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Personality and religion among adolescents in Wales

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Personality and religion among adolescents in Wales

Summary

A total of 123 males and 156 females aged between 12 and 16 years in Wales completed the Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised and the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity. After controlling for sex differences, religiosity was found to be independent of both extraversion and neuroticism, but significantly and negatively correlated with psychoticism.

Research concerning the relationship between personality and religion has consistently reported a significant inverse relationship between psychoticism, and measures of religiosity, but no relationship between neuroticism and extraversion. For example, Francis, Ziebertz and Lewis (2003) demonstrated that, among a sample of German undergraduates, attitude toward Christianity was negatively correlated with psychoticism, but had no significant correlation with either neuroticism or extraversion. Similar results have been demonstrated by Fearn, Lewis and Francis (2003) among English A-level students and Francis and Kerr (2003) among white English-speaking South Africans. This paper seeks to explore this relationship among a group of Welsh adolescents.

A total of 279 young people (123 males and 156 females) between 12 and 16 years of age attending one school in Wales completed the 6-item indices of extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism proposed by the short-form Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised (Corulla, 1990), and the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity, a 24-item index concerned with affective responses to God, Jesus, the Bible, prayer and church (Francis, Lewis, Philipchalk, Brown, & Lester, 1995).

After controlling for sex differences by means of partial correlations, no significant correlation was found between attitude towards Christianity and either extraversion ($r = 0.11$, NS) or neuroticism ($r = 0.02$, NS). A small significant negative correlation was found between attitude toward Christianity and psychoticism ($r = -0.12$, $p < .05$).

The results indicate that the personality dimension significantly correlated with attitude towards Christianity is psychoticism, but that attitude towards Christianity is independent of both extraversion and neuroticism among adolescents in Wales. The present findings are consistent with the findings of earlier studies conducted in Germany, England and South Africa, confirming that attitude toward Christianity is independent of both extraversion and neuroticism, but negatively and significantly correlated with psychoticism. In all four studies, however, the correlations with psychoticism are relatively small (-.14 in Germany, -.25 in England and -.19 in South Africa) indicating that this constantly reported relationship nonetheless accounts for relatively little shared variance between the two variables.

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