

## Religiosity, Intolerance of Uncertainty and Self Esteem among Young Adults

Rumana Zaib<sup>1\*</sup>, Cynthia Sara James<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The research was conducted to examine the relationship between Religiosity, Intolerance of uncertainty and Self-esteem among young adults. A sample of 160 young adults residing in Bangalore was taken using convenient sampling method. The tools used to collect data were Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS), Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (IUS) and Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale. The data was analyzed using Pearson correlation, Independent Sample t Test, Linear Regression Analysis. Findings indicate a significant negative relationship between Intolerance of Uncertainty and Self Esteem with IU significantly influencing SE. Significant gender difference was found with males scoring higher in both SE and IU. Findings also suggest that Muslims exhibited higher religiosity compared to Hindus. The research shall aid in the delivery of suitable treatment interventions and also serve as a foundation for future research.

**Keywords:** *Religiosity, Intolerance of Uncertainty, Self-esteem, Young Adults*

The Covid-19 era, having unleashed a global health emergency left humanity hanging with patience, faith and empathy at the face of uncertainty. People endured both as humanity and as individuals. Many took shelter in faith, spirituality and religion to cope with an uncertain future (Bentzen, et. al., 2021; Lucchetti, et. al., 2021). Embracing the new normal was a hustle in itself. Young Adults were a vulnerable population during these tumultuous phases. An attempt to reconnect with academics, employment, and other commitments while catching up with a stalled world was stressful for many (Shanahan, et. al., 2022). With an uncertain future, having to tackle the new normal, questioned the ability to cope with it all effectively. All of these aspects give possible space for uncertainty to thrive. Failure to keep up with these life stages tend to make people isolated, deprived, and dejected, causing their self-esteem to take a blow (Azmi., et. al., 2022). Nonetheless, in a country like India, where most people identify with a religion, consistently find relevance to associate oneself to God. People take resort to religious beliefs in understanding the meaning of life and evaluating it based on set norms. Many find peace, security and solace in following their respective scriptures and rituals, which works for many as a coping mechanism (Carver, et. al., 1989). Hence, the combination of Religiosity, Intolerance of Uncertainty, and Self Esteem among young adults is an essential one.

<sup>1</sup>Student, MSc Clinical Psychology, Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous), Bangalore, India

<sup>2</sup>Research scholar, Dept. Psychology Aligarh Muslim University, India

\*Corresponding Author

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The concept of religiosity has several facets and is made up of cognitive, psychological, and behavioral responses. In general, measures like faith in God, self-reported religiosity, and participation in religious activities are used to quantify it. Religiosity refers to an individual's urge to commit themselves to religious principles, beliefs and activities (Desouky & Umarji, 2021).

A research (Ghaffari, et. al., 2010) investigated the connection between religion, self-esteem, and perceived discrimination in a population of Muslim immigrants. The findings imply that, despite experiencing religious persecution, Muslim immigrants strongly committed themselves to their religious principles and rituals. A study conducted in the year 2012, by Gebauer, et. al., found that higher degrees of personal religiosity contributed to higher levels of social self-esteem. A study's (Papazisis, et. al, 2014) findings revealed that the vast majority of students held a strong religious and/or spiritual conviction, which was substantially positively connected with elevated self-confidence. In a study (Howell et. al., in 2019), religiosity was associated with decreased fear of negative evaluation in those with above-average Intolerance of Uncertainty.

Intolerance of uncertainty (IU) is an ingrained fear of the unknown that has been observed in both normal and diseased samples (Carleton, 2012). Dugas, et al., (2005) note that, since events and their consequences cannot be fully known, predicted, or guaranteed, IU manifests itself as a disproportionate propensity to find uncertain circumstances exhausting. People who are extremely intolerant of uncertainty hold the view that unforeseen incidents should be avoided and are overly worried about the probability of an adverse occurrence occurring, even if the possibility is far from reality.

The research by Yang, et. al. (2019) examined the impact of self-uncertainty salience on self-esteem striving. Findings showed that the prominence of self-uncertainty enhances the demand and work for self-esteem striving.

Rosenberg (1965) defines self-esteem as one's positive or negative attitude toward oneself and one's evaluation of one's own thoughts and feelings overall in relation to oneself.

According to self-determination theory, individuals with higher self-esteem possess more decision-making efficacy that encourages them for deciding on a course based on self-concordance, for instance, interest and aptitude, and boosts their academic engagement. According to the data from Taiwan Higher Education Database, students with higher self-esteem were found to have lower career uncertainty because of choosing a major for self-concordant reasons and possessed an intense willingness to study, which hence contributed to a decrease in career uncertainty (Lin, et. al., 2014).

Anxiety-buffer hypothesis suggests self-esteem is found to guard against life adversities by directing attention to a "bigger picture" (Greenberg et al., 1993). Hence self-esteem could be considered a protective factor for Intolerance of uncertainty (Dar et al., 2017). Various researches have found a negative relationship between the two variables, implying that people who record high on IU seem susceptible to develop low self-esteem (e.g., Boelen et al., 2010). More research in the Indian setting is required. This study aims to study and evaluate the same.

Much of the research is centred on adolescents and certain age groups, such as college students, undergraduates, or people in specific occupations. This study will be conducted on

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young adults aged 19 to 25, who, according to Erikson's Stages of Development, belong to the category of 'Intimacy vs. Isolation'. This age range accounts for 'Launching children' in Duvall's (1957) Family Life Cycle stages with regard to individuals having to deal with creating new relationships, feelings of loneliness, and pursuing a career and job, all of which can lead to positive and negative feelings of uncertainty and self-esteem. The role of religion can shed further light on protective factors.

With this research, we aim to study whether there is a significant relationship between Religiosity, Intolerance of Uncertainty, and Self Esteem, and examine the influence of Intolerance of Uncertainty on Self Esteem among young adults.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### *Statement of the problem*

The aim of the study is to assess the relationship between religiosity, intolerance of uncertainty and self-esteem among young adults.

#### *Hypotheses*

Ho1– There is no significant relationship between Religiosity and Self-esteem among young adults

Ho2 – There is no significant relationship between religiosity and Intolerance of Uncertainty among young adults

Ho3 - There is no significant relationship between Intolerance of Uncertainty and Self-esteem among young adults

Ho4 - There is no significant influence of Intolerance of Uncertainty on Self-esteem among young adults

Ho5 - There is no significant difference between religiosity, Intolerance of Uncertainty and self-esteem in males and females.

Ho6 - There is no significant difference in Religiosity, Intolerance of Uncertainty and self-esteem between religious groups, among young adults.

#### *Sample and Procedure*

The sample comprised of 160 young adults of age between 19-25 years, residing in Bangalore. Of them were 109 females and 51 males. The data was collected using convenient sampling method. The self-report questionnaires along with Informed consent including the details regarding confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study, were circulated to the participants. The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS, to investigate the relationship between religiosity, Intolerance of Uncertainty and Self Esteem using Pearson Correlation and to investigate significant difference between the variables with respect to gender and religious groups using independent t test. Linear regression was performed to predict the influence of IU on Self-esteem.

#### *Instruments*

- 1. The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS-15):** CRS is a metric for centrality, prominence, and magnitude of religious significance in personality. It assesses the general strength of five theoretically established fundamental components of religiosity, public practice, private practice, religious experience, ideology, and the intellectual dimension. CRS features 15 items with a five-point Likert scale varying from never, rarely, occasionally, often, and very often, with scores assign values of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 correspondingly. The internal consistency of the CRS-5 in the Religion Monitor's entire sample is 0.85, 0.93 for the CRS-10, and 0.84 for the CRSi-7 (Cronbach's Alphas).

2. **Intolerance of uncertainty Scale (IUS):** The IUS comprises of a number of items that, in addition to being related to uncertainty, appear to be measuring the tendency, most likely connected with neuroticism, to react with discomfort to most if not all negative events and circumstances. The Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (IUS; Freeston et al., 1994) is a 27-item questionnaire which assesses the significance of uncertainty, aims to change the future, as well as emotional, cognitive, and behavioural reactions to uncertain circumstances. The IUS has a high internal consistency ( $\alpha=0.94$ ) and a good test-retest reliability ( $r=0.74$ ).
3. **Rosenberg Self-esteem scale:** Rosenberg Self-esteem scale is a 10-item measure that evaluates comprehensive feelings of self-worth by examining positive and negative beliefs about oneself. It presumes that the scale is one-dimensional. All items are scored on a four-point scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. It has a great internal consistency, with a Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility of 0.92. Test-retest reliability revealed correlations of 0.85 and 0.88, showed outstanding stability.

## RESULTS

*Table No. 1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables*

Variable	N	M	SD	1	2	3
Religiosity	160	49.65	14.04	—		
Intolerance of Uncertainty	160	73.01	20.41	0.35	—	
Self Esteem	160	18.01	5.16	0.72	0.001**	—

Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$

Table 1 depicts mean, standard deviation and scores of Religiosity, Intolerance of Uncertainty (IU) and Self Esteem among Young Adults. The  $r$  value for Religiosity and IU is 0.07 with the corresponding  $p$  value 0.354 ( $p > 0.05$ ), which indicates that there is no significant relationship between Religiosity and IU. The  $r$  value for Religiosity and Self Esteem is 0.02 with the corresponding  $p$  value 0.723 ( $p > 0.05$ ), which signifies that there is no significant relationship between Religiosity and Self Esteem. Hence the null hypothesis stating “There is no significant relationship between Religiosity and Self Esteem among young adults” is accepted. The  $r$  value for IU and Self Esteem is -0.49 with the corresponding  $p$  value 0.001 ( $p < 0.01$ ), which indicates that there is a significant negative relationship between IU and Self Esteem. Hence null hypothesis stating “There is no significant relationship between Religiosity and IU among young adults” is rejected.

*Table No. 2 Independent Sample t Test for study variables among male and female*

Variable	Male		Female		$t(158)$	$p$
	M	SD	M	SD		
Religiosity	48.13	15.28	50.36	13.44	-0.93	0.351
Intolerance of Uncertainty	67.88	75.41	21.60	19.47	-2.20	0.029*
Self Esteem	19.63	17.25	4.75	5.19	2.773	0.006**

Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$

Table 2 indicates that  $t$  value for Religiosity among male and female young adults was found to be -0.93 with the corresponding  $p$  value 0.351 ( $p > 0.05$ ) which indicates that there is no

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significant difference in religiosity among male and female young adults. The t value for Intolerance of Uncertainty among male and female young adults was found to be -2.20 with the corresponding p value of 0.029 ( $p < 0.05$ ) which indicates that there is a significant difference in Intolerance of uncertainty among male and female young adults. High mean scores of 67.88 was observed for males compared to female young adults. The t value for Self Esteem among male and female young adults was found to be 2.773 with the corresponding p value of 0.006 ( $p < 0.01$ ) which signifies that there is a significant difference in Self Esteem among male and female young adults. High mean scores of 19.63 was observed for males compared to females.

**Table No. 3 Independent Sample t Test for study variables with respect to religion**

Variables	Hinduism		Islam		t(142)	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Religiosity	42.54	11.98	61.48	6.61	-10.51	0.0001***
Intolerance of uncertainty	73.64	20.91	73.42	19.47	0.062	0.95
Self-esteem	17.91	5.21	17.85	5.16	0.074	0.94

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Table 3 shows Mean, SD, t and p values for religiosity among Islam and Hinduism. Results indicated significant difference among religions of Islam and Hinduism on religiosity,  $t(142) = -10.51$ ,  $p = 0.0001$ ,  $p < .001$  with Islam ( $M = 61.48$ ,  $SD = 6.61$ ) attaining higher scores when compared to Hinduism ( $M = 42.54$ ,  $SD = 11.98$ ). Results indicated no significant difference among religions, Hinduism and Islam on Intolerance of Uncertainty,  $t(142) = 0.06$ ,  $p = 0.95$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . Results indicated no significant difference among religions, Hinduism and Islam on Self Esteem,  $t(142) = 0.07$ ,  $p = 0.94$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .

**Table No. 4 Linear Regression analysis for influence of IU on Self Esteem**

Variable	Beta	SE	$\beta$	t	p
Intolerance of Uncertainty	-0.12	0.017	-0.49	-7.19	0.001**

Note: Dependent variable: Self-esteem, \*\* $p < 0.01$

Simple linear regression was used for predicting if increasing level of Intolerance of Uncertainty influences Self Esteem in young adults. Table 4 indicates that the t value was found to be -7.19 and significant value p was found to be 0.001 ( $p < 0.01$ ) which signifies that there is a significant influence of IU on SE. As the level of IU decreases, SE increases by 0.12.

## DISCUSSION

The results suggest that Religiosity did not significantly correlate with Intolerance of Uncertainty and Self-esteem. Hence the null hypotheses, Ho1 that stated, “There is no significant relationship between Religiosity and Self-esteem among young adults” and Ho2, “There is no significant relationship between religiosity and Intolerance of Uncertainty among young adults” were accepted. The results aligned with a study by M. Shea (2002), indicating there was no overall significant relationship between self-esteem and religiosity. However, there are ample amounts of research to support the relationship between the two variables. A significant negative relationship was found between Self Esteem and Intolerance of Uncertainty, indicating that as Intolerance of Uncertainty decreased, Self Esteem is increased. Hence the null hypothesis Ho3, “There is no significant relationship between

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Intolerance of Uncertainty and Self-esteem among young adults” is rejected. The results of the study supported evidence with regard to career uncertainty that revealed lower career uncertainty in students with high self-esteem. In a study, (Bruchhage & Lea, 2022), it was revealed that self-esteem had a decreasing effect on worry while IU had an increasing effect on worry. This concludes the negative relationship between self-esteem and IU, indicating that when one increases, the other decreases.

Linear regression analysis was done to predict the influence of Intolerance of Uncertainty on Self-esteem. The findings reveal that there is a significant impact of IU on SE. Therefore, the null hypothesis Ho4, stated, “There is no significant influence of Intolerance of Uncertainty on Self-esteem among young adults” is rejected. A study reveals that self-esteem was influenced by self-uncertainty. The results (Yang et. al., 2019) represent the first direct demonstration showing people who experience self-uncertainty being keen to perform tasks that help them with their self-esteem contingencies.

Independent sample t test was done to examine Ho5, stated, “There is no significant difference between religiosity, Intolerance of Uncertainty and self-esteem among males and females”. Findings strongly imply that there is a significant difference in Self Esteem among male and female young adults. These findings align with the previous study which revealed significant gender disparities, with males regularly exhibiting higher self-esteem compared to females. (Moksnes, et. al., 2013; Casale S., 2020). With regard to intolerance of uncertainty there is a significant difference between males and females with high means scores observed in males (M=67.88), when compared to females (M=27.60). Hence the null hypothesis stating that “There is no significant difference in Intolerance of Uncertainty among male and female young adults”, is rejected. The results were inconsistent with earlier research, which indicates that uncertainty negatively impacted female students than males (Doruk, et. al., 2015). On the other hand, no substantial variation was found in religiosity with respect to gender. This contradicts research findings among Muslim immigrants in the United States which revealed that men participate in religious activities more than women (Ghaffari et al., 2010). As a result, the null hypothesis, which states that "there is no significant difference between religiosity among males and females”, is accepted.

Independent Sample t test was performed to test the hypothesis, Ho6, “There is no significant difference in religiosity, Intolerance of Uncertainty and self-esteem between religious groups among young adults”. The religions included in the study were Hinduism and Islam. Other religious groups that participated in the study belonged to Christianity (n=10), Sikhism (n=1), Buddhism (n=1), and Baha’ism (n=1); and were not included for the analysis due to their small sample size. There are two key findings of the present research. First, findings indicate a significant difference in religiosity among the religions Hinduism and Islam, with the mean scores of Islam (n=52, M=61.48) being higher than Hinduism (n=92, M=42.54). This suggests that people identifying themselves as belonging to Islam are more religious compared to those belonging to Hinduism. The findings were in line with earlier researches (Ganga, et. al., 2013; Begum, et. al., 2016), where a significant difference was shown between Hindu and Muslim adults on the account of religiosity, with Muslim adults scoring greater on religiosity. Second, results indicated no significant difference among religions, Hinduism and Islam on Intolerance of Uncertainty and Self Esteem. Hence the null hypotheses, “There is no significant difference in Self-esteem between religious groups among young adults”, and “There is no significant difference in Intolerance of Uncertainty between religious groups among young adults” are accepted. Previous research, (Singh, et. al., 2009) on the contrary suggests there are religious disparities in self-esteem, with Christian

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respondents having the highest scores for self-esteem, followed by Muslim and Hindu respondent. Further, with regard to Intolerance of Uncertainty, much research hasn't been done previously, on religious communities. This study could be considered one of the first studies to research in this area.

### CONCLUSION

Findings revealed a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and Intolerance of uncertainty. In the researcher's view, for people with high self-esteem, it is easier not to be as much preoccupied about the future, due to their level of self-worth, confidence and belief in themselves that no matter what comes ahead, they have the ability to face it. Multiple researches (e.g., Julius, 2022) suggest that people high in self-esteem, exhibit higher self-efficacy i.e., the belief in one's level of competence. Religiosity did not show any relationship with Self Esteem and Intolerance of Uncertainty. Research also revealed that IU is a predictor of Self Esteem among young adults. The findings also showed significant gender differences in Self Esteem and IU with males scoring higher in both variables, but no gender disparities were found in religiosity. Finally, results showed significant differences among religious groups, Hindus and Muslims in Religiosity, with Muslims exhibiting higher religiosity, but no significant difference was found in Self Esteem and IU.

### Implications

Clinicians can focus on helping clients cope with their fear of an uncertain future in order to help improve their self-esteem. Religious coping could be used for Muslims as a targeted intervention program. This research may be the first to study the relationship between Religiosity, Intolerance of Uncertainty and Self Esteem in young adults, which stands as a base for further studies.

### Limitations

Given, a small sample size (n=160), it is less representative of the larger population of young adults. Higher religious samples from different religious groups could have been included in the study to get an apt representation of all major religions, for wider results concerning them. An unequal sample size of males and females is less likely to reflect the gender disparity.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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