

**Relationship of Mindfulness Receptivity to Religiosity, Personality, and
Depression and Anxiety**

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Abstract

Anxiety, stress, and depression continue to increase in the general United States population, and college students particularly have been impacted with nearly half of all students reporting that they struggle with their mental health. Mindfulness is one way to combat such mental health issues and is part of many organized religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and any religious tradition in which contemplative prayer is present, and mindfulness also has been found to be associated with personality traits as well. The purpose of the present study was to explore mindfulness in the context of self-identified religion, personality, and mental health variables, and we hypothesized that those individuals who were more open and agreeable, who were part of a religious group, and who evidenced depressive, anxiety, or stress-related issues would be most receptive to mindfulness. A total of 217 participants completed the Brief Five-Factor Model Questionnaire (B-FFM), Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21), Receptivity to Mindfulness Questionnaire (RMQ), Religiosity Measure (RM), and Religious Orientation Scale (ROS). Results indicated that the Five-Factor Model subscales of Agreeableness, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism, the DASS-21 subscales of depression and stress, the RM Consequential Religiosity scale, and the ROS Intrinsic Religion scale were the strongest predictors of receptivity to mindfulness. Implications for educators and mental health clinicians are offered.

Keywords: mindfulness, personality, anxiety, depression, religion

Relationship of Mindfulness Receptivity to Religiosity, Personality, and Depression and Anxiety

A recent national research report has shown that the American people are becoming more anxious, depressed, and stressed in general (Terlizzi et al., 2024), and one subgroup of the United States population experiencing dramatic increases in the incidence of anxiety and depressive disorders is college students (Komelski et al., 2024). Rates of anxiety and depression among college students have been steadily increasing over the last decade, in particular, and the annual Healthy Minds Study (Healthy Minds Network, 2022; Lipson, 2022) completed in 2022 found the highest rates in the study's 15-year history: Approximately 44% of college students experienced symptoms associated with clinically significant depression, 37% reported symptoms associated with a clinically significant anxiety disorder, and 15% seriously contemplated suicide in the past year. Other studies have noted that stress and anxiety are consistently identified by college students as significant mental health challenges, and these studies have documented the steep increase in college students experiencing mental health challenges and found that many college students do not receive treatment and are likely to withdraw from school as a result of their mental health issues (Vidic, 2023). Given these increases in the levels of anxiety and depression among both college students and the general adult U.S. population, it is important for researchers and clinicians alike to identify beneficial methods to treat these disorders. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to explore the relationship of mindfulness receptivity to personality variables, religious affiliation, measures of religious motivations and practices, and the situational stress, anxiety, and depression experienced in college student daily life.

Brief Review of Relevant Literature

Mindfulness as a Means to Address Anxiety and Depression

Mindfulness and mindfulness techniques have been shown to be important factors influencing a variety of variables and outcomes including chronic pain in veterans (Ruan et al., 2025), body image (Charinsarn & Nuttavuthisit, 2025), self-compassion and general psychological well-being (Azadfar et al., 2025), cognitive bias (Schilke & Ross, 2025), and positive affect (Barnhofer et al., 2015) as well as anxiety, depression, stress, sexual difficulties, physiological arousal, and immune function (Charney et al., 2018; Hofmann et al., 2010; Ludwig & Kabat-Zinn, 2008; Shennan et al., 2011), among others. Mindfulness can be defined as an intentional cognitive and emotional state or meditation practice whereby one observes and devotes focus on being aware of and giving attention to what one is experiencing in the present moment (thoughts, feelings, emotions, surroundings) without interpretation, judgment, or action and has been found to be associated with positive coping strategies (Heath et al., 2016; Luberto, et al., 2014; Petrovic et al., 2022) that serve to mitigate the influences of stress, anxiety and depression. Dispositional mindfulness is a character/personality trait that allows us to be mindful in the present moment on a day-to-day basis (Fitzgerald & Lunt, 2024; Petrovic et al., 2022) and which has been linked to our perceived ability to cope with difficult life circumstances (Chesney et al., 2006), especially anxiety and depression, as previously noted (Abbott et al., 2023; Kotik & Was, 2024). Mindfulness practice is also associated with exposure to a diversity of thought shown to increase openness to others/experiences and to reduce stereotyping and discrimination, which helps individuals be more inclusive and accepting of others (Vance et al., 2022).

Studies examining contemplative practices and the integration of mindfulness into educational policy, practice, and research have proliferated over the past several years (Ergas &

Hadar, 2023; McCaw, 2020). However, there is a lack of uniformity in terms of the various delivery methods and educational aims, which have been implemented and studied (Ergas, 2019; Honsky et al., 2025) in that some studies presented mindfulness in psychological, ethically neutral terms focusing on individual mental self-improvement, while others presented mindfulness in ontological terms focusing on ethically grounded teleological transformation (McCaw, 2020). Some factors that inform varying aims and delivery methods include: (a) the secularization of mindfulness, which distances it from its Hindu and Buddhist roots (McCaw, 2020); (b) concerns regarding the commodification of education; (c) emphasis on evidence-based outcomes and performative indicators of educational assessment; and (d) utilization of psycho-technological pedagogies (Ergas, 2019; Gardner, 2021). The majority of studies to date have examined how mindfulness has been largely incorporated into education for therapeutic but not educational benefits, perhaps due to the influence of the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn in the field of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR; Ergas & Hadar, 2023).

Factors Associated with Being Receptive to Mindfulness

Although much attention has been given to exploring the concept of mindfulness and the correlates of dispositional mindfulness, especially in educational and therapeutic environments, relatively little consideration has been given to the concept of “receptivity to mindfulness,” which Petrovic et al. (2022, p. 3) noted “may be an important precursor to engaging in mindfulness practice.” Petrovic et al. (2022, p. 3) further articulated mindfulness receptivity as “an open and receptive attitude toward a) engaging in mindfulness practice, and b) experiencing the potential benefits that mindfulness practice may bring about.” Previous research has explored barriers to mindfulness that have included such elements as time commitment (Day et al., 2014; Day & Thorn, 2017), resistance to medical management (Hearn et al., 2021), mindfulness not

improving the experience of chronic pain (Hearn et al., 2021), internal (e.g., worrying, intrusive thoughts) and external (e.g., noise, other people interrupting mindfulness practice) distractions (Komelski et al., 2024), high levels of perfectionism (Bearden et al., 2024), and lack of motivation, unreadiness to change, and decreased interest over time (Marks et al., 2023), to name a few.

Only a handful of studies to date have specifically explored the construct of “receptivity to mindfulness.” Barrasso-Catanzaro (2016) implemented a single session curriculum-based mindfulness and acceptance-based workshop into a college classroom and found that dispositional mindfulness, psychological flexibility, and psychological distress predicted college students’ receptivity to mindfulness. Petrovic et al. (2022) examined differences between students with and without a history of non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) in relation to mindfulness receptivity and found that (a) dispositional mindfulness and coping self-efficacy were found to be positively associated with one another; and (b) moderate levels of mindfulness receptivity were reported by both college students who had a history of NSSI and those who did not. Based on the limited evidence available to date, results have suggested that mindfulness receptivity may be an important factor in cultivating a sense of dispositional mindfulness.

Religious Traditions and Openness to Mindfulness

Mindfulness is most notably associated with Buddhist religious traditions and the Four Noble Truths but evidence found in earlier Indian literature suggests that the use of mindfulness practice predates the origins of Buddhist religious thought. As noted by Singh (2023),

Buddhism arose within a pre-existing Hindu (or more correctly Vedic, since the term Hindu was a later invention) culture. Siddhartha Gautama (The Buddha) was born to a Hindu family. As Buddhism spread, many of its concepts became absorbed into

Hinduism, with some Hindus even believing that Buddha was an avataar [sic]—a reincarnation of a Hindu God. (p. 94)

Mindfulness can be seen in other religious traditions in the form of prayer that is central to many religions. Albatnuni and Koszycki (2020) noted that

Contemplative practices are faith-based methods that have been linked with psychological well-being. The most extensively researched contemplative practices originate from Eastern traditions, with the majority of empirical work focusing on the benefits of secular mindfulness meditation. . . . Other religions also have many forms of contemplative practices including prayer. (p. 912)

Trammel (2018) further articulated the link between mindfulness and prayer in the specific religion of Christianity by stating that “Christian spiritual practices center around practices of prayers as well as Scripture that support mindfulness” (p. 201). In the modern era, figures such as the Trappist Monks Thomas Merton, M. Basil Pennington, and Thomas Keating advocated such prayer/mindfulness practices as they incorporated elements of early Christian desert monastic prayer, *lectio divina*, Eastern Hesychasm, and medieval mysticism into their practice of Contemplative/Centering Prayer (Keating, 1986; Pennington, 1980). In the case of Merton, said practice was directly influenced by the interreligious exchanges he had with figures such as D. T. Suzuki, Thich Nhat Hahn, and the Dalai Lama (Merton, 1973). If prayer can be conceptualized as a mindfulness activity, then it stands to reason that individuals who are more “religiously minded” and/or devoted in their faith would potentially evidence higher levels of dispositional mindfulness or greater receptivity to general mindfulness practice—and perhaps both.

Personality Variables Related to Mindfulness Receptivity

As noted earlier, dispositional mindfulness is considered a character trait that is a facet of larger personality, and studies examining the link between mindfulness and personality variables have spurred an impressive array of research, largely using the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of Personality (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) as the guiding framework. For instance, Giluk (2009) reviewed 32 samples from 29 unique studies that explored the relationship between mindfulness and facets of personality and found that all FFM personality factors were related to aspects of mindfulness with the strongest relationships involving the personality dimensions of Neuroticism and Conscientiousness. Mather et al. (2019) examined the relationship between the FFM and dispositional mindfulness in a sample of 229 predominantly college students and found an inverse relationship between Neuroticism and mindfulness and positive relationships between mindfulness and Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness. Ortet et al. (2020) examined the FFM and mindfulness in a sample of 372 university students and found that emotional stability (Neuroticism) and Extraversion were strongly related to both dispositional mindfulness and happiness. Roemer et al. (2024) completed an exploratory network analysis of personality and mindfulness in samples from the United States, England, Canada, Spain, and Argentina and found that all of the Big Five personality traits were strongly related to mindfulness across cultural samples with Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Openness to Experience evidencing some of the strongest relationships.

The Purpose of the Present Study

Previous research on mindfulness has not explicitly explored the link between receptivity to mindfulness and other positive coping strategies such as membership in a religious

organization (Lopez et al., 2023) and personality and mental health variables such as depression, stress, and anxiety. Understanding the relationship between these variables and receptivity to mindfulness may prove useful to college educators and therapists alike when exploring mindfulness as a coping strategy for the stress associated with being a college student. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to explore the relationship of mindfulness receptivity to religious group identification, measures of religiousness (which measure beliefs, practices, attitudes, values, and involvement), personality variables, and the situational stress, anxiety and depression experienced in college student daily life. We predicted that those students who identify with organized religious organizations, who have stronger religious beliefs, who score higher on the constructs of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience, and those students who have the highest levels of anxiety, depression, and stress would have a higher receptivity to mindfulness activities. An ancillary goal of this study was also to explore the factor structure of the measure of mindfulness receptivity that was created for the purpose of completing this investigation.

Method

Participants

Participants in the present study were 217 undergraduate students at a small regional liberal arts college in the Southeast. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 57 with a mean age of 20.84 ($SD = 5.78$), and 62% ($n = 135$) were women with 35.9% ($n = 78$) identifying as men. Regarding racial/ethnic origin, 53% ($n = 115$) of the participants were White with smaller percentages of Latin/Hispanic/Chicano (23.5%; $n = 51$), Black/African American (17.1%; $n = 37$), and Asian-American/Pacific Islander (2.3%; $n = 5$). Approximately 32.3% ($n = 70$) of the participants were freshmen in college with a similar number of sophomore students represented

(28.1%; $n = 61$) but smaller percentages of junior (23%; $n = 50$) and senior level students (14.7%; $n = 32$). We asked participants to self-identify as one of 13 different religious denominations, and the largest categories were Roman Catholic (36.9%; $n = 80$), Non-denominational Christian (22.6%; $n = 49$), and Baptist (8.8%; $n = 19$). A total of 20.7% of the participants identified as “other” on the religious denomination variable.

Measures

Brief Five-Factor Model Questionnaire (B-FFM; Goldberg, 1999). The B-FFM is a 50-item inventory that measures personality traits on the dimensions of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. Participants rank each statement using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from very inaccurate to very accurate. Each of the five scales contains 10 items that are summed to create a total score that can range from 10 to 50 with higher scores on the scale representing stronger characteristics of that personality trait. Coefficient alphas in the present study were .88 for Extraversion, .83 for Agreeableness, .84 for Conscientiousness, .87 for Neuroticism, and .82 for Openness to Experience.

Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The DASS-21 is a 21-item, four-point Likert-type measure that assesses the degree of stress, anxiety, and depression experienced in the past week. The instrument is comprised of three subscales—Anxiety, Depression, and Stress (7 items each)—and scores on the subscale items are summed to create total scores. Scores can range from 7 to 28 on each scale with higher scores indicating more anxiety, depression, or stress. Coefficient alphas in the present study were .82 for Anxiety, .89 for Depression, and .81 for Stress.

Receptivity to Mindfulness Questionnaire (RMQ; Tkacik & Kieffer, 2023). The RMQ is a 10-item, five-point Likert-type questionnaire used to measure participants' willingness to engage in mindfulness activities on a daily basis. Responses range from strongly agree to strongly disagree, and the measure was designed to be summed into one total score that can range from 10 to 50. The 10 items included on the measure were created after a review of the available literature and through the expert opinion of the study authors who have extensive experience in this area. Questions 1 through 4 were adapted from Petrovic et al. (2022), whereas the other six items were developed by the authors given their experience in the area of mindfulness and were further informed by other religious items included in the present study. Coefficient alpha for the 10 items in the present student was .75. All item to total correlations were positive with the exception of item 6 ($r = -.06$). With the deletion of this item, coefficient alpha would have improved to .81. The 10 RMQ items are presented in Appendix A.

Religiosity Measure (RM; Rohrbaugh & Jessor, 1975). The RM is an 8-item, four to five response multiple choice questionnaire designed to assess both participation in religious services as well as the impact of religious beliefs on the day-to-day lives of participants. One item differs from all others as it requires respondents to fill in a blank based on how many times they have attended religious services in the past year. The measure has four subscales composed of two items each—Ritual Religiosity, Consequential Religiosity, Theological Religiosity, and Experiential Religiosity. Items are summed to formed subscales and higher scores on the subscales indicate more religiosity on that construct. Coefficient alphas for the four subscales in the present study were .39¹ for Ritual Religiosity, .78 for Consequential Religiosity, .67 for

¹ We believe coefficient alpha on this scale was very low because the scale is comprised of two items and because one of those items is a free response category where participants list the number of times they attend religious services annually. Many participants' responses had to be

Theological Religiosity, and .77 for Experiential Religiosity. Coefficient alpha on Ritual Religiosity was very low largely because of the free response nature of the question, which generated robust responses from participants.

Religious Orientation Scale (ROS; Allport & Ross, 1967). The ROS is a 48-item, five-point Likert-type scale that measures intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations. Extrinsic religious orientation refers to individuals who adopt religious beliefs only to achieve personal goals like feeling comforted or protected. Conversely, intrinsic religious orientation refers to those individuals who use religion as a “master motive” and live their religious beliefs each and every day. The ROS is comprised of five subscales: Extrinsic subscale (12 items), Intrinsic subscale (9 items), Bateson’s Internal Scale (9 items), Bateson’s External Scale (6 items), and Bateson’s Doctrinal Orthodoxy Scale (12 items). Subscale items are summed to form total scores on each dimension, and higher scores indicate more of the particular construct. Coefficient alpha for the subscales in the present study were .76 for Extrinsic, .91 for Intrinsic subscale, .90 for Bateson’s Internal scale, .76 for Bateson’s External Scale, and .96 for Bateson’s Doctrinal Orthodoxy Scale.

Procedure

The questionnaire and an implied consent form were distributed electronically to students enrolled in classes at a small liberal arts college in the Southeast between Fall 2023 and Spring 2025 for an opportunity to earn extra credit in those classes. No participants explicitly refused to participate in the study.

recoded or estimated based on the transcribed response. Thus, this subscale was not interpreted even if statistically important results were found given the problems with score reliability in these data. The data are included in the results and tables only for informational purposes.

Results

To evaluate the hypothesis that personality, depression, anxiety, and religiosity affect receptivity to mindfulness, one singular multiple linear regression analysis was conducted with the total score on the RMQ as the single outcome variable. The resulting regression was statistically significant, $F(17, 168) = 4.75, p < .000001$, and accounted for 26% of the dependent variable variance after accounting for sample size (Multiple $R = .57, R^2 = .33$). The best predictors in the regression equation based on standardized Beta-weights were B-FFM Agreeableness Total Score ($\beta = .48, p < .0001$), RM Consequential Religiosity ($\beta = .20, p = .10$), ROS Intrinsic Religion Scale ($\beta = -.15, p = .23$), and B-FFM Openness to Experience ($\beta = .14, p = .05$). Each predictor variable's correlation with the RMQ, its standardized Beta-weight, and its structure coefficient are presented in Table 1.

We also computed structure coefficients² for each of the predictors in the regression equation, as they can be inherently helpful in the interpretation of multiple linear regression results (Thompson & Borrello, 1985; Ziglari, 2017). Computing structure coefficients allows the researcher to explore the effects of collinearity in the data set and affords one the opportunity to examine variables that are consuming the same portion of dependent variable variance. When predictor variables in regression equations are correlated (as they are in the present study), interpreting only Beta-weights can lead to faulty interpretive conclusions because some variables will have very small standardized Beta-weights (perhaps even close to zero) even though they

² Cooley and Lohnes (1971) defined a structure coefficient as the “bivariate correlation between the predictor and the criterion variable divided by the multiple correlation” (p. 55). This means that structure coefficients are essentially the simple bivariate correlations between the predicted outcome (also known as Y-HAT) and the predictor variable itself.

might have the same predictive power as the strongest predictor variables with the largest standardized Beta-weights.

An analysis of the structure coefficients in the present study yielded a slightly different interpretive picture than an evaluation of just the standardized Beta-weights. B-FFM Agreeableness (.89) was still the overall strongest predictor of mindfulness along with B-FFM Openness and RM Consequential Religiosity. However, structure coefficient analysis suggested that B-FFM Conscientiousness (.40), DASS Depression (-.29), DASS Stress (-.28) and B-FFM Neuroticism (.21) also make important contributions to the explanation of dependent variable variance.³

One purpose of the present study was to determine if religious orientation was related to mindfulness, and to examine the hypothesis that students who identify with organized religion will have a stronger receptivity to mindfulness we conducted a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with self-identified religion as the single factor and the total score on the RMQ as the sole dependent variable. For the single factor in this analysis, we utilized the three largest religions versus all other religions combined, and this meant that Roman Catholic ($n = 80$; 36.9%), Non-denominational Christian ($n = 49$; 27.6%), and Baptist ($n = 19$; 8.8%) were compared to the other 10 religious denominations (including those who stated no religious identification) listed on our demographic form ($n = 67$; two respondents did not report any response to this question). The results of the ANOVA were not statistically significant, $F(3, 209) = .19, p = .90$. Means on the RMQ total score varied from a high of 36.9 ($SD = 5.76$) for the group of 10 religions combined to a low of 36.1 ($SD = 5.52$) for the non-denominational

³ Higher scores on Agreeableness, Openness, Consequential Religiosity, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism are associated with higher receptivity to mindfulness. Conversely, higher scores on DASS Depression and Stress are associated with lower receptivity to mindfulness.

Christian group, but there was very little variation on receptivity to mindfulness across all religious groups, including those who reported no organized religious group membership.

Given that means on the RMQ were so closely grouped in the ANOVA analysis, we examined the scores on the RMQ to determine if we had a restriction of range on this variable. An analysis of the frequency distribution of RMQ scores did indeed reveal a restriction of range in RMQ scores. Because the RMQ is a 10-item, five-point Likert type instrument, total scores can hypothetically range from 10 (respondents score 1 for every item) to 50 (respondents score 5 for every item). In our sample, no respondent scored lower than 24 on the RMQ total score, and only 14% of the participants scored lower than 30, which is the midpoint of RMQ scores. This means that 86% of our sample scored at or above the midpoint of the scale, suggesting that our participants were already very receptive to mindfulness. We also found that on the DASS measure our sample tended to report lower levels of anxiety, stress, and depression, which may suggest that they were not in sufficient distress to consider using coping strategies such as mindfulness.

Factor Analysis of the Receptivity to Mindfulness Questionnaire (RMQ)

Because the RMQ was developed to measure mindfulness in the present study, the psychometric properties of the instrument have not been previously explored. Thus, we endeavored to evaluate the factor structure of the RMQ to determine if there was a single univariate factor underlying the data or if multiple factors existed. Given that the RMQ was developed both on the basis of theory and through expert extrapolation of items, we elected to use Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to measure factor structure. In conducting the EFA, we employed principal axis extraction and rotation to the varimax criterion as the methods for factor extraction and subsequent rotation. In deciding the number of factors to retain, we used guidance

presented in Henson and Roberts (2006) and Thompson (2004) to guide our analytical decisions to use the K1 rule, scree test, parallel analysis, and Velicer's Minimum Average Partial (MAP) Test (Velicer, 1976). In the present study, all four factor retention tests suggested the retention of three factors that explained 68.14% of the variance in RMQ items. Initial extraction Eigenvalues for the three components were 3.99 (39.85%), 1.75 (17.45%), and 1.09 (10.85%). Communalities for the 10 items ranged from .81 (MQ item 2) to .20 (MQ item 4) with an average of .56 (SD = .21). Communalities for the 10 items on the RMQ are presented in Table 2.

The first factor was comprised of items 1, 2, 3, and 5 and was labeled "Openness to Mindfulness Techniques" because the items addressed openness to considering mindfulness practices. The second factor included items 4, 9, and 10 and was labeled "Perceived Impediments to Practicing Mindfulness" because the items focused on being suspicious of mindfulness or being too busy to practice techniques. Finally, the third factor was comprised of items 6, 7, and 8, which was labeled "Anticipated Benefits of Mindfulness" because the items focused on helping the individual be less judgmental or hard on themselves. Only one of the items—item 5—had noteworthy factor pattern/structure coefficients on more than one factor with a factor coefficient of .56 on factor 1 and .41 on factor 3. We elected to retain this item on factor 1 because of the item's focus on openness to mindfulness.

Results of Receptivity to Mindfulness Using Three-Factor Model

Given that our mindfulness measure was developed as a single factor instrument but factor analysis revealed the presence of three distinct factors, we reran our multiple regression analyses using the three factors that emerged in the factor analysis as the new dependent variables in the study. The same set of 17 predictor variables (five scales of the B-FFM, three scales of the DASS, five scales of the ROS, and four scales of the RM) was used in these

analyses as was used in the original multiple regression analysis with one total RMQ score. Results from the three regression analyses are presented in Tables 3 through 5. The first regression analysis with Openness to Mindfulness Techniques (items 1, 2, 3, and 5) as the dependent variable was statistically significant, $F(17, 167) = 2.70, p < .0001$ and accounted for 24% of the dependent variable variance after adjusting for sample size (Multiple $R = .56; R^2 = .31$). The strongest predictors in this analysis based on standardized Beta-weights and structure coefficients were Agreeableness Total Score ($\beta = .42, p < .0001; r_s = .79$), ROS Intrinsic Religion Scale ($\beta = -.38, p = .003; r_s = .04$), B-FFM Openness to Experience ($\beta = .24, p = .001; r_s = .62$), and RM Consequential Religiosity ($\beta = .20, p = .125; r_s = .24$). This first analysis yielded results that were similar to the results of the multiple regression analysis with one total RMQ score.

The second multiple regression analysis with Perceived Impediments to Practicing Mindfulness as the dependent variable was statistically significant, $F(17, 167) = 2.70, p = .001$ and accounted for 14% of the dependent variable variance after accounting for sample size (Multiple $R = .46; R^2 = .22$). The strongest predictors in this analysis based on standardized Beta-weights and structure coefficients were Agreeableness Total Score ($\beta = .31, p = .0002; r_s = .77$), ROS Bateson Doctrinal Orthodoxy Scale ($\beta = -.23, p = .08; r_s = .16$), DASS Stress Scale ($\beta = .16, p = .25; r_s = .47$), DASS Depression Scale ($\beta = -.10, p = .36; r_s = -.47$), and B-FFM Openness to Experience ($\beta = .06, p = .42; r_s = .39$). This second regression included many of the same predictors in the other analyses such as Agreeableness and Openness to Experience but had other noteworthy predictors such as the DASS Depression and Stress scales.

The third and final multiple regression analysis with Anticipated Benefits of Mindfulness as the dependent variable was also statistically significant, $F(17, 168) = 2.63, p = .001$ and

accounted for 13% of the dependent variable variance after accounting for sample size (Multiple $R = .46$; $R^2 = .21$). The strongest predictors in this analysis based on standardized Beta-weights and structure coefficients were Agreeableness Total Score ($\beta = .37, p = .0001; r_s = .76$), Bateson Internal Scale ($\beta = -.29, p = .06; r_s = -.11$), DASS Anxiety Scale ($\beta = .22, p = .05; r_s = .19$), DASS Stress Scale ($\beta = -.22, p = .11; r_s = -.10$), and RM Ritual Religiosity ($\beta = -.17, p = .04; r_s = -.18$). The final regression also included some of the same predictors in the other analyses such as Agreeableness and ROS Internal Scale but had other noteworthy predictors such as the DASS Anxiety and Stress scales.

Discussion

The present study explored the relationship between receptivity to mindfulness, religious affiliation, personality, and the situational stress, anxiety, and depression experienced in college student daily life. Given high rates of stress among university students, concerns about student well-being and mental health, and increased use of college counseling centers, which have prompted many institutions of higher education to look at student health more holistically (Honsky et al., 2025), we endeavored to determine whether or not our students might be open to and benefit from mindfulness practices being incorporated into our pedagogy, as our own experience has also suggested that the students we teach frequently battle depression, stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. Interpreting both standardized Beta-weights and structure coefficients in our convenience sample ($n = 217$) of college students suggested that the best predictors of mindfulness were personality traits (B-FFM Agreeableness, B-FFM Openness, B-FFM Conscientiousness, and B-FFM Neuroticism), selected measures of religiosity (ROS Intrinsic Religion Scale and RM Consequential Religiosity Scale), and DASS-21 Depression and Stress Scales.

Relation of Current Findings to Previous Research

Personality Variables. Personality emerged as the strongest predictor of mindfulness receptivity—especially the constructs of Agreeableness, Openness to Experience, and Conscientiousness—in both the single factor and three-factor solutions of RMQ. Agreeableness was the strongest overall predictor suggesting that students who are cooperative, empathetic, and trusting are especially open to mindfulness practices. Openness to Experience also had a positive association with mindfulness, indicating that those curious and receptive to new ideas are more willing to engage in mindfulness. Conscientiousness and Neuroticism also contributed, though more modestly. Interestingly, Neuroticism—often linked to stress sensitivity—positively predicted receptivity suggesting that students high in Neuroticism may view mindfulness as a tool for stress management. Extraversion, however, was not a meaningful predictor.

Although other studies have associated the personality variables in this study with mindfulness, we examined their relationships with “receptivity to mindfulness,” which we expected would align with previous mindfulness research. Our results were broadly consistent with prior work linking personality traits to mindfulness (Barańczuk, 2019; Giluk, 2009; Haliwa et al., 2021; Roemer et al., 2024), particularly the positive associations between mindfulness and Agreeableness, Openness, and Conscientiousness. The role of Neuroticism, however, appears more complex, as some studies have reported negative relationships (Barańczuk, 2019; Mather et al., 2019); while others such as Giluk (2009) found positive associations. Our results aligned with the latter, suggesting that students who are more emotionally vulnerable may be more motivated to consider mindfulness practices.

Depression, Anxiety and Stress Variables. Previous studies have documented the potential value of mindfulness practices for lowering depression, anxiety, and stress (Bartlett et

al., 2021; Desrosiers et al., 2013; Parmentier et al., 2019; Sharma & Kumra, 2022; Vidic, 2023). We expected that students with higher DASS-21 scores would score higher on the RMQ because either they saw a greater personal benefit/value in mindfulness activities or because they viewed mindfulness as a potential resource given their distress level. The present study did not find the hypothesized strong positive relationships between receptivity to mindfulness and DASS-21 stress, anxiety, and depression, perhaps because our sample did not report elevated levels of distress on these variables. Additionally, there were some nuanced relationships at the subscale level when using the three-factor solution for the RMQ. For example, stress was positively related to perceived impediments to mindfulness while anxiety showed a small positive association with anticipated benefits. Depression had a weak negative association with the Openness to Mindfulness subscale, similar to that found when examining the relationship with the overall Receptivity to Mindfulness scale.

Previous studies have not examined the relationship between situational stress, anxiety, and depression and receptivity to mindfulness, and the lack of clear findings from this study are at least partially explained by some of our study limitations. For example, our scores showed a restriction of range in both the predictor and dependent variables in that the majority of participants reported relatively low levels of depression, anxiety, and stress combined with uniformly high receptivity to mindfulness. This restriction of range limited our ability to fully detect differences across the mental health and mindfulness receptivity variables.

Self-Identified Religion. As noted previously, mindfulness has roots in Eastern religions (most notably Buddhism) and aligns with practices of prayer, contemplation, and spirituality associated with many faith traditions. We expected greater receptivity among students for whom religion was a more salient aspect of their lives, but our results were mixed, and at times,

counterintuitive. Of nine religious measure subscales, the RM Consequential Religiosity and ROS Intrinsic Religion scales made unique contributions to predicting mindfulness receptivity. Although Consequential Religiosity (the belief that religion has practical, real-world outcomes) was positively related to the total RMQ and the RMQ Openness to Mindfulness subscale, Intrinsic religiosity unexpectedly showed a negative relationship with the RMQ and the Openness to Mindfulness subscale. Other measures, such as doctrinal orthodoxy and ritual religiosity, had limited predictive power.

The study of religion in psychology has been a journey of varying attempts to measure religion and its meaning for individuals, and measurement has advanced from quantifying the amount of participation in organized religious activities to efforts to understand and measure the various roles that religion/faith have in the lives of individuals. However, the interaction of religion, spirituality, and mindfulness has not received significant coverage in the literature, and based on the alignment of mindfulness practices with many faith traditions, we expected that our measures of religion would have noteworthy and positive associations with receptivity to mindfulness. Our findings did not support our initial hypothesis and suggested that the relationship between religion and receptivity to mindfulness is complex. People who view religion as practically relevant may be more open to mindfulness while those who view religion primarily as intrinsic devotion may see mindfulness as competing with, rather than complementing, their faith. Previous research has not extensively examined this intersection, and our results underscore the need for more nuanced measures that distinguish between religious beliefs, devotional practices, and motivations. Moreover, many religiosity measures are rooted in Christian frameworks while mindfulness originates in Eastern traditions, which may have shaped

our findings. Improvements in the measurement of various aspects of religion could result in refinements to theories about the ways in which religious orientation shapes receptivity.

Limitations of the Present Study

A key limitation in our study was the restricted range of RMQ scores in that a striking 86% of participants scored above the midpoint on the RMQ scale, limiting our ability to examine predictors of low mindfulness receptivity. Similarly, participants reported relatively low levels of state-dependent depression, anxiety, and stress, which could have further muted potential relationships among variables and limited our ability to detect differences in mindfulness receptivity. Additionally, our sample was derived from a small liberal arts college with a strong Benedictine religious tradition and contained more women than men, both of which could have influenced our results as well. Finally, we asked participants to self-identify their religious group from a list of religions we generated (rather than allowing participants to describe their religious beliefs, traditions, and practices), and we administered the questionnaires at various points over the course of several academic terms rather than attempting to collect all data at one specific point in a single academic term. Regarding self-identified religious orientation, our narrow view of religious identification was a limitation of the study and future work should include a more robust measure of religious affiliation that includes strength of affiliation in addition to other important variables, such as how frequently individuals attend services or engage in private prayer (among others). Our study did include nine subscales of religiousness across two different measures that evaluated many of these constructs, but stronger instruments that more directly measure these areas should be utilized in future work in this area.

Implications and Conclusions

Mindfulness in University Environments. Our findings support the value of introducing mindfulness in university settings to potentially increase the well-being of college students. In addition to the mental health benefits mindfulness offers college students, it may also help to address the contemporary “attention phase shift” due to unprecedented technology interfacing. As Franco Berardi argued, “acceleration and intensification of information transmission is leading to an overload of the senses and an experience of present time that is increasingly fragmented and discontinuous” (as cited in O’Donnell, 2015, p. 190). Berardi further observed that “young people undergo experiences of information overload as their attention is ceaselessly solicited from multiple sources contributing to ‘attentive stress’ and reduction in time permitted for affectivity, sensibility, and thinking” (as cited in O’Donnell, 2015, p. 190). The integration of mindfulness into education evidenced increased reflective, affective, and ethical capacities of students and contributed to their identity formation, deepening of compassion, connection to others, morality, spirituality, personal meaning, and insight (Ergas & Hader, 2023). Mindfulness also enhances brain functioning, psychological functioning, bodily health, and work performance (Grace, 2011). Therefore, the introduction of mindfulness into schools and developing institutional cultures that cultivate mindfulness in students and teachers develop the capacity for creative and deep attention, which helps to support greater clarity, non-reactivity, and ethical sensitivity, as well as a richer experience of life (Gardner, 2021). Mindfulness techniques coupled with creative pedagogy dispose students to be more open, curious, and interested in the nature of their experiences in the world while also enhancing their abilities to afford attention to things other than themselves in less reactive, more creatively responsive ways (Gardner, 2021).

Students who are already receptive to mindfulness may benefit further from structured opportunities to practice such techniques. Tang et al. (2020) evaluated the results of mindfulness training on students' psychological and cognitive functioning and demonstrated the feasibility of a first-year mindfulness training seminar. Several universities start their first-year academic success seminars with mindfulness activities, with some examples including the four-week mindfulness training in the first-year seminar at Indiana University–Purdue University (Mowreader, 2023) as well as the program implemented at the University of Hartford's Hillyer College (University of Hartford, 2022). Marjorie Jackson developed a framework she called "Mindful Learning" to introduce mindfulness skills for academic success (University of Hartford, 2022). Other colleges offer mindfulness training beyond the first-year seminar with one example being the *Move into Mindfulness* program that offers mindfulness-related exercises created by Washington University in St. Louis (Washington University in St. Louis, n.d.). Thus, existing programs demonstrate the feasibility of using mindfulness activities and training in college environments, and embedding mindfulness into first-year seminars may normalize practice, reduce perceived barriers, and signal that the university prioritizes student well-being.

Mindfulness in Religious Academic Environments: A Benedictine Example. The university at which we teach is rooted in the 1,500-year-old Benedictine tradition, and the Benedictine charism and core values of our institution commit the university to providing an education that stresses the development of every person's mind, spirit, and body for a balanced life (Saint Leo University, 2025). This demands that all of us, individually and collectively, work diligently to ensure that our students develop the character, learn the skills, and assimilate the knowledge essential to becoming morally responsible leaders, and, in turn, requires that we create socially responsible environments that challenge all at the university to listen, learn,

change, and serve (Saint Leo University, 2025). The university core values and Benedictine charism, which animate its educational mission, find parallels and correlates in the practice of mindfulness and, hence, may account for the open disposition toward and receptivity to mindfulness revealed in the study findings. Like the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, mindfulness requires focal attention on the present to permit us to act with empathy and compassion, and to afford hospitality to others so they can be received as if they were Christ (RB 53; Saint Benedict, ca. 530/1981). Advocating humility, both the *Rule* (RB 7; Saint Benedict, ca. 530/1981) and mindfulness suggest tempering ego-driven desires and self-centeredness, thereby opening up our minds to serve others and act upon what is in the best interest of the community (e.g., RB 5–6, 34, 36–37; Saint Benedict, ca. 530/1981). Just as the *Rule* outlines a balanced structure for life, which includes time for prayer, *lectio divina*, and “listening with the ears of the heart” (RB 8–20, 32–38, 48; Saint Benedict, ca. 530/1981) so, too, does mindfulness call for intentional focus on and deep connection to the present, paying attention without judgment, and reflection.

Beyond Academia. Too often students find themselves in competition with themselves and with their classmates by thinking things like, “I need to be successful in academics, athletics, and socializing.” Although this intra- and interpersonal competition can produce both individual success and individual stress, it is not often a strategy for success in work organizations. Indeed, work organizations tend to value individual competence and mastery, but they increasingly focus on building collaborative organizations to foster high achievement (Beyerlein et al., 2003). We found a growing number of examples where mindfulness training has become part of for-profit organizations, and one such example appears on the website for MantraCare (a meditation company working with businesses) that describes the mindfulness offerings of Intel and Goldman Sachs (Shivam, n.d.). There is also an increased recognition of the importance of

collaboration in work organizations, and in a discussion about mindfulness and collaboration, Linda Moran (an author of *Beyond Teams*) noted, “No one person knows enough, and organizations’ success increasingly depends on collaboration among employees. Mindfulness creates an openness to listening to others, which is essential to collaboration” (L. Moran, personal communication, August 20, 2025). Thus, receptivity to mindfulness may serve as a foundation for skills increasingly valued in contemporary work environments.

Future Research. The 10-item RMQ offers a practical tool for assessing the willingness to participate in mindfulness activities and can be used to spark meaningful discussions about mindfulness as a practical model for life and learning. Future studies should incorporate qualitative approaches to explore students’ lived experiences with mindfulness, what they value about it, and how it shapes well-being, learning, and relationships. Further work should also disentangle the nuanced interplay of religiosity, mental health, and personality with mindfulness receptivity. Exploring mindfulness as both a stress-reduction technique that equips students to navigate their fast-paced life and a path to compassion and empathy may deepen understanding of value in education.

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Table 1

Correlations Coefficients, Standardized Beta-Weights and Structure Coefficients for Regression with Single Factor Version of the Receptivity to Mindfulness Questionnaire (n = 215)

Subscale	Correlation with Mindfulness	95% CI		Standardized Beta-Weight	Structure Coefficient
		<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>		
Extraversion	0.04	-0.10	0.18	-0.11	0.07
Agreeableness	<u>0.51</u>**	0.40	0.61	<u>0.48</u>**	<u>0.89</u>
Conscientiousness	<u>0.23</u>**	0.90	0.36	0.02	<u>0.40</u>
Neuroticism	0.12	0.02	0.26	0.05	<u>0.21</u>
Openness	<u>0.28</u>**	0.14	0.41	0.14*	<u>0.50</u>
DASS Anxiety Score Total	-0.03	-0.17	0.11	0.09	-0.05
DASS Depression Score Total	<u>-0.17</u>	-0.31	-0.03	-0.06	<u>-0.29</u>
DASS Stress Score Total	<u>-0.16</u>	-0.3	-0.02	-0.08	<u>-0.28</u>
ROS Extrinsic Religion Scale	0.02	-0.12	0.16	0.08	0.04
ROS Intrinsic Religion Scale	0.04	-0.10	0.18	<u>-0.15</u>	0.07
ROS Bateson Internal Scale	0.07	-0.08	0.21	-0.07	0.12
ROS Bateson External Scale	0.05	-0.10	0.19	0.01	0.09
ROS Bateson Doctrinal Orthodoxy Scale	0.05	-0.10	0.19	-0.08	0.09
RM Ritual Religiosity Scale	-0.01	-0.15	0.13	-0.08	-0.02
RM Consequential Religiosity Scale	0.10	-0.05	0.24	<u>0.20</u>	<u>0.18</u>
RM Theological Religiosity Scale	0.01	-0.13	0.15	0.12	0.02
RM Experiential Religiosity Scale	0.07	-0.08	0.21	0.07	0.12

Note: Coefficients that were greater than + / - .15 are bolded and underlined and were subsequently used to interpret the results of this analysis.

CI = Confidence Interval; *LL* = Lower Limit; *UL* = Upper Limit.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2*Communality Coefficients for RMQ Items*

Item	Communality ^a
RMQ1	0.73
RMQ2	0.81
RMQ3	0.78
RMQ4	0.20
RMQ5	0.50
RMQ6	0.24
RMQ7	0.63
RMQ8	0.43
RMQ9	0.71
RMQ10	0.54

<i>Mean</i>	0.56
<i>SD</i>	0.22

a. Higher commonalities indicate that the common factors explain the variation in a variable's scores and that the item contributes to the measurement of a construct. Low commonalities indicate that the variation/variance in the variables scores is unique to the item and that the item does not contribute to measurement of the construct.

Table 3

Correlations Coefficients, Standardized Beta-Weights and Structure Coefficients for Regression Openness to Mindfulness Techniques Subscale (Factor 1) of the RMQ (n = 215)

Subscale	Correlation with Factor 1	95% CI		Standardized Beta-Weight	Structure Coefficient
		LL	UL		
Extraversion	0.01	-0.13	0.15	-0.15*	0.01
Agreeableness	<u>0.44</u>*	0.31	0.55	<u>0.42</u>**	<u>0.79</u>**
Conscientiousness	<u>0.16</u>	0.01	0.30	-0.03	<u>0.28</u>**
Neuroticism	0.01	-0.13	0.15	-0.01	0.01
Openness	<u>0.35</u>*	0.22	0.47	<u>0.24</u>**	<u>0.62</u>**
DASS Anxiety Score Total	-0.01	-0.15	0.13	-0.04	-0.02
DASS Depression Score Total	-0.12	-0.26	0.02	-0.10	<u>-0.22</u>**
DASS Stress Score Total	-0.05	-0.19	0.09	0.14	-0.09
ROS Extrinsic Religion Scale	-0.04	-0.18	0.10	0.02	-0.06
ROS Intrinsic Religion Scale	0.02	-0.12	0.16	<u>-0.38</u>**	0.04
ROS Bateson Internal Scale	<u>0.17</u>	0.03	0.30	0.05	<u>0.21</u>**
ROS Bateson External Scale	0.07	-0.08	0.21	0.07	0.12
ROS Bateson Doctrinal Orthodoxy Scale	0.12	-0.02	0.26	0.04	<u>0.21</u>**
RM Ritual Religiosity Scale	0.09	-0.06	0.23	0.04	<u>0.16</u>
RM Consequential Religiosity Scale	0.13	-0.01	0.27	<u>0.20</u>	<u>0.24</u>**
RM Theological Religiosity Scale	0.03	-0.11	0.17	<u>0.16</u>	0.05
RM Experiential Religiosity Scale	0.09	-0.06	0.23	0.03	<u>0.17</u>*

Note: Coefficients that were greater than + / - .15 are bolded and underlined and were subsequently used to interpret the results of this analysis.

CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 4

Correlations Coefficients, Standardized Beta-Weights and Structure Coefficients for Regression with Perceived Impediments to Practicing Mindfulness Subscale (Factor 2) of the RMQ (n = 215)

Subscale	Correlation with Factor 2	95% CI		Standardized Beta-Weight	Structure Coefficient
		<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>		
Extraversion	0.04	-0.10	0.18	-0.07	0.10
Agreeableness	<u>0.36</u>*	0.23	0.48	<u>0.31</u>**	<u>0.77</u>**
Conscientiousness	<u>0.20</u>	0.06	0.33	0.04	<u>0.43</u>**
Neuroticism	<u>0.18</u>	0.04	0.32	0.06	<u>0.38</u>**
Openness	<u>0.18</u>	0.04	0.32	0.06	<u>0.39</u>**
DASS Anxiety Score Total	-0.09	-0.23	0.06	0.08	<u>0.20</u>**
DASS Depression Score Total	<u>-0.23</u>*	-0.36	-0.09	-0.10	<u>-0.47</u>**
DASS Stress Score Total	<u>-0.22</u>*	-0.35	-0.08	<u>-0.16</u>	<u>-0.47</u>**
ROS Extrinsic Religion Scale	0.03	-0.11	0.17	0.11	0.06
ROS Intrinsic Religion Scale	-0.01	-0.15	0.13	0.05	-0.01
ROS Bateson Internal Scale	-0.02	-0.16	0.12	0.01	-0.04
ROS Bateson External Scale	-0.03	-0.17	0.11	-0.08	-0.06
ROS Bateson Doctrinal Orthodoxy Scale	-0.07	-0.21	0.08	<u>-0.23</u>	<u>-0.16</u>**
RM Ritual Religiosity Scale	-0.06	-0.20	0.09	-0.10	0.12
RM Consequential Religiosity Scale	0.02	-0.12	0.16	<u>0.15</u>	0.05
RM Theological Religiosity Scale	-0.08	-0.22	0.06	0.01	<u>-0.18</u>**
RM Experiential Religiosity Scale	-0.01	-0.15	0.13	0.06	-0.03

Note: Coefficients that were greater than + / - .15 are bolded and underlined and were subsequently used to interpret the results of this analysis.

CI = Confidence Interval; *LL* = Lower Limit; *UL* = Upper Limit.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5

Correlations Coefficients, Standardized Beta-Weights and Structure Coefficients for Regression with Anticipated Benefits of Mindfulness Subscale (Factor 3) of the RMQ (n = 215)

Subscale	Correlation with Factor 3	95% CI		Standardized Beta-Weight	Structure Coefficient
		<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>		
Extraversion	0.06	-0.09	0.20	0.02	0.13
Agreeableness	<u>0.35</u>*	0.21	0.47	<u>0.37</u>**	<u>0.76</u>**
Conscientiousness	0.14	-0.01	0.28	0.03	<u>0.31</u>**
Neuroticism	0.02	-0.12	0.16	-0.05	0.04
Openness	0.10	-0.04	0.24	-0.01	<u>0.21</u>**
DASS Anxiety Score Total	0.09	-0.06	0.23	<u>0.22</u>*	<u>0.19</u>**
DASS Depression Score Total	0.01	-0.13	0.15	0.07	0.02
DASS Stress Score Total	-0.05	-0.19	0.10	<u>-0.22</u>*	-0.10
ROS Extrinsic Religion Scale	0.08	-0.07	0.22	0.04	<u>0.17</u>*
ROS Intrinsic Religion Scale	0.10	-0.04	0.24	0.10	<u>0.22</u>**
ROS Bateson Internal Scale	0.05	-0.09	0.19	<u>-0.29</u>*	0.11
ROS Bateson External Scale	0.10	-0.04	0.24	0.09	<u>0.21</u>**
ROS Bateson Doctrinal Orthodoxy Scale	0.08	-0.07	0.22	0.01	<u>0.17</u>*
RM Ritual Religiosity Scale	-0.18	-0.22	0.06	<u>-0.17</u>	-0.18
RM Consequential Religiosity Scale	0.07	-0.08	0.21	0.06	<u>0.16</u>**
RM Theological Religiosity Scale	0.09	-0.06	0.23	0.06	<u>0.19</u>**
RM Experiential Religiosity Scale	0.09	-0.06	0.23	0.09	<u>0.19</u>*

Note: Coefficients that were greater than + / - .15 are bolded and underlined and were subsequently used to interpret the results of this analysis.

CI = Confidence Interval; *LL* = Lower Limit; *UL* = Upper Limit.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Appendix A**Items on the Receptivity to Mindfulness Questionnaire**

1. I am open to the idea of mindfulness.
2. I would be willing to try practicing mindfulness on a regular basis.
3. I am receptive to the benefits that mindfulness may bring about.
4. I am suspicious regarding the use of mindfulness.
5. I believe that the self-awareness that mindfulness cultivates would be beneficial to my efforts to understand how I feel.
6. I think that mindfulness would present to me things about myself that I do not want to confront.
7. I think that mindfulness might help me not be so hard on myself.
8. I believe that mindfulness might help me to be less judgmental.
9. I find myself too busy and distracted to try mindfulness.
10. I find it hard to focus, therefore I do not think mindfulness is something I could practice.