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A Study of the Affects of Religiosity on Mental Health at Providence College

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Religiosity and Mental Health at Providence College

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Abstract

This research project aims to understand the connection, if any, between religiousness and mental health outcomes in college students. On a campus where many students and faculty engage in religious practices, either on campus or off, studying the effects of religion as a spiritual and psychological outlet proves to be a relevant concept for the Providence College community.

Hypotheses

H1: Religion will have a negative relationship with stress.

H2: Religion will have a negative relationship with anxiety.

H3: Religion will have a negative relationship with depression.

Methods

- Data was collected through a systematic random sample of Providence College students.
- An email was sent to 408 PC students with a link to a Qualtrix survey that was open from March 25 through April 7.
- A total of 118 number of people responded giving us a response rate of 28.92%.
- Data was collected from an anonymous Qualtrix survey link.
- The data received was analyzed using SPSS Statistics Data Editor.
- To measure my dependent variables, I used the widely used DASS21 Clinical Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale.

Results

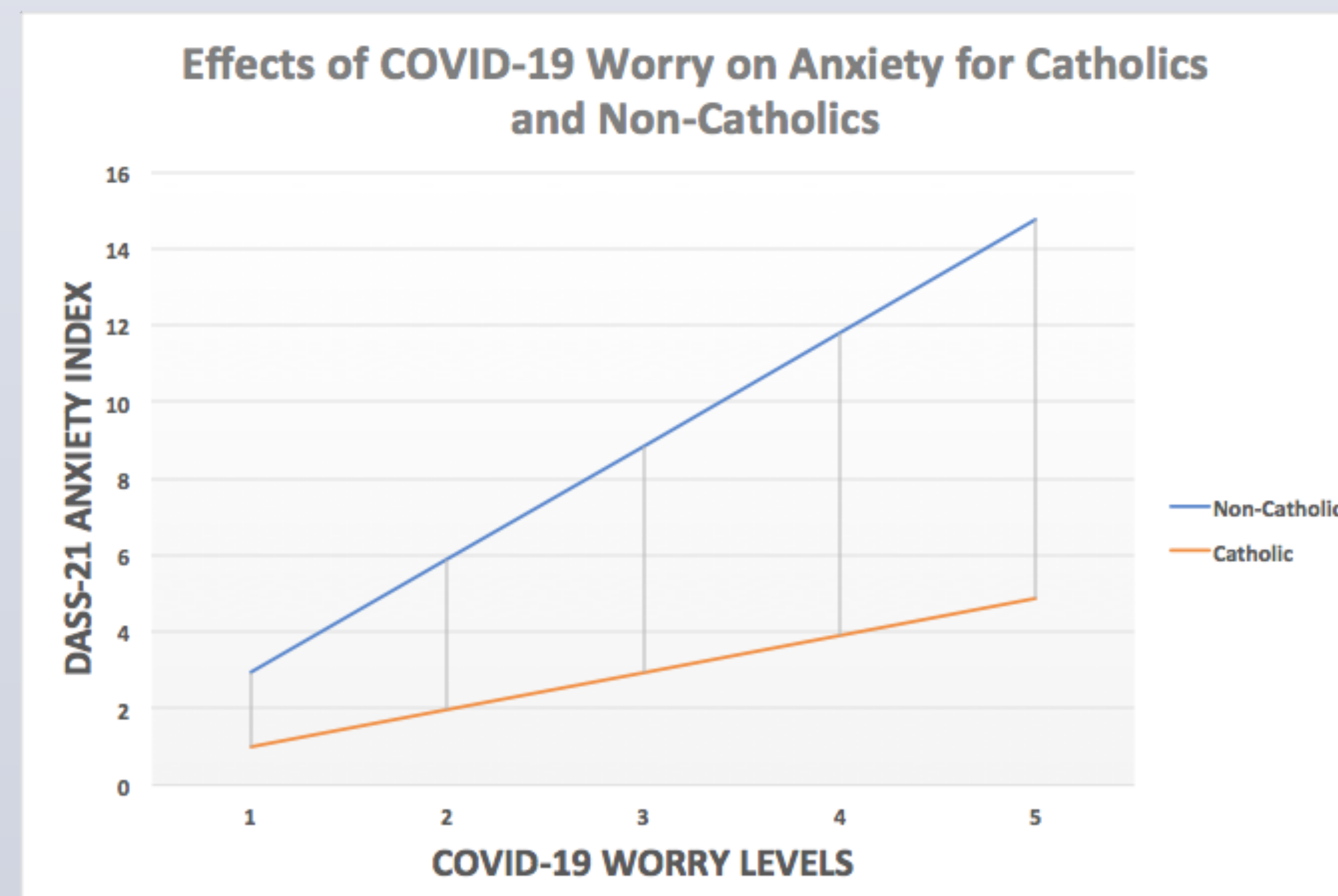
Pearson's Correlations of DASS-21: Stress, Anxiety, and Depression with COVID-19 Worry and Religiosity				
Dependent Variable	COVID-19 worry	Catholic	Religious Saliency	Church Attendance
Stress	.362***	No relationship	No relationship	No relationship
Anxiety	.337***	No relationship	No relationship	No relationship
Depression	No relationship	No relationship	No relationship	No relationship

*** correlation is significant at the .001 level (2 tailed)

- There were no direct effects between measures of religiosity and Stress, Anxiety, or Depression.
- There were strong correlations between an individual's worry levels of COVID-19 with Stress, Anxiety, and Depression.
- Identifying as Catholic reduces the effects of an individual's worry levels of COVID-19 on Anxiety.

EFFECTS OF RELIGION, COVID-19 WORRY, AND DEMOGRAPHICS ON ANXIETY				
	Model 1		Model 2 (Interaction)	
	b	S.E.	b	S.E.
INTERCEPT	2.951	2.57	-3.663	4.62
FEMALE	1.420*	0.668	1.352*	0.662
WHITE	-0.197	0.962	-0.320	0.954
AGE	0.238	0.307	0.278	0.305
CATHOLIC	-0.675	0.818	7.218	4.674
RELIGIOUS SALIENCE	-0.094	0.556	0.055	0.557
CHURCH ATTENDANCE	-0.041	0.232	-0.038	0.229
COVID-19 WORRY	1.396**	0.469	2.949**	1.018
INTERACTION TERM				
COVID*CATHOLIC			-1.972+	1.15
R-SQUARED	0.168		0.195	
N	97		97	

**P<0.01, *P<0.05, +P<0.10 (TWO-TAILED)



Discussion

- Direct findings did not support Hypothesis 1, 2, or Hypothesis 3.
- A preponderance of the data shows that much of the elevated anxiety, stress, and/or depression experienced by PC students has been catalyzed mainly by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Religiosity, overall, has an attenuating effect on COVID-19's impact on anxiety. (See Figure)
- Catholic PC students were measured as having approximately 66% less **anxiety** or worry about COVID-19.

Conclusions

- The timing of the data collection aligning with the COVID-19 global pandemic situated this study within a unique historical point that clearly had an impact on my dependent variables (stress, anxiety, and depression).
- Religiosity does not have much to do with the ways through which PC students handle/cope with anxiety, stress, or depression, as there was no direct correlation between measures of religiosity and "better" mental health outcomes.
- However, the impact of COVID-19 on anxiety was less severe for PC students that identified as Catholic than it was for their non-Catholic peers.
- Overall, it is important to take note of the significant role the COVID-19 pandemic has played in this study, and how measures of anxiety, stress, and depression are likely to be higher than general from the onset.