Research Paper

Religiosity and Personality among Students of Psychology and Religion

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ABSTRACT

The following study aimed to study religiosity and personality among student of various backgrounds, namely psychology students, other students and students involved in study of religion, the total sample size was 70. One way ANOVA was used to find out significant differences. There was significant difference on total religiosity and its Ideology, Private practice and public practice subdomains amongst various class of students, the personality of the students also differed significantly on Neuroticism and Conscientiousness. There was significant correlation between extroversion, public practice and experience. Conscientiousness had significant correlation with experience and openness similarly was significantly correlated with public practice, private practice and experience.

Keywords: Religiosity, Personality, Traits, Religious Students, Psychology Students

The word religion gives rise to different kind of reactions, it may vary from extreme dislike or being neutral from adolescents to that of reverence from mid-aged persons. Religion as a system has existed from the day humanity became aware of its consciousness, when organized religion came into existence and what effect it had on development of human beings is still a matter to explore and various theories have been proposed in this area.

Oxford dictionary defines religion as "the belief in the existence of a God or Gods, and the activities that are connected with the worship of them, or in the teachings of a spiritual leader", the definition delineates different components; Belief, Acts, Ideas and set of teachings. Religiosity is defined as a state of being religious, or more precisely, the attitude one carries towards religion and the terms religious attitude and religiosity have been used interchangeably in this study. Study of religiosity falls under the preview of Psychology of religion. This area has seen renewed interest as the access to the core religious material has increased exponentially starting from project Gutenberg, and now with comprehensive videos on social media, discussions of religious aspects, books, and artifacts. The opportunity to discuss various aspects of religion, and various sermons which are available, people at large have exposure to religion. With influx of information people now have more information about their religion and also about other religions.

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Student holds the key for social development. The interaction between the student community and their attitude towards religion would be quintessential to know the trends in the society and what role religion would play in times to come. Religiousness has been shown to have a positive impact on mental health, however the mediating effect of the other variables need to be studied. (Moreira-Almeida et al., 2006). As the present study is related to personality and religiosity of students only student sample has been taken into consideration.

India as a country has been the source for most of the non-Abrahamic religions, and Hinduism is a religion which is followed by the majority, there are scant studies related to religion and its pervasive effect on the lives of the student in Indian scenario.

Religiosity can be broadly divided into 5 major domains (Stark and Glock, 1970)
1. Intellect: It refers to thinking and reflecting and shows the cognitive processing.
2. Ideology: This theme refers to core beliefs of the person in divine. It does not indicate extensive knowledge.
3. Public practice: Interaction with religious community is an integral part of religion, this is referred a public practice.
4. Private practice: This shows connection at personal level. This may be seen in form of meditation and personal prayers.
5. Experiential: This dimension refers to perceptions and feeling of a person in relation to the supreme or the ultimately reality as conceptualized by the person.

Personality in layman's language can be termed as the sum of what we represent and what is seen through the eyes of others. Personality does not develop in vacuum it is an outcome of environmental influences and the process of adapting to it through internal resources, this can be seen inform of behavior.

Trait refers to consistent pattern of behavior which is either moderated or elicited under the relevant environmental circumstances. Trait according to Oxford dictionary of psychology refers to "A characteristic or quality of distinguishing a person or (less commonly) a, thing especially a more or less consistent pattern of behavior that a person possessing the characteristic would likely to display in relevant circumstances." (Colman, 2009)

There are many studies based on type and trait approach and have established significant differences between the students from different academic backgrounds as well as their religiosity. Study conducted by Saroglou (2009) has studies religiousness in late adolescence, adulthood and late adulthood and has advanced the view that religiousness is an outcome of an interaction of cultural and basic personality dimension.

Religiosity differs significantly between different disciplines, studies show that significant differences existed between different disciplines, even when it comes to personality, however there was no significant difference between various academic majors. (Schmid, Rayn et al., 2021)

METHODOLOGY
Objectives
1) To study the differences between religiosity of psychology students, student from other discipline and religious adepts.

2) To study personality differences between psychology students, students from other disciplines and religious adepts.

3) To explore the relation between religiosity and personality.

Hypotheses

1) There will be significant difference between religiosity of students belonging to various discipline.

2) There will be significant differences between the personality traits of students belonging to various discipline.

3) There will be significant correlation between dimensions of religiosity and personality traits.

Sample

Purposive sampling was done to select students from the various disciplines, and their inclusion was determined by the fact that they have spent at least 2 years studying their discipline. The students selected were from undergraduates who have completed 2nd year or from master's program. The total sample consisted 34 Psychology students, 23 students from other discipline and 13 students from religious institutes, who were not pursuing any other course.

Measures

- **CRS:** Central religiosity scale Indian adaptation (Huber, 2009) consists of 20 questions across five domains related to Intellect, Ideology, Public practice, Private practice and Experience. The scale uses 5-point Likert scale. Cronbach alpha for was central religiosity 0.939.
- **NEO-FFI:** To assess the personality the NOE FFI (Costa and McCrae, 1991) was used, which consists of 60 question 12 pertaining to each trait. The responses are given in 5-point Likert scale. Reliability was measured through Cronbach alpha and it was 0.856.

Statistical Analysis

ANOVA was used to find out the significant differences between the various groups. Post hoc test in order to determine the mean difference between the groups and its significance.

Pearson correlation was used to find out significant relationships between domains of centrality of religiosity and NEO-FFI traits. SPSS 29 version was used for statistical analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The following are the results and the discussion for the study conducted.

Table 1. Shows ANOVA for various domains of Centrality of Religiosity scale for Psychology students, other students and those studying religion.
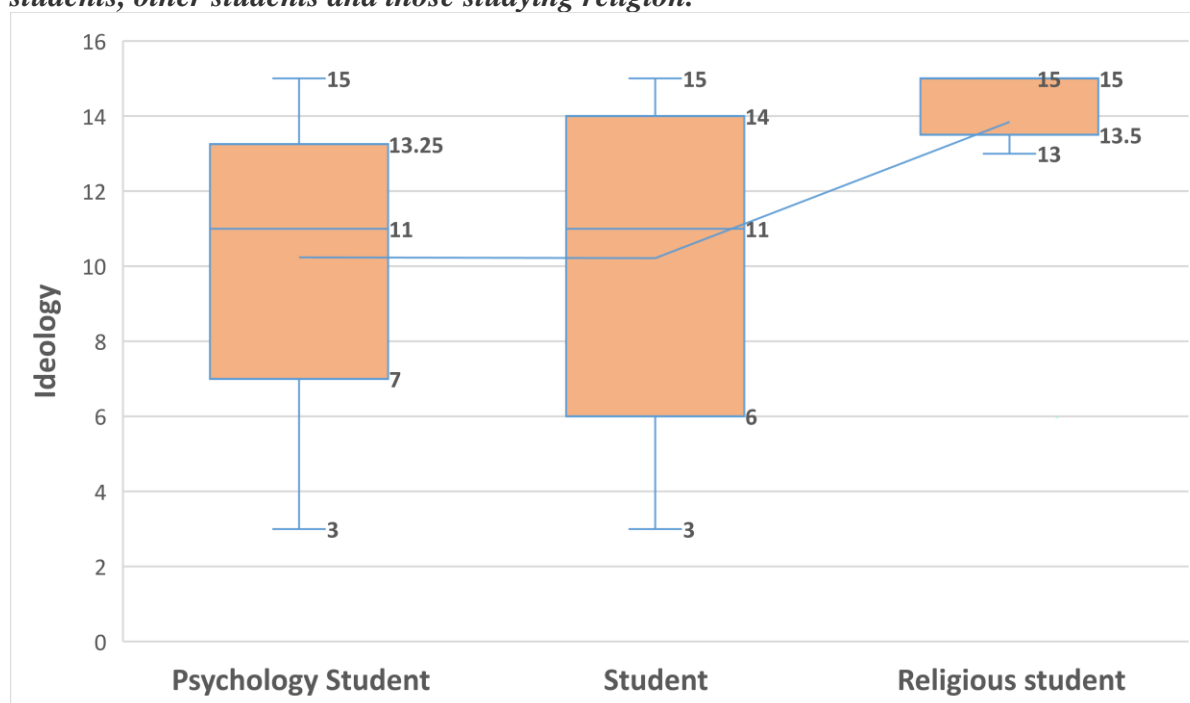
Measure	Psychology Student		Other Student		Religious student		F (70)	η^2
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Ideology	10.24	3.63	10.22	4.11	13.75	2.86	**4.53**[**]	.12
Public practice	9.35	3.59	9.39	3.59	13.08	3.06	**5.56**[***]	.14
Private practice	21.35	6.76	20.78	6.43	26.50	4.78	**3.60**[**]	.10
Total Religiosity	3.50	1.02	3.45	0.97	4.36	0.88	**3.98**[**]	.11

$^{**}p < .05, ^{***}p<.01$

Out of five factors, three in religiosity were found to differ significantly, as a consequence there was a significant difference in total religiosity in students other than those (both psychology and others) involved in religious studies. We can say that the alternate hypothesis has been accepted.

Figure 1a. Shows box plot for Ideology domain in Centrality of Religiosity for Psychology students, other students and those studying religion.

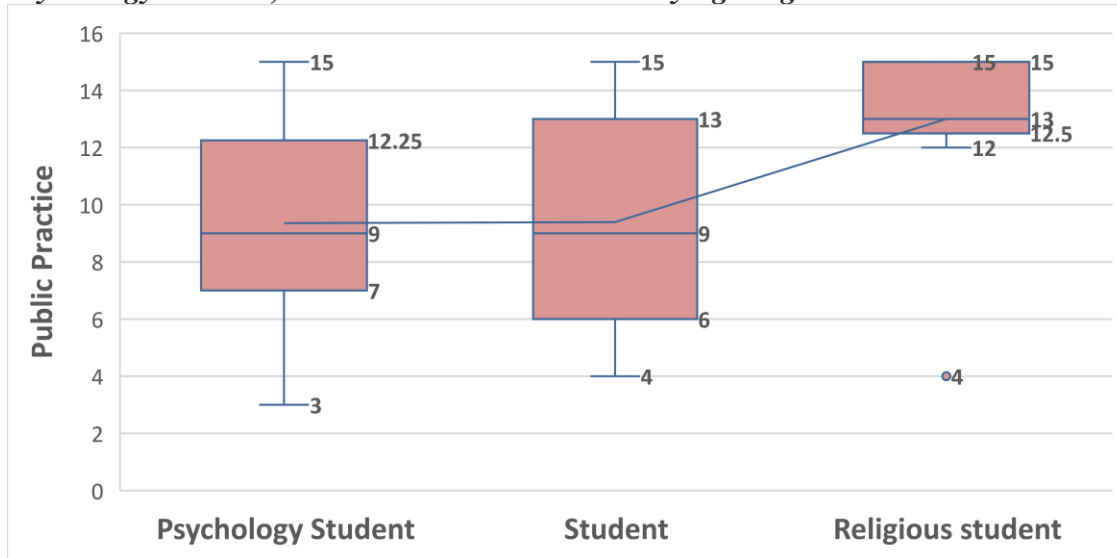*Table 1a. Shows post hoc test for Ideology domain for Psychology students, other students and those studying religion.*

Ideology

Student (I)	Student (J)	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig
Religious student	Psychology Student	3.51**	1.24	.006
	Other Student	3.53**	1.31	.009

There was significant difference on Ideology between students studying religion and others. As reading philosophical aspects and understanding them in detail is the prerogative of students, involved in reading scripture, the mean score of religious students was significantly higher when compared to Psychology students and other students, both the mean differences were significant at 0.01 level. The sample in consideration was of students who were practicing Hindus, however most of them would have less time to invest on philosophical investigation related to religion, as lot of importance has been laid on economic development and education is seen as an important tool for having an income in order to secure a better future. Ideologies are understood only by those who would pursue it in academics, e.g., students of political though or philosophy.

Figure 1b. Shows box plot for public practice domain in Centrality of Religiosity for Psychology students, other students and those studying religion.
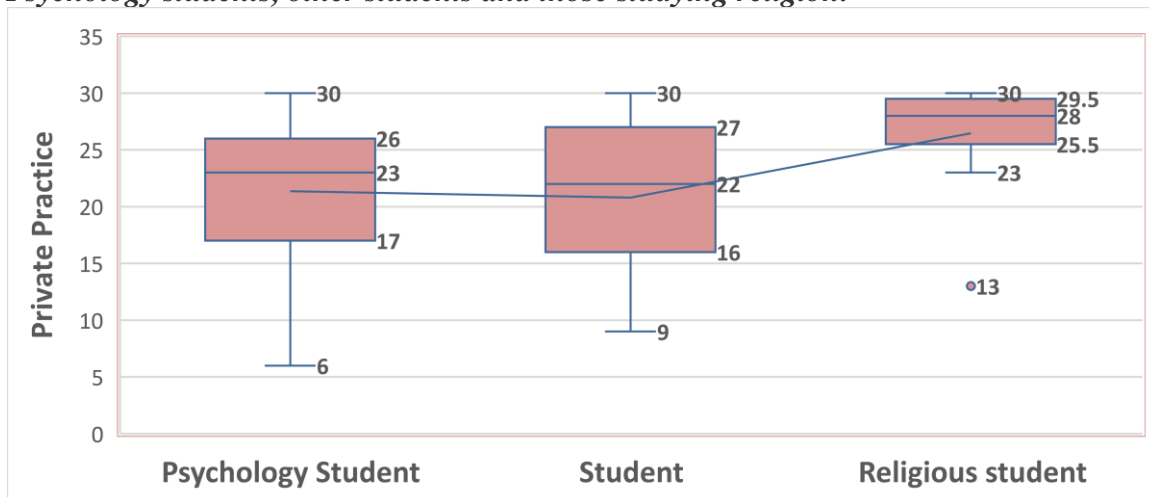

Table 1b. Shows post hoc test for Public practice domain for Psychology students, other students and those studying religion.

Public practice

Student (I)	Student (J)	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig
Religious student	Psychology Student	**3.73*****	1.18	.002
	Other Student	**3.69*****	1.25	.004

The significant difference in this domain between religious students and others, including psychology student, is due to the fact that, a major part of student's time is spent in educational institution and proximity would lead to forming relationships, on the other hand the student studying religion, as a part of their training and rituals, interact more with people. The approach taken towards a student of religion is lot more respectful and accepting, when compared to the approach taken towards others. The difference was significant at 0.01level.

Figure 1c. Shows box plot Private practice domain of Centrality in religiosity for Psychology students, other students and those studying religion.
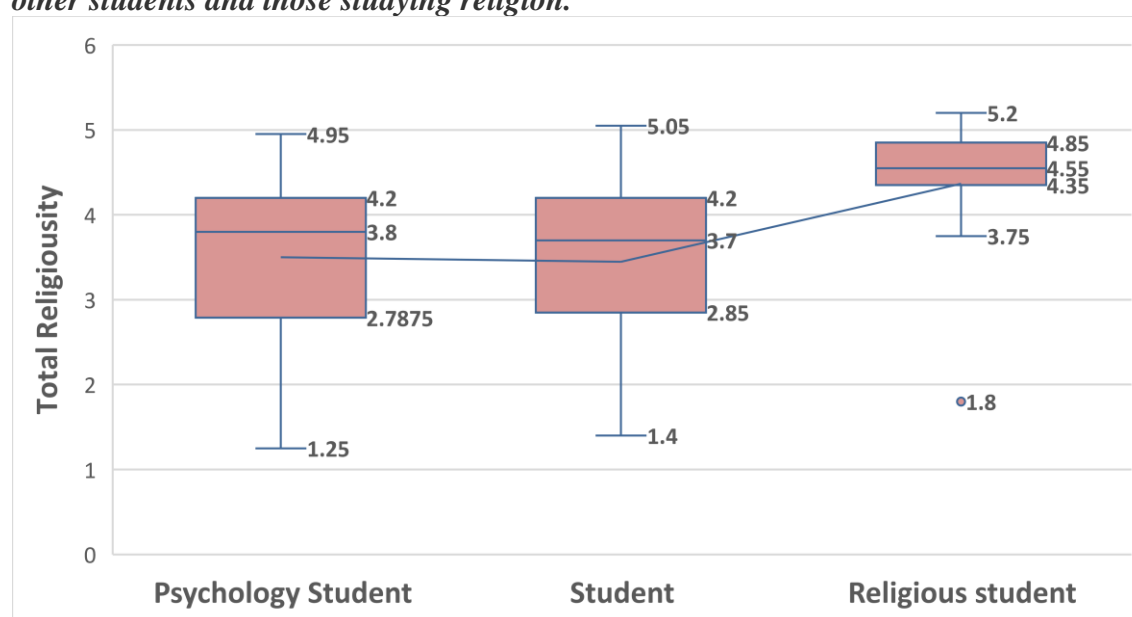
Table 1c. Shows post hoc test for Private practice domain for Psychology students, other students and those studying religion.

Private practice

Student (I)	Student (J)	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig
Religious student	Psychology Student	**5.15**[**]	2.13	.019
	Other Student	**5.72**[**]	2.26	.014

Private practice is a domain concerned with personal prayer and meditation; the differences were significant at 0.01level. Private practices like mediation are related to mindfulness. According to Saroglou (2002) "prayer seems to reflect intrinsic religiosity…" "…People with open and mature religiosity as well as people open to spirituality seem to be high in emotional stability. On the contrary, extrinsic religiosity is associated with neuroticism." The modern education system does not emphasize much on these practices, though some initiatives have been taken. Personal prayer and meditative practices have been part of all religions and the same can be harnessed to improve emotional stability of the students.

Figure 1d. Shows Boxplot from means for centrality of religiosity for psychology students, other students and those studying religion.

Table 1d. Shows post hoc test for Total religiosity domain for Psychology students, other students and those studying religion.

Total religiosity

Student (I)	Student (J)	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig
Religious student	Psychology Student	**.86**[**]	.31	.029
	Other Student	**.91**[**]	.33	.026

The total religiosity scores differed among students of religion and others and were found to be significant at .05 level, the total difference is due to difference in the Ideology, Public practice and Private practice domains. It would be important to note that the differences in Intellect domain and experiential domain were not significant this shows, the other students

have some understanding of the underlying concept of religion. Their experience of the ultimate reality, does not differ significantly when compared to that of students of religion.
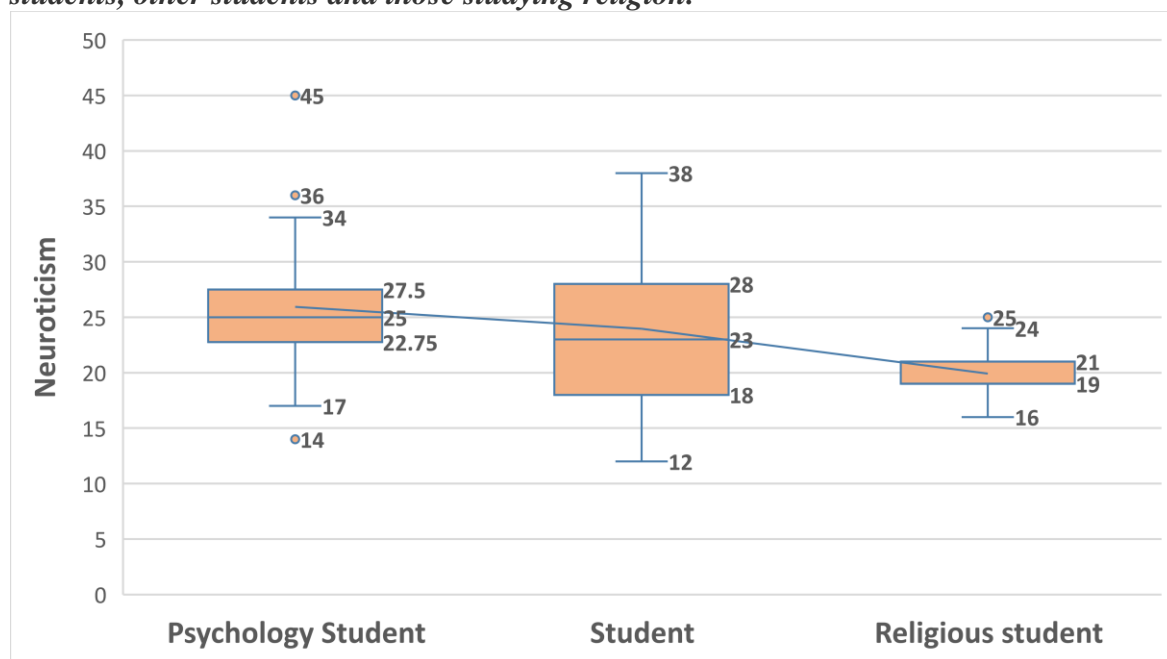
Table 2. Shows ANOVA for various domains of NEO-FFI for Psychology students, other students and those studying religion.

Measure	Psychology Student		Other Student		Religious student		F (70)	η^2
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Neuroticism	25.94	5.81	23.96	6.85	19.92	2.60	**5.146*****	.13
Conscientiousness	31.29	5.35	33.43	5.06	28.38	3.61	**4.29****	.11

**p < .05, ***p<.01

Only in two traits neuroticism and conscientiousness, alternate hypotheses were accepted and there was no significant difference in other traits, like extraversion, openness and agreeableness.

Figure 2a. Shows Neuroticism trait in various students in NEO-FFI for Psychology students, other students and those studying religion.

Table 2a. Shows post hoc test on Neuroticism domain for Psychology students, other students and those studying religion.

Neuroticism

Student (I)	Student (J)	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig
Psychology student	Other Student	1.98	1.56	.207
	Religious Student	**6.02*****	1.88	.002

Psychology as a discipline is more involving for the students when compared other disciplines e.g., Memory, Attention, Attitude etc. It looks deeply into epistemological principles leading to understanding nuances of the behavior. This might have contributed to the high neuroticism in Psychology students, though there is no significant difference between the neuroticism levels of other students. Students pursuing psychology were found

to be high on neuroticism (Vedel, Thomson etc. 2015). One can even attribute neuroticism of the psychology students to the phenomenon of "Wounded healer", where in the student of psychology might have been encouraged to take up psychology due to adverse childhood experiences (Newcomb, M. et al., 2015).

Table 2b. Shows post hoc test on Conscientiousness domain for Psychology students, other students and those studying religion.
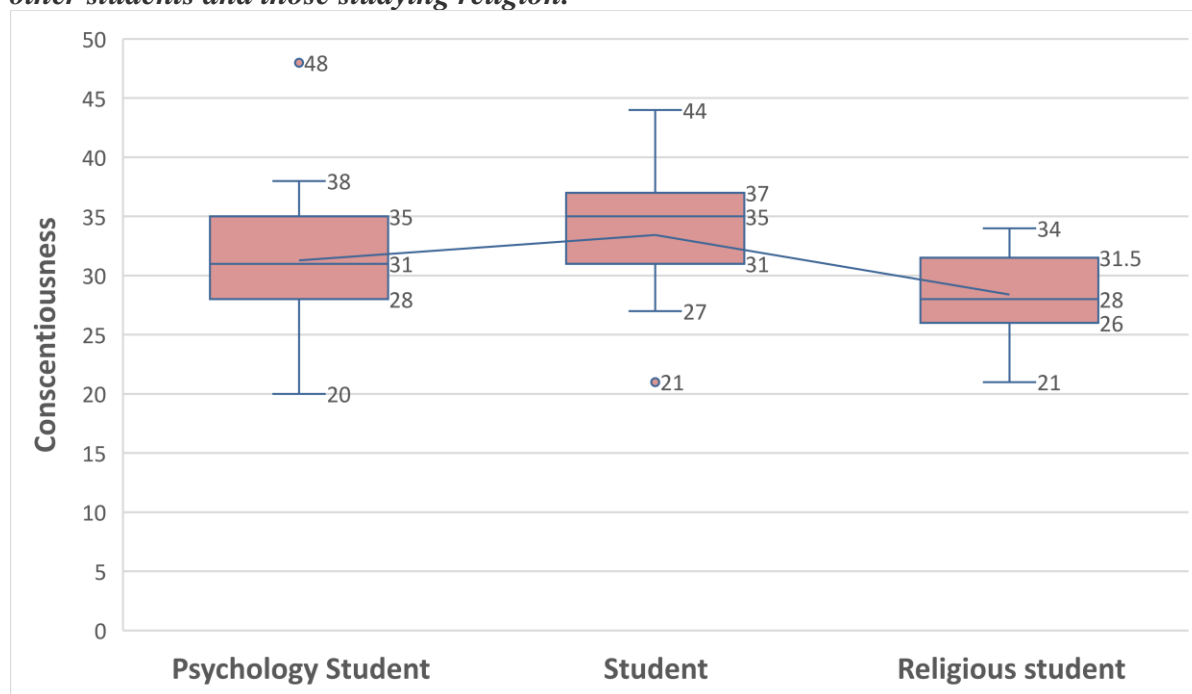
Table 2b. Shows post hoc test on conscientiousness domain for Psychology students, other students and those studying religion.

Conscientiousness

Student (I)	Student (J)	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig
Other student	Psychology Student	2.14	1.35	.117
	Religious Student	**5.050*****	1.73	.005

Students apart from psychology students and those studying religion were highly conscientiousness, there scores were higher when compared to psychology students, but significant difference was not observed. There was a significant difference between the score of students studying religion and Others, at .01 level. This may be due to the fact that students studying religion have less structured curriculum, when compared to students following a well framed standardized curriculum. Religious studies are carried under tutelage of an expert (Pandit), who would decide the lessons based on the need of the adept, as religious studies are carried out in places of worship, it proves to be a hindrance in carrying out regular classes, on the other hand it contributes to the public practice of religion and through interactions reduces social anxiety, where in, due to increased interaction the religious students are able to overcome social anxiety.

Table 3. Shows correlation between various domains of Centrality of Religiosity and traits in NEO-FFI

Personality traits	Public Practice	Private Practice	Experience
Neuroticism	-0.010	-0.076	0.022
Extroversion	**.301****	0.230	**.298****
Openness	**.265****	**.265****	**.249****
Agreeableness	0.099	-0.027	0.012
Conscientiousness	0.159	0.108	**.264****

**p < .05, ***p<.01*

Extroversion as a trait had significant correlation at 5% level with public practice and experience and coefficient of correlation stood at 0.301, extraversion as trait represents kindness, gregariousness and positive emotions, it correlates well with public practice which shows the relationship between the individual and the community, participation in communal activities and visiting religious places. Experience as a domain refers to unique experience of the individual in communal activities, as extroversion trait reflects positive emotion, excitement seeking and activity level, the correlation is .298 and is significant at .05 level.

Openness as a trait refers to fantasy, imagination, artistic interest, emotionality, intellectual interest and tolerance to ambiguity. The following were the correlation coefficients, public practice, r = .265**, private practice, r = .265**, and experience r = .249**. The domains of religiosity and openness had low correlation; however, they were significant at .05 level. The following qualities in the traits can be largely correlated with the domains of religiosity; Openness to experience with experience, Imagination and emotionality with private practice and Adventurousness and exploration with public practice. (Schmid & Ryan, 2021)

Conscientiousness was found to be significantly correlated only with one trait i.e., experience. Orderliness, deliberation and self-discipline seem to have played a role in contact with ultimate reality and experiences related to it.

CONCLUSION

Religious studies are embedded with certain practices which may prove to be useful in the modern curriculum, methods related to private practice, if incorporated in a secular way to address the need of the students will promote mindfulness. This may help to reduce the Neuroticism in student and provide them with a framework to deal with anxiety, hostile feelings and depression and make them less vulnerable. The atmosphere prevalent in religious places makes sure that religious students interact with various strata of the society whether it be socioeconomic or based on age, and helps in developing robustness in the personality, the same is reflected in public practice wherein the student of religion is able to interact, through rituals. The religious students were less conscientiousness when compared to other and psychology students, this is due to the fact that the curriculum is taught by an experienced teacher who also plays role of a mentor, curriculum is not time bound, like regular academics, ample time is given for the student to assimilate the concept and the pace is set to suit the needs of the student. It would be pertinent to note that teaching is carried out in a public place wherein people affiliated to institution have access, and more often than not the students are called upon to answer their queries or to help in public rituals. Though modern education is oriented towards performance of a student, it would be essential to make them conversant with the underlying philosophical principles of the subject, this can even be a result of limited exposure to one's own subject. It would help to understand the

view point of other subjects, which can certainly provide a new direction to modern education. The modern education is secular in nature which has its own advantages, however as there is no exposure towards philosophical paradigms, this is only left for students at higher levels of education, or one has to pursue based on his/her own interest, this leaves a vacuum related to ideology and may lead to confusion. It would be worthwhile to mention that there was no significant difference in the intellect and experience of the students.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.