

To what extent political ideology mediates the effect of religiosity in individuals' expression of empathy towards others?

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Mestrado em Estudos Internacionais

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Departamento de História

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A todos os que amo

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Enquanto escrevo isto, estou sentada à minha secretária, no trabalho, a pensar em como é que vou conseguir escrever uma dissertação, estagiar a tempo inteiro e ainda dormir bem (no meu caso, seriam necessárias 10 horas de sono para me sentir fresca como uma alface do Lidl - yikes). Embora não tenha a certeza se as pessoas leem isto, e correndo o risco de parecer egoísta, quero agradecer antecipadamente à minha futura eu. Ela conseguiu submeter esta dissertação, embora eu ainda não tenha a certeza de como o vai fazer. Espero que, na altura em que escrever o último parágrafo destes agradecimentos, a minha futura eu (que será a eu do presente daqui a um ano) sinta que deu o seu melhor e tenha aquela sensação de missão cumprida.

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Resumo

Estudos anteriores exploraram as relações binárias entre empatia, religiosidade e ideologia política, mas não as estudaram como uma tríade interligada. Contudo, a aferição do que explica a maior ou menor empatia dos indivíduos pode assentar em relações não estritamente binárias. A pesquisa prévia tem reiterado o efeito da religiosidade na empatia. Porém, pouca pesquisa se tem debruçado sobre o papel de eventuais efeitos moderadores neste efeito. Em particular, não foi ainda produzida pesquisa relevante que afira o papel da ideologia política como mediadora desta relação. Esta lacuna na literatura sugere uma necessidade de entender a complexidade desta interação, sendo este o foco desta dissertação. Deste modo, os seus objetivos incluem: (1) avaliar o efeito da religiosidade na empatia; (2) avaliar o efeito da religiosidade na ideologia política; (3) avaliar o efeito da ideologia política na empatia, e (4) testar o papel mediador da ideologia no efeito da religiosidade na empatia. Para responder a estes objetivos, realiza-se uma análise comparada europeia apoiada em dados do European Value Study de 2017. Os resultados desta investigação reforçam a existência de um efeito positivo da religiosidade na empatia (mais religiosos, mais empáticos), assim como da religiosidade na ideologia (no posicionamento à direita), e da ideologia na empatia (quanto mais à direita, menos empatia). Os resultados revelam, também, que a ideologia política interfere no efeito da religiosidade na empatia. Esta dissertação destaca a necessidade de adotar abordagens metodológicas multifacetadas para uma compreensão mais aprofundada dos fatores explicativos da empatia.

Palavras-chave: Empatia, Ideologia Política, Religiosidade, Europa, Crenças Pessoais

Abstract

Previous studies have explored the binary relationships between empathy, religiosity, and political ideology, but have not examined them as an interconnected triad. However, understanding what explains greater or lesser empathy in individuals may be based on relationships that are not strictly binary. Prior research has reiterated the effect of religiosity on empathy. Yet, little research has delved into the role of potential moderating effects in this relationship. In particular, there has not been significant research examining the role of political ideology as a mediator in this relationship. This gap in the literature suggests a need to understand the complexity of this interaction, which is the focus of this dissertation. Thus, its objectives include: (1) assessing the effect of religiosity on empathy; (2) assessing the influence of religiosity on political ideology; (3) assessing the impact of political ideology on empathy, and (4) testing the mediating role of ideology in the effect of religiosity on empathy. To address these objectives, a comparative European analysis is conducted, drawing on data from the 2017 European Value Study. The results of this investigation underscore a positive effect of religiosity on empathy (more religious, more empathetic), as well as of religiosity on ideology (its right-leaning positioning), and of ideology on empathy (the further right-leaning, the less empathetic). The findings also reveal that political ideology affects the impact of religiosity on empathy. This dissertation highlights the need to adopt multifaceted methodological approaches for a deeper understanding of the factors explaining empathy.

Keywords: Empathy, Politic Ideology, Religiosity, Europe, Personal Beliefs

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Introduction

In recent decades, political science has devoted increasing attention to the study of empathy and religiosity. Within the literature, a consensus has emerged suggesting that religious individuals exhibit higher levels of empathy compared to their non-religious counterparts (e.g., Batson & Gray, 1981; Darley & Batson, 1973; Donahue, 1985; Francis & Pearson, 1987; Greenwald, 1976; Watson et al., 1984; Duriez 2004). Prior research has also shown that religious individuals tend to identify with right-leaning ideologies (e.g., Jost et al., 2003; Layman, 1997). Hence, it would be expected that right-leaning individuals would exhibit higher levels of empathy. However, it is left-leaning individuals who exhibit more empathy (e.g., McCue & Gopoiian, 2000; Iyer et al., 2012). This contradiction prompts a critical question not yet answered: What role does political ideology play in mediating the effect of religiosity on empathy?

Seeing them as a connected triad, this dissertation conducts multiple regression analysis. Acknowledging the prior focus of research on case studies and predominantly Western and Christian contexts, this dissertation seeks to extend its scope through a comprehensive European analysis. Leveraging the 2017 dataset from the European Value Study (EVS), this dissertation overcomes the constraints of smaller samples, enabling the generalization of results across different national and cultural contexts.

The primary objectives of this dissertation include: (1) assessing the effect of religiosity on empathy; (2) assessing the effect of religiosity on political ideology; (3) assessing the effect of political ideology on empathy; and (4) testing the mediating role of ideology on the effect of religiosity on empathy.

This dissertation is structured into three chapters. Chapter 1 presents the literature review, offering an examination of previous studies and findings related to religiosity, empathy, and political ideology. It provides a foundational understanding of the concepts and the main conclusions in previous literature. Chapter 2 outlines the methodology employed in this dissertation and establishes a comparison with previous methods used in other studies. Chapter 3 presents the empirical findings of the study and discusses them in the context of previous research. All data collected is analysed and summarised, highlighting key trends, patterns, and relationships discovered.

In a time marked by growing polarisation, this dissertation aspires to understand the factors that influence empathy and provide insights that would benefit policymakers, educators, researchers, and society at large.

Navigating Empathy, Religiosity, and Political Ideology: Literature Review

The first aim of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive literature review on the concepts of empathy, religiosity, and political ideology. This review aims to explore and delineate their meanings and dimensions, as well as to assess some of the debates around these concepts. The second aim is to delve into the understanding of the relationships between these concepts, highlight the gaps in the existing literature, and assert the relevance of this research. In particular, it aims to identify what prior research has already found about what explains empathy, specifically focusing on the importance of key variables such as religiosity and ideology. The chapter is divided into six sections. Section one explores the definitions and dimensions of empathy; section two delves into religion and religiosity; section three examines the influence of religiosity on empathy; section four investigates the impact of religiosity on ideology; section five studies the effect of ideology on empathy; and section six probes the potential mediating role of political ideology on the effect of religiosity on empathy.

1.1 Conceptualizing Empathy: Definitions and Dimensions

This section starts by considering the multiple definitions and dimensions of empathy. This explanation requires a brief mention of the empirical scales chosen to measure empathy and the dimensions that support those scales since these choices greatly influence the outcomes and validity of existing research and are thus key to understanding the main conclusions of current and past literature. Hence, in this chapter, scales will be briefly mentioned, albeit not in methodological detail (limitations, main characteristics, and other issues concerning the scales can be seen in detail in Chapter 2).

Empathy, a widely studied concept, has numerous, sometimes inconsistent, definitions presented in the literature. Despite the variations and inconsistencies, these definitions, some of which are described below, share a common ground: empathy is associated with the act of understanding, experiencing, and responding to the emotions and experiences of others.

Among the various conceptions of empathy, the following stand out: a congruent emotional response oriented toward another person's perceived welfare (Batson et al., 1995); the capacity to comprehend and experience others' emotions (Decety & Jackson, 2004); an individual's response to the experiences of another (Davis, 1983); a combination of sympathy and

compassion (Hasson et al., 2018); and the process of sharing another person's emotions (Hoffman, 2000; Singer & Lamm, 2009).

These definitions are compatible with the idea that empathy promotes prosocial behaviour not only among individuals within a group but also between strangers (Cikara et al., 2014; Hane, 2022). Numerous studies have also demonstrated that empathy can be a crucial factor in enhancing relationships between different groups of people (Batson et al., 1997; Batson & Ahmad, 2009; Pettigrew, 1997; Pettigrew, 1998; Hane, 2022).

In psychology, empathy is broken down into two different categories: situational empathy and dispositional empathy. The first one relates to the reactions in a particular situation, measured right after the occurrence, through “facial, gestural, and vocal indices of empathy-related responding” (Zhou et al., 2003, p. 275) while the second one concerns character traits which influence an individual's tendencies and capacities to empathize across various situations (Stueber, 2019). In this dissertation, we focus on the second, which is, for this reason, presented below.

Among the dimensions explored in dispositional empathy are emotional empathy (often called affective empathy) and cognitive empathy. Emotional empathy relates to an emotional response to another's condition (Batson et al., 1995). It's a process where one not only recognizes another's emotional state but also feels a similar emotion (e.g., Hoffman, 2000). Emotional empathy aids individuals in grasping the emotional state and conditions of others (e.g., Davis, 1983; Hoffman, 2000; Batson et al., 2007). In other words, it refers to the ability of an individual to resonate with and feel the emotions of another, rooted in one's consistent personality traits, rather than just a fleeting reaction to a specific event. In contrast, cognitive empathy focuses on perspective-taking (Davis, 1983). It involves recognizing and understanding the emotions of someone else (Blair, 2005) but does not necessarily mean that one shares those emotions (Decety & Jackson, 2004). While cognitive empathy can promote a deeper understanding and more effective communication, it may not always provoke genuine feelings of concern that are typically linked with emotional empathy.

These dimensions of dispositional empathy - emotional and cognitive - can be operationalized through different empirical scales¹, measuring specific aspects of each

¹ Existing research on empathy has predominantly focused on dispositional empathy, assessing it through various tools. The most widely known include, in no particular order: (1) the Empathy Quotient, focusing on cognitive empathy, emotional empathy and social skills (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004); (2) the Mehrabian and Epstein Questionnaire measure of emotional empathy (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972); (3) the Hogan Empathy Scale, focusing on emotional empathy and affective empathy (Hogan, 1969); (3) the Interpersonal Reactivity Index acknowledging affective and cognitive dimensions by implementing four sub scales (Davis, 1983); and

dimension. For instance, within emotional empathy, empirical scales often aim to measure aspects such as empathetic concern and personal distress (Davis, 1983), as well as emotion contagion, proximal responsivity², and peripheral responsivity³ (Reniers et al., 2011). Within cognitive empathy, empirical scales often aim to measure aspects such as perspective-taking (Davis, 1983; Reniers et al., 2011) and fantasy (Davis, 1983).

This dissertation will focus on the aspect of empathetic concern, within the dimension of emotional empathy, part of the category of dispositional empathy. In other words, empathy will be defined as per Davis (1983) and Batson et al. (1995) as an emotional response to another's welfare. This choice stems from the understating of empathy as a key element in empathetic experiences, as well as the growing understanding of the importance of empathy's emotional aspect (e.g., Davis, 1980; Batson et al., 1983; Decety & Jackson, 2004; Singer et al., 2004). Furthermore, Batson et al.'s definition reflects aspects of religion, such as concern for others (Batson et al., 1983; Inzlicht et al., 2009), whereas Davis's definition's emphasis on emotional reactions, fits well with political beliefs, that frequently reflect emotional responses to societal events (Markus, 1982; Westen et al., 2006; Huddy et al., 2007; Druckman & McDermott, 2008).

By adopting this definition, this dissertation aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of empathy. It recognizes the multifaceted nature of empathy and acknowledges its relevance in both religious and political contexts.

1.2 Religion and Religiosity: Understanding Definitions, Dimensions, and Debates

This section starts by differentiating religion from religiosity, explaining both shortly, before delving into the different dimensions of religiosity, and identifying the main conclusions and debates surrounding them. It is important to note that, although different, oftentimes the terms religion and religiosity may be used interchangeably in research.

Religion is a system of beliefs, practices, and symbols that frequently entail the worship of one or more deities, adherence to a particular morality, and participation in rituals (Geertz,

(4) the Questionnaire of Cognitive and Affective Empathy by Reniers et al, (2011), focusing on cognitive and emotional empathy by using five sub scales (Reiners et al., 2011).

² Proximal responsivity: the immediate and direct emotional reactions one has when witnessing someone else in distress. It involves one's emotions mirroring those of another person when nearby, resulting in an instant empathetic response (Davis, 1983).

³ Peripheral responsivity: Differs from proximal responsivity as it pertains to more indirect or secondary emotional responses. Even if one doesn't instantly resonate with the distress of the observed person, peripheral responsivity can manifest as feelings of concern, pity, or sadness for that person from a more distant or detached perspective (Davis, 1983).

2017; James, 2018). Religion is seen as offering a feeling of meaning and purpose, helping some people and communities make sense of the world, deal with the difficulties of life, and cope with uncertainty (Pargament, 2001).

Religion is the baseline for religiosity. Religiosity refers to an individual's religious beliefs, practices, and commitment usually associated with a church or structured community (e.g., Peterman et al., 2002; Erdem 2010; Dirilen-Gümüü, 2010). In other words, one could argue religiosity measures how religious one is. It encapsulates multiple dimensions, such as, for instance, the frequency of attendance to religious services, the importance of religion in one's life, and adherence to religious teachings or doctrines (e.g., Glock, 1962; Allport & Ross, 1967; Hill & Pargament 2003).

In addition to religiosity being a multidimensional concept, “there is no general consensus on the number and meaning of these dimensions” (Lemos et al., 2019). In 2008, a total of 177 scales used to measure religiosity were accounted for, 44 of which had been published since 1999 (Cutting & Walsh, 2008).

Just like empathy, religiosity can be operationalized through different empirical scales, measuring specific dimensions of it. Furthermore, some studies choose to use one or two questions instead of a pre-defined scale (e.g., Dirilen-Gümüü, 2010). Nevertheless, to illustrate the diversity of dimensions and how they impact the main conclusions of the research, this dissertation chooses to highlight a couple of dimensions: intrinsic vs extrinsic religious orientation (e.g., Allport and Ross, 1967), literal vs symbolic religious styles (e.g., Duriez, 2004; Łowicki & Zajenkowski, 2020) and inclusion vs exclusion of transcendence (e.g., Duriez, 2004; Łowicki & Zajenkowski, 2020).

The intrinsic orientation of religion relates to religion as an end, a master motive through which an individual guides their actions, whereas extrinsic religious orientation relates to religious beliefs as a means to an end, namely when it benefits the believer, i.e., through social relations, status, personal comfort, etc. (Allport and Ross, 1967). Concerning religious styles, the literal style relates to a one-track mind way of thinking where only one answer exists to each question (Fontaine et al., 2003), while the symbolic dimension relates to the possibility of multiple interpretations (Fontaine et al., 2003; Fontaine et al., 2005), implying “a tolerance for ambiguity as well as for interpretations that can be critical of the existing social order” (Fontaine et al., 2005, p. 131). Inclusion and exclusion of transcendence relate to the belief in a transcendent entity – people who believe in a deity (inclusion) and people who do not (exclusion) (e.g., Duriez, 2004).

It is important to avoid seeing religiosity as a static concept, but rather recognize it as a multidimensional construct that encapsulates different dimensions that can change according to the context and purpose of research. The orientation of religion, the style of religious belief, and the existence of belief all can play a role thus highlighting the complexity of its effect on empathy.

Building upon previous studies (e.g., Duriez, 2004; Markstrom et al., 2009; Łowicki & Jonason, 2021), and considering the availability of data, this dissertation considers the following dimensions of religiosity: inclusion of transcendence (religious belief); identification as religious (being religious); attendance to religious services; and importance of God.

Inclusion of transcendence may influence empathy levels (Duriez, 2004; Łowicki & Zajenkowski, 2021; Allport & Ross, 1967). Being a religious person can shape worldview, moral values, and interpersonal relationships (Batson et al., 1995). Regular attendance to religious services can promote social bonds (e.g., Markstrom et al., 2009), potentially boosting prosocial behaviour. The importance of God, differentiating deep commitment from nominal identification (e.g., Allport & Ross, 1967; Huber & Huber, 2012), could significantly impact one's empathetic responses and prosocial attitudes.

1.3 The Effect of Religiosity on Empathy: The Higher the Religiosity, the Higher the Empathy

One of the goals of the present research is to empirically assess the effect of religiosity on empathy (objective 1). Intending to provide a literature review underlying this goal, this section focuses on the main conclusions and debates concerning religiosity as an explanatory factor of empathy.

Although using different methodologies, most studies on this topic have reached a similar conclusion: religious people tend to be more empathetic (e.g., Darley & Batson, 1973; Greenwald, 1976; Watson et al., 1984; Batson & Gray, 1981; Francis & Pearson, 1987). However, up until now, no study conducted a large-scale, cross-cultural analysis of this effect, calling into question the possible outcomes in doing so. Moreover, although a correlation is likely, debate ensues when arguing which dimensions of both religiosity and empathy correlate positively and which do not, especially given the number of scales used to measure them.

Duriez (2004) found a positive correlation between empathetic concern and the symbolic processing of religious content, and a negative correlation between inclusion of transcendence and empathetic concern. This suggests that individuals who believe in a transcendent deity are

not necessarily more empathetic (Duriez, 2004). However, this conclusion has since been contested. Other studies have found a positive correlation between empathetic concern and religiosity, specifically regarding the inclusion of transcendence and symbolic religious style (Łowicki & Zajenkowski, 2020). These results suggest that empathetic concern is strongly associated with belief in God, with religious individuals often experiencing greater empathy for others. Furthermore, this research also indicates that belief in God is the sole significant predictor of empathetic concern when inclusion of transcendence and religious styles are taken simultaneously into account (Łowicki & Zajenkowski, 2020).

In short, concerning religious styles, both Duriez (2004) and Łowicki and Zajenkowski (2020) indicate that the symbolic religious style (tolerance for ambiguity and multiple interpretations) is positively correlated with empathetic concern. In other words, people with this type of religious style, are capable of multiple perspectives in their religious understanding and appear to be more empathetic. Discrepancies happen, however, when considering belief in God. Two possible explanations for such discrepancies could be: 1) choice of methodology (e.g., Davis, 1983; Duriez, 2004; Reniers et al., 2011) since different studies choose different scales; and 2) cultural backgrounds and religious traditions of the population researched (e.g., Hofstede, 1984; Tarakeshwar et al., 2003). This dissertation considers and accounts for these limitations, by proposing to test this effect at a level not yet tested - a comparative European level - where different countries, with different cultural and religious traditions, face the same methodological choices. Hence, this dissertation proposes its first hypothesis (1) individuals with higher religiosity will display greater empathetic tendencies than those with lower levels of religiosity in a comparative European analysis.

When examining the effect of religiosity on empathy, it is also crucial to consider the ongoing debate regarding their connection, regardless of religious denomination. On one hand, religion has been identified as a potential catalyst for prejudice and intolerance (Duriez, 2004). While it can contribute to broadening empathy from a limited circle to all of humanity, religion has also been associated with justifying or inciting violence towards different religions, races, cultures, or sexual orientations (Duriez, 2004). On the other hand, religion can extend the altruistic impulses of individuals beyond their own circle by using specific language and symbolism (Duriez, 2004), thus fostering prosocial behaviours such as caring (Batson, 1983; Duriez, 2004; Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008). Religious practices and communal rituals may also enhance emotional connections between individuals and create an environment conducive to empathetic actions (Markstrom et al., 2009). Many religious teachings across various traditions promote selflessness and cooperation (Batson et al., 1983).

1.4 The Effect of Religiosity on Political Ideology: The More Religious, the More Conservative

The second goal of the present research is to empirically assess the effect of religiosity on political ideology (objective 2). Intending to provide a literature review underlying this goal this section focuses on identifying tendencies and main conclusions. It is also worth noting that the terms conservative and liberal may be used as synonyms for right-leaning and left-leaning, respectively.

The wide existing research suggests a strong correlation between being highly religious and being conservative, driven by both inherent preferences and social influences (e.g., Layman & Carmines, 1997; Olson & Green, 2006; Guth et al., 2006; Kelly & Morgan, 2007; Malka et al., 2012; Burleson, 2020; O'Brien & Abdelhadi, 2020). Two major frameworks propose explanations for this observed tendency. The first framework suggests an organic or intrinsic connection, suggesting that religious individuals naturally gravitate towards conservative ideologies (e.g., Alford, et al., 2005; Jost et al., 2008; Graham et al., 2009). The Moral Foundations Theory (Graham et al., 2009) explains this framework by suggesting that people prioritize certain moral foundations based on their upbringing, culture, and beliefs. Religious individuals tend to emphasize values such as sanctity, authority, and loyalty, which are more closely associated with conservative ideologies. In contrast, liberal ideologies prioritise harm prevention and fairness, which may not be as deeply emphasised in religious contexts.

In contrast, the second framework attributes this tendency to social influences, arguing that religious elites across denominations promote conservative views, implying a complementary relationship between religious beliefs and conservative ideologies (Carroll et al. 1999; Layman, 2001; Layman & Green, 2005)

Both frameworks can coexist as both support the argument that religious people tend to be more conservative. Moreover, this tendency seems to stem from engagement with political discourse (Malka et al., 2012), suggesting that active participation in political discussions and debates plays a role in strengthening and reinforcing the observed relationship between religiosity and conservative leanings. It highlights the dynamic nature of this relationship, which evolves not just from inherent beliefs or elite influence but also from ongoing interactions in the political arena (Malka et al., 2012).

It is important to note, however, that most of this research was also conducted by taking the United States as a case study concerning the liberal-conservative dichotomy. Hence, to

allow a broader generalization of the conclusions by testing that relationship in a different context, that of Europe, this dissertation proposes to replicate the test of the effect of religiosity on ideology in an updated and comparative European approach. Hypothesis (2) thus reads as follows: higher levels of religiosity (measured through belief in God, identification as religious, attendance to religious services, and importance of God) will positively correlate with more right-wing self-positioning.

1.5 The Effect of Political Ideology on Empathy: The More Conservative, the Less Empathetic

The third goal of the present research is to empirically assess the effect of political ideology on empathy (objective 3). Intending to provide a literature review underlying this goal, section five highlights the main conclusions and studies. Beyond the focus on religiosity, research has also argued that empathy can also be affected by ideology. This section explores the literature assessing the extent to which ideology influences empathy. First, it starts with a brief analysis of the psychological mechanisms underlying empathy and ideology; then it delves into the similarities and differences in empathy on the ideological spectrum left-right. It is important to note, once again, that the terms left and right are often equated to liberal and conservative.

Extant literature suggests a reciprocal effect between ideology and empathy. On one hand, psychological differences and distinct levels of empathy may influence variations in ideology and policy positions (e.g., Iyer et al., 2012; Kirchler et al., 2014; Jost et al., 2008; Hasson et al., 2018). On the other, ideology can often predict how an individual might experience empathy (e.g., Iyer et al., 2012; Hasson et al., 2018). This may help to explain why conservatives tend to focus more on reducing uncertainty and threats compared to liberals (Jost et al., 2003). Still, research recognizes that people on both ends of the political spectrum can be intolerant (Kirchler et al., 2014).

Both liberals and conservatives exhibit greater empathy for their own political group compared to others (Hasson et al., 2018), meaning they have “similar levels of intolerance towards ideologically dissimilar and threatening groups” (Brandt et al., 2014, p. 27). This implies that these ideological groups are more similar than initially believed in terms of empathy (e.g., Morgan et al., 2010; Crawford & Pilanski, 2012). However, some works also highlight that liberals tend to feel more empathy than conservatives (e.g., Iyer et al., 2012; Hasson et al., 2018). That is, there is still some ambiguity regarding the results of this relationship.

One explanation for this is that while liberals tend to attribute others' plights to external causes (factors outside of an individual's control), leading to greater empathy towards them, conservatives tend to attribute such situations to internal causes (factors an individual can control) being less likely to show the same level of empathy (Skitka & Tetlock, 1992; Puthillam & Kapoor, 2021). Liberals also tend to exhibit broader empathetic circles compared to conservatives (Waytz et al. 2016; Puthillam & Kapoor 2021). This means that liberals are generally more inclined to extend their empathy and understanding to a wider range of individuals and groups. In contrast, conservatives are more likely to restrict their empathetic responses, expressing a stronger level of empathy towards their family and nation (Puthillam & Kapoor, 2021).

Considering both the ambiguity of the conclusions and the context in which they were conducted, this dissertation proposes to re-test this effect in a comparative European context. Thus, it poses its third hypothesis (3) ideological self-positioning influences levels of empathy, with individuals more to the left wing likely demonstrating higher empathy than those to the right wing.

1.6 The Possible Mediating Role of Political Ideology on the Effect of Religiosity on Empathy: Research Goals and Hypotheses

The fourth and last goal of the present research is to empirically test the mediating effect of ideology on the effect of religiosity on empathy (objective 4). Intending to provide a literature review underlying this goal this section starts by identifying what research has done previously.

Considering the focus from previous research on small samples and case studies, this dissertation seeks to re-test the effect of religiosity on empathy, as well as of religiosity on ideology and of ideology on empathy (as posed in objectives 1, 2 and 3).

Objective 4 takes shape when considering the paradox at hand: religious individuals tend to exhibit higher levels of empathy and often lean more towards conservative ideologies. Previous research has consistently shown that religiosity is often linked to prosocial behaviours and increased empathy. On the flip side, other studies have demonstrated that left-leaning individuals, despite being generally less religious, often display high empathetic tendencies. This juxtaposition of findings creates a compelling paradox in the literature.

However, when scrutinizing these seemingly conflicting narratives, it is possible to recognize a potential missing link: the role of political ideology. Could it be that political ideology acts as a filter or a lens through which religiosity influences empathy? This speculation

suggests that it might not just be one's religious beliefs, but how those beliefs intertwine with one's political leanings, that determines their empathetic behaviours.

Understanding ideology as a potential mediator is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it can bridge the gap between the conflicting findings in the literature, providing a deeper understanding of the religiosity-empathy effect. Secondly, in an increasingly polarized world, comprehending the interplay between religiosity, ideology, and empathy can offer insights into promoting cohesion and understanding among diverse groups. Hence, to unravel this complex relationship and to provide clarity to the aforementioned paradox, this study aims to explore the possible mediating role of ideology on the effect of religiosity on empathy.

Few studies have delved into the use of a mediator in the effect of religiosity on empathy concluding that caring for others mediates the effect of the importance of belief on empathetic concern (Markstrom et al., 2009) and moral identity mediates the effect of religious involvement on empathy (Hardy et al., 2012). So far, literature has not produced relevant literature on the study of ideology as a mediator in the effect of religiosity on empathy. Hence, it becomes evident that our understanding of the effect of religiosity on empathy could benefit from analysing mediating factors as another way of looking at it and contributing to its understanding.

Political ideology, particularly in terms of left vs. right, can influence attitudes towards issues such as social justice, equality, and human rights. For instance, individuals who identify with the left tend to value equality and universal rights more, while those on the right might emphasize order, tradition, and individual values.

So, considering that religiosity might encourage empathy through teachings about love, charity, and human connection, the way these teachings are interpreted and put into practice might vary depending on an individual's ideological inclination. A religious person on the left might be more inclined to apply these teachings in social justice contexts, advocating, for instance, for the rights of the disadvantaged. In contrast, a religious person on the right might interpret these teachings more traditionally or conservatively, focusing on community and family values.

This connection suggests that when studying the effect of religiosity on empathy, the role of political ideology cannot be overlooked. As a potential mediator, ideology could shape, amplify, or diminish the impact of religiosity on empathy.

This dissertation therefore poses its hypothesis (4) political ideology will mediate the effect of religiosity on empathy, with right-wing self-positioning weakening the positive correlation between religiosity and empathy. The inverse, with left-wing self-positioning strengthening this

correlation, might be true as well since while right-wing self-positioning might weaken the positive correlation between religiosity and empathy due to reasons like adherence to traditional values, and conservative interpretations of religious teachings, left-wing positioning might amplify the positive aspects of religious teachings that advocate for compassion, charity, and love for all. That said, these interpretations aren't universally applicable and might vary based on individual experiences, specific religious beliefs, and the cultural or national context. However, they offer a theoretical perspective on why left-wing ideology might influence the empathetic tendencies generated by religiosity.

The direct effect of religiosity on empathy may be influenced by an individual's ideological self-positioning. This means that the strength and/or direction of the effect could change when considering one's political leanings. That is, for individuals with right-leaning political views, the positive correlation traditionally observed between religiosity and empathy is expected to weaken. In other words, highly religious individuals who also lean to the right wing might not exhibit as high levels of empathy as those who are highly religious but do not lean right.

While the hypothesis specifically mentions right-wing self-positioning, by implication, left-leaning self-positioning is likely expected to strengthen the positive correlation between religiosity and empathy. If the hypothesis holds true, it suggests that empathy is not just explained by religiosity, but that that relationship is affected by the individual's left-right ideology.

CHAPTER 2

Methods and Measures: Methodological Considerations

Chapter two will focus on the proposed methodology for this dissertation. Section one delves into the reasons behind the database choice; section two highlights biases in previous research on empathy and religiosity to justify and strengthen the methodological choices for this dissertation; section three explores empathy's measurements from earlier studies and introduces the measures adopted in this dissertation; section four examines measurements of religiosity in past research and proposes the ones used in this dissertation; and section five reviews political ideology measurements from prior studies and details the measurements selected for this work.

2.1 Database Choice

Despite the identification of a strong relationship between empathy and religiosity in previous research, this link is yet to be tested in a broader comparative context. Prior research, as explored in the previous chapter, built their conclusions on small samples, generally with less than 500 respondents (e.g., Duriez, 2004; Łowicki & Jonason, 2021), often even less than 300 (e.g., Saroglou et al., 2005; Jack at al., 2016; Watson et al., 1984; Batson & Gray, 1981). Such limited sample sizes inherently restrain the statistical power and, consequently, the confidence with which findings can be generalized to the population. Furthermore, the lack of diverse contexts in prior studies risks omitting important cultural, historical, or socio-political differences that may influence the effect of religiosity on empathy. This dissertation aims to fill this gap by providing a large-scale, cross-cultural study focusing on a European comparative approach, thereby enhancing the breadth of understanding in this domain.

In addressing the research objectives, this dissertation leverages the most recent wave of data from the European Value Study of 2017. This database stands out not only for its recency but also for its comprehensive inclusion of variables that permit the operationalisation of this dissertation's core concepts. For this European comparison, the research encompasses all the available countries from this wave, totalling 36 nations and 59,438 respondents: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Ukraine.

Additionally, this dissertation considers sex, age, and education as control variables, as seen in previous research (e.g., Watson et al., 1984; Francis & Person 1987; Markstrom et al., 2010; Łowicki et al., 2020; Layman & Carmines 1997; Olson & Green 2006; Malka et al 2012; Obrien & Abdelhadi, 2020; Puthillam & Kapoor, 2021).

2.2 Methodological Constraints in Prior Research: Social Desirability

Biases in Measuring Empathy and Religiosity

This section addresses potential biases in measuring empathy and religiosity, with a particular emphasis on the influence of social desirability bias.

Empathetic individuals are known to possess overly positive self-perceptions, often stemming from the denial of negative traits rather than an acknowledgement of positive ones (Paulhus & Reid, 1991). Religiosity, still seen as a desirable trait, is also targeted by the same bias, suggesting that individuals may exaggerate their levels of religiosity and spirituality in response to empirical assessments (Jones & Elliot, 2017). Consequently, self-reported measures of both empathy and religiosity may be influenced by the desire for social approval or communal benefits, potentially exaggerating individuals' perceived levels of empathy and religiosity (Jones & Elliott, 2017; Leak & Fish, 1989; Sedikides & Gebauer, 2010).

To counter the effects of social desirability bias in self-reported data, other-reports may be used (e.g., Saroglou et al., 2005; Jack et al., 2016). Though most studies using self-reports indicate a positive correlation between religiosity and empathy (e.g., Watson et al., 1984; Łowicki & Jonason, 2021; Ishii & Watanabe, 2022), other-reports provide an alternative perspective, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of this effect. However, it's worth noting that both types of reports consistently support the idea that religious individuals tend to express and be perceived as having higher levels of empathetic concern (e.g., Watson et al., 1984; Watson et al., 1995; Łowicki & Jonason, 2021; Ishii & Watanabe, 2022; Saroglou et al., 2005; Jack et al., 2016).

While self-reports are susceptible to biases like social desirability, they remain essential for capturing an individual's self-perception and subjective experiences. They offer insights into personal interpretations and understanding of one's empathy and religiosity (Paulhus, 1991; Jones & Elliott, 2017). Moreover, the alignment between self-reports and other-reports in previous research highlights the reliability of self-reported data in assessing the relationship between empathy and religiosity (e.g., Saroglou et al., 2005; Watson et al., 1995). Given this consistent alignment and the inherent value of self-reports in understanding subjective

experiences, this dissertation has chosen to employ self-reported measures of empathy and religiosity.

2.3 Measurements for Empathy

This section delves into measurements of empathy, discussing previous scales in some detail regarding their characteristics and limitations. Then, it proposes this dissertation's measurements, highlighting the questions used and the targeted groups.

The scales adopted to measure empathy in previous research highlight the diversity of psychological approaches to empathy, as each one operationalizes different aspects of the concept. The most widely used include, but are not limited to: (1) the Empathy Quotient (henceforth, EQ), focusing on cognitive empathy, emotional empathy and social skills (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004); (2) the Mehrabian and Epstein Questionnaire measure of emotional empathy (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972); (3) the Hogan Empathy Scale, focusing on emotional empathy and affective empathy (Hogan, 1969); (3) the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (henceforth, IRI), acknowledging affective and cognitive dimensions by implementing four subscales (Davis, 1983); and (4) the Questionnaire of Cognitive and Affective Empathy (henceforth QCAE) by Reniers et al, (2011), focusing on cognitive and emotional empathy by using five sub scales (Reiners et al., 2011).

The EQ, developed by Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright (2004) for autism research, is a self-report measure that assesses empathy as a whole, without sub-scales or subcategories. It consists of 40 questions and defines empathy as a combination of two key abilities: experiencing appropriate emotional responses to others' emotions and understanding those emotions.

Mehrabian and Epstein's measure of empathy includes 33 questions, divided into seven categories⁴. Hogan's scale comprises 64 questions derived from other personality tests, which then allowed for the creation of two independent groups - high empathy individuals and low empathy individuals (Stueber, 2019).

The IRI by Davis calculates a separate empathy score for each of its four scales, rather than a single overall score. The IRI's four scales are Perspective Taking, Fantasy, Empathetic

⁴ "Susceptibility to emotional contagion, Appreciation of the feelings of unfamiliar and distant others, Extreme emotional responsiveness, Tendency to be moved by others' positive emotional experiences, Tendency to be moved by others' negative emotional experiences, Sympathetic tendency, Willingness to to be in contact with others who have problems" (Mehrabian and Epstein, 1972).

Concern, and Personal Distress⁵. Each scale represents a distinct dimension of empathy, with a total of 28 questions, 7 questions per scale (Stueber, 2019).

The QCAE is also a popular tool for measuring empathy, developed by Reniers et al. in 2011. It comprises five sub-scales to assess both affective and cognitive empathy: Perspective Taking, Online Simulation, Emotion Contagion, Proximal Responsivity and Peripheral Responsivity⁶.

These scales, despite their frequent application, have notable constraints. The EQ does not accurately differentiate between empathy, sympathy, and personal distress, thus impeding its ability to autonomously evaluate empathy (Stueber, 2019). Both the Hogan scale⁷ and the Mehrabian and Epstein's scale⁸ include items that do not correspond with their chosen empathy definitions, indicating issues with measurement validity (Stueber, 2019). Specifically, certain items on Hogan's scale are unrelated to cognitive empathy, and some on the Mehrabian and Epstein's scale are not related to emotional empathy (Stueber, 2019). Moreover, the QCAE overlooks cultural and linguistic factors, limiting its applicability in non-English contexts and potential dimension overlap (Stueber, 2019). The IRI may fail to encapsulate cultural differences and its Personal Distress scale has been contested for not accurately reflecting an empathetic response (Stueber, 2019). These limitations collectively point to a lack of validity in these measures due to inappropriate operationalization decisions. Probably because of such issues, no correlation has been found between the scores calculated from the empathy scales and their accuracy in measuring empathy (Stueber, 2019).

Considering the limitations and operationalisation choices of previous research, this dissertation sees empathy as per Davis (1983) and Batson et al. (1997), choosing to focus on empathetic concern, the aspect of emotional empathy, within dispositional empathy, and defining it as an emotional response to another's welfare. Furthermore, while other scales used to measure empathy faced critiques for not relating to their definition of empathy (e.g., Hogan scale and the Mehrabian and Epstein's scale), this dissertation overcomes that obstacle by choosing variables that relate directly to the definition chosen.

⁵ See Davis (1983) for a more comprehensive understanding of this scale.

⁶ See Reniers et al. (2011) for a more comprehensive understanding of this scale.

⁷ Literature qualifies as problematic the following questions: "Question 7: I prefer a shower to a tub bath; Question 29: I think I would like to belong to a singing club; Question 56: I like to talk about sex." (Hogan, 1969)

⁸ Literature qualifies as problematic the following questions: "Question 2: People make too much of the feelings and sensitivity of animals; Question 3: I often find public display of affection annoying; Question 4: I am annoyed by unhappy people who are just sorry for themselves; Question 33: Little children sometimes cry for no apparent reasons." (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972)

The variables used in this dissertation to measure empathy consider the approach taken by Davis (1983) and Batson et al. (1997), as well as the understanding that empathy promotes prosocial behaviours among strangers (Cikara, et al., 2014). Therefore, the measurement of the dependent variable focuses on the empathetic concern felt by the respondents, towards two different group categories: one group considering geography (the response items are: “people in your neighbourhood”, “people of the region you live in”, “fellow countrymen”, “Europeans”, “all humans all over the world”) and one group considering vulnerable individuals in society (the response items are: “immigrants”, “unemployed individuals”, “sick and disabled individuals”, and “elderly people”).

The decision to incorporate both empathy when considering geography and empathy towards vulnerable groups of people in this dissertation was driven by the ambition to achieve a comprehensive understanding of empathetic tendencies. First and foremost, introducing a variety of empathetic triggers, from geographical distinctions to vulnerabilities, allows for a richer exploration of empathy's multifaceted nature. Secondly, this approach distinguishes between the experiences of those from distant regions and the immediate vulnerabilities faced by certain groups, enabling a detailed examination of where empathy is most pronounced. This dual approach, by capturing a broad spectrum of empathetic concerns towards different target groups, bolsters the study's external validity, making its findings highly applicable to a range of real-world contexts.

Empathy will be thus measured through two questions in the EVS, both focusing on empathetic concern. Question 1 is the following: “To what extent do you feel concerned about the living conditions of: the people in your neighbourhood, the people of the region you live in, your fellow countrymen, Europeans, all humans all over the world”. Question 2 is as follows: “To what extent do you feel concerned about the living conditions of the following groups living in your country: elderly people, unemployed people, immigrants, sick and disabled people”. Both questions were given the following scale: 1 = very much, 2 = much, 3 = to a certain extent (question 1)/cares more or less (question 2), 4 = not so much, and 5 = not at all.

To operationalise empathy regarding the above-mentioned questions two composite variables were created, one for each one of the questions. The alpha is 0,888 for the items in Question 1, and 0,805 for Question 2, thus allowing the elaboration of the two mean indexes. Both indexes were recoded to combine the answers into two categories: (1) “cares for other people” stemming from “very much” and “much”, recoded as 1; and (2) “doesn't care for other people” stemming from “not so much” and “doesn't care at all”, recorded as 0. “Cares more or less for other people” (for question 2) and “cares to a certain extend” (for question 1), were not

considered in the recodification, and were considered missing since they concern a neutral answer.

The decision to categorize responses into these binary groups, as opposed to utilizing the full spectrum of responses, was deliberate. The primary aim was to contrast clear empathetic tendencies against non-empathetic ones. Composite variables may dilute the clarity required to detect the presence or absence of empathy. By omitting the middle-ground responses like "cares more or less for other people" and "cares to a certain extent", and recoding the answers, the focus was sharpened on distinct empathetic and non-empathetic behaviours. This approach provides a clearer picture of how respondents align themselves in terms of empathy, helping in discerning patterns and associations with other variables.

2.4 Measurements for Religiosity

This section recognizes the inability to use previously created religiosity scales and proposes the measurements adopted in this dissertation, presenting the variables used.

The multidimensional nature of religiosity has given rise to the design of countless scales to capture its essence. Hill and Hood (1999) categorized these scales into various categories according to content, including religious beliefs and practices, religious orientation, religious commitment, and more. Each scale serves a specific purpose, is used in a particular context, and targets a distinct population. However, the scales' broad categorization highlights the complexity and multi-dimensionality of religiosity itself.

While these scales have greatly furthered our understanding of religiosity, they come with limitations. Many scales were tailored to specific national or cultural contexts (Cutting & Walsh, 2008), making their indiscriminate application across diverse cultures potentially challenging (Cutting & Walsh, 2008). Furthermore, the demographic backgrounds they were designed for, such as college students or limited ethnic groups, can introduce biases, potentially presenting a skewed perception of religiosity (Hill & Hood, 1999).

In light of these considerations, and the diversity and number of scales available, this dissertation adopts an alternative approach. Drawing from the European Values Study (EVS) 2017 database, it focuses on dimensions consistently highlighted in the literature and operationalizes them for a European comparative setting. The dimensions are inclusion of transcendence (religious belief), identification as religious (being religious), attendance to religious services and importance of God.

Religious belief, will be measured through the following question: "Which, if any, of the following do you believe in: God?" The response (1 = yes and 2 = no) will be recoded as a dummy variable, where "yes" will be coded as 1 and "no" as 0.

Identification as religious will be measured through the following question: "Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are: a religious person, not a religious person, or a convinced atheist?" The responses to this question (1 = a religious person; 2 = not a religious person and 3 = a convinced atheist) will be recoded as a dummy variable, where "a religious person" will be coded as 1 and both "not a religious person" and "a convinced atheist" will be coded as 0.

Attendance to religious services will be measured through the following question: "Apart from weddings, funerals, and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?" answered on a scale from 1 (more than once a week) to 7 (never, practically never) and recoded with an inversion of the scale as follows: 1 = "never, practically never"; 2 = "less often"; 3 = "once a year"; 4 = "only on specific holy days"; 5 = "once a month"; 6 = "once a week" and 7 = "more than once a week".

The importance of God will be measured through the following question: "How important is God in your life?" answered on a scale from 1 = not at all important, to 10 = very important.

These dimensions were selected based on their relevance to the broader themes in religiosity literature and their potential influence on aspects like empathy levels, worldview, social bonds, and prosocial attitudes, as previously elaborated in Chapter 1.

2.5 Measurements for Political Ideology

This section starts by listing examples of measurements of political ideology in previous research, followed by the measure used in this dissertation and its justification.

Scholars have adopted diverse methods to measure political ideology. Some of these methods include utilizing intolerance judgment items to assess respondents' views of targets with specific political objectives (Crawford & Pilanski, 2012); measuring adherence to cultural norms and hierarchical structures (Puthillam et al., 2021); and responses to scenarios related to resource allocation (Skitka & Tetlock, 1992). Other techniques have delved into concepts like dehumanization (Waytz & Epley, 2012), symbolic racism (Sears & Henry, 2003), and the influence of political ideology on attitudes towards controversial speech and constitutional rights (Lindner & Nosek, 2009). The spectrum also includes assessments of attitudes towards

conflicting or consistent issues (Brandt et al., 2014) and evaluations of moral values and concerns (Iyer et al., 2012).

Among these diverse methodologies, scales have emerged as a popular tool. However, they present their own set of challenges. For instance, the Wilson-Patterson Attitude Inventory, which lists a series of issues for respondents to agree or disagree with, may not be equipped to address contemporary issues comprehensively. Its binary format risks oversimplifying complex views (e.g., Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The Social Dominance Orientation Scale, emphasizing group-based hierarchies, has faced criticisms regarding its construct validity and comprehensive representation of political ideology (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007; Pratto et al., 2006). Similarly, the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale, which zeroes in on authoritarian tendencies, might be seen as culturally biased and could potentially merge personality traits with political beliefs (Altemeyer, 1996; Feldman & Stenner, 1997). Tools like the Political Compass, offering a two-dimensional grid based on economic and social dimensions, have their own set of criticisms, including potential oversimplifications (Caprara et al., 1999; Duriez et al., 2005). The Moral Foundations Questionnaire also have its unique set of challenges (Graham et al., 2009; Haidt, 2008; Caprara et al., 2006; Duriez & Van Hiel, 2002).

Among these diverse tools stands the Left-Right Self-placement Scale, a seemingly simplistic measure in use. Despite critiques about its oversimplification and potential cultural misinterpretations (Fuchs & Klingemann, 1990; Inglehart & Klingemann, 1976; Jost, 2006), this scale offers several strengths. Historically, it has been a cornerstone in political research, highlighting its longevity and adaptability across different research contexts. Its widespread use and inclusion in major surveys, like the European Values Study (EVS) 2017, underpin its significance. Furthermore, the scale's adaptability to various cultural and societal contexts showcases its strength.

Critics argue that the scale might not fully capture the complex nature of politics, with some suggesting that it merely reflects party-specific ideological stereotypes (Sartori, 2005; Inglehart, 1990). However, research has consistently shown its efficacy, with voters accurately identifying with ideological families and positioning themselves aptly on the left-right spectrum (Inglehart & Klingemann, 1976; Klingemann, 1995). Despite its limitations, its credibility remains intact, as demonstrated by various studies (Belchior, 2010; Powell, 2000; McDonald & Budge, 2005).

This dissertation chooses, therefore, to support the measurement of ideology in self-reported placement on the left-right scale. The question is: “In political matters, people talk of ‘the left’ and ‘the right’. How would you place your views on this scale [1 to 10], generally

speaking?”, where 1 is left and 10 is right. This choice is made for three main reasons: ease and efficiency when analysing data, direct measurement of individual ideology, and accommodation of the diversity of political beliefs to allow for distinctions between individuals who may lean slightly to the left or right and those who have more extreme self-positioning stances.

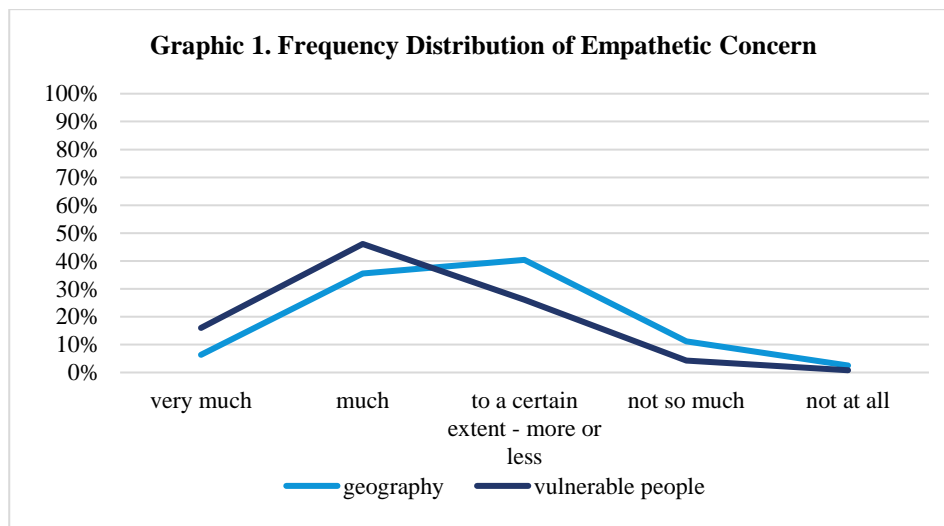
Explaining Empathy by Religiosity and Ideology: Results and Discussion

This chapter aims to empirically respond to the objectives and test the hypothesis proposed in this dissertation. Section 1 presents a descriptive analysis of the main variables at stake; section 2 concerns the effect of religiosity on empathy; section 3 addresses the effect of religiosity on political ideology; section 4 delves into the effect of political ideology on empathy; and section 5 explores the mediating role of ideology in the effect of religiosity on empathy.

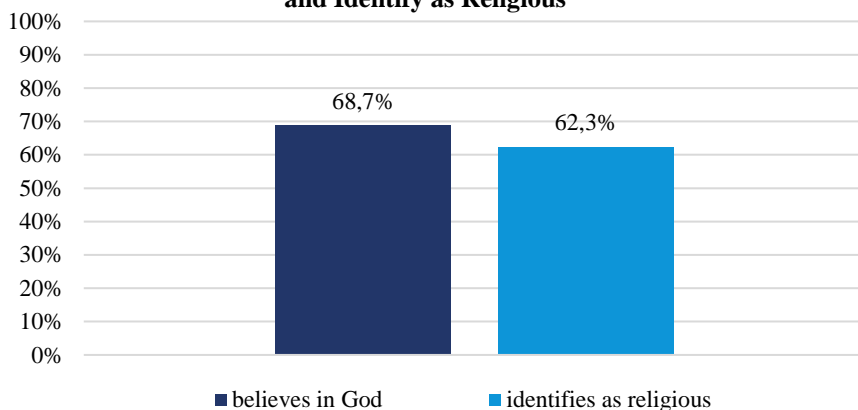
3.1 Some Descriptive of The Main Variables in the Research

This section will start by presenting a brief descriptive analysis of the main variables in this dissertation.

Overall, the respondents show stronger empathetic concern regarding vulnerable groups of people compared to people considering geography (Graphic 1). The majority of respondents have moderate to strong concern in both cases, but the intensity is notably higher in the first group. Furthermore, most respondents believe in God and identify themselves as religious (Graphic 2). Concerning the frequency of attendance to religious services, about a third never attend (32,9%), and 22,7% say they only attend on specific holy days (Graphic 3). God tends to be important for people in this sample, although those who shared that God is not important at all make up 17,7% (Graphic 4). Politically, they are more or less distributed across the left-right spectrum, although almost one-quarter positions themselves in the middle (Graphic 10, see appendix).

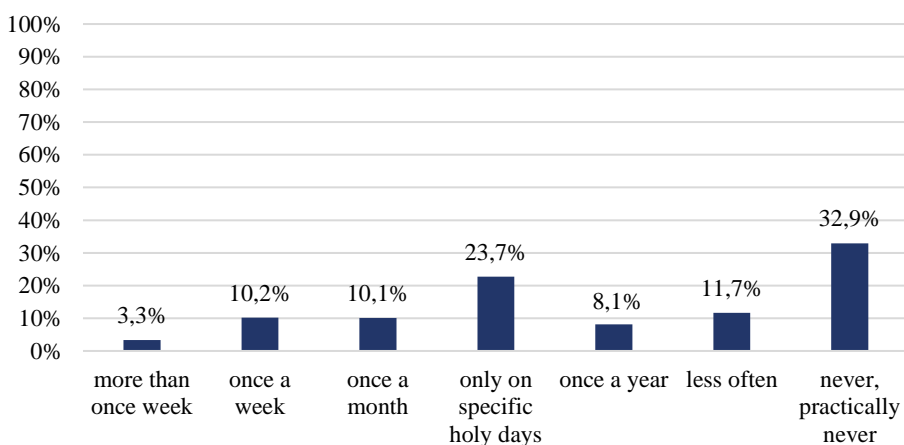


Graphic 2. Frequency Distribution of Those Who Believe in God and Identify as Religious

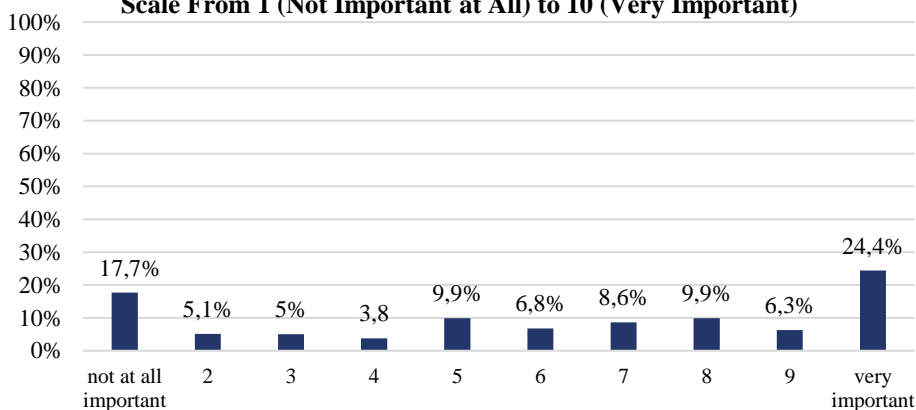


Note: variables are dicotomised and this data represents "yes".

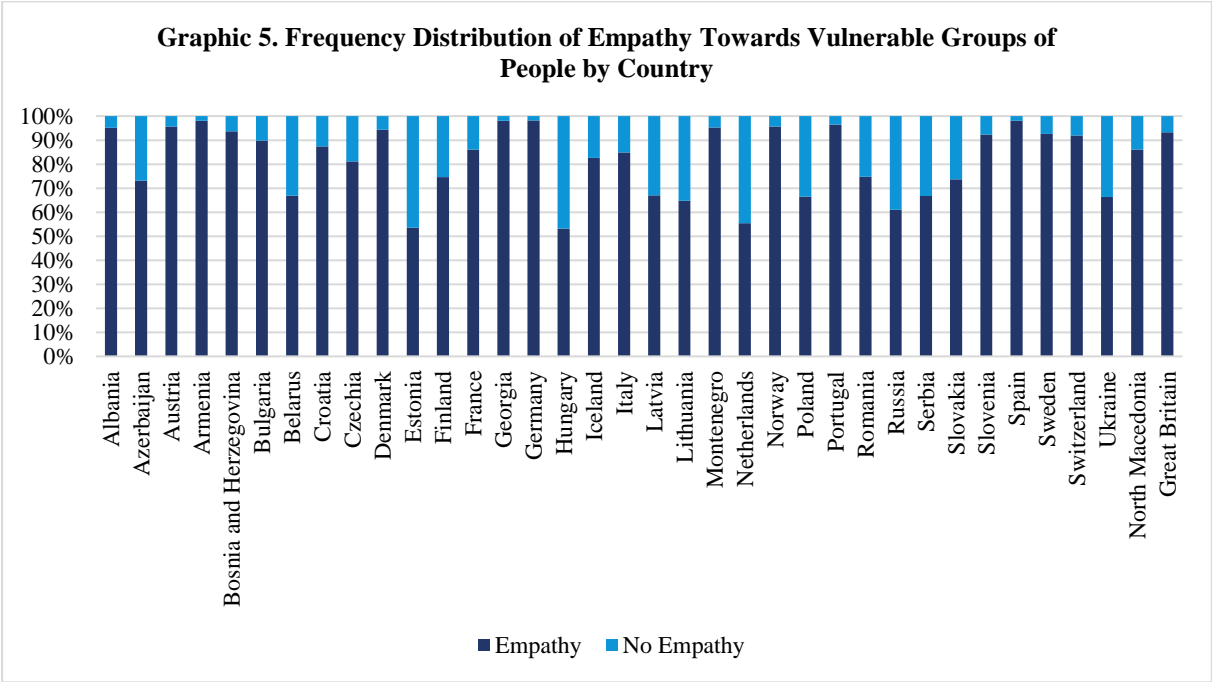
Graphic 3. Frequency Distribution of Attendance to Religious Services



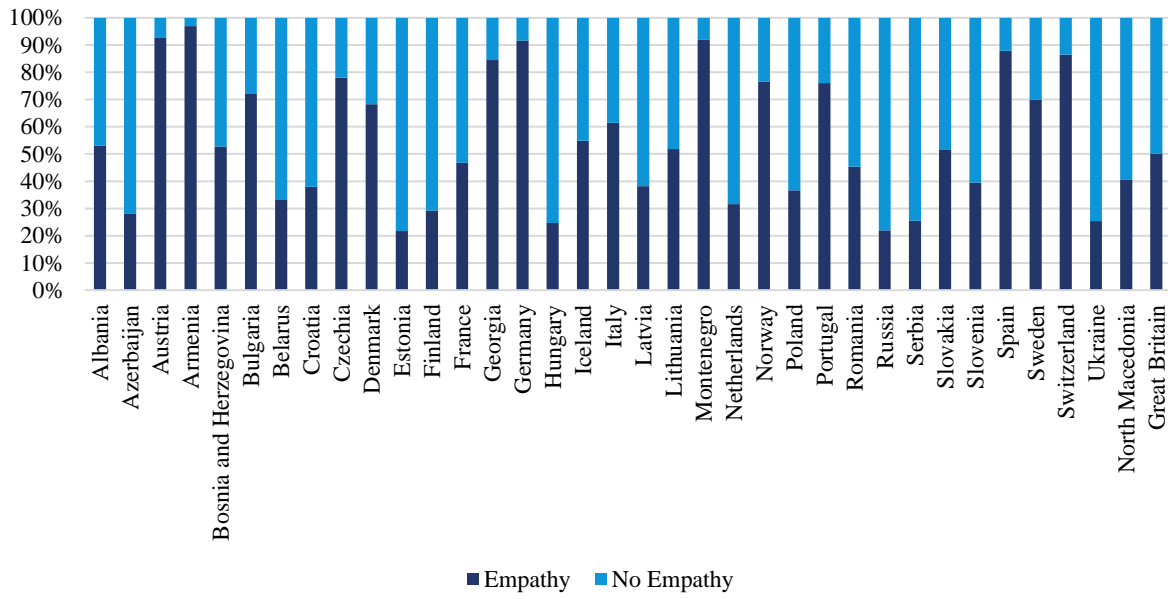
Graphic 4. Frequency Distribution of Importance of God on a Scale From 1 (Not Important at All) to 10 (Very Important)



At the macro level, countries tend to show varying degrees of empathy when comparing empathy towards vulnerable groups of people (Graphic 5) to empathy considering geography (Graphic 6). In some countries, empathy is consistently high or low in both cases, while in others, there is an evident difference between the two. Armenia stands out in both, with 98% expressing empathy towards vulnerable groups and an almost similar 97% when considering geography. Similar results are found for Germany. On the opposite, Estonia's empathy levels are noticeably low in both cases. For vulnerable groups, the empathy level stands at 53,5%, but it drops even further to 21,7% when considering geography. Hungary also shows low empathy levels across both cases. Azerbaijan has a significant difference between the two cases, with 73,1% empathy towards vulnerable groups but dropping to 28,2% when considering geography. Another country with a notable difference is the Netherlands, showing 55,4% empathy towards vulnerable groups but only 31,6% when considering geography. This means that although they may be related, these two operationalisations of empathy are independent of each other, at least at the macro level.



Graphic 6. Frequency Distribution of Empathy When Considering Geography by Country



3.2 The Effect of Religiosity on Empathy

Corroborating H1, the results from Table 1 suggest that higher levels of religiosity, as measured by identification as religious, attendance to religious services, and importance of God are generally associated with higher empathy towards vulnerable groups of people and when considering geography. Religious belief, however, shows a negative correlation to empathy in both cases. Nonetheless, when the probabilities are depicted (Figures 1 and 2), its effect aligns positively with the trends seen in the other religiosity variables, though the magnitude of the difference is less pronounced. This suggests that while the model might interpret religious belief as negatively correlated with empathy, the probability representation shows it to be in a positive direction, albeit to a lesser degree than other religiosity indicators. It is also important to note the roles of sex and education since they emerge as a predictor of empathy as well: women and the most educated tend to distance themselves from the right and lean to the left.

The mean comparison of the predicted probabilities⁹ of the effect of the variables measuring religiosity on both dependent variables shows a pattern consistent with the findings above, showcasing a congruent pattern between empathy towards vulnerable people and when considering geography. Across the religiosity variables (excluding religious belief), individuals who are more religious consistently show more probabilities of experiencing empathy. This observation firmly supports the hypothesis that religious individuals display more empathy.

While prior research has consistently shown that there is a positive correlation between religiosity and empathy, the specifics of which dimensions of religiosity correlate with which dimensions of empathy remain contentious. Duriez (2004) and Łowicki and Zajenkowski (2020) offer contrasting views, with the latter emphasizing the strong association between believing in God and empathetic concern. The results from Table 1 align closely with Duriez's conclusions, particularly in highlighting that religious belief is a weaker predictor of empathy. Furthermore, although Markstrom et al (2009) argue that attendance to religious services does not increase empathy, this dissertation found a different result. It is worth highlighting that contrary to previous studies (e.g., Duriez 2004; Markstrom et al., 2009; Łowicki & Zajenkowski, 2020), the results now achieved are based on a broad European comparison, which gives greater robustness to the conclusions reached.

One possible explanation for the results, as suggested by Duriez (2004), is that although religion might foster compassion, solidarity, and love, it also might foster intolerance, hate, and

⁹ For detailed information concerning the mean comparisons of the predicted probabilities, see figures 6 and 7 of appendix B.

prejudice. Hence, he argues that it is the religious processing styles and not the belief that predicts empathy.

Table 1. H1 - Binary Logistical Regression for Religiosity. Dependent variable: Empathy

	Empathy towards vulnerable groups of people				Empathy towards people considering geography			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B
Religious belief	0,71***	-0,35 (0,09)	0,70***	-0,36 (0,09)	0,79***	-0,24 (0,07)	0,79***	-0,24 (0,08)
Being religious	1,29**	0,25 (0,08)	1,18**	0,16 (0,08)	1,19**	0,18 (0,07)	1,17*	0,16 (0,07)
Attendance to religious services	1,10***	0,09 (0,02)	0,08***	0,08 (0,02)	1,13***	0,20 (0,01)	1,12***	0,12 (0,01)
Importance of God	1,09***	0,08 (0,01)	1,09***	0,09 (0,002)	1,02	0,02 (0,01)	1,03**	0,03 (0,01)
Sex (male=1)			0,80***	-0,22 (0,05)			1,10**	0,09 (0,04)
Age			1,02***	0,02 (0,01)			1,01***	0,01 (0,001)
Education (higher = 3)			1,30***	0,26 (0,07)			1,34***	0,30 (0,03)
Constant	3,06***	1,12 (0,05)	0,70**	-0,35 (0,13)	0,97	-0,02 (0,04)	0,312***	-1,12 (0,10)

N =	13237				11154			
R2 Negekerke =	0,03		0,07		0,02		0,04	

Collinearity tests were run (VIF and tolerance) indicating that the independent variables in both cases of empathy present no issues.

Note: All values have been rounded to the second decimal place.

* p<0.05

** p<0.01

*** p<0.001

Source: EVS, 2017

Figure 1. Predicted Probability of Empathy Towards Vulnerable Groups of People by Religiosity

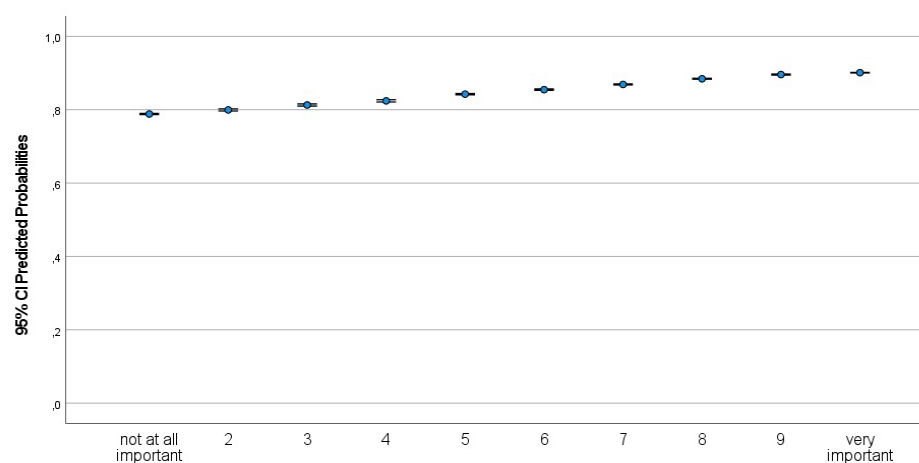
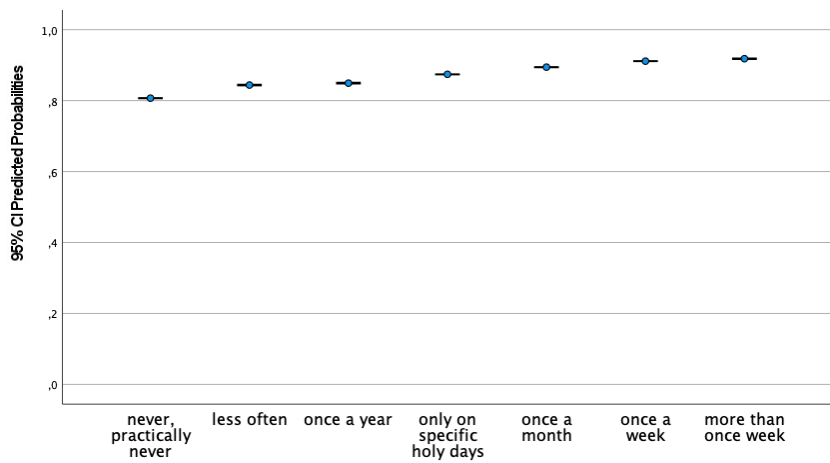
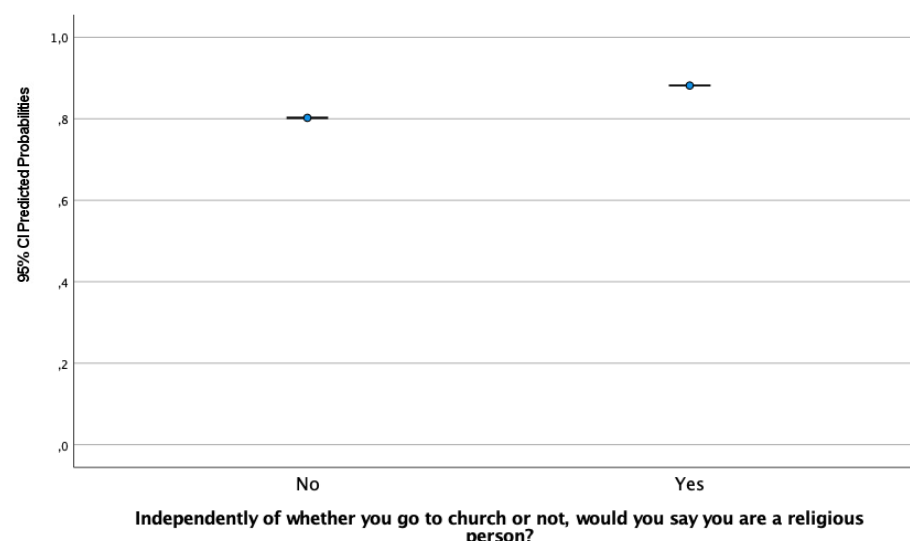
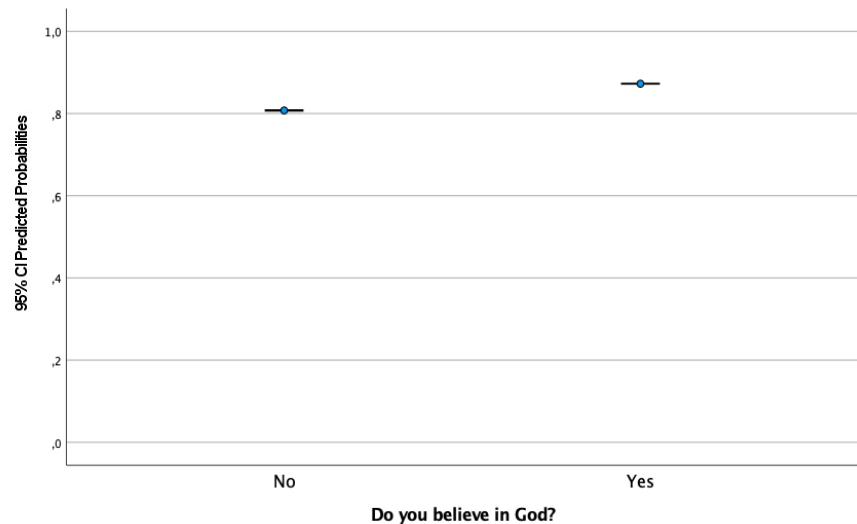
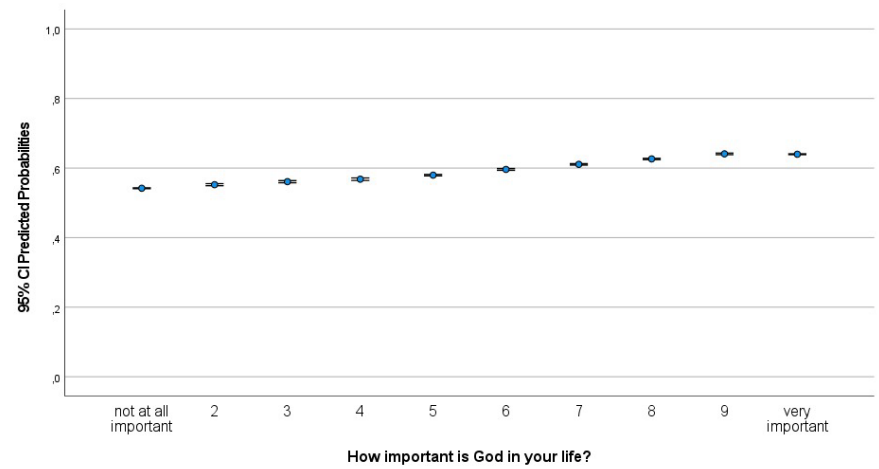
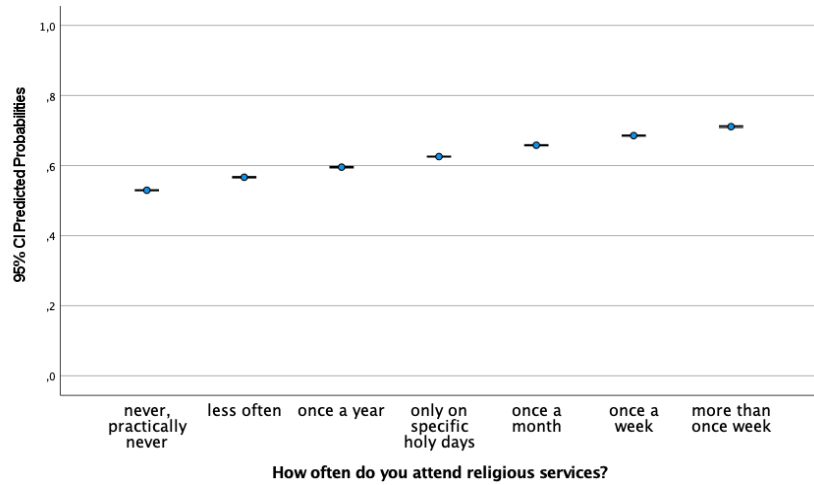
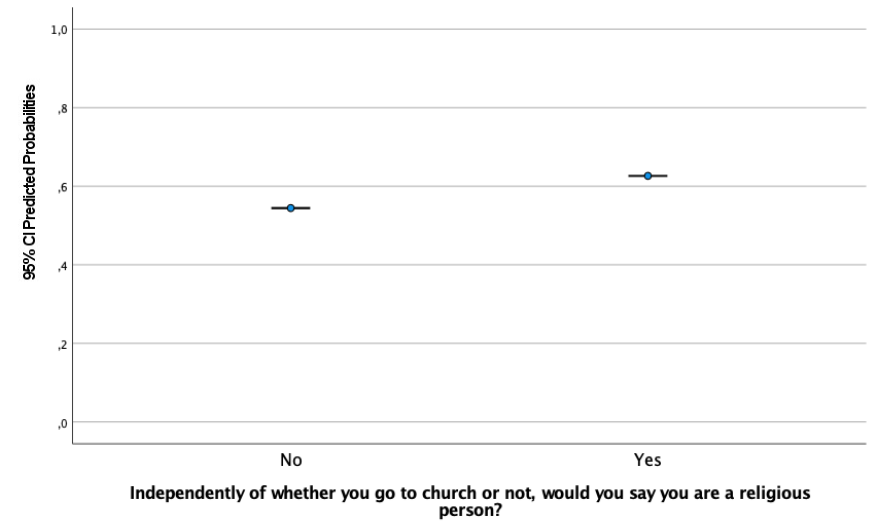
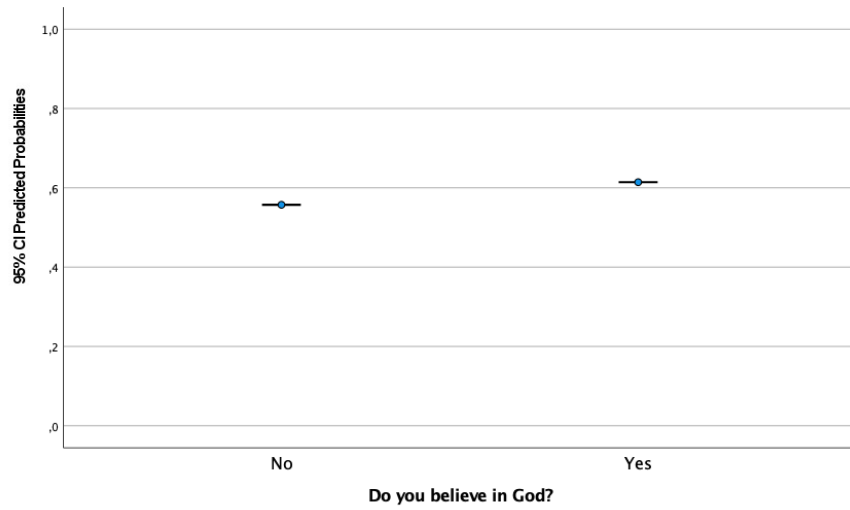


Figure 2. Predicted Probability of Empathy When Considering Geography by Religiosity



3.3 The Effect of Religiosity on Political Ideology

The data from Table 2 corroborates H2 suggesting that higher levels of religiosity are associated with more right-wing self-positioning in a European comparative context. Of the four variables measuring religiosity, only identification as religious does not have statistical significance. The remaining three show a positive effect on political ideology with the Importance of God being the strongest predictor of right-wing self-positioning (followed by attendance to religious services). Similarly to the last section, education shows that the higher it is, the higher the tendency for individuals to lean left.

The effect of political ideology on empathy resonates through multiple studies, with researchers like Layman and Carmines (1997), Olson and Green (2006), and O'Brien and Abdelhadi (2020) all arguing that religiosity and conservative inclinations are linked. The findings from Table 2 echo this trend, highlighting the connection between religiosity, and a propensity to lean towards the right side of the political spectrum.

One possible explanation as to why attendance to religious services and the importance of God align with conservative views might be due to the emphasis on traditional values in religious institutions and right-wing ideologies.

While the independent variables in the models offer some explanation about the left-right positioning of individuals, their relatively small beta coefficients suggest that they individually have limited explanatory power. This suggests that other factors, not accounted for in this model, may play a more substantial role in explaining ideology.

In short, these findings, compared against the literature (e.g., Skitka & Tetlock, 1992; Puthillam & Kapoor, 2021; Waytz et al. 2016; Hasson et al., 2018) validate, and expand upon the assertion that religiosity plays a role, although modestly, concerning belief in God, attendance to religious services and importance of God, in influencing individual ideological self-positioning, even in a diverse European setting.

Table 2. H2 - Linear Regression for Religiosity. Dependent variable: Political Ideology

	Model 1	Model 2
	Beta	Beta
Religious belief	0,03***	0,04***
Being religious	0,01	0,01
Attendance to religious services	0,05***	0,06***
Importance of God	0,08***	0,08***
Age		0,05***
Sex (male = 1)		0,004***
Education (Higher = 3)		-0,02

N =	43672	
R2 =	0,03	0,03

Note: All values have been rounded to the second decimal place.

* p<0.05

** p<0.01

*** p<0.001

Source: EVS, 2017

3.4 The Effect of Political Ideology on Empathy

The findings from Table 3 echo previous findings and confirm H3 revealing that individuals who place themselves on the right side of the political spectrum tend to exhibit reduced empathetic tendencies. This not only corroborates the argument that left-leaning individuals are likely more empathetic in a comparative European context but also enriches the broader discourse, emphasizing the importance of context and culture in understanding this effect. The representation of the predicted probabilities (Figure 3) visually corroborates this conclusion. The mean comparison of the predicted probabilities¹⁰ also shows that for empathy towards vulnerable groups, individuals positioning themselves more towards the left tend to have marginally higher probabilities of displaying empathy compared to their right-leaning counterparts.

Regarding controls, once again, women tend to show more empathy than men, and the more educated one is, the more empathy they display. Additionally, age is associated with a slight lean to the right.

The results from Table 3 align with, among others, the works of Iyer et al. (2012) and Skitka and Tetlock (1992) in the USA, as well as that of Puthillam & Kapoor (2021) on India, and Hasson et al. (2018) on the USA, Germany, and Israel.

¹⁰ For detailed information concerning the mean comparisons of the predicted probabilities, see figure 8 of appendix B.

Table 3. H3 - Binary Logistical Regression for Political Ideology. Dependent variable: Empathy

	Empathy towards vulnerable groups of people				Empathy towards people considering geography			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B
Political Ideology	0,90***	-0,11(0,01)	0,90***	-0,11 (0,01)	0,90***	-0,10 (0,01)	0,90***	-0,10 (0,01)
Sex (male=1)			0,69***	-0,38 (0,06)			0,98	-0,03 (0,04)
Age			1,03***	0,03 (0,002)			1,01***	0,01 (0,001)
Education (higher = 3)			1,13***	0,12 (0,04)			1,25***	0,22 (0,03)
Constant	13,05***	2,57 (0,07)	3,72***	1,31 (0,15)	2,95	1,08 (0,05)	1,18	0,16 (0,11)

N =	11708				9698			
R2 Negekerke =	0,01		0,06		0,02		0,03	

Note: All values have been rounded to the second decimal place.

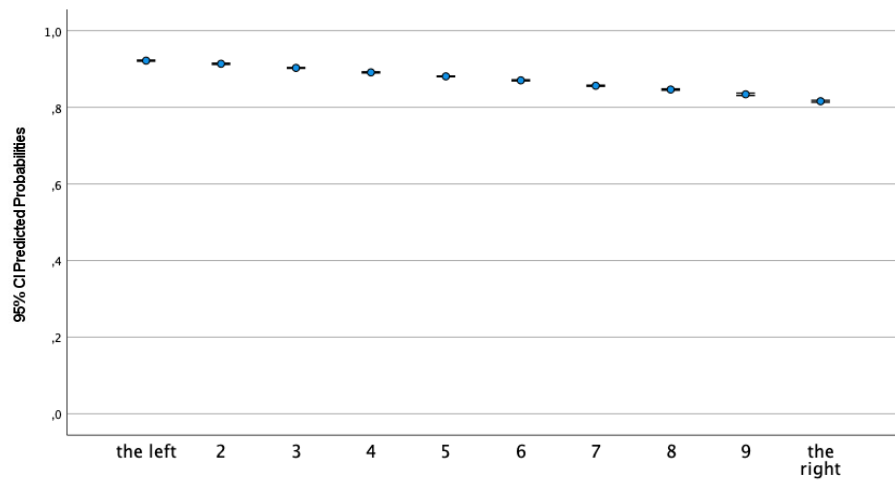
* p<0.05

** p<0.01

*** p<0.001

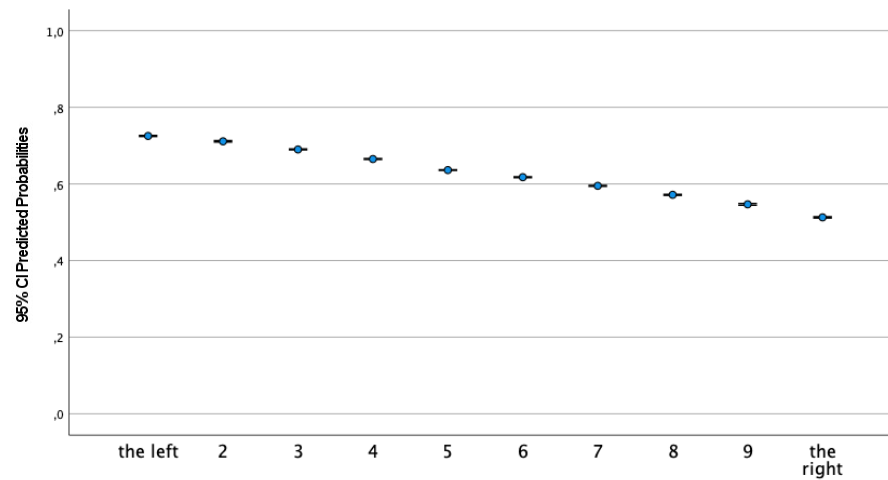
Source: EVS, 2017

Figure 3. Predicted Probability of Empathy Towards Vulnerable Groups of People (3.1) and Empathy When Considering Geography (3.2) by Political Ideology



In political matters, people talk of 'the left' and 'the right'. How would you place your views on this scale [1 to 10], generally speaking?

Figure 3.1



In political matters, people talk of 'the left' and 'the right'. How would you place your views on this scale [1 to 10], generally speaking?

Figure 3.2

3.5 The Possible Mediating Role of Political Ideology on the Effect of Religiosity on Empathy

Data also corroborates the fourth and last hypothesis of this research, suggesting that ideological self-positioning of individuals mediates the effect of religiosity on empathy, with right-wing self-positioning weakening the positive correlation between religiosity and empathy. This is especially the case for attendance to religious services in empathy towards vulnerable groups, and religiosity as a whole when considering geography. The mediator effect of ideology is therefore not innocuous.

Looking at the mean comparisons of the predicted probabilities¹¹ of empathy towards vulnerable groups of people based on attendance to religious services (Figure 4), those who rarely attend religious services and lean left, have a noticeably higher probability of being empathetic compared to their right-leaning counterparts.

As for empathy when considering geography (Figure 5), the mean comparison of the predicted probabilities¹² suggests that those who do not believe in God and those who identify as religious, left-leaning individuals consistently have higher probabilities of being empathetic. Furthermore, as we transition towards the right end of the political spectrum, this probability consistently decreases, indicating a potential mediating role of ideological self-positioning. Concerning attendance to religious services for those who "never or practically never" attend them, there's a difference of about 19% in empathy probabilities between left-leaning and right-leaning individuals. Across all answer categories of religious service attendance, the difference in empathy probabilities between left self-positioning and right self-positioning ranges from 15% to 20%. When we examine the importance of God, the empathy probabilities echo a similar trend. For individuals for whom God is "Not at all important" and lean towards the left, the empathy mean presents a substantial difference of 36,7%. This pattern persists across all levels of importance given to God.

In short, H4 holds true by suggesting that ideological self-positioning plays a mediating role, particularly, for one religiosity dimension in empathy toward vulnerable groups of empathy, and for all of them for empathy when considering geography.

This innovative hypothesis sheds light on the interaction between religiosity, political ideology, and empathy. By proposing that ideological self-positioning can mediate the established bond between religiosity and empathy, this research could potentially pave the way

¹¹ For detailed information concerning mean comparison of predicted probabilities, see Figure 5 of appendix B.

¹² Idem.

for a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of empathy. Exploring this intersection holds promise in exploring the innumerable factors that shape an individual's capacity for empathy, making its contribution to the literature.

Table 4. H4 – Logistical Regression for Empathy, Controlling for Religiosity and Political Ideology

	Empathy towards vulnerable groups of people		Empathy towards people considering geography	
	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B
Belief in God	0,83	-0,18 (0,28)	0,63*	-0,46 (0,21)
Being religious	1,04	0,04 (0,24)	0,98	-0,02 (0,18)
Attendance to religious services	1,29***	0,25 (0,05)	1,22***	0,20 (0,04)
Importance of God	1,09*	0,09 (0,04)	1,10***	0,09 (0,03)
Sex (male = 1)	0,75***	-0,28 (0,06)	1,02	0,02 (0,05)
Age	1,02***	0,02 (0,002)	1,01***	0,007 (0,001)
Education (higher = 3)	1,22***	0,20 (0,04)	1,29***	0,25 (0,03)
Belief in God by political ideology	0,98	-0,02 (0,05)	1,05*	0,05 (0,04)
Political ideology by being religious	1,04	0,04 (0,04)	1,04*	0,03 (0,03)
Attendance to religious services by political ideology	0,97***	-0,03 (0,008)	0,99*	-0,01 (0,006)
Political Ideology by Importance of God	1,00	-0,002 (0,006)	0,99**	-0,01 (0,005)
Constant	1,03	0,03 (0,15)	0,46***	-0,78 (0,12)
N =	10851		8869	
R2 Negekerke =	0,07		0,04	

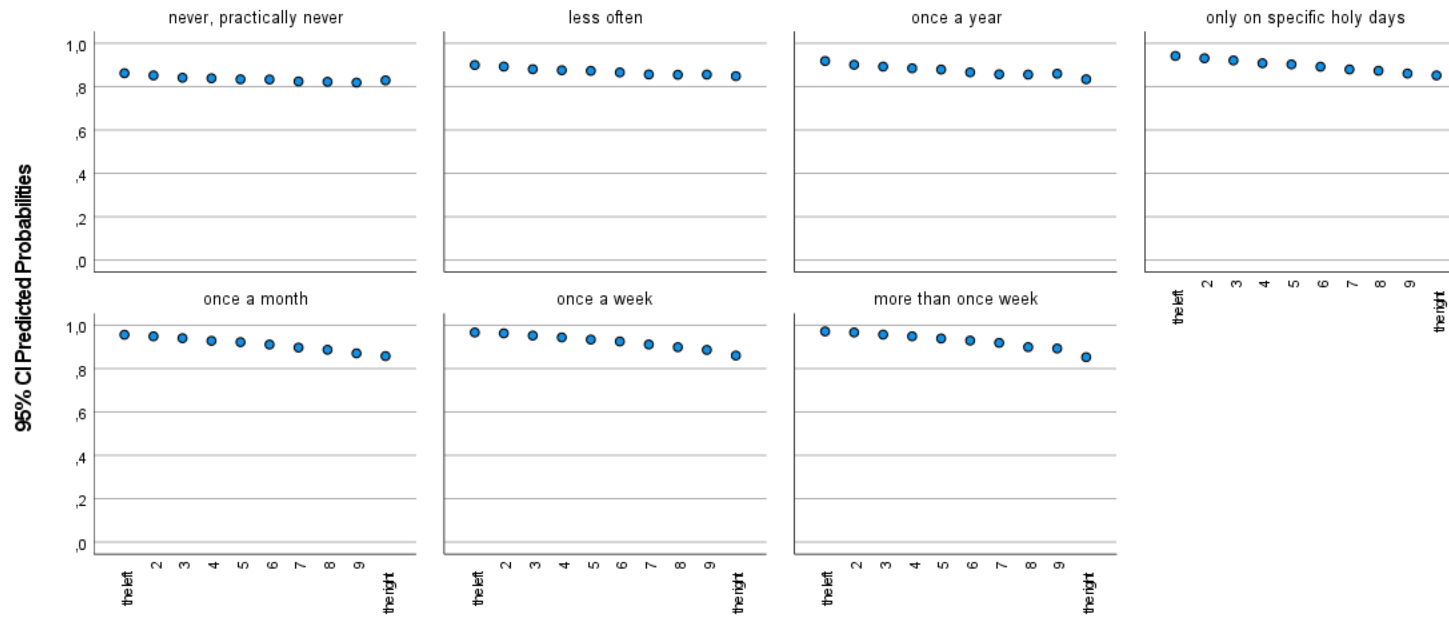
Note: All values have been rounded to the second decimal place.

* p<0.05

** p<0.01

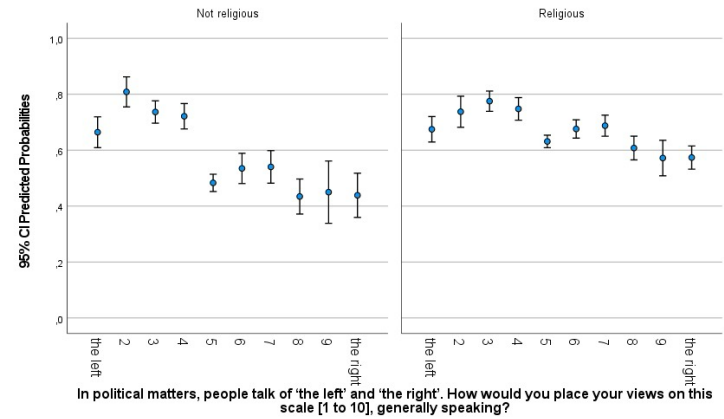
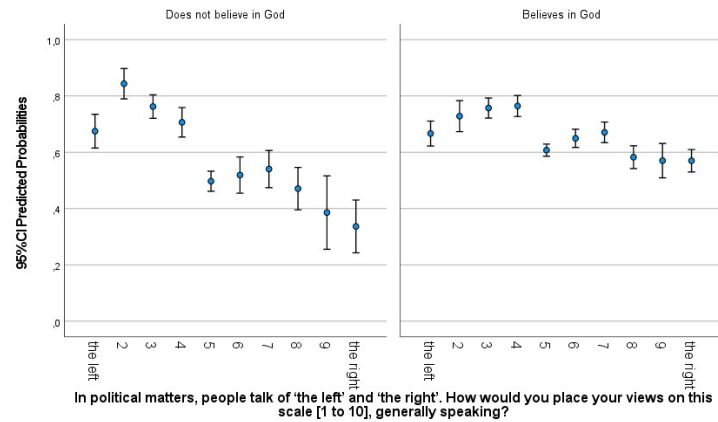
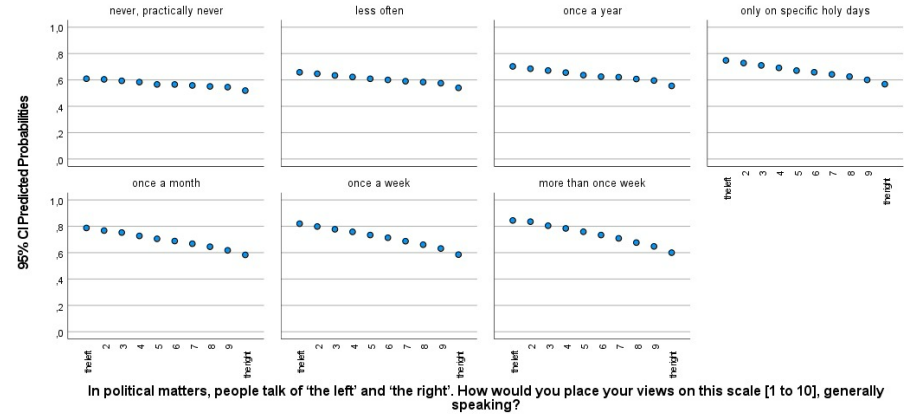
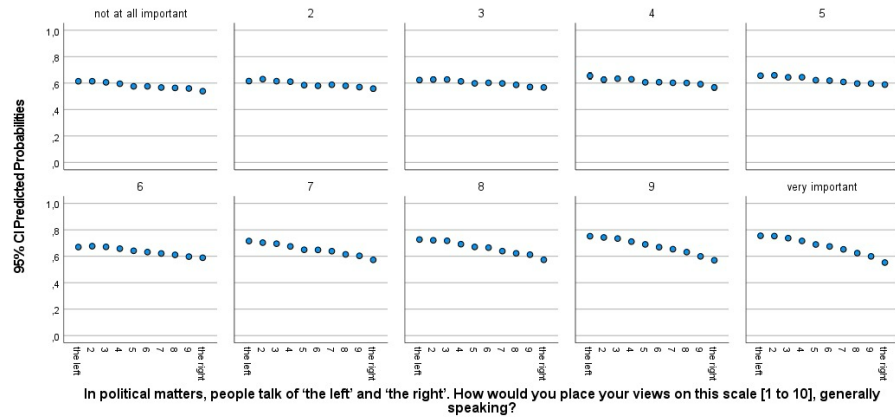
*** p<0.001

Figure 4. Predicted Probabilities of Empathy Towards Vulnerable Groups of People by Attendance to Religious Services and Ideology



In political matters, people talk of 'the left' and 'the right'. How would you place your views on this scale [1 to 10], generally speaking?

Figure 5. Predicted Probabilities of Empathy When Considering Geography by Religiosity and Political Ideology



Conclusions

The relationship between religiosity, political ideology, and empathy is still a relatively new field to explore and the existing literature presents us with a puzzle. On one hand, there is a widely acknowledged understanding that religious individuals tend to exhibit more empathy. Simultaneously, studies have shown religious individuals frequently lean towards right-wing ideologies. This should lead right-leaning individuals to exhibit more empathetic tendencies. Yet, contrarily, it is the left-leaning individuals that have been found to display more empathy. This contradiction, at its core, emphasizes the ambiguity surrounding the mediating role of political ideology in the effect of religiosity on empathy. This dissertation sought to untangle this puzzle, aiming to clarify these conflicting outcomes, and re-test previously corroborated hypotheses in a European context.

Hypothesis 1 – individuals with higher religiosity will display greater empathetic tendencies than those with lower levels of religiosity in a comparative European analysis – holds true in this dissertation for being religious, attendance to religious services, and importance of God. This conclusion aligns with some previous works (e.g., Duriez, 2004) but contrasts with others (Łowicki & Zajenkowski, 2020), suggesting that religious belief does not predict empathy.

Hypothesis 2 – higher levels of religiosity (measured through belief in God, identification as religious, attendance to religious services, and importance of God) will positively correlate with more right-wing self-positioning – holds true for belief in God, attendance to religious services and importance of God. The results supported this hypothesis, revealing that different dimensions of religiosity indeed have a predictive power over right-wing self-positioning. This is consistent with the findings of Layman and Carmines (1997), Olson and Green (2006), and O'Brien and Abdelhadi (2020).

Hypothesis 3 – ideological self-positioning influences levels of empathy, with individuals more to the left wing likely demonstrating higher empathy than those to the right wing – is supported, highlighting that left-leaning individuals generally displayed more empathetic concern when compared to their right-leaning counterparts. These findings align with previous research as well (e.g., Skitka & Tetlock, 1992; Iyer et al., 2012; Hasson et al., 2018).

Hypothesis 4 - political ideology will mediate the effect of religiosity on empathy, with right-wing self-positioning weakening the positive correlation between religiosity and empathy – was also validated in this dissertation. Specifically, while religious individuals tended to be

more empathetic, their political ideology could decrease this empathetic response. It holds true for attendance to religious services in empathy towards vulnerable groups of people, and for all of the religiosity dimensions considered in this research for empathy when considering geography.

It is important to note, however, potential limitations such as the desirability bias in this research. The findings from this study also present ample opportunities for future research. It would be valuable to explore these relationships over different time frames or in different socio-political contexts. Understanding the distinctions of how different religious practices or beliefs within the broader category of religiosity influence these dynamics can also offer deeper insights. Lastly, qualitative explorations can help capture the lived experiences and personal narratives that support these statistical relationships.

One of the contributions of this research is the exploration of political ideology's mediating role in the religiosity-empathy dynamic. The confirmation of the hypothesis that right-wing self-positioning weakens the positive correlation between religiosity and empathy is new. This reveals that while religious individuals are generally more empathetic, their political beliefs can influence their expression of empathy. The mediating role of political ideology underscores the complex nature of empathy and how it is influenced by different interconnected factors.

Furthermore, the variations in empathy found between countries in this European context underscore the importance of cultural and societal factors in understanding these relationships. While general trends emerge, the unique socio-political landscapes of different European countries might play a role in shaping these dynamics. Future research might delve into these country-specific nuances to offer a deeper understanding.

In conclusion, this dissertation bridges prior research gaps and introduces new perspectives, by both confirming previously held hypotheses in a broader context, and by highlighting the role of political ideology as a mediator between religiosity and empathy. In an era marked by political and social divisions, understanding these dynamics becomes even more crucial.

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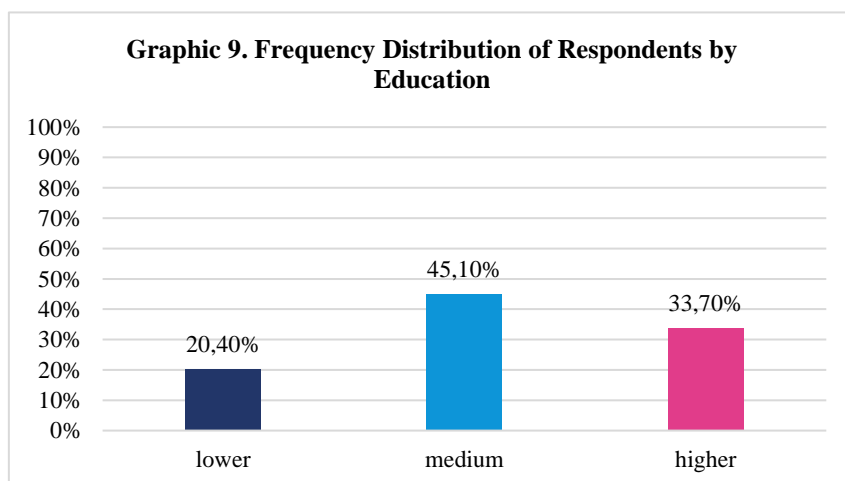
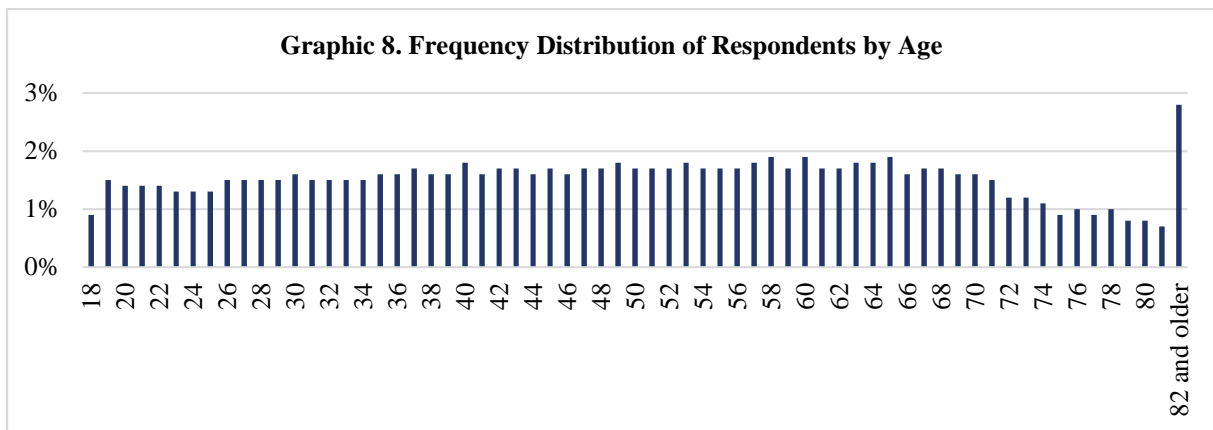
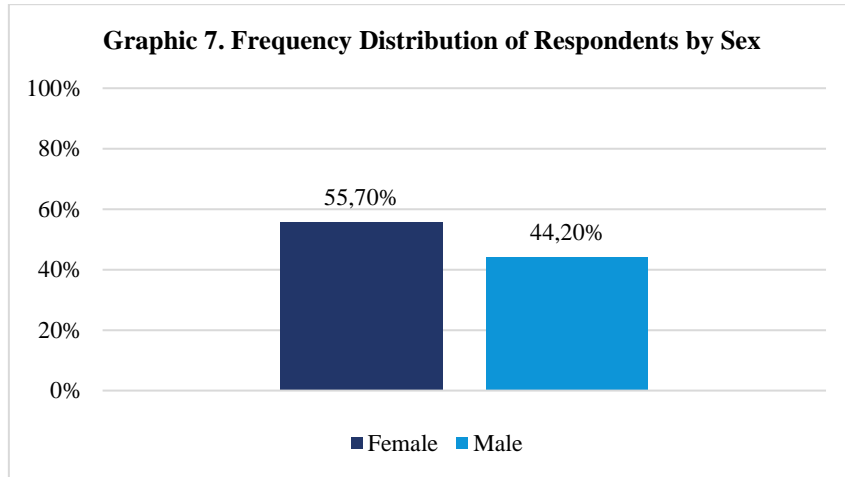
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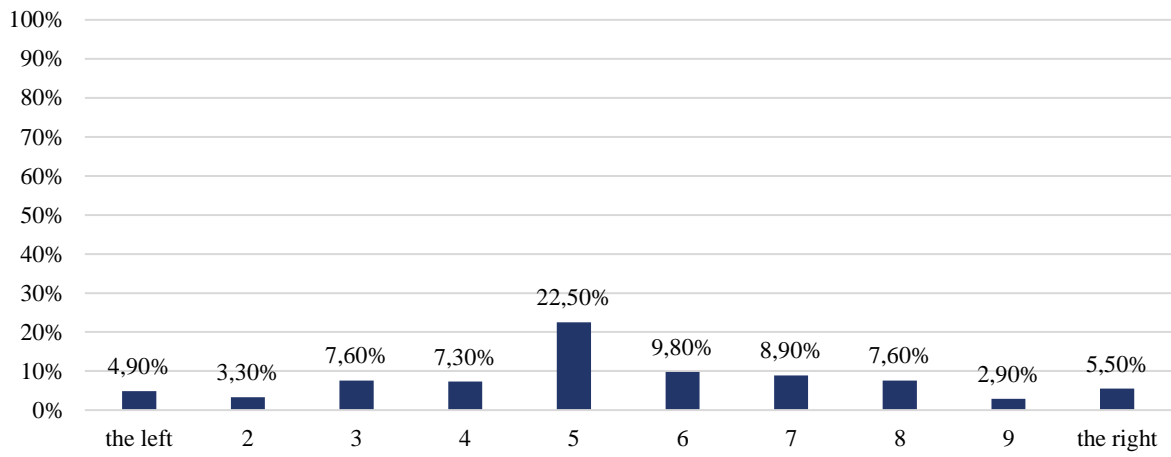
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APPENDIX

Appendix A



Graphic 10. Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Ideological Self-positioning on a Scale from 1 (The Left) to 10 (The Right)



Appendix B

Figure 6. H1 - Mean Predicted Probabilities for Empathy Towards Vulnerable Groups of People by Religiosity

Do you believe in God?

	Mean	N	S.E.
No	0,8048	3551	0,39638
Yes	0,8734	10372	0,33253
Total	0,8559	13923	0,35118

**Independently of whether you go to church or not,
would you say you are a religious person?**

	Mean	N	S.E.
No	0,7969	4638	0,40235
Yes	0,8827	9509	0,32174
Total	0,8546	14147	0,35252

How often do you attend religious services?

	Mean	N	S.E.
never, practically never	0,7971	4761	0,4022
less often	0,8461	1670	0,36095
once a year	0,8565	1087	0,35076
only on specific holy days	0,8742	3227	0,33169
once a month	0,9083	1593	0,28862
once a week	0,8933	1603	0,3088
more than once week	0,9214	598	0,26933
Total	0,8522	14539	0,35492

How important is God in your life?

	Mean	N	S.E.
not at all important	0,5263	2320	0,49942
2	0,5604	571	0,49677
3	0,5528	568	0,49764
4	0,5682	403	0,49594
5	0,552	1203	0,4975
6	0,6055	796	0,48904
7	0,6147	1059	0,48689
8	0,6351	1214	0,4816
9	0,6593	725	0,47427
very important	0,6256	3384	0,48404
Total	0,5919	12243	0,4915

Figure 7. H1 - Mean Predicted Probabilities for Empathy When Considering Geography, Controlling for Religiosity

Do you believe in God?

	Mean	N	S.E.
No	0,5487	3142	0,4977
Yes	0,6072	8696	0,48841
Total	0,5917	11838	0,49155

How often do you attend religious services?

	Mean	N	S.E.
never, practically never	0,5144	4197	0,49985
less often	0,5789	1444	0,4939
once a year	0,5967	972	0,49081
only on specific holy days	0,6051	2717	0,48892
once a month	0,6519	1310	0,47655
once a week	0,6749	1378	0,46859
more than once week	0,7341	455	0,44232
Total	0,5882	12473	0,49217

Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are a religious person?

	Mean	N	S.E.
No	0,5337	4150	0,49892
Yes	0,6232	7929	0,48463
Total	0,5924	12079	0,4914

How important is God in your life?

	Mean	N	S.E.
not at all important	0,5263	2320	0,49942
2	0,5604	571	0,49677
3	0,5528	568	0,49764
4	0,5682	403	0,49594
5	0,552	1203	0,4975
6	0,6055	796	0,48904
7	0,6147	1059	0,48689
8	0,6351	1214	0,4816
9	0,6593	725	0,47427
very important	0,6256	3384	0,48404
Total	0,5919	12243	0,4915

Figure 8. H3 - Mean Predicted Probabilities for Empathy Towards Vulnerable Groups of People (Right) and Empathy When Considering Geography (Left), Controlling for Political Ideology

In political matters, people talk of ‘the left’ and ‘the right’. How would you place your views on this scale [1 to 10], generally speaking?

	Mean	N	S.E.
the left	0,9142	956	0,28018
2	0,9434	618	0,23133
3	0,9244	1336	0,26445
4	0,9125	1120	0,28269
5	0,8557	3160	0,35145
6	0,8683	1336	0,33833
7	0,8675	1117	0,33918
8	0,842	981	0,36493
9	0,8715	358	0,3351
the right	0,8219	842	0,38286
Total	0,8776	11824	0,32774

In political matters, people talk of ‘the left’ and ‘the right’. How would you place your views on this scale [1 to 10], generally speaking?

	Mean	N	S.E.
the left	0,6699	712	0,47056
2	0,7739	460	0,41875
3	0,7569	1008	0,42914
4	0,7394	852	0,4392
5	0,574	2887	0,49459
6	0,6281	1151	0,48351
7	0,6386	916	0,48066
8	0,5503	776	0,49779
9	0,5418	323	0,49902
the right	0,5351	727	0,49911
Total	0,63	9812	0,48282

Table 5. H4 - Mean Predicted Probabilities for Empathy Towards Vulnerable Groups of People, Controlling for Attendance to Religious Services and Political Ideology

Attendance to religious services	Political Ideology	Mean	N	S.E.
never, practically never	the left	0,905	410	0,294
	2	0,915	283	0,279
	3	0,900	587	0,301
	4	0,888	420	0,316
	5	0,801	999	0,400
	6	0,796	367	0,404
	7	0,772	307	0,420
	8	0,750	292	0,434
	9	0,783	69	0,415
	the right	0,750	216	0,434
	Total	0,834	3950	0,372
less often	the left	0,915	82	0,281
	2	0,973	73	0,164
	3	0,950	141	0,218
	4	0,924	132	0,266
	5	0,841	402	0,366
	6	0,859	156	0,349
	7	0,872	133	0,335
	8	0,791	115	0,408
	9	0,854	48	0,357
	the right	0,786	84	0,413
	Total	0,870	1366	0,337
once a year	the left	0,881	59	0,326
	2	0,946	55	0,229
	3	0,919	111	0,274
	4	0,917	96	0,278
	5	0,840	238	0,367
	6	0,925	107	0,264
	7	0,957	92	0,205
	8	0,805	82	0,399
	9	0,936	31	0,250
	the right	0,756	45	0,435
	Total	0,884	916	0,320

	the left	0,914	208	0,282
	2	0,972	107	0,166
	3	0,956	250	0,206
	4	0,937	223	0,243
	5	0,894	707	0,308
only on specific holy days	6	0,888	312	0,316
	7	0,894	254	0,309
	8	0,935	214	0,248
	9	0,840	81	0,369
	the right	0,865	192	0,343
	Total	0,907	2548	0,290
	the left	0,973	73	0,164
	2	0,981	53	0,137
	3	0,933	120	0,250
	4	0,938	128	0,243
	5	0,912	352	0,284
once a month	6	0,948	173	0,223
	7	0,916	142	0,279
	8	0,848	105	0,361
	9	0,907	54	0,293
	the right	0,876	97	0,331
	Total	0,920	1297	0,272
	the left	0,925	80	0,265
	2	0,944	36	0,232
	3	0,930	86	0,256
	4	0,895	95	0,309
	5	0,899	327	0,302
once a week	6	0,892	158	0,311
	7	0,903	145	0,296
	8	0,939	132	0,240
	9	0,938	48	0,245
	the right	0,884	146	0,322
	Total	0,907	1253	0,290

	the left	0,921	38	0,273
	2	1,000	8	0,000
	3	1,000	28	0,000
	4	1,000	21	0,000
	5	0,909	110	0,289
more than once week	6	0,893	56	0,312
	7	0,919	37	0,277
	8	0,882	34	0,327
	9	0,962	26	0,196
	the right	0,831	59	0,378
	Total	0,911	417	0,285
	the left	0,914	950	0,281
	2	0,943	615	0,232
	3	0,924	1323	0,264
	4	0,913	1115	0,282
	5	0,857	3135	0,351
Total	6	0,871	1329	0,336
	7	0,868	1110	0,339
	8	0,841	974	0,366
	9	0,871	357	0,336
	the right	0,824	839	0,381
	Total	0,878	11747	0,327

**Table 6. H4 - Mean Predicted Probabilities for Empathy When Considering Geography,
Controlling for Belief in God, and Political Ideology**

Belief in God	Political Ideology	Mean	N	S.E.
No	the left	0,675	237	0,469
	2	0,844	179	0,364
	3	0,762	404	0,426
	4	0,707	293	0,456
	5	0,497	760	0,500
	6	0,519	235	0,501
	7	0,541	222	0,499
	8	0,471	172	0,501
	9	0,386	57	0,491
	the right	0,337	101	0,475
	Total	0,595	2660	0,491
Yes	the left	0,667	441	0,472
	2	0,728	254	0,446
	3	0,757	560	0,429
	4	0,765	501	0,425
	5	0,608	1970	0,488
	6	0,650	842	0,477
	7	0,671	638	0,470
	8	0,583	575	0,494
	9	0,570	256	0,496
	the right	0,570	600	0,495
	Total	0,645	6637	0,479
Total	the left	0,670	678	0,471
	2	0,776	433	0,417
	3	0,759	964	0,428
	4	0,743	794	0,437
	5	0,577	2730	0,494
	6	0,621	1077	0,485
	7	0,637	860	0,481
	8	0,557	747	0,497
	9	0,537	313	0,499
	the right	0,536	701	0,499
	Total	0,631	9297	0,483

**Table 7. H4 - Mean Predicted Probabilities Empathy When Considering Geography,
Controlling for Identification as Religious and Political Ideology**

Being Religious	Political Ideology	Mean	N	S.E.
No	the left	0,664	286	0,473
	2	0,809	209	0,394
	3	0,737	471	0,441
	4	0,722	377	0,449
	5	0,483	1014	0,500
	6	0,535	329	0,500
	7	0,540	285	0,499
	8	0,434	244	0,497
	9	0,450	80	0,501
	the right	0,439	155	0,498
	Total	0,582	3450	0,493
	Yes	the left	0,675	409
2		0,738	244	0,441
3		0,775	512	0,418
4		0,748	448	0,435
5		0,631	1777	0,483
6		0,676	787	0,468
7		0,688	586	0,464
8		0,608	510	0,489
9		0,572	236	0,496
the right		0,574	549	0,495
Total		0,661	6058	0,473
Total		the left	0,671	695
	2	0,770	453	0,421
	3	0,757	983	0,429
	4	0,736	825	0,441
	5	0,578	2791	0,494
	6	0,634	1116	0,482
	7	0,640	871	0,480
	8	0,552	754	0,498
	9	0,541	316	0,499
	the right	0,544	704	0,498
	Total	0,632	9508	0,482

**Table 8. H4 - Mean Predicted Probabilities for Empathy When Considering Geography,
Controlling for Attendance to Religious Services and Political Ideology**

Attendance to religious services	Political Ideology	Mean	N	S.E.
never, practically never	the left	0,662	308	0,474
	2	0,807	197	0,396
	3	0,737	430	0,441
	4	0,697	333	0,460
	5	0,471	988	0,499
	6	0,513	345	0,501
	7	0,487	234	0,501
	8	0,421	240	0,495
	9	0,441	84	0,499
	the right	0,472	199	0,500
	Total	0,566	3358	0,496
less often	the left	0,632	68	0,486
	2	0,724	58	0,451
	3	0,772	101	0,421
	4	0,758	99	0,431
	5	0,587	349	0,493
	6	0,615	130	0,488
	7	0,597	134	0,492
	8	0,500	88	0,503
	9	0,488	41	0,506
	the right	0,479	71	0,503
	Total	0,616	1139	0,487
once a year	the left	0,658	38	0,481
	2	0,825	40	0,385
	3	0,706	85	0,458
	4	0,803	71	0,401
	5	0,552	239	0,498
	6	0,594	96	0,494
	7	0,781	82	0,416
	8	0,629	70	0,487
	9	0,593	27	0,501
	the right	0,491	53	0,505
	Total	0,642	801	0,480

only on specific holy days	the left	0,662	148	0,475
	2	0,659	82	0,477
	3	0,753	194	0,433
	4	0,728	180	0,446
	5	0,636	618	0,482
	6	0,679	240	0,468
	7	0,692	214	0,463
	8	0,606	160	0,490
	9	0,522	69	0,503
	the right	0,574	148	0,496
	Total	0,658	2053	0,474
once a month	the left	0,764	55	0,429
	2	0,884	43	0,324
	3	0,784	102	0,413
	4	0,775	80	0,420
	5	0,652	296	0,477
	6	0,713	150	0,454
	7	0,676	108	0,470
	8	0,557	88	0,500
	9	0,694	36	0,467
	the right	0,474	76	0,503
	Total	0,682	1034	0,466
once a week	the left	0,726	62	0,450
	2	0,710	31	0,461
	3	0,817	71	0,390
	4	0,836	73	0,373
	5	0,657	294	0,476
	6	0,734	139	0,444
	7	0,748	107	0,436
	8	0,688	93	0,466
	9	0,641	39	0,486
	the right	0,624	125	0,486
	Total	0,704	1034	0,457

	the left	0,630	27	0,492
	2	0,857	7	0,378
	3	0,944	18	0,236
	4	0,778	9	0,441
	5	0,750	84	0,436
more than once week	6	0,761	46	0,431
	7	0,750	32	0,440
	8	0,750	32	0,440
	9	0,640	25	0,490
	the right	0,680	50	0,471
	Total	0,736	330	0,441
	the left	0,671	706	0,470
	2	0,773	458	0,419
	3	0,755	1001	0,430
	4	0,740	845	0,439
	5	0,573	2868	0,495
Total	6	0,629	1146	0,483
	7	0,640	911	0,480
	8	0,549	771	0,498
	9	0,545	321	0,499
	the right	0,536	722	0,499
	Total	0,630	9749	0,483

**Table 9. H4 - Mean Predicted Probabilities for Empathy When Considering Geography,
Controlling for the Importance of God, and Political Ideology**

Importance of God	Political Ideology	Mean	N	S.E.	
Not at all important	the left	0,692	198	0,463	
	2	0,833	138	0,374	
	3	0,746	299	0,436	
	4	0,687	195	0,465	
	5	0,474	563	0,500	
	6	0,532	158	0,501	
	7	0,486	138	0,502	
	8	0,420	119	0,496	
	9	0,425	40	0,501	
	the right	0,325	83	0,471	
	Total	0,581	1931	0,494	
	2	the left	0,467	30	0,507
		2	0,767	30	0,430
3		0,739	69	0,442	
4		0,724	58	0,451	
5		0,562	130	0,498	
6		0,500	60	0,504	
7		0,647	51	0,483	
8		0,590	39	0,498	
9		0,556	9	0,527	
the right		0,571	14	0,514	
Total		0,616	490	0,487	
3		the left	0,677	31	0,475
		2	0,808	26	0,402
	3	0,734	64	0,445	
	4	0,771	70	0,423	
	5	0,422	128	0,496	
	6	0,491	53	0,505	
	7	0,644	45	0,484	
	8	0,500	36	0,507	
	9	0,375	16	0,500	
	the right	0,563	16	0,512	
	Total	0,588	485	0,493	

4	the left	0,647	17	0,493
	2	0,471	17	0,515
	3	0,625	40	0,490
	4	0,792	48	0,410
	5	0,591	88	0,494
	6	0,694	49	0,466
	7	0,576	33	0,502
	8	0,333	24	0,482
	9	0,444	9	0,527
	the right	0,357	14	0,497
	Total	0,602	339	0,490
	5	the left	0,568	44
2		0,771	48	0,425
3		0,782	87	0,416
4		0,744	90	0,439
5		0,537	356	0,499
6		0,640	111	0,482
7		0,578	83	0,497
8		0,471	70	0,503
9		0,571	21	0,507
the right		0,535	43	0,505
Total		0,603	953	0,489
6		the left	0,682	22
	2	0,655	29	0,484
	3	0,800	50	0,404
	4	0,776	49	0,422
	5	0,591	193	0,493
	6	0,684	117	0,467
	7	0,681	69	0,469
	8	0,533	45	0,505
	9	0,607	28	0,497
	the right	0,520	25	0,510
	Total	0,649	627	0,478

	the left	0,781	32	0,420
	2	0,629	35	0,490
	3	0,805	77	0,399
	4	0,712	73	0,456
	5	0,611	229	0,489
7	6	0,677	130	0,469
	7	0,681	113	0,468
	8	0,633	79	0,485
	9	0,583	36	0,500
	the right	0,447	38	0,504
	Total	0,658	842	0,475
	the left	0,760	50	0,431
	2	0,857	35	0,355
	3	0,742	93	0,440
	4	0,811	74	0,394
	5	0,641	287	0,481
8	6	0,686	118	0,466
	7	0,709	127	0,456
	8	0,647	99	0,481
	9	0,548	31	0,506
	the right	0,478	46	0,505
	Total	0,682	960	0,466
	the left	0,719	32	0,457
	2	0,846	26	0,368
	3	0,825	57	0,384
	4	0,756	45	0,435
	5	0,651	146	0,478
9	6	0,657	67	0,478
	7	0,746	55	0,440
	8	0,623	53	0,489
	9	0,667	36	0,478
	the right	0,535	43	0,505
	Total	0,689	560	0,463

	the left	0,660	241	0,475
	2	0,783	69	0,415
	3	0,772	145	0,421
	4	0,785	135	0,412
	5	0,647	719	0,478
Very important	6	0,640	272	0,481
	7	0,683	183	0,467
	8	0,588	199	0,493
	9	0,521	94	0,502
	the right	0,601	391	0,490
	Total	0,652	2448	0,476
	the left	0,671	697	0,470
	2	0,775	453	0,418
	3	0,758	981	0,428
	4	0,747	837	0,435
	5	0,576	2839	0,494
Total	6	0,627	1135	0,484
	7	0,642	897	0,480
	8	0,551	763	0,498
	9	0,538	320	0,499
	the right	0,536	713	0,499
	Total	0,632	9635	0,482