

**Name of Scholar:** Prakhar Srivastava

**Name of Supervisor:** Prof. Samina Bano

**Name of Department:** Department of Psychology

**Topic of Research:** The Ripple Effects of Contact: Examining the Transfer Effects of Hindu-Muslim Friendship in India

### **Findings**

The study examines the transfer effects of Hindu-Muslim cross-group friendships among young adults in Delhi-NCR. The findings reveal that cross-group friendships significantly increased inclusion of other in self ( $\beta = 0.591, p < 0.001$ ), indicating that individuals with Hindu-Muslim friendships are more likely to perceive outgroup members as psychologically close. This connection directly improved attitudes toward the primary outgroup ( $\beta = 0.285, p < 0.001$ ) and reduced intergroup anxiety ( $\beta = -0.250, p < 0.001$ ). Reduced anxiety further enhanced positive outgroup attitudes ( $\beta = -0.323, p < 0.001$ ), demonstrating that both cognitive and affective mechanisms mediate primary transfer effects.

Secondary transfer effects were also confirmed: benefits of Hindu-Muslim friendships extended to improved attitudes toward other minority groups, including Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains (indirect effect = 0.038, 95% CI [0.003, 0.104],  $p = 0.031$ ). Improved attitudes toward the primary group generalized to other minorities ( $\beta = 0.184, p < 0.001$ ), and reduced anxiety about one religious group predicted reduced anxiety about others, further improving secondary group attitudes. This cascading effect demonstrates that cross-group friendships trigger psychological changes that benefit multiple groups across society.

Tertiary transfer effects were observed through several indirect pathways. While no direct path from friendship to multicultural ideology was found ( $\beta = 0.018, p = 0.717$ ), improved primary outgroup attitudes predicted stronger endorsement of multicultural ideology ( $\beta = 0.111, p = 0.031$ ). Additionally, reduced intergroup anxiety increased perceived outgroup variability ( $\beta = -0.205, p < 0.001$ ), which in turn strengthened multicultural support ( $\beta = 0.158, p = 0.002$ ). The structural equation model demonstrated excellent fit ( $\chi^2 = 10.836, df = 8, p = 0.211$ ; CFI = 0.994; RMSEA = 0.030), reinforcing confidence in the three-pathway framework.

The study further finds that low levels of intergroup anxiety act as a key bridge between individual friendships and broader attitudinal and ideological change. Sequential mediation confirmed that friendships first foster self-other overlap, then reduce anxiety, and ultimately improve primary outgroup attitudes and increase perceived variability of the outgroup. Overall, while Hindu-Muslim friendships operate primarily through psychological proximity and anxiety reduction, their full transformative potential extends to multiculturalism and inclusive ideology, provided these mechanisms are activated through genuine, sustained contact rather than superficial encounters.