates how a different environment can influence one's attitude and behavior, offering peace and satisfaction. The Pakistani cultural context, particularly in Sindh, emphasizes spirituality and attachment to religious teachings, evident when the author observes inscriptions on the grave of Maan Mukhtan, "May this woman have a child with no trouble. 'Let my brother become a father: 'Let that man come back into my life'" (p. 69). Socio-economic factors also play a significant role in shaping beliefs. In times of hardship, individuals seek comfort by visiting saints' shrines, participating in rituals with faith that saints will alleviate their troubles. For example, a woman recounts how praying to Nag Baba resolved her daughter's issues: "After her daughter was divorced, the in-laws refused to return her jewelry and belongings... But after she came to pray to Nag Baba, the family apologized and returned everything and even gave the furniture" (p. 67).

Bandura's theory underscores how social values and norms, influenced by the environment, shape individuals' beliefs and behaviors. The text illustrates the mentality of believers, addressing societal attitudes and the dimensions of their behaviors. Poor economic conditions often push individuals towards practices that provide spiritual and emotional solace. For instance, the faith in saints' blessings helps individuals cope with miseries and foster hope. The novel also portrays socio-cognitive practices of pilgrims, emphasizing how beliefs and rituals are influenced by environmental and socioeconomic factors. The narrative highlights practices like casting magic and wearing

charms, especially in remote areas. Such beliefs are often rooted in cultural and religious teachings, as the environment leaves profound impacts on people's cognition and behavior. Socioeconomic status (SES), a key environmental factor, further influences perspectives and life outcomes.

The author elaborates on the economic disparities and their impact on social dynamics. Gulshan, a character in the novel, protests against discrimination she faces at the shrine of Miran Pir, where she is denied equality. She laments, "Why can't I sit here? They said to me you are a witch... Cleaning women like Haseena were not allowed to sit with the caretakers to eat. 'One should treat everyone equally'" (p. 126). Class discrimination, rooted in socioeconomic conditions, creates gaps within society, even among those sharing the same faith. Such instances demonstrate how economic disparities shape social interactions and cultural practices. The author's keen observations of scenes related to shrines and pilgrims' journeys offer a mature and nuanced depiction of socio-cognitive behaviors. Through these accounts, *Sita Under the Crescent Moon* presents an intricate exploration of how environment, cultural traditions, and socioeconomic factors shape individuals' beliefs, behaviors, and social cognition.

Social norms specifically related to rituals and folktales

Sita Under the Crescent Moon by Khan seems a collection of rituals and folktales as well as the activities on shrines that reveal how people gather and celebrate rituals according to their faith and creed. The novel depicts social norms and values as perceived by Annie Ali Khan, highlighting how people behave in a society that tends to follow these norms and values on both collective and individual levels. Social norms, culturally constructed rules, guides, and standards, differentiate acceptable human behavior within a society or group, particularly in specific situations. These norms are supported by social values and often overlap with rituals, although distinct from habits, which are repetitive behaviors often performed unconsciously. The novel reflects religious rituals celebrated by pilgrims visiting shrines of saints. Some rituals are purely religious, while others are based on folklore. For instance, the author observes the ritual of walking barefoot to shrines, beginning with her visit to the temple of Durga, known as Sati, who sacrificed her life for her love marriage with Shiv. In the social norms of her time, love marriage was deemed vulgar and unacceptable. A myth about Sati narrates how she was killed when she attended Daksha's yagna uninvited:

"All the deities of the heavens were invited to Daksha's yagna except Shiv and Sati. Uninvited Shiv and Sati made an appearance, and was insulted by her father... Durga then flung herself into the flames of the ceremonial fire, the sacred yagna turned into the means for a sacrificial pyre" (p. 4-5).

Societies often stigmatize love marriages, degrading or even killing those who defy these norms. Sati and Shiv faced similar ostracism, with Sati's family not inviting her to the sacred rites. Her sisters were considered more honorable: "Her sisters were more distinguished and worthy of honor than she was" (p. 4). Such folktales profoundly influence behavior, surviving across generations and often integrating into religious practices, as seen in the case of Sati. Pilgrims now visit her shrine, light fires, and pray to her for peace and comfort:

"Sati was a woman celebrated as a goddess after she was immolated. Her sacrifice, like the sacrifice of Karbala, was a reminder: nothing came without price in this world. Like the Shaheed lays down his life in struggle, the Sati burned for a greater truth" (p. 7).

Sati's story also symbolizes justice, particularly for oppressed women in Hinglaj, Baluchistan, where a myth narrates how she punished a rapist king by transforming into a terrifying deity:

"Durga is said to have roamed the gardens of the king's palace in the roop of a beautiful woman until the king, in pursuit, followed her into the wilderness, where she transformed into a terrifying deity. The king realizing his folly begged forgiveness and promised to serve the Mata. Durga granted him pardon and turned into a stone murti" (p. 7).

In many parts of Pakistan, women are prohibited from attending funerals. The author witnessed this near a shrine, where men alone buried a woman:

"Women never attend the burial of a woman. Men buried women. Some of the men climbed into the rectangle of dug-out earth, and together the men in throng on the ground helped lower the mayyat into the ground" (p. 149).

To seek blessings or good health, the practice of burning loban (a fragrant resin) persists, often without understanding its medicinal properties. The author observed a man spreading loban's fragrance at a shrine:

"In the morning and then again at sunset, as the sun descended into the night, Saleem, the incense seller, set out about the perimeter of Miran Pir with a loban in hand... the lobaan wala walked amongst the graves, covering every inch of the courtyard. He had to keep walking so the coals would keep burning, smoke rising in fragrant flags" (p. 148).

Though rooted in Islamic traditions, as evidenced by the hadith, this practice has gained secular and commercial dimensions. Pilgrims also use loban during dhamaal performances to enhance ecstasy. Folktales play a significant role in constructing and transmitting social norms, particularly those tied to religious practices. Folklore's verbal history, passed down generations, includes music, myths, and legends that influence rituals. For instance, rituals for rain involve cooking sweet rice and praying:

"The women would either cook sweet rice at home and take it to the shrine or prepare the dish at the site, taking children along. After eating the special rice, being asked by the women to pray for rain. Pathani remembered the children praying, 'O Khuda let the rain come.' After the children ate and prayed, the clay pot was carried around by a member of the community before being smashed to the ground, the ritual ceremony for the rain" (p. 274).

Social norms act as behavioral rules, shaping individuals' cognitions, emotions, and actions, especially in religious contexts. The rites and rituals described in *Sita Under the Crescent Moon* reveal how people incorporate learned beliefs into daily life, transforming them into enduring social norms.

Findings

Cognitive learning and environment play a pivotal role in the lives of the people. Accordingly, the characters of the said novel seem influenced by the environment. The author of the novel, also as a pilgrim, moves to temples and shrines of Sindh and Baluchistan where she herself remains in search of the influential factors. The pilgrims mentioned by the author of the novel have their own personal experiences which they have gained living in religious environment. Living in the society, their experience about general interaction with the general community seems bitter. Therefore, they have become seeker of the peace, comfort and spirituality.

Moreover, the findings show that the author's journey, with the group of pilgrims, deeply throws light on an obscure and veiled world. There, on the shrines and temples, remain present heretics, healers, wives, seekers, sisters, mothers, grandmothers as well as believers. They show empathy, self-sacrifice and love for others considering it a part of their worship and belief. The worship and worship places have changed the mind-sets and transformed the customs of the land. For instance, the sacred places made of thread and clay impart a power to women so that they may meet the challenges of their wretched conditions.

The findings reveal that the pilgrims act according to their psychological based behaviors. For instance, they have learnt how rites and rituals can assist them in achieving their mottos. They perform spirituality-based rituals, which, according to their perception bring them close to the spirit of the saints and goddesses they worship. For instance, they perform a religious dance named as 'Dhamaal' to gain ecstasy. Similarly, they offer the pilgrims or sufferers the birds-drunk water to cure the ailment. The caretakers on the shrines and temples cure the women by sweeping their chests with special brooms and so on. Somewhere, the devotees offer milk to the snakes that are considered sacred things on the shrines and as a source of safety for the pilgrimage makers.

The findings manifest that these rites and rituals have been transmitted to the present generation through stories and folklores told by their ancestors and elder ones. The author's narration of events of pilgrimage prove that the visitors/pilgrims depict strong beliefs in the stories they have heard. For instance, stories about Sita and Naag Baba have converted the followers to devote their lives for these saints. They, therefore come from distant areas regarding the treatment of different ailments and then quench their thirst of seeking truth after they are healed or recovered. The author also heard the similar stories by the healers and other pilgrims who had experienced in these aspects. She also observed that most of the visitors would come there due to economic crises they faced in the society. They sought refuge on the shrines by begging to the saints to get their poor economic conditions improved.

1 Discussion

The findings of this study are in line with the contemporary researches on socio-cognitive theory, especially Bandura's reciprocal determinism, which explains how personal, environmental, and behavioral factors interplay to influence individual beliefs and actions. In *Sita Under the Crescent Moon*, this dynamic is observed in the pilgrims' deep connection to shrine culture, where their spiritual practices and rituals are inherited from previous generations and reinforced through continuous participation (Ho & Teo, 2022). Recent studies include Winters et al., (2021), which assert that the reinforcement of cultural norms through observational learning explains why successive generations of believers continue to adhere to and innovate religious traditions, even in response to changing social conditions. Similar to this is the argument of Mapuranga et al., (2021), which states that learned behaviors, especially in relation to faith and spirituality, are strengthened through social reinforcement, suggesting that the pilgrims' unwavering commitment to rituals is not only a personal choice but a socially constructed practice. This indicates that reciprocal determinism plays a crucial role in the preservation of spiritual traditions because external influences continue to shape personal convictions and communal behaviors (Huo & Li, 2022).

Moreover, this research work elaborates the significance of religious practices and shrine culture on social identity, especially concerning women and low-income classes. Women in the novel play pivotal roles in the religious context (Bhandari & Hanna, 2021). They

look to shrines to seek solace and power; thus, their participation with these places aligns with the ideas presented by Haeri (2002) concerning the role played by women in South Asian religious activities. Women in the novel, like those in Haeri's study, use shrine visits as a means of coping with societal constraints and personal hardships, reinforcing the argument that religious spaces offer agency in traditionally patriarchal societies.

Furthermore, the economic struggles of pilgrims, as depicted in the novel, reflect broader socio-economic trends, where individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds turn to faith as a coping mechanism (Kafta et al., 2023). It thereby suggests that the shrine culture, though spiritual by nature, represents a socio-economic phenomenon that yields emotional relief and communal support for some and in some cases also material benefits in the form of charitable practices (Hafezi et al., 2023).

With these results in view, this paper pushes the larger dialog concerning religion, culture, and socio-cognitive development by illustrating how reciprocal determinism works in the field of spiritual practices (Collings & Eaton, 2021). It is, therefore, possible to apply Bandura's framework on literature analysis and extend socio-cognitive theory to areas beyond its direct applications in psychology and education. Additionally, the study discusses the intersection of gender, class, and faith, thus adding a new layer of analysis about how people experience spiritual landscapes as a result of social and economic forces (Winters et al., 2021). Further research may further elaborate on this by ethnographically studying the people who visit the shrines to see how modern believers interpret and transform the practices (Poppo & Schloemer, 2023). In addition, comparative studies of shrine cultures of South Asia can provide a more nuanced understanding of the similarities and differences in religious practices across regions.

Implications

The findings of this study are theoretically and practically significant, especially in socio-cognitive psychology, cultural anthropology, and religious studies. This study demonstrates how cultural and environmental influences interact with personal cognition to shape religious beliefs and behaviors through the application of Bandura's reciprocal determinism framework in the novel *Sita Under the Crescent Moon*. Earlier studies on the socio-cognitive theory had concentrated more on education, on-the-job behaviors, and social learning in institutional settings (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Woodcock & Tournaki, 2023). The present study is an extension of Bandura's theory to a literate and religious text area that explains how spiritual behaviors are not merely a product of individualistic beliefs but rather through intense social and environmental conditioning. In addition, the fact that folklore has the role of underpinning shrine culture reveals that traditions are passed down not just by observing but by passing myths and stories around, thus constituting an informal system of education that determines the morality and social conduct. Such a perspective offers an explanation on how spiritual traditions survive across generations and how individuals create their identity through collective cultural and religious practices.

The practical benefits of this study lie in its illumination of the role that shrine culture plays in molding social behavior, especially in marginalized communities. In short, it would seem that religious spaces serve as more than places of worship but as a refuge for emotional support, social bonding, and psychological healing. This has deep implications for policy makers, sociologists, and mental health workers seeking to comprehend the interlocking dynamics of faith, economic stress, and psychological well-being. The study further throws light on the role women play in religious spaces, portraying how shrine culture is a sort of empowerment and agency for women in patriarchal structures. Such an understanding can contribute to the design of gender-sensitive religious and cultural policies that take into account the importance of spiritual practices in social identity building. Cultural preservationists and educators may also use this knowledge to document and preserve intangible cultural heritage, ensuring that these traditions are valued as essential parts of history rather than trivialized as mere superstition. Future research may elaborate on these implications by conducting ethnographic studies on the contemporary interpretations of shrine culture and its evolving role in modern society.

Limitations and future directions

This study thus provides useful information on how reciprocal determinism informs religious and cultural practices but largely relies on text analysis, making it incapable of capturing real variations in the lived experience and understanding of shrine culture. Findings rely on *Sita Under the Crescent Moon*, a novel and thus reflect more the author's view than the view of most shrine visitors based on a more general, empirical study of people's lived experience. Moreover, the study did not take into account regional variations in shrine practices across different parts of Pakistan or South Asia in which historical, economic, and political contexts differently affect religious engagement. Future research may address these limitations by including ethnographic methods, such as interviews and field observations, to get a deeper insight into the shrine culture of the present day and its influence on social identity. Comparative studies among different religious traditions in South Asia may also be able to give a more complete view of how reciprocal determinism works across varying cultural and spiritual contexts. Interdisciplinary approaches, combining psychology, sociology, and religious studies, could further highlight the cognitive and emotional dimensions of shrine practices to provide a holistic understanding of their significance in both historical and modern contexts.

Conclusion

This paper analyzes *Sita Under the Crescent Moon* as a work through which the concept of reciprocal determinism shows the interactions between personal cognition, environmental influences, and social behaviors in constructing religious beliefs and cultural traditions. Through Bandura's socio-cognitive framework, the analysis demonstrates how shrine culture endures over generations through learning, folklore transmission, and conditioning in the environment. The study underlines the importance of shrine visits as not only spiritual acts but also mechanisms for social identity formation, psychological coping, and gender empowerment. It also throws light on how economic hardships and societal constraints drive people, especially women, toward religious spaces for solace and agency. Although the study has the limitations of dependence on textual analysis, it continues to open avenues for future ethnographic and comparative research to further understand how reciprocal determinism influences religious practices across diverse cultural contexts. Ultimately, this research contributes to the overall understanding of socio-cognitive theory in regards to faith, tradition, and social behavior; it develops insights into the enduring power of religious and cultural heritage in shaping both individual and communal identities.

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