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**GOD IN THE DIGITAL CLOUD: SOCIAL MEDIA BEHAVIORS AND RELIGIOUS
AFFILIATION IN INDIVIDUALS WITH THE HERMIT ARCHETYPE**

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This paper investigates patterns of digital behavior on social media among individuals exhibiting a pronounced Hermit archetypal profile, with emphasis on distinctions between religious and non-religious participants. The research was conducted on a convenience sample of 188 participants, 40.4% of whom were identified as digital hermits based on the 60th percentile of the archetypal profile. Four behavioral dimensions were analyzed: thematic focus of posts, posting frequency, time spent on social media, and online reach. Findings showed that religious participants more often posted spiritual, reflective, and symbolic content, while non-religious individuals tended to avoid posting or shared mundane, personal topics. Although none of the observed differences reached statistical significance, effect sizes suggested only small or modest variations. Nevertheless, descriptive patterns indicate stylistic divergences between the groups, supporting the theoretical assumption of a more restrained and selective online presence among religious digital hermits.

Keywords: digital hermits, religious affiliation, digital behavior, spirituality, self-presentation.

1. Introduction

In contemporary society, spirituality and religiosity, traditionally associated with the study of sacred texts, ecclesiastical rituals, and solitary spiritual practices, have undergone a marked transformation, extending into digital platforms, including social media. This transition has enabled the dissemination of spiritual and religious content in a manner that transcends the limitations of physical space, thereby offering greater accessibility and opportunities for interaction. Social media have emerged as a conduit (medium as both a vehicle of transmission and bearer of message) through which individuals articulate their religious convictions, seek spiritual support, exchange perspectives, and participate in

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collective prayers. This digital dynamic not only reinforces personal spirituality, but also fosters the formation of global communities united by shared values and beliefs, thereby enhancing the sense of belonging and mutual connectedness.

In light of an increasing body of academic literature emphasizing the importance of the spiritual dimension within the context of health, there is a growing interest in integrating such content into educational and therapeutic practices. This approach facilitates a broader comprehension of psychological functioning, encompassing existential concerns and the inner resources of the individual. Nevertheless, further research remains necessary to elucidate more precisely the mechanisms by which spirituality and religiosity exert influence on psycho-physical well-being. In the effort to more fully recognize and address the spiritual needs of users, the question arises as to which forms, modes, and types of communication are most suitable for the specific character of social media as a mediated space.

1.1. Historical Perspective and the Integration of Spirituality into Psychological Sciences

In recent decades, the association between religion and general health, particularly physical health, has been increasingly corroborated, with researchers endeavoring to elucidate this link through various factors, including health-related behaviors, psychosocial variables, and biological mechanisms (Yeary et al., 2012). Nevertheless, it has become increasingly evident that such factors fail to comprehensively account for the complexity of the relationship between religiosity and health (Ellison & Levin, 1998; Koenig et al., 2001, as cited in Yeary et al., 2012). In this context, the concept of social capital has garnered growing attention as a potential mediator of this relationship. Religious communities are thus highlighted as significant sources of social capital, promoting trust, social inclusion, and participation in voluntary and supportive activities. However, despite the presumption that religiosity may influence health in part through these mechanisms, the number of empirical studies that directly test this hypothesis remains limited (Yeary et al., 2012). A more thorough investigation of this approach is vital not only for understanding the link between religion and health but also for clarifying the role that social ties, both physical and increasingly digital, play in shaping spiritual and psychological well-being. The growing scientific interest in the nexus between religiosity, spirituality, and health further underscores the significance of this field (Lucchetti et al., 2021).

Although the concepts of religiosity and spirituality are often used interchangeably, there is a growing recognition of their conceptual connectedness alongside their distinctiveness. Religiosity refers to the institutional aspects of belief and practice, whereas

spirituality pertains to the individual search for meaning and a relationship with the sacred (Lucchetti et al., 2021). Acknowledging this distinction, numerous professional organizations have advocated for the integration of spirituality into clinical practice. This has resulted in the inclusion of spiritual content in educational curricula and an increase in studies demonstrating the association between spirituality and improved mental health, particularly in the context of depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders (Koenig, 2012; Lucchetti et al., 2012; Pesut et al., 2008; Moreira-Almeida et al., 2014, as cited in Lucchetti et al., 2021).

This scientific and clinical receptivity towards the spiritual dimension provides a foundation for the examination of its contemporary expressions, including those mediated by digital technologies and social media. Although research in this area is not yet sufficient to draw definitive conclusions, it is increasingly apparent that the ways in which individuals experience and practice faith are being substantially transformed by online environments, thus reinforcing the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of spirituality.

1.2. Digital Spirituality and the Formation of Identity

The digital era has afforded social media a prominent space for the articulation of various forms of identity, including religious identity. Online interactions increasingly shape the ways in which individuals perceive, interpret, and practice their faith, with digital environments enabling the emergence of novel, virtually embedded forms of spiritual belonging. Within this framework, the internet is increasingly viewed as a form of non-traditional "sacramental space"—a domain that facilitates spiritual connection, expression, and participation, particularly for those who are physically isolated or seeking alternative modes of religious communication (Oliver & Raney, 2014, p. 46). The concept of e-spirituality encompasses these digitally mediated spiritual experiences, which provide access to religious content, discussions, and rituals via online platforms in unprecedented ways (Oliver & Raney, 2014, p. 47).

In the contemporary digital milieu, religious affiliation no longer merely reflects personal identity but may also function as a strategic tool for online self-presentation. Williamson (2008, as cited in Young et al., 2009) draws attention to Facebook users who combine religious labels with, for instance, relationship status, not solely as descriptive information, but as psycholinguistic signals directed at potential partners with congruent value systems. This mode of expression, interpreted through the theoretical lenses of Grice (1975), Kahneman and Tversky (1982), and Lewin (1943, 1951), reveals the complex

function of digital communication, not only in transmitting factual content but also in shaping perceptions of availability and affiliation.

Religion in the digital context thus does not operate exclusively as a stable marker of identity; it also assumes a selective, communicative function. It becomes a mechanism for filtering undesired interactions and expressing personal preferences, particularly within romantic and social engagements (Young et al., 2009). Such a reinterpretation of religious expression in online spaces further affirms the fluidity of contemporary identities and underscores the necessity for novel analytical instruments in understanding digital spirituality.

1.3. Social Media as Religious Ecosystems and Key Social Subsystems

One of the central elements of contemporary religious interaction within the digital realm is undoubtedly the issue of self-presentation and identity construction on social media. Users actively manage how they are portrayed online, carefully selecting and filtering content in alignment with how they wish to be perceived in the digital environment (Oliver & Raney, 2014, pp. 16–28). In the context of religious affiliation, this process becomes even more intricate, as individuals use digital platforms not merely to express their religious beliefs or engage in discussions, but also to shape the expression of their spirituality in accordance with the norms and expectations of specific online communities (Oliver & Raney, 2014, p. 19). In this manner, religious affiliation becomes a flexible resource in the digital construction of identity, both personal and socially shaped.

Social media have transformed patterns of social interaction through the concept of networked sociality, whereby digital media no longer serve solely as channels of communication but emerge as active instruments in the construction and maintenance of social and increasingly, religious relationships (Oliver & Raney, 2014, pp. 189–208). Oliver and Raney (2014, p. 195) emphasize that online platforms enable the creation of communities based on shared interests, including spiritual beliefs, thereby facilitating a new form of religious affiliation that is free from spatial and temporal constraints. This dynamism of digital religious communities demonstrates that technology not only allows for the transmission of existing religious practices, but also actively shapes new forms of spirituality, belonging, and communal experience.

In accordance with this trend, religious communities are increasingly recognizing social media as a vital mechanism for attracting and retaining members (Everton, 2019). Individuals are more likely to engage with religious communities when they already possess existing social ties within them, and the density of networked connectedness enhances

conformity to communal norms while reducing the likelihood of disaffiliation or religious switching (Lofland & Stark, 1965; Stark & Bainbridge, 1980; Popielarz & McPherson, 1995; Emerson & Smith, 2000; Finke & Stark, 2005; and Adamczyk & Felson, 2006, as cited in Everton, 2019). Such networks, especially in their digital manifestation, function not only as structures of spiritual support but also as social catalysts for stability and identification.

Recent research further emphasizes the relational dimension of religious communities, focusing on patterns of interconnection and spiritual support among members. By applying social ecological theory (Seidman, 2012; Tseng & Seidman, 2007, as cited in Todd, Blevins, & Yi, 2019), religious communities are understood as dynamic networks of relationships that transcend formal and institutional boundaries. The research focus includes both friendship-based and spiritual ties, aiming to develop a deeper understanding of how the structure and quality of these relationships shape the sense of belonging and spiritual fulfilment, while also opening space for the use of network-based methods in testing theoretical assumptions about religious environments (Todd et al., 2019).

1.4. Specificities of the Hermit Archetype in Digital Religiosity

Rooted in Jungian analytical psychology and further developed through interpretations by scholars such as Carol S. Pearson and Jean Shinoda Bolen, the Hermit archetype may be understood as a synthesis of several archetypal motifs, embodying withdrawal from the ordinary world in pursuit of inner truth, silence, contemplation, and spiritual maturity. It symbolizes introspection, personal transformation, and spiritual purification. Within the context of digital reality, this archetype acquires a renewed dimension. Individuals manifesting internalized traits aligned with the Hermit do not reject technology; rather, they embrace it deliberately and selectively, primarily as a medium for sharing spiritual insights, fostering self-reflection, and cultivating a meaningful personal space within the online environment (Wright, 2024; Muris & Ollendick, 2023). Similarly, Koenig (2009) emphasizes that religion and spirituality often enhance mental health and function as vital resources for coping with stress. This further substantiates the interpretation of digital silence among religious hermits as a possible strategy of psychological self-regulation and preventative mental hygiene.

Among social media users reflecting characteristics of the Hermit archetype, there is often a marked proclivity toward privacy, infrequent and carefully curated communication, and selectivity in content sharing. Their online presence tends to be unobtrusive yet imbued with deep symbolic and spiritual meaning (Yudkin, 2023). In contrast to users who prioritize visibility, recognition, or intensive social interaction, digital hermits pursue authenticity and

gravitate toward content endowed with inner significance. The spiritual expressions they share are rarely driven by a missionary impulse; instead, they mirror a personal quest, silent contemplation, and internal coherence (Miklós-Thal, Goldfarb, Haviv, and Tucker, 2024).

This mode of spiritual expression strongly resonates with contemporary tendencies toward religious individualization and personalized faith, wherein the individual independently shapes their spiritual identity, often outside institutional frameworks. Research suggests that such an approach may be associated with higher levels of life satisfaction, emotional stability, and a sense of coherence (Koenig, 2009; Schafer, 2018; Lim & Putnam, 2010; Bhosale, 2015; McCaffree & Saide, 2017).

The phenomenon of the digital hermit can also be viewed through the lens of spiritual authority construction within the online realm. As their influence does not stem from institutional legitimacy, their credibility relies on message consistency, the authenticity of conveyed values, and personal resonance with the observer (Davidson & Farquhar, 2014; Schafer, 2018; McCaffree & Saide, 2017). In this way, the Hermit archetype not only makes space for alternative expressions of digital spirituality but also for a model of leadership that is non-hierarchical, profoundly human, rooted in silence, wisdom, and the mutual recognition of shared truth (Miklós-Thal et al., 2024).

Given the intricate interplay between spirituality, identity, and digital communication, it becomes evident that religious expression within the contemporary online sphere requires new interpretive frameworks. Digital environments, with their dynamic structures and affordances for personalized self-presentation, provide fertile ground for the emergence of distinct forms of spiritual presence, among which the phenomenon of the digital hermit stands out. From this perspective, religiosity is not solely perceived through the prism of institutional practices, but also through individualized behavioral patterns, quiet expressions of belonging, and selective communication within the networked space.

This study is oriented towards exploring the relationship between religious affiliation and social media behavior among individuals who identify with the Hermit archetype. By analyzing how spiritual experiences are expressed and shaped within digital spaces, the aim is to gain a deeper understanding of how technology transforms perceptions of faith and opens pathways to new, personalized forms of religious belonging and interaction.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

A total of 188 participants took part in the study by completing a questionnaire distributed via an online Google Docs form. The sample was convenience-based and diverse in terms of age, gender, education, religious affiliation, and other demographic characteristics. Regarding gender, 73.9% of participants were women (N = 139), 25.5% were men (N = 48), while 1.1% selected the option "prefer not to disclose."

Age data were collected using categorical intervals, with the most represented age group being 25 to 44 years, comprising 63.3% of the sample. In terms of education, the highest proportion of participants held a Master's degree (35.1%), followed by those with a secondary school education (30.9%), a Bachelor's degree (17.6%), a higher vocational qualification (11.7%), and a postgraduate qualification (4.8%).

With regard to religious affiliation, the majority of participants identified as Christians (76.6%), while the remaining individuals identified as atheists (14.4%), agnostics (5.9%), or with other affiliations including Islam, Judaism, antitheism, and apathetism, in much smaller proportions.

The number of close offline friendships varied among participants, with the most common response being "more than five friends" (23.9%), indicating that nearly a quarter of the sample had a network of over five close offline friendships.

Based on participants' responses to items reflecting three archetypes from the Pearson-Marr model, namely the Seeker, the Magician, and the Sage, an aggregate score was calculated to reflect the intensity of a composite archetypal profile labelled the Hermit. The 60th percentile (≥ 67.4 points) was used as a threshold for identifying this profile, resulting in a distinct subgroup of 76 participants (40.4% of the total sample). This subgroup was the focus of comparative analysis, with particular attention to specific patterns of digital religiosity, privacy, and self-expression in online environments.

The selection of the 60th percentile as the threshold for identifying the Hermit archetype profile was grounded in psychometric, theoretical, and empirical considerations. From a psychometric perspective, a 60th percentile cut-off is commonly employed in studies of personality traits, including models such as the Big Five (Costa and McCrae, 1992), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers and Briggs, 1998), and the Pearson-Marr Archetype Indicator (Pearson and Marr, 2003), to represent pronounced yet non-extreme levels of expression. In instruments such as the NEO-PI-R (see Costa and McCrae, 1992; McCrae and Costa, 1999, pp. 139-153), individuals scoring above this threshold are considered to exhibit a high level of a given trait while still remaining within the normal range of distribution. This level approximately corresponds to one standard deviation above

the mean, allowing for the differentiation of pronounced from average profiles without compromising sample variability or statistical stability.

From a theoretical perspective, the archetype, conceived as a symbolic and universal structure of the unconscious, does not represent a trait in the narrow psychometric sense. However, its degree of expression in an individual can be interpreted quantitatively, as a stable disposition or enduring tendency. Because archetypes are not categorical but rather continuous patterns that manifest uniquely across individuals, the level of expression must be understood interpretatively. Accordingly, this study adopted an approach typically used in trait assessment, selecting the 60th percentile as an appropriate threshold that avoids excluding a substantial portion of the sample through overly restrictive cut-offs, while still providing a clear distinction between average and pronounced archetypal profiles. This balance ensures both representativeness and conceptual clarity in identifying dominant archetypal patterns. When the symbolic configuration of the Hermit archetype in Jungian theory (see Jung, 1959, pp. 214–218; von Franz, 1999, pp. 174–180; Pearson, 1991, pp. 247–252) is transposed into the digital context, it becomes operationalized through patterns of more restrained, selective, and meaningful engagement on social media—that is, precisely the dimensions examined in this study. In this sense, the 60th percentile threshold functions not merely as a statistical criterion, but also as a theoretical boundary distinguishing the general population of social media users from those whose digital presence embodies the introspective and contemplative qualities of the Hermit archetype, expressed through carefully chosen posts, reduced communication frequency, and symbolic or spiritual content. Additional methodological support for this approach is provided by the Pearson–Marr Archetype Indicator (PMAI), whose manual (Pearson and Marr, 2003) recommends interpreting dominant archetypes as those scoring in the upper range of the distribution—approximately between the 60th and 70th percentiles. This practice enables the differentiation of pronounced archetypes from average ones without compromising sample representativeness. A preliminary distributional analysis of the composite Hermit archetype index confirmed that the 60th percentile represents a natural dividing point between average and more pronounced archetypal profiles, whereas higher thresholds (e.g., 70th or 80th percentiles) would significantly reduce subgroup size and thereby limit both the reliability of statistical analyses and the generalizability of results. Consequently, the applied model aligns with the interpretive rationale of the PMAI framework while extending it empirically to capture the distinct symbolic configuration of the Hermit archetype within the digital environment.

Accordingly, the criterion for identifying the Hermit archetype was established the 60th percentile of the composite score across relevant dimensions, encompassing participants who demonstrate high—but not extreme—levels of introspectiveness, symbolic orientation, and spiritual reflectivity. This approach represents a balance between theoretical precision and empirical feasibility, a consideration of particular importance when addressing profiles that are relatively uncommon and conceptually nuanced, such as the Hermit archetype.

For the purpose of this study, two subgroups were further delineated within the digital hermit subset, based on religious affiliation: so-called religious hermits (N = 64) and non-religious hermits (N = 12). The latter included individuals who identified as atheists, agnostics, apatheists, or antitheists. This categorization served as the basis for exploring differences in digital behavior, self-presentation styles, and religious orientation.

2.2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Main Research Question (MRQ): How do the digital behavior patterns of religious and non-religious individuals exhibiting characteristics of the Hermit archetype differ?

Main Hypothesis (MH): Religious digital hermits display distinct behavioral patterns on social media compared to their non-religious counterparts, with a tendency toward a more restrained, selective, and reflective presence.

2.3. Sub-Research Questions and Working Hypotheses

Sub-Research Question 1 (SRQ1): What types of content are shared by religious and non-religious digital hermits?

Working Hypothesis 1a (MH1a): Religious digital hermits are more likely to post content with spiritual, symbolic, or reflective themes, whereas non-religious hermits tend to share more personal, aesthetic, or secular content.

Sub-Research Question 2 (SRQ2): Are there differences in posting frequency between religious and non-religious digital hermits?

Working Hypothesis 1b (MH1b): Religious digital hermits post less frequently on social media than their non-religious counterparts.

Sub-Research Question 3 (SRQ3): How much time per day do religious and non-religious digital hermits spend on social media?

Working Hypothesis 1c (MH1c): Religious digital hermits spend less time per day on social media compared to non-religious hermits.

Sub-Research Question 4 (SRQ4): Do religious and non-religious hermits differ in the platforms they use and the size of their digital social networks?

Working Hypothesis 1d (MH1d): Religious hermits are more likely to use Facebook and maintain a smaller number of virtual contacts, while non-religious hermits are more inclined toward using other platforms and sustaining a broader network of connections.

2.4. Instruments

For the purposes of this study, a structured questionnaire was employed, comprising three principal sections. The first section pertained to demographic data, including age, gender, level of education, religious affiliation, marital status, number of close friends, and place of residence. The second section was devoted to the archetypal profile, consisting of statements reflecting the three specified dimensions of the Pearson-Marr model, on the basis of which the (digital) Hermit profile was constructed. The third section examined the use and perception of social media, encompassing the type and frequency of posts, time spent on platforms, number of friends and followers, platforms used, level of emotional engagement, and personal perception of one's digital presence. Participants responded to the statements using a Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 – "strongly disagree" to 5 – "strongly agree"), accompanied by additional closed and open-ended items enabling a more precise description of their behavior on social media.

2.5. Procedure

Data were collected between November 20, 2024, and February 28, 2025, via an online survey administered through Google Forms. The research was conducted entirely in a digital format consistent with the nature of the research topic, which includes patterns of social media behavior, and the necessity for participants to respond within the same contextual environment in which they typically engage with digital content. The questionnaire link was disseminated through pre-existing online communities on Facebook and Instagram, as well as distributed via electronic mail. Each post was accompanied by a concise description of the study's purpose, emphasizing anonymity, voluntary participation, and the exclusively scientific intent of the research.

Prior to commencing the survey, participants were presented with all necessary information regarding the study's purpose, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw consent at any time without consequence. The introductory section of the form specified that all data would be processed in aggregated form, precluding any the possibility of individual identification, and that participation did not entail any form of

monetary or non-monetary compensation. Informed consent was obtained through an active confirmation process, whereby participants indicated their agreement by selecting the consent option on the opening page of the questionnaire.

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of scientific research, the Code of Ethics for Research Involving Human Participants (National Council for Ethics in Science and Higher Education, 2016), the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA, 2017), and the Code of Ethics in Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Croatia (2015).

2.6. Data Processing

The data were subjected to various statistical analyses using the SPSS software package. In comparing religious and non-religious hermits, appropriate non-parametric methods were applied due to the relatively small subgroup sizes and the distributional characteristics of the data.

3. Results

In order to enable a systematic and transparent examination of the main hypothesis, the analysis begins with an evaluation of the individual sub-hypotheses that operationalize its constituent dimensions. This approach allows for a more precise understanding of the specific aspects of digital behavior exhibited by religious and non-religious hermits, thereby laying the groundwork for an integrated interpretation of the overall behavioral patterns among individuals who display characteristics of the Hermit archetype.

What follows is a presentation of results for the four working sub-hypotheses (MH1a – MH1d), which together form the analytical framework for testing the main hypothesis. Each sub-hypothesis investigates a specific aspect of the digital behavior of religious and non-religious digital hermits. MH1a addresses thematic differences in published content, with a focus on spiritual, personal, and creative elements. MH1b examines the frequency of posts, that is, how often participants from both groups share content. MH1c analyzes the amount of time spent daily on social media. MH1d focuses on differences in the platforms used (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) and the size of online reach, measured by the number of friends or followers.

This approach facilitates a detailed and structured assessment of the main hypothesis concerning differences in digital behavioral patterns between religious and non-religious individuals who exhibit the traits of the Hermit archetype.

To examine differences between religious and non-religious hermits in key variables of digital behavior, a preliminary test of normality was conducted using the Shapiro–Wilk test. Given that most variables did not conform to a normal distribution ($p < .05$), non-parametric statistical tests were applied (Mann–Whitney U and Chi-square) in accordance with the nature of the data and the size of the subgroups.

Working Hypothesis 1a (MH1a): Religious digital hermits prefer to publish content of a spiritual, symbolic, or reflective nature, whereas non-religious hermits more frequently share personal, aesthetic, or secular content.

To test the first working hypothesis, which addresses thematic differences in the types of content published by religious and non-religious digital hermits, the variable “On social media, I most often post...” was analyzed. Participants selected one of several predefined content categories (e.g., personal, creative, spiritual, I do not post, etc.). Their responses were treated as a nominal variable, as no intrinsic order exists among the categories.

This variable offers insight into the expressive orientations and symbolic priorities within each group. Based on the responses, a contingency table was constructed (Table 1), presenting the actual distribution of content types posted by religious and non-religious participants exhibiting Hermit archetype characteristics.

Table 1. Observed Distribution of Preferred Content Types Among Religious and Non-Religious Digital Hermits

type of content most frequently posted	NON-RELIGIOUS	RELIGIOUS
hobbies and creative activities	0 (0.0%)	3 (9.1%)
wisdom and sayings	0 (0.0%)	3 (9.1%)
I don't like to post	4 (80.0%)	15 (45.5%)
educational and informative content	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.1%)
promotional content	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.1%)
my personal pictures	1 (20.0%)	8 (24.2%)

Source: authors of the paper

The results presented in Table 1 display the actual distribution of responses regarding the types of content most frequently shared by digital hermits, classified according to religious affiliation. While the most common response in both groups was an aversion to posting content on social media, the magnitude of this preference differed markedly: 80% of non-religious participants stated that they do not publish content, compared to 45.5% of religious participants. Religious participants exhibited greater thematic diversity. Notably, the categories wisdom and sayings and hobbies and creative activities appeared exclusively within this group, each representing 9.1% of responses. These findings indicate the presence of reflective and symbolic expression, which aligns closely with the archetypal characteristics of the Hermit profile.

To determine whether the distributional difference between the groups was statistically significant, a Chi-square test was conducted, appropriate for analyzing associations between two categorical variables. Due to the limited number of participants in the non-religious subgroup (N = 12), the results were interpreted with additional caution to account for potential sensitivity to sample size and variance.

Table 2. Chi-Square Test Results for The Distribution of Content Type by Religiosity

Statistic	Value
Chi-square value (χ^2)	2.585
Degrees of freedom (df)	5
p-value	0.7637

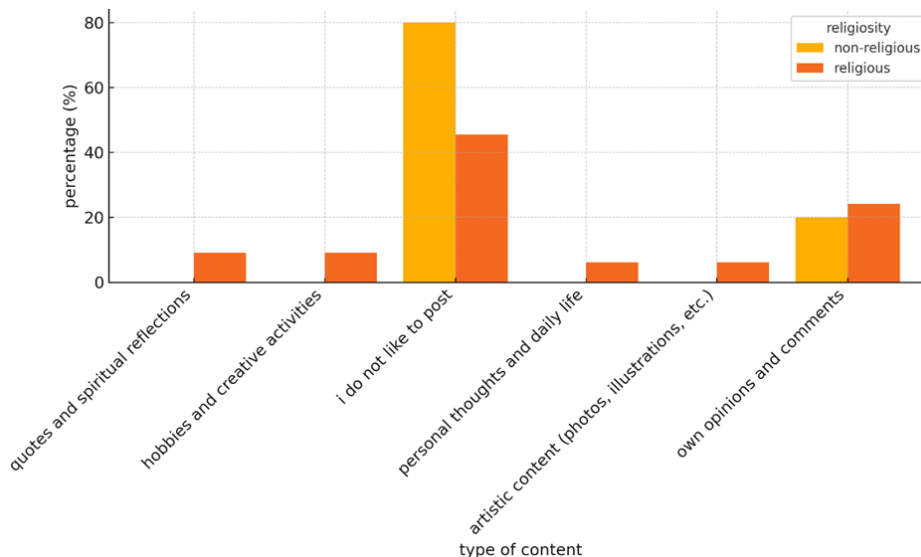
Source: authors of the paper

The obtained results $\chi^2(5, N = 76) = 2.59, p = .76$ indicate that the observed difference is not statistically significant ($p > .05$), and therefore no conclusive association can be established between religiosity and type of content shared within the analyzed sample of individuals displaying characteristics of the Hermit archetype. On the basis of these findings, Working Hypothesis MH1a is not confirmed.

Nevertheless, although the Chi-square test did not yield statistical significance, the distribution of responses reveals a pattern that remains consistent with the theoretical expectation posited in the hypothesis. Despite the absence of significance at the inferential level, the descriptive analysis suggests a discernible trend: religious participants appear more likely to post content of a spiritual, reflective, and symbolic nature, whereas non-religious individuals tend to favor every day, personal, or artistic content, or more prominently, to abstain from posting altogether. This thematic distinction is further

illustrated visually in Graph 1, which provides a clearer overview of the content-related presence patterns within the groups under consideration.

Figure 1. Thematic Distribution of Most Frequently Posted Content by Religiosity (in %)



Source: authors of work using digital tools

Graph 1 provides a visual overview of the types of content most commonly posted by religious and non-religious digital hermits. Although the differences were not statistically significant (see Table 2), a thematic orientation trend is clearly observable, supporting the hypothesis. Specifically, a higher proportion of spiritual content is evident among religious participants, while non-religious individuals more frequently report a complete absence of posting activity.

Given the limitations of the Chi-square test in the context of small sample sizes, the effect size was also calculated using Cramér's V, in order to assess the practical significance of the observed differences.

Table 3. Effect Size (Cramér's V) for Association Between Religiosity and Preferred Content Type

test	value
Cramér's V	0.101

Source: authors of the paper

The obtained value of Cramér's $V = .10$ indicates a very small effect size in the relationship between religious affiliation and the thematic orientation of social media posts. Although the descriptive analysis suggests a stylistic difference between the groups, with a higher presence of spiritual and reflective content among religious participants, this result confirms that the difference lacks strong statistical or practical significance. Therefore, the effect size calculation provides an additional insight complementing the p-value, showing that although the differences are not statistically significant, a slight trend exists which supports the archetypal interpretation. In the context of archetypal behavior, such symbolic preference remains theoretically relevant, although weakly expressed in this sample.

This opens the way for further analysis of posting frequency, which represents the quantitative aspect of digital activity. The following section, through MH1b, examines how often members of each group engage in the active creation of digital content, thereby deepening the understanding of their communication patterns in the virtual space.

Working Hypothesis 1b (MH1b): Religious digital hermits post content on social media less frequently than non-religious ones.

To test the second working hypothesis, which predicts differences in posting frequency between religious and non-religious digital hermits, the variable "On average, I post" was analyzed. Participants assessed how often they publish content on social media, with responses expressed on an ordinal scale, ranging from very infrequent to very frequent posting. This variable served as an indicator of the level of digital activity within each group, enabling comparison of expressive patterns among participants with differing levels of religiosity. Based on participants' responses, a summary table (Table 4) was constructed, presenting the distribution of posting frequency for each participant group.

Table 4. Frequency of Social Media Posting by Level of Religiosity in the Subsample of Digital Hermits

I post on average	non-religious	religious
once a week	0 (0.0%)	11 (17.2%)
several times a week	1 (8.3%)	7 (10.9%)
never	0 (0.0%)	8 (12.5%)
less than once a month	2 (16.7%)	11 (17.2%)
daily	3 (25.0%)	5 (7.8%)
several times a month	6 (50.0%)	22 (34.4%)

Source: authors of the paper

Table 4 presents the distribution of responses to the variable “I post on average”, shown separately for the two groups of digital hermits, religious and non-religious, expressed in absolute frequencies and relative percentages. In the non-religious group, the majority reported posting several times a month (50.0%), followed by daily (25.0%), less than once a month (16.7%), and several times a week (8.3%). No participants in this group selected never or once a week. In the religious group, the most common response was also several times a month (34.4%), followed by once a week (17.2%), less than once a month (17.2%), never (12.5%), several times a week (10.9%), and daily (7.8%).

The distribution of responses indicates differing posting patterns: religious participants tend to prefer moderate frequencies (e.g., several times a month, once a week), while non-religious participants show a greater proportion of more intensive posting, including daily and frequent monthly activity. Given the ordinal nature of the variable and the unequal group sizes, the appropriate non-parametric test, Mann-Whitney U, was applied.

Table 5. Mann–Whitney U Test Results for Differences in Posting Frequency Between Religious and Non-Religious Digital Hermits

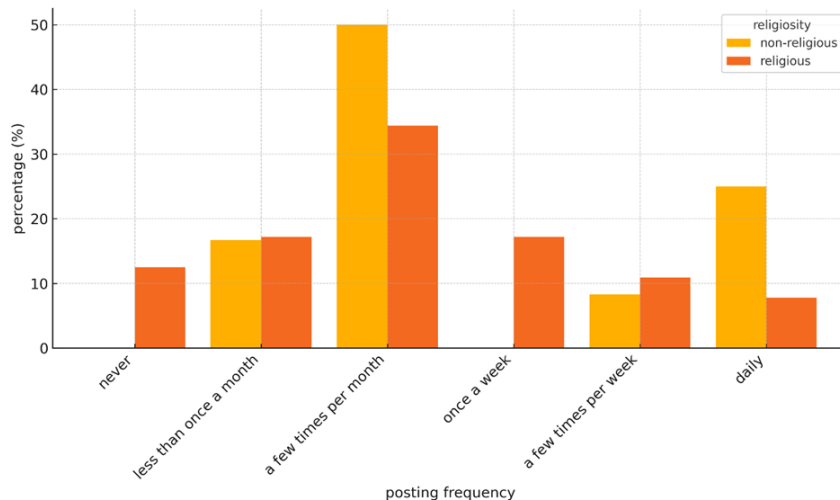
Test	U value	p value
Mann-Whitney U test	321	0.3581

Source: authors of the paper

The test results ($U = 321$, $p = .36$) indicate that the difference between the groups is not statistically significant. Although there are observable differences in the percentage distribution of responses, these differences are not substantial enough to reach significance at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, Working Hypothesis MH1b is not confirmed.

Nevertheless, the visual representation in Graph 2 further highlights the emerging pattern in the distribution, showing that non-religious participants are more frequently represented in categories indicating more intensive posting, whereas religious participants are more evenly distributed across moderate frequencies. Such patterns may suggest subtle differences in digital engagement which, in a larger sample, could potentially reach statistical significance.

Figure 2. Frequency of Social Media Posting Among Religious and Non-Religious Digital Hermits (in %)



Source: authors of work using digital tools

The graph clearly illustrates a greater tendency among non-religious participants toward more frequent content posting, with a marked presence in the categories of daily and regular monthly activity, whereas religious participants more commonly operate within moderate expressive ranges.

To further assess the practical significance of the observed differences, the effect size was calculated. This analysis is particularly important in cases where the results are not statistically significant, as it may indicate potential real-world relevance of the observed differences.

Table 6. Effect Size for Differences in Posting Frequency Between Religious and Non-Religious Individuals

z value	effect size (r)
-0.897	0.103

Source: authors of the paper

The calculated effect size ($r = .10$) indicates a very small effect. This means that, although a tendency toward more frequent posting among non-religious participants is observable in the descriptive data, the difference is not sufficiently pronounced to bear practical relevance. In conclusion, within the analyzed sample, religiosity did not demonstrate a significant influence on the frequency of social media posting.

Following the examination of posting frequency (MH1b), the next analytical step focuses on the average daily time digital hermits spend on social media (MH1c). This working hypothesis further deepens the understanding of differences in patterns of digital presence, exploring not only posting frequency, but also the overall level of engagement in terms of time spent online.

Working Hypothesis 1c (MH1c): Religious digital hermits spend less time on social media daily compared to non-religious ones.

To examine the third working hypothesis, the variable "Each day I spend on social media" was used, whereby participants estimated the average amount of time they spend daily on digital platforms. Responses were given on an ordinal scale, ranging from very short to very long durations spent online, and were analyzed as an indicator of digital engagement intensity. This variable offers insight into the patterns of digital habits among religious and non-religious digital hermits, in terms of the amount of time they dedicate daily to online activity.

Based on participant responses, a summary table (Table 7) was created, showing the distribution of answers within each group, thereby allowing a comparison of social media usage patterns according to levels of religiosity.

Table 7. Daily Time Spent on Social Media Among Religious and Non-Religious Digital Hermits

Daily time spent on social media	non-religious	religious
less than 30 minutes	1 (8.3%)	14 (21.9%)
about 1 hour	4 (33.3%)	16 (25.0%)
2 to 4 hours	2 (16.7%)	17 (26.6%)
more than 4 hours	5 (41.7%)	17 (26.6%)

Source: authors of the paper

Table 7 presents the distribution of participants according to the amount of time they spend daily on social media, classified by level of religiosity. The data are expressed as the number of participants and the corresponding percentages within each group.

In the religious group, responses were evenly distributed: 21.9% spend less than 30 minutes, 25.0% around one hour, 26.6% between 2 and 4 hours, and 26.6% more than 4 hours per day. In contrast, among non-religious participants, responses were concentrated in the categories “more than 4 hours” (41.7%) and “around one hour” (33.3%), while other categories were less represented. This distribution indicates a possible difference in the level of digital engagement between the groups.

To examine the statistical significance of these differences, the Mann–Whitney U test was applied. Given the ordinal nature of the variable and the unequal group sizes, this test was the appropriate non-parametric procedure for comparison.

Table 8. Mann–Whitney U Test Results for Differences in Daily Time Spent on Social Media Between Religious and Non-Religious Digital Hermits

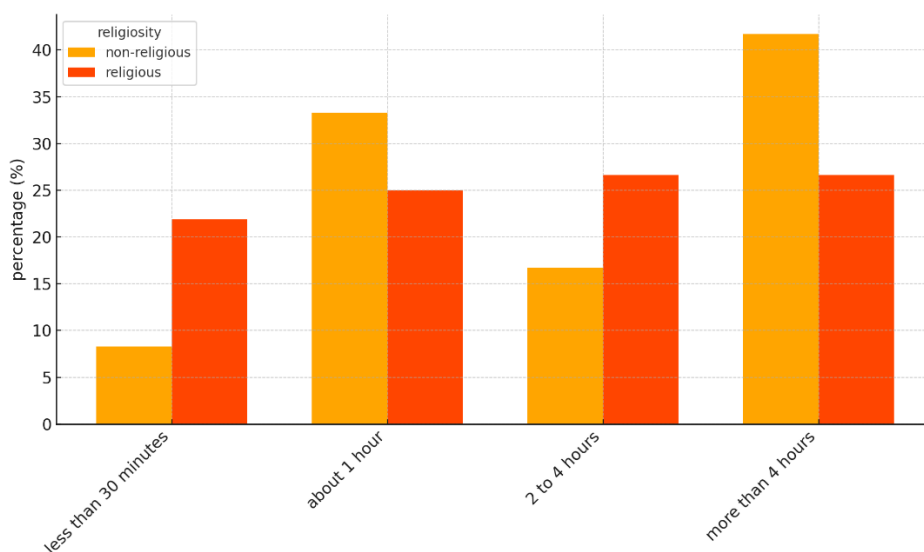
Test	U vrijednost	p-vrijednost
Mann–Whitney U test	318.5	0.3381

Source: authors of the paper

The results of the Mann–Whitney U test ($U = 318.50$, $p = .34$) showed that the difference in time spent on social media between religious and non-religious participants was not statistically significant. Although certain patterns are observable in the distribution of responses, the p-value is not sufficiently low to confirm a significant difference at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that religious affiliation determines the amount of time spent on social media within the analyzed sample. Accordingly, Working Hypothesis MH1c is not confirmed.

Despite the lack of statistical significance, the distribution of responses suggests potential differences in social media usage patterns, which are further illustrated in the following graph.

Figure 3. Distribution of Daily Time Spent on Social Media Among Religious and Non-Religious Digital Hermits (in %)



Source: authors of work using digital tools

This graph presents a comparative distribution of daily time spent on social media between religious and non-religious digital hermits. Non-religious participants are more frequently represented in the category of more than four hours per day online, whereas the responses of religious participants are more evenly distributed across all provided time categories.

To assess the practical significance of the differences, the effect size was also calculated.

Table 9. Effect Size for Differences in Time Spent on Social Media Between Religious and Non-Religious Individuals

z value	effect size (r)
-0.933	0.107

Source: authors of the paper

The calculated effect size ($r = .11$) indicates a small effect. Despite a slightly more pronounced trend for non-religious participants to spend more time online, the difference is not sufficiently marked to bear statistical or practical significance. In conclusion, time spent on social media does not exhibit meaningful differentiation based on religious affiliation within the analyzed sample.

Following the analysis of the temporal dimension of digital activity (MH1c), the research now turns to network reach and platform choice as integral elements of digital presence patterns. The fourth working hypothesis (MH1d) assumes that religious and non-religious digital hermits differ in terms of the types of social media platforms used and the size of their virtual contact networks.

Working Hypothesis 1d (MH1d): Religious hermits are more likely to use Facebook and have a smaller number of virtual contacts, whereas non-religious hermits tend to prefer other platforms and maintain a broader network of user connections.

As part of the fourth working hypothesis, the focus was placed on comparing network reach and platform choice between religious and non-religious digital hermits. For this purpose, three variables were analyzed: (1) "Use of social media", which determined which platforms participants use (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, other); (2) "Number of Facebook friends", which indicates the size of the network within the most widely used social media platform; (3) "Number of Instagram followers", as an indicator of visibility and potential reach on a visually oriented platform. Together, these three variables provide insight into the patterns of network behavior and self-presentation strategies among religious and non-religious digital hermits.

Based on participants' responses, a summary table (Table 10) was compiled, presenting preferences in social media use within each group.

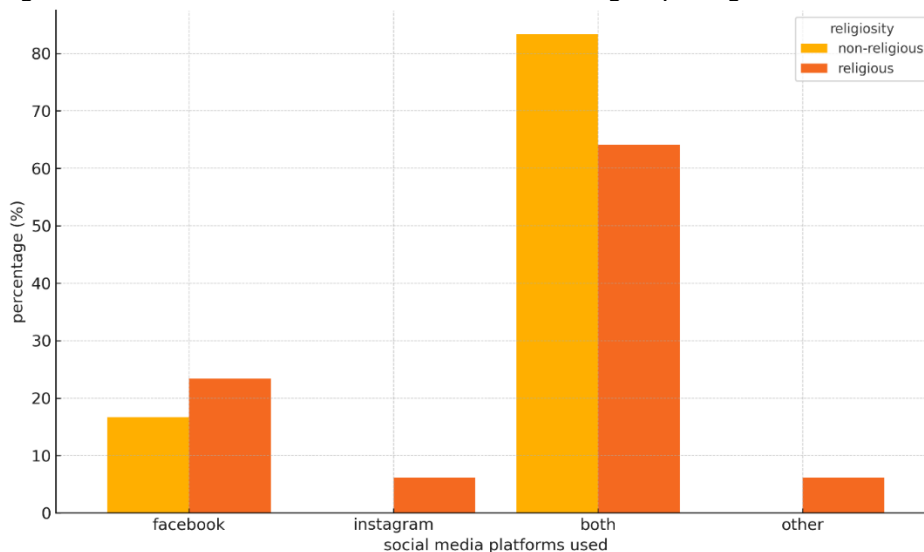
Table 10. Social Media Preferences Among Religious and Non-Religious Individuals with the Hermit Archetype

SOCIAL NETWORKS USAGE	NON-RELIGIOUS	RELIGIOUS
FACEBOOK	2 (16.7%)	15 (23.4%)
INSTAGRAM	0 (0.0%)	4 (6.2%)
OTHER	0 (0.0%)	4 (6.2%)
BOTH	10 (83.3%)	41 (64.1%)

Source: authors of the paper

Religious participants display greater dispersion in platform choice: 64.1% use a combination of networks (e.g. Facebook and Instagram), while 23.4% use Facebook exclusively, and 6.2% prefer only Instagram or other platforms respectively. Non-religious participants show a higher concentration in the use of dominant platforms: 83.3% use a combination of networks, while 16.7% use only Facebook. No participant from the non-religious group reported using only Instagram or other platforms. These differences are also illustrated in Graph 4.

Figure 4. Distribution of Social Media Platform Usage by Religious Affiliation (in %)



Source: authors of work using digital tools

To examine the association between religiosity and social media platform preferences, the Chi-square test of independence was applied.

Table 11. Results of the Chi-Squared Test for The Association Between Religious Affiliation and Social Media Usage

Test	Chi ² value	p value	degrees of freedom
Chi-squared test	2.266	0.519	3

Source: authors of work

The test result $\chi^2(3, N = 76) = 2.27, p = .52$ did not indicate a statistically significant association between religiosity and the type of social media platforms used. The observed differences should therefore be interpreted with caution.

To assess the practical significance of the observed differences, the effect size was additionally calculated.

Table 12. Effect Size (Cramér's V) for Association Between Religiosity and Social Media Platform Usage

test	value
Cramér's V	0.102

Source: authors of work

Although the differences are not statistically significant, the descriptive analysis reveals certain patterns, namely, a more pronounced presence of Facebook among religious participants, and a stronger orientation towards combined platform use among non-religious individuals. This may hold theoretical relevance within the framework of the archetypal approach.

The next step in the analysis focuses on the size of the Facebook friend network, measured by the variable "Number of Facebook friends", classified into four levels. Due to the ordinal nature of the data, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied.

Table 13. Mann-Whitney U Test Results for Differences in Facebook Friend Counts Between Religious and Non-Religious Individuals

Test	U value	p value
Mann-Whitney U test	367.5	0.8125

Source: authors of work

The test results ($U = 367.50$, $p = .81$) do not indicate the presence of statistically significant differences between the groups. Descriptively, non-religious participants appear slightly more frequently in the highest category (>1000 friends), but this difference is not sufficiently pronounced to carry inferential weight. To assess the practical significance of differences in network reach alongside statistical significance, the effect size was also calculated.

Table 14. Effect Size for Differences in Facebook Friend Counts Between Religious and Non-Religious Individuals

z value	effect size (r)
-0.235	0.027

Source: authors of work

The calculated effect size ($r = .03$) indicates a very small practical effect, further confirming that the differences are not meaningful either statistically or in real-world terms.

These findings support the conclusion that religious affiliation does not significantly influence the size of one’s virtual network within the most widely used social media platform.

In the third part of the analysis, the difference in number of Instagram followers between the groups was examined using the variable “On Instagram I have:”, ranked across multiple levels. The Mann–Whitney U test was applied.

Table 15. Mann–Whitney U Test Results for Differences in Instagram Follower Counts Between Religious and Non-Religious Individuals

Test	U value	p value
Mann–Whitney U test	371.5	0.85

Source: authors of work

The test results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the number of Instagram followers between religious and non-religious participants ($U = 371.50$, $p = .85$). This result suggests that religious affiliation is not associated with the size of network reach on Instagram.

Although minor differences may be discerned in the descriptive data, they are not sufficiently pronounced to be confirmed as systematic within the examined sample.

To further investigate the potential practical relevance of the observed differences, the effect size was also calculated.

Table 16. Effect Size for Differences in Instagram Follower Counts Between Religious and Non-Religious Individuals

z value	effect size (r)
-0.178	0.02

Source: authors of work

The calculated effect size ($r = .02$) indicates an extremely small practical effect, meaning that differences in the number of Instagram followers between religious and non-religious participants are not relevant in either statistical or measurable practical terms.

Following the examination of differences in platform choice and virtual network size, the fourth hypothesis is not statistically confirmed, although descriptive patterns remain relevant for understanding the archetypal dimension of digital behavior. Accordingly, Working Hypothesis MH1d is not confirmed.

Ultimately, the results of the fourth working hypothesis suggest that religious affiliation is not a significant factor in determining network reach or platform preference among digital hermits, although descriptive patterns continue to offer meaningful insights for further archetypal interpretations.

As shown in the analyses of MH1a to MH1d, while none of the individual variables demonstrated statistically significant differences, consistent descriptive patterns point to the presence of an underlying divergence in digital behavior between religious and non-religious participants.

Main Hypothesis (MH): Religious digital hermits display distinct behavioral patterns on social media compared to non-religious ones, characterized by a more restrained, selective, and reflective presence.

Based on the results obtained from the analysis of the four working hypotheses (MH1a–MH1d), it can be concluded that the main hypothesis is partially confirmed, primarily at the level of observed patterns and thematic tendencies, although statistical significance was not reached in any of the tested variables.

Working hypothesis MH1a indicated thematic differences in the posts: religious participants more frequently shared reflective and symbolic content (e.g., quotes, proverbs), whereas non-religious participants preferred personal posts or had little to no

content. Although the differences were not statistically significant, descriptive analysis suggests a stylistic divergence in expression.

For MH1b, non-religious participants posted more frequently (daily or several times a month), while religious participants were more evenly distributed across moderate posting categories. The difference was not statistically significant; however, the effect size points to a slight variation in engagement.

MH1c showed that non-religious participants spent more time online, whereas religious participants exhibited a more balanced pattern of usage. Again, no statistically significant difference was found, but a trend toward differentiated habits was observed.

In MH1d, non-religious participants were more likely to use multiple networks (e.g., Facebook and Instagram), whereas religious participants favored more traditional platforms, particularly Facebook. Non-religious individuals also tended to have a larger online reach, although these differences were not statistically confirmed.

Despite the absence of statistical confirmation, the comprehensive analysis demonstrates that religious digital hermits do exhibit behavioral patterns that may be described as more restrained, selective, and reflective, in line with the main hypothesis. These differences are primarily expressed through style, thematic focus, and frequency of expression, rather than through quantitative indicators supported by statistically significant inferential tests.

Therefore, the main hypothesis may be interpretatively confirmed within the framework of the theoretical model and consistent descriptive findings, with a clear need for further research on a larger and more representative sample, in order to enable stronger statistical validation of the observed patterns.

4. Discussion

The research indicates that religious digital hermits exhibit recognizable patterns of behavior on social media. Although not statistically confirmed, these patterns consistently manifest through a stronger orientation towards symbolic and reflective content, less frequent and more moderate posting dynamics, shorter time spent online, and greater selectiveness in both platform choice and the size of network reach. Such patterns not only support the hypothesis of a more restrained and reflective presence among religious users, but also vividly portray the Hermit archetype as a digital nomad, one who does not use technology for networking or visibility, but rather for contemplation, sharing personal insights, and creating space for silence amidst the noise of the internet. Religious digital hermits shape their profiles as modern-day digital pilgrimages, deeply symbolic spaces

where the weight and meaning of content prevail over its quantity. Their presence is not random nor mass-oriented, but intentional, controlled, detached from superficial visibility, and focused on crafting an authentic spiritual experience through media symbolism (Jones, 2017; Rimban & Suruiz, 2024; Pearson, 1991; Tran & Davies, 2024).

In the area of thematic focus of social media posts, religious participants more frequently share content of a spiritual and reflective nature, such as religious quotes, symbolic messages, and contemplative thoughts, consistent with a model of digital introspective presence. This pattern is supported by the findings of Davidson and Farquhar (2014), who note that religious social media users tend to express themselves through content reflecting their values and spiritual beliefs. Everton (2019) emphasizes that religious networks operate as normative and symbolic systems that encourage the expression of values through spiritual language. Bhosale (2015) also highlights that spiritual content such as meditation and prayer have therapeutic effects and contributes to emotional stability. Similarly, Abokhodair, Abdelrahim and Magdy (2020) demonstrate that Muslim social media users frequently share Qur'anic verses as a form of restrained but deeply symbolic spiritual expression. Such posts rarely include comments and function as discreet digital manifestations of faith. In contrast, non-religious participants more often share secular content or abstain from posting entirely, which may reflect a weaker sense of symbolic meaning associated with their digital presence.

In examining posting frequency, a pattern emerged showing that non-religious hermits post more frequently, while religious users are more moderate and less present on a daily basis. This form of digital restraint may be interpreted through the lens of self-presentation theory (Goffman, 1959), where religious individuals carefully choose when and how to express themselves. Davidson and Farquhar (2014) point out that religious users often experience increased social pressure within homogeneously religious networks, which affects their online expressiveness. They argue that in such environments, religiosity, rather than functioning as a protective factor, can become a source of stress and pressure. Hill (2014) further confirms that the stability of religious identity is contingent upon social support, and when that support diminishes, the tendency toward withdrawal and digital silence increases. Everton (2019) cautions that closed religious networks, while providing normative stability, can simultaneously limit freedom of expression and foster defensive communication. Andok (2024), on the other hand, highlights that digital media enable users to personalize religious authority, allowing individuals to choose which form of online authority they align with, when and why, thus replacing traditional hierarchical authority structures with a more flexible, user-oriented model.

Similar patterns can also be found in offline network dynamics. Hill (2014), drawing on Berger's concept of the "plausibility structure", demonstrates that religious beliefs remain stable only when supported by close and ideologically homogeneous networks. When such support weakens, the risk of belief changes increases. Analogously, the digital restraint of religious hermits reflects an effort to preserve identity within communities governed by strong normative frameworks.

The study of time spent online supports the notion of functional rationalization, whereby religious individuals more often remain within moderate time categories. Lim and Putnam (2010) highlight that religious individuals are more likely to be engaged offline within their communities, which may partly explain their lower online activity. Bhosale (2015) and Braimer (2016) confirm that spiritual discipline is linked to emotional regulation, and thus to more moderated digital presence. Rautela and Sharma (2019) stress that spirituality provides stability in times of rapid change and helps individuals maintain inner peace. Koenig (2009) notes that religious beliefs and spiritual practices are often associated with better mental health and serve as a vital resource for managing daily stress. In this context, the withdrawn digital behavior of religious hermits may be understood as a form of internal regulation and protection of emotional stability.

In terms of digital adaptation of religious expression, Aduragba et al. (2022) note that during the pandemic, religious communities often used social media not only to broadcast ritual content, but also as a means of psychological support and to sustain a sense of spiritual connectedness. This further supports the interpretation of digital restraint as a reflective, rather than a passive, strategy. Non-religious participants, on the other hand, demonstrate greater intensity in online activity, which may be linked to a greater reliance on digital interaction as a source of social content. Jabłońska (2022) notes that religious social media users are more likely to use these platforms to seek social support in coping with stress, while non-religious users favor problem-focused coping strategies, indicating different patterns of digital behavior associated with religiosity.

The analysis of network reach and platform usage further clarifies these differences. Religious hermits tend to favor more stable platforms such as Facebook and maintain narrower contact circles. Hunter, Friend, Williams-Wheeler and Fletcher (2012) show that closed parental networks function similarly, through implicit retention within homogeneous groups. McIntosh, Sykes and Kubena (2002) find that religious homogeneity increases network density and cohesion, but simultaneously limits contact diversity. Oh (2020) adds that younger believers reorganize networks around ideological affinity, while older ones remain within existing structures. Pattison (1980) describes closed religious' groups as

systems of psychosocial healing, where emotional connection and shared values substitute for broader social contact. McClure (2017) warns that while the internet fosters pluralism, it does not necessarily promote inclusivity, which, for religious digital hermits, may result in preserving traditional patterns while reinterpreting spiritual practices. By contrast, non-religious participants tend to use more platforms and maintain a wider circle of contacts, which may be associated with greater openness to digital visibility and pluralism. Gemar (2022) argues that plural religious identity and network diversity increase social capital, further reinforcing the differences in networking strategies between the two groups.

In the theoretical context, the observed patterns support the interpretation of the Hermit archetype as outlined by Jung (1968) and the Pearson-Marr model (Pearson, 1991), where the Hermit is perceived as a reflective figure, oriented towards introspection, silence, and symbolic clarity. Withdrawn presence, limited network reach, and thematic focus do not indicate a lack of engagement, but rather a different form of digital spiritual expression, often guided by the need for self-regulation and identity preservation (Bhosale, 2015; Braimer, 2016; Miklós-Thal et al., 2024; Schafer, 2018; Wright, 2024; Muris & Ollendick, 2023).

Moreover, the interpersonal dimension of relationships within religious networks suggests that quality of connections, rather than quantity, serves as the main predictor of emotional security and support (Merino, 2014; Schafer, 2018). The digital silence of religious users is not an absence, but a space for discreet exchange within circles of trust. Agbarya (2024) demonstrates that audience perception, whether real or imagined, strongly influences what and how believers share on social media. A study among Muslim women in Israel shows that awareness of a potential audience, even when not present, leads to caution or withdrawal from the public sphere, in order to protect personal and shared religious values. In this sense, digital silence becomes a conscious strategy for safeguarding identity. Thus, it may be concluded that religious salience within networks functions not as a tool for mass communication, but as a means of strengthening emotional closeness. Schafer (2018) confirms that religious discussions within close networks enhance emotional bonding and long-term relationship stability.

In contrast to most of the findings cited above, some studies question the positive relationship between religious networking and subjective well-being. Edling, Rydgren and Bohman (2014), in a study of young people in Sweden, show that neither religious practice nor identity significantly influences happiness. The key predictor of well-being proved to be participation in organization-based social networks, whether religious or secular. This supports Eichhorn's thesis (2012, as cited in Edling et al., 2014) that religion promotes

happiness only when it is widely accepted and socially normalized. In this context, the digital selectivity of religious hermits may be interpreted as a personal choice, not aimed at external validation, but at symbolic coherence and introspective expression.

In conclusion, although the statistical findings were not significant, descriptive patterns consistently point to subtle yet stable differences in the digital behavior of religious and non-religious hermits. These differences are evident in posting style, frequency, and platform choice, suggesting a deeper integration of religious identity into digital life.

For religious individuals, the digital space functions as a medium for introspective self-presentation and spiritual contemplation, rather than as a channel for social visibility. This is consistent with the model proposed by Müller and Friemel (2024), which posits that digital media serve believers as tools for reinforcing a sense of belonging and preserving identity. Their digital restraint reflects a selective approach to content sharing, aligned with personal and integrated value systems.

These findings suggest that religious digital hermits represent a distinct type of social media user, whose behavior is driven by internal criteria of authenticity and symbolic consistency. While the study offers a coherent theoretical framework and delineates identifiable patterns of digital behavior, it also entails several methodological limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the findings.

4.1. Limitations of the Study and Implications for Future Research

Although this study provided valuable insights into patterns of digital behavior among individuals displaying pronounced characteristics of the Hermit archetype, several limitations should be acknowledged, as they may affect both the interpretation and the generalizability of the findings.

One important consideration concerns the nature of the sample, which was both convenience-based and self-selected. This sampling strategy limits the extent to which the results can be generalized to the broader population. Participants voluntarily chose to take part via digital channels, suggesting that the sample likely comprised individuals with higher levels of digital literacy, introspective orientation, and interest in topics related to religiosity or archetypal psychology. Furthermore, data collection via an online survey carries the potential risk of socially desirable responding, despite assurances of anonymity and adherence to clearly defined ethical standards. It is also essential to acknowledge the cultural and temporal context in which the study was conducted. The research took place during a period characterized by profound global transformations in digital communication and religious expression—factors that may have influenced participants' behavior patterns, particularly regarding the manner and frequency of social media use. Consequently, the

findings should be interpreted with caution, recognizing that outcomes may differ across different cultural, generational, or social contexts. An additional limitation concerns the imbalance between the number of religious and non-religious participants, particularly within the digital hermit subsample. This disparity reduces the statistical power and constrains the ability to gain a more nuanced understanding of variation within the non-religious group. Moreover, the convenience-based online sample may be biased toward individuals already interested in spirituality, identity, and introspection. Finally, although the quantitative methods employed enabled the identification of general trends, self-report measures and closed-ended questions cannot fully capture the complexity of motivational and emotional dimensions of digital behavior. Future research should therefore adopt mixed-method approaches, combining quantitative and qualitative designs, and include larger and more diverse samples to deepen understanding of the relationships among religiosity, archetypal dispositions, and digital self-presentation. Incorporating variables such as levels of religious involvement, personal motivations, and psychological needs would allow more precise interpretation of the interplay between archetypal dispositions and digital behavior.

Despite these limitations, the study provides an important basis for further investigation into how archetypal tendencies—such as introspectiveness, spiritual reflectivity, and symbolic orientation—manifest within contemporary digital environments. The findings provide a foundation for future interdisciplinary research connecting archetypal psychology, communication studies, and digital religion scholarship, with the aim of achieving a deeper understanding of the spiritual dimension of online identity.

5. Conclusion

In the digital epoch, where presence has become currency, the Hermit archetype reveals a quiet counterculture, a form of digital resistance to the spectacle of visibility. This study suggests that religious digital hermits, while not quantitatively distinguishable from their non-religious counterparts, exhibit a qualitatively different relationship with the online realm. For them, presence is not imperative, but a choice, and posting is not an impulse, but a symbolic act. Their restraint is not absence, it is a space of meaning.

This behavioral profile points to a deeper psychological and social dynamic. Social media, in this context, are not merely platforms for information exchange, but arenas where identity is negotiated, the spiritual landscape shaped, and a personal voice found amid digital noise. While non-religious users are more inclined towards everyday expression or complete withdrawal, religious hermits embody a form of silent spiritual presence, an

almost ritualised digital asceticism in which communication is carefully measured, and content is imbued with meaning. In this sense, the digital hermit functions as a symbol of reflective identity, one that defies the logic of perpetual connectedness.

This phenomenon calls for a rethinking of social media not merely as spaces for communication, but as sites of identity performance, spiritual regulation, and symbolic self-representation. In light of this, future research should move beyond a purely statistical logic of confirmation and open itself to phenomenological and interpretative approaches, asking: How do users inhabit digital space? How does spirituality reshape their experience of visibility, silence, and identity? By incorporating narrative and experiential methods, it becomes possible to more deeply explore this quiet yet intellectually and existentially resonant figure of the digital hermit, who, even in silence, speaks.

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