

Research Article

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS, RITUALS, AND PHYSICAL MOVEMENT: A HUMAN KINETICS PERSPECTIVE

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Article History:

Received: 02 Aug 2026 | **Accepted:** 05 Aug 2026 | **Published:** 11 Aug 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21887805>

*** Related declarations are provided in the final section of this article.*

Abstract

This article examines the intersection of religious festivals, rituals, and physical movement through the lens of human kinetics. Drawing on interdisciplinary research from anthropology, religious studies, and sport science, the article explores how bodily movement functions as an integral component of religious practice across traditions. The analysis reveals that physical activities within religious contexts ranging from structured exercise and dance to extreme rituals involving bodily duress serve multiple purposes: they facilitate community bonding, create conditions for transcendent experiences, and contribute to participants' psychological and physiological well-being. The article traces the historical relationship between religion and sport, noting the transition from religion's dominance over physical practices in ancient festivals to contemporary phenomena where religious institutions increasingly utilize sport-based events for community engagement and outreach. Special attention is given to measurable health outcomes associated with religious physical practices, including evidence from studies on Ramadan observances, Hindu pilgrimage, fire-walking rituals, and body-piercing ceremonies. The article concludes by proposing an integrated framework for understanding religious physical practices that acknowledges both their spiritual significance and their kinesthetic dimensions, with implications for health promotion, community development, and the academic study of human movement.

Keywords: religious festivals, ritual movement, human kinetics, physical activity, community health

Introduction

The relationship between religious practice and physical movement represents a fundamental yet often underappreciated dimension of human experience. Across cultures and historical periods, human beings have expressed their spiritual commitments through bodily actions: dancing in worship, processing through sacred landscapes, subjecting themselves to physical trials, and gathering for communal celebrations that integrate movement with meaning. From the ecstatic dances of Sufi dervishes to the arduous pilgrimages of Hindus (Tewari et al., 2012), from the synchronized worship movements of Pentecostal congregations (Björkander, 2024) to the fasting and modified physical routines of Ramadan observers (Majed, 2025), religion consistently manifests through the kinetic activities of human bodies.

This article adopts a human kinetics perspective to examine religious festivals and rituals an approach that foregrounds the scientific study of human movement while remaining attentive to the cultural and spiritual meanings that participants attach to their physical practices. Human kinetics, as an academic discipline, encompasses the biomechanical, physiological, psychological, and sociocultural dimensions of human movement. Applied to religious contexts, this perspective illuminates how bodily practices function within spiritual traditions and what measurable effects they produce in practitioners.

The significance of this inquiry extends beyond academic interest. As health professionals and religious communities alike seek strategies for promoting physical activity and holistic well-being, understanding how religious contexts naturally generate movement opportunities becomes practically relevant. Furthermore, as secularization and religious change reshape contemporary societies, the evolving relationship between sport, exercise, and spirituality warrants careful examination.

This article addresses three primary questions: First, how does physical movement function within religious festivals and rituals across traditions? Second, what measurable outcomes physiological, psychological, and social result from participation in religious physical practices? Third, how has the relationship between religion and physical activity transformed over time, and what implications does this hold for contemporary practice? The analysis draws on ethnographic studies, empirical research, and historical scholarship to construct a comprehensive account of religion, ritual, and human movement.

Theoretical Foundations: Embodiment, Ritual, and Movement

The Embodied Nature of Religious Practice

Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes that religion cannot be understood solely in terms of beliefs, doctrines, or cognitive commitments. Rather, religious life is fundamentally embodied enacted through physical practices that shape practitioners' experiences, identities, and social relationships. As Martina Björkander (2024) observes in her study of Pentecostal worship, "ritual is embodied; it is overt human action. Such human action, when performed in concert, can create community and form faith" (p. [page number needed]). This embodied dimension is not incidental to religious experience but constitutive of it: human beings feel, know, and connect with the sacred through their bodies.

The concept of "orthopathos" right passion or affection captures the integration of embodiment and affectivity in religious practice (Björkander, 2024). Worship rituals engage participants sensorially and emotionally, and this engagement occurs necessarily through bodily means. When congregants stand, sit, clap, dance, or raise their hands in unison, they are not merely expressing pre-existing internal states but actively cultivating particular dispositions and experiences. The body becomes both instrument and site of spiritual formation.

This insight aligns with broader theoretical developments in ritual studies, which emphasize the performative and embodied dimensions of religious action. Rituals do not simply communicate meanings that exist independently; they create meanings through their performance. The kinetic patterns of ritual movement—the rhythms, postures, gestures, and sequences that participants enact—generate experiences and understandings that could not be produced through verbal instruction alone.

An Ecokinetic Approach to Ritual Movement

Scholars seeking to understand how bodily movement functions in religious contexts have developed specialized analytical frameworks. One particularly fruitful approach is the "ecokinetic" method proposed by researchers in dance and religious studies (Kimerer, 2014). This approach guides scholars to pay attention to patterns of bodily movement made by participants; imaginatively recreate the kinetic experience of making those movements; and discern the trajectories of thinking, feeling, and acting that these movement patterns open in those who perform them.

The 'ecokinetic' perspective recognizes that movement patterns are not arbitrary but systematically shape participants' experiences. When a congregation moves together in synchronized worship, when pilgrims traverse a sacred landscape, or when ritual practitioners dance themselves into altered states, the specific kinetic qualities of these activities—their tempo, their spatial configurations, their demands on the body—contribute directly to the outcomes participants report. Something happens through movement that could not happen through other means.

This approach also acknowledges the transformative potential of ritual movement. Participants in religious physical practices frequently report being changed by their experiences: healed, reconciled, brought into communion with spirits, or granted revelation (Kimerer, 2014). These transformations, while interpreted through the theological frameworks of particular traditions, are catalyzed by the concrete physical activities in which practitioners engage. The ecokinetic approach seeks to explain how and why bodily movement proves effective in generating these claimed experiences.

The Historical Transformation of Religion and Sport

The relationship between religious practice and physical activity has not remained static across time. Historical analysis reveals significant transformations in how religion and sport intersect, with implications for understanding contemporary practices. Research examining the (changes) of (sport) and religious festivals in both Eastern and Western contexts documents a fundamental shift in their relationship (Chen & Hsu, 2010).

In ancient religious festivals, physical activities were embedded within sacred contexts and served religious purposes. Through bodily ceremonies, participants entered sacred spaces where "the sacredness of life was manifested and restored" (Chen & Hsu, 2010, p. 28). These festivals contained what might be termed "primitive athletic elements," but sport as an autonomous domain did not exist separately from religion. Rather, physical practices were controlled by and oriented toward religious meanings and institutions.

The development of modern sport has involved increasing systematization, organization, and the creation of "symbolic systems and ceremonial actions belonging to sports" (Chen & Hsu, 2010, p. 29). Sport has developed its own rituals, its own sacred times and spaces, its own forms of community and meaning-making. This autonomization of sport represents a significant cultural development one that has paradoxically led religious institutions to adopt sport-based practices for their own purposes. Contemporary religious festivals "have to utilize

sports as means of preaching religion," using bodily performances to "awaken human memories of religious festivals" and disseminate faith through athletic culture (Chen & Hsu, 2010, p. 30).

This historical transformation reflects broader cultural changes, including the advancement of science, the promotion of education, and the increasing emphasis on human agency and subjectivity. The sacred, (supernatural) power that once resided in religious contexts has been partially transferred to athletic contexts, with "(deified) religious belief" giving way to " (personalized) sport world" (Chen & Hsu, 2010, p. 31). Understanding this historical trajectory illuminates both the persistence of physical practice in religious contexts and the emergence of new forms of religion-sport intersection.

Physical Movement in Major Religious Traditions

Pilgrimage as Kinetic Practice

Pilgrimage represents one of the most widespread and physically demanding forms of religious practice. Across traditions Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and others believers undertake journeys to sacred sites, journeys that typically involve sustained physical exertion over extended periods. From a human kinetics perspective, pilgrimage constitutes a form of endurance activity with measurable physiological demands and potential health outcomes.

Research on one of the world's largest collective events a month-long Hindu religious festival in North India provides empirical evidence for the effects of pilgrimage participation on well-being. In a longitudinal study comparing pilgrims who attended the gathering with controls who did not, researchers found that "those participating in this collective event reported a longitudinal increase in well-being relative to those who did not participate" (Tewari et al., 2012, p. 1). This finding is particularly striking given the challenging physical conditions characteristic of mass gatherings: noise, crowding, harsh environmental conditions, and risks of communicable disease.

The study's authors suggest that their findings call for reconceptualizing how mass gatherings impact individuals. While acknowledging the significant health risks such events can entail, they argue that "an exclusive focus on risk is misleading and limits our understanding of why such events may be so attractive" (Tewari et al., 2012, p. 2). The social psychological processes activated by participation in group activities processes involving shared identity,

collective effervescence, and mutual support appear to generate well-being benefits that offset or outweigh the physical challenges involved.

This research adds to a growing body of evidence suggesting that religiously motivated physical activities, even those that appear demanding or hazardous from an external perspective, may produce positive outcomes for participants. The challenge for human kinetics research is to identify the mechanisms through which these effects occur and to distinguish between contexts and practices that generate benefits versus those that pose unacceptable risks.

Ritual Dance and Choreographed Worship

Dance represents another significant form of religious physical practice, one that has received increasing attention from scholars of both religion and human movement. In many traditions, dance serves as a primary medium for worship, community formation, and spiritual experience. Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity, in particular, has been noted for its openness to embodied and affective dimensions of faith (Björkander, 2024).

The functions of dance in worship are multiple. Ethnographic research in Kenyan Pentecostal churches reveals that congregants understand music and dance as serving strong fellowship functions. As one young worshipper explained, when people "come and stand together and sing the same songs that everyone knows... you feel like you belong" (Björkander, 2024, p. [page number needed]). The kinetic engagement of praise and worship standing together, moving together, raising hands in unison creates a sense of being in the "right place" and prepares participants to receive religious instruction.

Church leaders consciously employ movement to foster community. As one pastor noted, "the moves that we do together, you know, move this way, everybody raise up your hand, everybody raise your handkerchief... That has a very strong fellowship component to it" (Björkander, 2024). The synchronized movement of bodies creates and signals collective identity, marking participants as belonging to a particular community ("we are Mavuno") and reinforcing bonds among them.

Some churches extend this kinetic emphasis beyond song and dance to include intentionally designed "community time" activities. These may include games, competitions, or interactive exercises that get people moving and talking together. Far from being "mere entertainment," these activities serve deliberate ritual functions: helping people understand that they are welcome, fostering love for the community, and reinforcing the value of belonging

(Björkander, 2024). In contexts marked by individualism, materialism, and weakened traditional ties, such kinetic community-building practices take on particular significance.

Recent theological reflection has begun to articulate frameworks for understanding dance and movement in worship. The concept of "Kinetic Theology" has been proposed as "a new theological framework systematically affirming the intrinsic spiritual significance of the body in worship," with "Spiritual Choreography" representing its practical manifestation (2025). Such frameworks challenge traditional mind-body dualism in worship theory and argue for intentional movement as "a powerful prophetic and restorative form of praise" that fosters "a more holistic and deeply engaged liturgical experience" (2025).

Extreme Rituals and Costly Physical Practices

Some religious traditions incorporate physical practices that appear, from an external perspective, extreme or even hazardous. These may include fire-walking, body piercing, suspension, or other activities involving significant pain or risk. While such practices challenge conventional understandings of health and well-being, research suggests they may serve important functions for participants and communities.

The annual kavadi attam ritual practiced by Tamil Hindus in Mauritius provides a striking example. Participants pierce their skin with skewers and needles, then undertake a pilgrimage over many miles uphill to a temple, pulling altars connected to their bodies (Xygalatas, 2019). In the week prior to the festival, participants undergo deprivation including fasting, sleeping on the floor, and abstaining from sexual activity. The physical demands of this ritual are extraordinary by any measure.

Yet research employing physiological monitoring (using armband sensors to measure stress, skin temperature, heart rate, and sleep efficiency) reveals intriguing outcomes. Researchers found "a significant increase in the participants' assessment of their health after the ritual" (Xygalatas, 2019, para. 3). Moreover, "the more pain they had endured during the ritual the more needles they put through their body and the more energy they expended the greater those benefits were" (Xygalatas, 2019, para. 3). This counterintuitive finding that greater suffering produces greater perceived benefit helps explain why individuals with chronic illness or lower socioeconomic status (groups facing greater life adversity) showed higher rates of participation in the most demanding rituals.

Similar dynamics appear in other extreme ritual contexts. The Anastenaria, Orthodox Christians in Northern Greece, observe festivals involving processions, music, dancing,

animal sacrifices, and fire-walking. Participants dance over hot coals carrying icons of saints, reporting that the saint moves them (Xygalatas, 2014). Cognitive and anthropological research on these rituals explores the roles of emotional and physiological arousal, the dynamics of costly signaling, and the neurobiological factors that may be involved in producing participants' experiences (Xygalatas, 2014).

Scholars studying such practices caution against simplistic interpretations. While these rituals may appear irrational or dangerous to outsiders, they "may actually have tangible benefits, by helping their practitioners cope with adversity" (Xygalatas, 2019, para. 5). Researchers emphasize that such practices should not be treated as substitutes for biomedical interventions but acknowledge "their complementary utility for health management, especially in contexts where psychiatric or other medical interventions are either not widely available or are associated with stigma" (Xygalatas, 2019, para. 5).

Fasting, Physical Activity, and Health During Ramadan

The Islamic month of Ramadan offers a different perspective on the intersection of religious observance and physical activity. During Ramadan, healthy adult Muslims refrain from eating and drinking from sunrise to sunset, engaging instead in prayer, reflection, and charity. This annual practice, while primarily religious in motivation, has significant implications for participants' physical activity patterns and health.

Research on Ramadan observance reveals complex effects. Although health benefits of fasting have been reported, "lifestyles tend to change drastically during the Holy Month," with changes including "decreased physical activity, increased sedentary behavior, and reduced sleep, all of which constitute important risks for health" (Majed, 2025, para. 3). These changes are influenced by cultural practices that emphasize family time and meal gatherings from iftar (the break of fast) through the night.

Recognition of these challenges has led to the development of specific physical activity recommendations for Ramadan observers. The Qatar National Physical Activity Guidelines, for example, contain recommendations tailored to adults fasting during the holy month. These guidelines suggest that "light-to-moderate intensity activities are generally favored for fasting individuals," corresponding to activities perceived as "fairly light or easy" to "somewhat hard" (Majed, 2025, para. 4).

Timing considerations are particularly important. For healthy adults, "the best time to programme a structured physical activity session is 2-3 hours after Iftar," as this window

"offers an optimal time for proper hydration and avoiding any potentially negative effects of sustained effort" (Majed, 2025, para. 5). Sessions performed before sunset should "ideally not exceed 60 minutes" and should aim to end just before iftar to allow immediate food and fluid intake during the recovery period. Accumulating shorter bouts of activity throughout the day offers an alternative to single sessions (Majed, 2025).

These recommendations reflect a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between religious observance and physical health. Rather than treating Ramadan as a period when physical activity must be suspended, this approach seeks to integrate movement with fasting in ways that support both spiritual and physical well-being. The guidelines also acknowledge individual differences, advising those with chronic conditions like diabetes or hypertension to consult physicians before engaging in structured physical activity while fasting (Majed, 2025).

Health Outcomes and Well-Being

Psychological Benefits of Religious Physical Practice

The research reviewed above consistently points to positive psychological outcomes associated with participation in religious physical practices. Pilgrims report increased well-being following mass gatherings (Tewari et al., 2012). Extreme ritual participants report improved health assessments following physically demanding ceremonies (Xygalatas, 2019). Worshipers describe feelings of belonging, being "touched," and being in the "right place" through kinetic engagement (Björkander, 2024).

These findings align with broader research in health psychology and social neuroscience. Participation in collective activities, particularly those involving synchronized movement, activates neural systems associated with reward, bonding, and positive affect. The sense of being part of something larger than oneself or merging with a community or connecting with the sacred appears to have measurable psychological benefits.

The mechanisms underlying these benefits are likely multiple. Social connection itself is a powerful predictor of health and well-being, and religious physical practices typically occur in community contexts. The sense of meaning and purpose that religious frameworks provide may buffer against stress and adversity. The physical activity involved, even when not structured as "exercise," produces endorphin release and other neurochemical effects that influence mood. For extreme rituals, the experience of successfully enduring a demanding

ordeal may generate feelings of accomplishment and self-efficacy that generalize to other life domains.

Physiological Dimensions and Considerations

The physiological dimensions of religious physical practices vary enormously depending on the specific activity involved. Pilgrimage may involve sustained endurance activity with significant caloric expenditure. Ritual dance may combine aerobic and anaerobic elements with coordination demands. Extreme rituals may involve pain, tissue damage, and extreme physiological stress. Fasting during Ramadan alters metabolic patterns and hydration status.

Understanding these physiological dimensions is essential for evaluating both the benefits and risks of religious physical practices. Research employing ambulatory monitoring technologies such as the armband sensors used in studies of kavadi attam participants (Xygalatas, 2019) offers promising avenues for obtaining objective physiological data in naturalistic settings. Such methods can reveal patterns of heart rate variability, stress responses, sleep quality, and energy expenditure that self-report measures cannot capture.

From a public health perspective, religious festivals and rituals represent opportunities for promoting physical activity among populations that might not otherwise engage in structured exercise. The World Health Organization recommends that adults engage in 150-300 minutes per week of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, yet physical inactivity remains "the fourth leading cause of mortality worldwide" (Majed, 2025, para. 2). Religious contexts that naturally generate movement whether through pilgrimage, dance, or organized events like church-sponsored fun runs can contribute to meeting these guidelines.

At the same time, careful attention to safety is essential. Research on sedentary behavior demonstrates that "even among those who meet the WHO physical activity guidelines, extended periods of uninterrupted sitting can still pose health risks" (Majed, 2025, para. 2). Religious festivals that involve prolonged sedentary periods alongside intense activity bursts may not provide optimal health patterns. Recommendations for breaking up sitting time and maintaining regular light activity apply in religious contexts as elsewhere.

Community and Social Health

Beyond individual health outcomes, religious physical practices contribute to community health and social cohesion. The fellowship functions of worship movement creating bonds among participants, signaling shared identity, fostering belonging represent forms of social health that are increasingly recognized as essential to overall well-being. Research on mass

gatherings suggests that the collective nature of these events is central to their effects. The sense of participating in something larger than oneself, of being part of a community extended across time and space, generates experiences that individual physical activity cannot replicate. As one scholar notes, performing worship together "creates and mediates a sense of unity not only among gathered participants, but also among the local congregation and other congregations in its regional church networks, as well as among the local congregation and the evangelical community imagined across time and space" (Björkander, 2024).

This community dimension has particular significance in contexts marked by social fragmentation, individualism, and weakened traditional ties. Religious institutions that deliberately employ kinetic practices to build community may be responding to genuine social needs. The "intentional" focus on helping people feel welcome, loved, and belonging through movement-based activities reflects an understanding that social health requires active cultivation (Björkander, 2024).

Contemporary Applications and Implications

Faith-Based Physical Activity Initiatives

The recognition that religious contexts can effectively promote physical activity has led to the development of faith-based health initiatives across traditions. These programs leverage the existing infrastructure, social networks, and motivational frameworks of religious communities to encourage movement and healthy behaviors. A representative example is the fun run organized by the Zamboanga Peninsula Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, held with the theme "Heal Thy Lifestyle" (Zamboanga Peninsula Mission, 2024). This event brought together hundreds of participants to "celebrate spiritual development, community building, and good health" (2024, para. 1). Organizers emphasized that the run was "not just a mere sporting event, but an avenue to inspire sustainable lifestyle changes," with the goal of "creating a lasting impact by encouraging people to adopt healthier habits and daily exercise" (2024, para. 2).

The event's design reflected attention to inclusivity and broad participation, with categories for different age groups and routes of varying distances (6KM and 10KM) to accommodate diverse fitness levels. Participant testimonies highlighted both physical and relational outcomes: one heart attack survivor reported that the runs helped "revive my heart," while his wife noted improvements in migraine and dysmenorrhea and added that the activity "brought

us closer together as a couple, strengthening our bond" (Zamboanga Peninsula Mission, 2024, para. 4).

Such initiatives represent a contemporary manifestation of the historical relationship between religion and physical activity. Rather than simply incorporating sport into religious festivals, they deliberately design sport-based events to achieve religious and health purposes simultaneously. The integration of spiritual themes, community building, and physical activity creates holistic interventions that address multiple dimensions of well-being.

Implications for Health Promotion

The evidence reviewed in this article carries implications for health promotion practice. Public health professionals seeking to increase physical activity levels might consider partnering with religious institutions, which offer access to populations and motivational frameworks that clinical or commercial programs cannot easily replicate. Understanding the existing physical practices within religious traditions pilgrimage, dance, ritual movement can inform culturally sensitive interventions that build on rather than replace community traditions.

At the same time, health professionals must approach religious contexts with respect for their integrity and autonomy. The primary purposes of religious festivals and rituals are spiritual, not health-promoting. When health outcomes occur as byproducts of religious practice, they should be recognized and appreciated, but efforts to instrumentalize religion for health purposes risk misunderstanding or undermining the meanings that participants themselves attach to their activities.

For religious leaders and communities, the research reviewed here offers resources for thinking about the physical dimensions of worship and practice. Understanding how movement functions to create community, generate experience, and produce well-being can inform intentional design of religious activities. The "Kinetic Theology" framework mentioned earlier represents one effort to articulate a theological rationale for embodied worship (2025). Similar developments in other traditions might support the integration of physical practice with spiritual formation.

Future Research Directions

The study of religious festivals, rituals, and physical movement from a human kinetics perspective remains a developing field. Several directions for future research merit attention.

First, more rigorous empirical studies employing objective measurement methods are needed. The use of ambulatory monitoring technologies in extreme ritual research (Xygalatas, 2019) demonstrates the feasibility of collecting physiological data in challenging field settings. Extending such methods to other religious contexts pilgrimage, dance worship, fasting observances would provide valuable comparative data.

Second, longitudinal research designs that track participants over time can illuminate the duration and trajectory of effects. The study of Hindu pilgrims (Tewari et al., 2012) demonstrating increased well-being one month after the event represents an important step. Longer follow-up periods and repeated measures could reveal whether effects persist, decay, or transform over time.

Third, comparative studies across traditions and practices would illuminate both commonalities and specificities. Do the mechanisms through which pilgrimage generates well-being resemble those operating in ecstatic dance worship? Are the physiological demands of extreme rituals qualitatively different from those of endurance athletic events, or do they recruit similar systems for different interpretive frameworks?

Fourth, research should attend to negative outcomes and risks alongside benefits. Not all religious physical practices are beneficial for all participants, and contexts involving coercion, inadequate preparation, or unsafe conditions may produce harm. Understanding the conditions under which religious physical practices generate positive versus negative outcomes is essential for balanced assessment.

Conclusion

The intersection of religious festivals, rituals, and physical movement constitutes a rich field for human kinetics inquiry. Across traditions and historical periods, human beings have expressed their spiritual commitments through bodily actions walking, dancing, gesturing, enduring that engage the full capacities of the human organism. These practices are not merely incidental to religious life but constitutive of it: through movement, participants enter sacred spaces, form communities, generate experiences, and become transformed.

The research reviewed in this article reveals both continuity and change in the relationship between religion and physical activity. Ancient festivals embedded athletic elements within religious frameworks, subjecting movement to sacred meanings and institutional control (Chen & Hsu, 2010). Modern developments have seen sport acquire its own ritual systems and symbolic meanings, leading religious institutions to strategically adopt sport-based

practices for their own purposes (Chen & Hsu, 2010). Contemporary religious physical practices range from structured exercise events designed to promote health and community (Zamboanga Peninsula Mission, 2024) to extreme rituals involving significant pain and risk (Xygalatas, 2014, 2019), each with its own patterns of effects on participants.

From a human kinetics perspective, religious physical practices represent naturally occurring experiments in human movement. They reveal the capacities of the human body to perform under diverse conditions—sustained pilgrimage (Tewari et al., 2012), synchronized dance (Björkander, 2024), fasting-modified activity (Majed, 2025), extreme duress (Xygalatas, 2014, 2019). They demonstrate the intimate connections between movement and meaning, between what bodies do and what persons experience. They remind us that human beings are not minds inhabiting bodies but embodied persons whose physical activities shape and express who they are.

For health professionals, religious communities, and scholars alike, understanding these dynamics carries practical significance. Faith-based physical activity initiatives can effectively promote health while respecting the integrity of religious traditions (Zamboanga Peninsula Mission, 2024). Knowledge of how movement functions in ritual contexts can inform intentional design of worship practices (Björkander, 2024; 2025). Appreciation for the embodied dimensions of religion can enrich academic understanding of both human kinetics and spiritual life.

The study of religious festivals, rituals, and physical movement ultimately points toward a more integrated understanding of human beings. We are creatures who move and who mean, whose bodies are not separate from our spirits but are the very medium through which we encounter the world, relate to others, and connect with what we hold sacred. A human kinetics perspective that takes religion seriously, and a religious studies perspective that takes movement seriously, together illuminate this fundamental aspect of human existence.

Article Publication Details

This article is published in the **International Journal of Multidisciplinary Department, ISSN 3108-2718 (Online)**. In Volume 2 (2026), Issue 4 July-Aug)

The journal is published and managed by **IJRGP**.

Acknowledgements

We sincerely thank the editors and the reviewers for their valuable suggestions on this paper.

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