

Hinduism and Sibling Bereavement: A Qualitative Exploration of Religious Influence on Coping and Grief

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Introduction

Bereavement is intense, non-linear grief shaped by relationship, involving emotions like sadness and guilt (Martin & Elder, 2020; Mind, 2023). Sibling loss is unique, often overlooked, tied to lifelong bonds and shared memories (Hogan et al., 1994). Grief is influenced by support, death circumstances, and cultural or religious context (Aoun et al., 2018; Lobar et al., 2006; Parekh et al., 2025). Religion shapes mourning through beliefs, rituals, and spiritual ties (Hussein & Oyebode, 2009; Franks & Worth, 2014).

Rationale: Research links culture to bereavement but lacks depth on specific cultures. Sibling-bereaved Hindus in the UK remain under-explored, especially regarding the influences of migration and acculturation.

Aim: Explore how bereaved Hindus experience the premature loss of a sibling by learning about their retrospective experience at the time of bereavement and the ways in which they cope with their loss.

Research Question: **What are the experiences of Hindus who lose a sibling prematurely?**

- How do culture, faith, and community affect the experiences of sibling-bereaved Hindus?
- How do these experiences shape individuals' perspectives on life, death, and spirituality?

Participants

Convenience sampling: English & Gujarati posters advertised on social media & Hindu community groups.

24 participants recruited & split into 2 groups:

- UK-born **Residents** & (2) India-born **Immigrants/Migrants**

Inclusion Criteria: Hindu; age ≥ 18 -years; lost a sibling who died before age 70

Method

Qualitative study: **semi-structured interviews** to gather lived experiences, exploring thoughts, feelings, and beliefs on sibling bereavement among Hindus. Participants took part in an online interview which was recorded and transcribed.

Method of Analysis: **Constructivist Grounded Theory**

Preliminary Findings

Category 1 - Hinduism as an Anchor

The Meaning of Death in Hinduism - "in our Hindu religion, one main book called Shrimad Bhagvad Gita ... according to the quotes in there, if I respond, I want to say, death is inevitable, it will definitely happen, nobody can intervene"

Hindu Teachings as a Tool for Coping - "[rituals and prayers] helps you. To sort of try to sort of comfort you, if you pray for the departure soul that is, you can get that strength that you've done something for them ... gives you within yourself as well. It give you that peace of mind and it gives you that what do you call stillness within you as well"

Category 2 - A Chapter Closed Too Soon: The Unique Impact of Losing a Sibling

The Impact of Losing a Sibling - "every day, every moment of my life, he's there in my every breath in my body and soul, so I can't. I think like it's just me who is gone ... it's a very unpleasant experience. It cannot be what we call defining the words, but definitely it's very painful to be honest"

The Interplay Between Grief and Faith in Sibling Bereaved Hindus - "now every year when those festivals come around, like Diwali or erm all the religious months that we have, I I remember him a lot more like ... he's along aside the prayers that we do and erm... it's just helped me find a sense of peace, erm like I know I can rely on religion and rely on God, and like I know God's got me"

Category 3 - Dharma in the Diaspora: Exploring Cultural Crosscurrents and Community Transformation

The Western, British Influence on Indian Hindu Culture - "before ... about eigh- 80 to 90 percent ladies would never do job, right so... they are home all the time, ... whenever they do it [the rituals]. Nowadays everybody has a job, ladies are also doing a job so ... taking into consideration the time and around that all of the arrangements [rituals] according to that everybody does it."

Evolving Dharma: Old Roots, New Branches - "the older generation is very like serious and like thorough with the erm with like what to do after their death, and maybe they don't take that time to like sort of like grieve properly compared to compared to the younger generation. And like yeah. Erm, as the younger generation takes more time to process of what has happened instead of following all the traditions like 100%"

Conclusions

Drawing on the study's findings, it is clear that culturally sensitive bereavement support is vital for British Hindus coping with sibling loss. For Hindus, death marks not an end but a transition - the soul moves from one life to the next, offering comfort to the bereaved and a sense of spiritual continuity. Losing a sibling is a deeply personal and transformative experience, leaving a lasting impact on the survivor. The blend of Hindu beliefs and Western, British cultural influences has changed mourning practices, highlighting the importance of tailored support that reflects both religious and lived experiences of British Hindus.

References can be found on page 2 after scanning the QR code

Poster Feedback and References

