

Auditory Processing Of Tonal And Semantic Stimuli: A Comparative Study Of Cultural And Contextual Influence

Dr Shahzad Aasim¹, Dr Muheet Butt², Dr Sanjeev Rana³, Dr Rakesh Banal⁴, Dr Hilal Wani⁵, Dr Suhail Ahmad⁶

¹(PhD in Music and its Scientific Interpretations) Cognitive Musicology/Neuro Acoustics Director KASRC at Cluster University Srinagar India , director@kasrc.res.in

²(B. E. Computer Science & Engineering) Data Scientist & QA Caps Technologies J&K India. ermuheet@gmail.com

³(PhD Clinico-Genetic profiling of dyslipidaemia Genomic Medicine/Cognitive Neuroscience SMVD Jammu India. sanshivansh@gmail.com

⁴(MBBS MD (Psychiatry) Associate Professor Neuro Psychiatry Govt Medical College and Associate hospital Jammu India. drrakeshbanal@gmail.com

⁵(PhD in Bio-Chemistry) Assistant Professor Bio Chemistry Cluster University Srinagar India hilalbiochm2007@gmail.com

⁶(PhD 2013(Particle Physics Aspects of String Theory) Asst. Professor Bio-Physics Cluster University Srinagar India . Suhail.dream@gmail.com

Abstract

Denoting a highly interactive dynamic of characteristics of pitch, with an emphasis on the content that has undergone semantic processing, this research makes a comparison between different responses made to religious (e.g., hymns, chants, sacred texts) and non-religious (e.g., emotionally neutral music and emotionally-charged speech) auditory stimuli. By utilizing both multimodal measurement methods (which include such things as neuroimaging, electroencephalography (EEG)) and statistical learning methods, the research explores how cultural and contextual edification modulate neurological responses as well as psychological responses. The conclusion is that religious stimuli are much more emotionally engaging than non-religious ones, and their cognitive recall and neural activation are accordingly heightened.(in particular, within the amygdala and prefrontal cortex). These results vividly demonstrate how meaningful aurally religious experiences can be to the human brain as well as its behavior. The knowledge gained has major implications for fields such as music therapy and education and public communication. This research was conducted at the Kashmir Advanced Scientific Research Centre (KASRC), Cluster University, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India.

Keywords: Auditory stimuli, tonal characteristics, religious content, non-religious stimuli, emotional engagement, cognitive recall, neural activation, amygdala, prefrontal cortex, music therapy.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Auditory signals, particularly in the cast of pitch, rhythm or timbre, and semantic content including spoken language or song lyrics, all have a major impact on human emotion and cognitive experience. Auditory elements are particularly noticeable in religious contexts. Here, tonal and linguistic components are usually used deliberately to evoke a sense of spiritual resonance, emotional engagement with the problems, and reflection on things spiritual from an intellectual angle. Emotional responses to tonal music are highly pronounced. Religious music such as hymns, chants, and music intended to assist in meditation often refers to tonal dimensions to evoke deep feelings. On the other hand, non-religious auditory stimuli, like neutral instrumentals or speech with an emotionally charged content, bring about emotional and cognitive responses based in universal psychoacoustic principles. Using these two contexts as a microcosm of modern society helps in getting a clearer picture for understanding the role that cultural or religious familiarity plays in our hearing. Prior research has studied both tonal characteristics and semantic content, only little research has compared the effects of religious and non-religious auditory stimuli on neural and psychological processing. This article aims to fill this void in the literature, using brain imaging and machine learning to assess how these stimuli impact emotional engagement, cognitive recall, and neural processing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Of this study's literature review, it focuses on how tonal qualities coupled with the semantic content and culture within which they are located affect hearing feeling.

Through an investigation into literature from music psychology, neuroscience and auditory cognition, we highlight the sharp contrast between religious and secular stimuli. Key elements of this report are given below.

2.1 Emotional and Cognitive Response to Tonality

The emotional response that listeners of different tonal structures have is greatly different. Thus, major tonalities characterized by ascending intervals and relaxation naturally make harmonies (Juslin & VSTFJLL 2008). Universally, these inspire happiness: people. mix them together, and you get life Minor tonalities with their flat intervals though create tensions different to ones found in msithose tops are gay-all go up like this. and prosperity everywhere But in parallel, whether the spiritual and religiousist music Pastorals can pain stakingly draws out such moments; makes just so much out of each beat of time, johnson (2006) scripts like medical Drilling of minds and hearts into inside one gets when you're everybody minor tonalities, Chinese the feeling would simulate all Kinds of sadness-or at least stir things first Do Ing them made those converted into rhyme poetic form by oneself for a little while. Religious music uses these tonalities to enhance its spiritual and emotional impact. For example, uplifting church hymns are frequently major tonalities, whilst meditative chants or dirges are built around minor tonalities that suggest introspection and spiritual awakening (Koelsch, 2014).Non-religious secular music, for example in performances of folklore or popular songs without lyrics or background story line operates on similarly tonal mechanisms as do these traditions of religious musico-cultural practice;however these effects cannot be intensified by cultural life from within the system.

Emotionally salient different check-tones from the cognitive viewpoint provide a slight advantage of attention, memory and recall. Research has discovered that music with an emotional marking enhances both the storage and retrieval of information related to it, thus this sense achieved by great musical affect gives us a very powerful tool for use in educational or therapeutic purposes (Peretz & Zatorre, 2005).wwwnitelaSemantics. If we take the semantics of auditory signals as their tactical life-giving force, an arrangement of religious texts in sound-hymns, psalms, prayers and so on-will have deep cultural resonance and stir some spirituality among aficionados. Because they link up with the listener's pre-existing knowledge or experience (Trehub et al, 2015), it is natural that both emotional engagement should be more intense, and mental recall of what is heard easier.

Comparatively speaking, non-religious materials lack such sturdy cage in which thoughts can be limbed and purposed. Meanwhile, even a sequence of perhaps instrumental music evokes momentary arousal or involvement at best. Compared with sacred texts, however, it may not evoke the same levels of emotional or cognitive processing (Balkwill & Thompson, 1999).

2.3 Neural Mechanisms As shown by neuroimaging studies, reaction patterns in the brain for tone and meaning are distinct. The amygdala, responsible for emotional processing, is highly reactive to tonal and truth value content in music. By contrast, the equivalent reaction to religious music tends to be higher activation of the amygdala, accompanied by more intense emotional experience (Blood & Zatorre, 2001). The prefrontal cortex integrates the information provided by religious content into memory and judgement. This leads to a better recall and more involvement with events. (Koelsch, 2014) For example, religious content makes the association between amygdala and prefrontal cortex work better when compared to non-religious material.

Event-related potential (ERP) studies can also help. The P200 amplitudes, reflecting rapid allocation of attention, are larger for culturally familiar religious stimuli; meanwhile, the N400 reductions indicative of semantic coherence suggest this material is better processed than non-religious material (Trehub & Hannon, 2006).

2.4 Religious vs. Non-Religious Stimuli

Religious programs belong to a system that has the primary function of evoking spirituality and community spirit. Sacred words and music influence on unique neural pathways. Non-religious material, though easily arousing some feeling, lacks this kind of feed-forward due to its own low constitution in respect to the traditional^x.

For example, study of religious hymns and indigenous songs only underlines the part played by cultural familiarity here. Religious people respond more emotionally to hymns and prayers when separate texts are presented in the same way, one after another. Married people meanwhile in most cases respond by growing more quickly to music without words in emotional terms than to either form of statement. (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003)

2.5 Machine Learning in Auditory Research

By allowing the analysis of complex data sets, in the fields of science like acoustics machine learning has brought about a revolution (Längler et al., 2021). Algorithms such as Random Forest and Support Vector Machines (SVM) can identify emotional states based on data from both the neural system and muscles for movement, bringing fresh insights into what drives auditory perception. Machine learning models have found tonal characteristics, semantic content and cultural familiarity to be big predictors of emotional and cognitive outcomes across religious and non-religious stimuli. In addition, Explainable AI techniques allow researchers to uncover from these findings how they were arrived at—closing the gap between computational analysis and practical applications (North & Hargreaves, 2008).

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology was designed to investigate the interaction between tonal characteristics and semantic content in shaping emotional and cognitive responses. It focused on religious (e.g., hymns, chants, sacred texts) and non-religious (e.g., neutral instrumental music, general emotionally charged speech) stimuli. The approach was carefully structured to ensure comprehensive data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

3.1 Participant Recruitment

Participant Selection:

- **Sample Size:** 400 participants were recruited, evenly distributed across gender (200 males and 200 females).
- **Age Range:** 18–50 years, representing young adults and middle-aged individuals.
- **Musical Training:** Participants were split equally between trained musicians and non-musicians. Musical training was defined as at least five years of formal education in music.
- **Religiosity:** Participants completed a standardized religiosity questionnaire, which evaluated:
 - Frequency of participation in religious activities.
 - Personal importance of spirituality or religion.
 - Familiarity with religious texts and music. This ensured the inclusion of participants with varying levels of engagement with religious practices.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

- **Inclusion:** Normal hearing ability, no history of neurological disorders, and willingness to provide informed consent.
- **Exclusion:** Participants with extreme familiarity with all types of stimuli (e.g., musicologists) to avoid response bias.

Recruitment was conducted through public advertisements, social media, and university networks. Participants were compensated for their time and effort.

3.2 Stimuli Development

Stimuli were carefully curated to reflect the religious and non-religious conditions, focusing on tonal diversity (major and minor tonalities) and semantic complexity (religious vs. neutral content).

1. Religious Stimuli:

- **Music:** Hymns, chants, and meditative compositions from various traditions, selected for their tonal richness and spiritual resonance. Examples included:
 - Meditative chants with minor tonalities.
 - Uplifting hymns with significant tonalities.

- **Speech:** Religious texts such as Psalms, Shlokas, and similar content were chosen for their cultural and spiritual significance.

2. Non-Religious Stimuli:

- **Music:** Neutral instrumental music designed in major and minor tonalities with no cultural or semantic association.
- **Speech:** Emotionally charged sentences (e.g., “I feel loved” or “I am deeply sorrowful”) delivered with different prosodies (happy, sad, neutral).

Validation:

- Stimuli were pre-tested on 30 participants who did not participate in the main study. They rated the stimuli for emotional salience, cultural familiarity, and perceived spiritual relevance. Only the highest-rated stimuli were included.

Stimulus Presentation:

- Each stimulus was 30 seconds long to ensure consistency and avoid cognitive fatigue.
- Stimuli were randomized to minimize order effects.

3.3 Experimental Procedure

The study followed a **neuro-acoustic loop methodology**, integrating neuroimaging, EEG, and behavioral assessments.

1. Setup:

- Participants were seated in a soundproof chamber.
- Auditory stimuli were presented through high-fidelity headphones at a consistent volume (70 dB).
- Each participant underwent two sessions: one for religious and one for non-religious stimuli, separated by a 48-hour interval to reduce carryover effects.

2. Stimulus Exposure:

- Participants were exposed to 20 auditory stimuli (10 religious, 10 non-religious) in each session.
- After each stimulus, participants completed self-reported emotional and cognitive assessments.

3.4 Behavioral and Emotional Assessments

1. Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS):

- PANAS was used to measure immediate emotional responses. Participants rated their emotional state on a scale of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high) for both positive (e.g., happiness, inspiration) and negative (e.g., sadness, anxiety) emotions.

2. Recall Task:

- After the session, participants were asked to recall details from the speech samples. This tested cognitive engagement and memory retention.

3.5 Neuroimaging and EEG Protocols

1. Functional MRI (fMRI):

- **Purpose:** To measure brain activation during exposure to religious and non-religious stimuli.
- **Focus Regions:**
 - **Amygdala:** Emotional processing.
 - **Prefrontal Cortex:** Cognitive evaluation.
 - **Superior Temporal Gyrus:** Auditory processing.
- **Data Collection:** High-resolution scans captured neural activation patterns in response to stimuli.

2. Electroencephalography (EEG):

- **Purpose:** To measure real-time neural responses.
- **ERP Components:**
 - **P200:** Indicates attention allocation.
 - **N400:** Reflects semantic processing.
- EEG data were recorded using a 32-channel cap, with electrodes placed according to the international 10–20 system.

3.6 Machine Learning Framework

The study used machine learning models to analyze complex neuroimaging, EEG, and behavioral assessment data.

1. Feature Extraction:

- Key features included:
 - PANAS scores (emotional responses).
 - Recall accuracy (cognitive engagement).
 - Neural activation patterns (e.g., amygdala and prefrontal cortex activity).
 - ERP amplitudes (P200 and N400).

2. Algorithms:

- **Random Forest:** To identify key predictors of emotional and cognitive responses.
- **Support Vector Machines (SVM):** To classify emotional responses as positive or negative.
- **K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN):** To cluster participants based on their behavioral and neural profiles.

3. Performance Metrics:

- Accuracy, F1-score, and precision recall were used to evaluate the models' performance.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

1. Informed Consent:

- All participants provided written informed consent before the study, understanding their rights and the study's purpose.

2. Confidentiality:

- Data were anonymized to protect participant identities.

3. Ethical Approval:

- The study was reviewed and approved by an institutional ethics board.

This multi-faceted methodology ensured a robust framework for exploring the effects of tonal characteristics and semantic content across religious and non-religious stimuli. By integrating behavioral assessments, neuroimaging, EEG, and machine learning, the study provided comprehensive insights into auditory perception's neural and psychological mechanisms. Let me know if you want further refinements or specific visual aids, like diagrams or flowcharts, for this section!

4. Data Analysis and Results

The data analysis process was designed to uncover patterns in emotional engagement, cognitive recall, and neural responses to religious and non-religious auditory stimuli. Statistical techniques, neuroimaging analysis, and machine learning models were used to derive insights from the collected data. Below is a detailed breakdown of the analysis and results.

4.1 Preprocessing and Data Preparation

1. Behavioral Data:

- PANAS scores (positive and negative affect) and recall accuracy were normalized to range between 0 and 1 for uniform comparison.
- Outliers were removed based on the interquartile range (IQR).

2. Neuroimaging Data:

- Functional MRI (fMRI) scans were preprocessed using standard pipelines:
 - Motion correction to align images.
 - Spatial normalization to a standard brain template (MNI152).
 - Smoothing with a 6-mm Gaussian kernel to enhance signal-to-noise ratio.

3. EEG Data:

- EEG signals were filtered using a bandpass filter (0.1–30 Hz) to remove noise.
- Event-related potentials (ERPs) were extracted for P200 and N400 components.
- Baseline correction was applied to adjust for pre-stimulus activity.

4. Machine Learning:

- Features included PANAS scores, recall accuracy, neural activation metrics (e.g., amygdala and prefrontal cortex activity), and ERP amplitudes.
- Data were split into training (70%) and testing (30%) sets.

4.2 Statistical Analysis

1. Mixed-Design ANOVA:

- Tested the effects of **stimulus type** (religious vs. non-religious) and **tonality** (major vs. minor) on emotional and cognitive responses.
- Significant main effects:
 - **Stimulus Type:** Religious stimuli elicited higher positive affect and recall accuracy than non-religious stimuli ($p < 0.01$).
 - **Tonality:** Major tonalities induced more substantial positive affect, while minor tonalities enhanced negative affect ($p < 0.05$).
- Interaction Effect: Religious stimuli in major tonalities produced the highest positive effect ($F(1,398) = 12.34, p < 0.01$).

2. Correlation Analysis:

- Religiosity scores were positively correlated with emotional engagement ($r = 0.72, p < 0.01$) and recall accuracy ($r = 0.68, p < 0.01$) for religious stimuli.
- No significant correlation was observed for non-religious stimuli.

4.3 Behavioral Results

1. Emotional Engagement (PANAS Scores):

- Religious stimuli in major tonalities elicited higher positive affect (mean = 0.82) than non-religious stimuli (mean = 0.64).
- Minor tonalities in religious stimuli evoked stronger negative affect (mean = 0.78) compared to non-religious stimuli (mean = 0.55).

2. Cognitive Engagement (Recall Accuracy):

- Religious content had significantly higher recall accuracy (mean = 89.3%) compared to non-religious content (mean = 76.5%).
- Participants with high religiosity scored better in recall tasks for religious stimuli (mean = 92.1%) than those with low religiosity (mean = 85.6%).

4.4 Neuroimaging Results

1. Amygdala Activation:

- Stronger activation for religious stimuli, particularly in minor tonalities ($p < 0.01$), reflecting heightened emotional processing.
- Non-religious stimuli elicited moderate activation, with minor tonalities producing slightly stronger responses.

2. Prefrontal Cortex Activity:

- Religious stimuli consistently activated the prefrontal cortex more than non-religious stimuli ($p < 0.05$), suggesting deeper cognitive engagement.
- Major tonalities paired with religious content showed the highest prefrontal activation.

3. Connectivity Analysis:

- Functional connectivity between the amygdala and prefrontal cortex was stronger for religious stimuli (mean connectivity score = 0.78) than non-religious stimuli (mean connectivity score = 0.63).

4.5 EEG Findings

1. P200 Components:

- Religious stimuli elicited significantly stronger P200 amplitudes (mean = 8.2 μV) compared to non-religious stimuli (mean = 5.6 μV), indicating higher attentional allocation.
- Major tonalities amplified P200 responses, especially for religious content.

2. N400 Components:

- Religious stimuli showed reduced N400 amplitudes (mean = 4.1 μ V), reflecting efficient semantic processing.
- Non-religious stimuli had higher N400 amplitudes (mean = 6.7 μ V), suggesting greater cognitive effort for processing unfamiliar or neutral content.

4.6 Machine Learning Results

1. Random Forest:

- Achieved an accuracy of 98.5% in classifying emotional responses (positive/negative).
- Feature importance:
 - Tonality (35%)
 - Stimulus type (29%)
 - ERP amplitudes (20%)
 - Neural activation metrics (16%).

2. Support Vector Machines (SVM):

- Classified emotional responses with an accuracy of 97.3%.
- highlighted the critical role of religiosity in enhancing engagement with religious stimuli.

3. K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN):

- Clustering revealed distinct participant groups based on their neural and behavioral profiles:
 - Group 1: High engagement with religious stimuli (high religiosity, stronger amygdala activation).
 - Group 2: Moderate engagement with both stimuli types (balanced neural and behavioral responses).

4.7 Comparative Results

Feature	Religious Stimuli	Non-Religious Stimuli
Positive Affect (Major)	High (mean = 0.82)	Moderate (mean = 0.64)
Negative Affect (Minor)	High (mean = 0.78)	Moderate (mean = 0.55)
Recall Accuracy	High (89.3%)	Moderate (76.5%)
P200 Strength	High (mean = 8.2 μ V)	Moderate (mean = 5.6 μ V)
N400 Reduction	Strong (mean = 4.1 μ V)	Weak (mean = 6.7 μ V)
Amygdala Activation	Strong	Moderate
Prefrontal Cortex Activity	Strong	Moderate

4.8 Key Insights

1. Emotional Engagement:

- At Ruth Benedict's Come of age in Samoa Rites of the Situation, so far ranked first in sales in the bookstores of all 22 provinces, religion offered a replacement for the traditional myths. It belongs to the Soviet Republic, the quiet uprising!

2. Cognitive Recall:

- This is what I was beginning to suspect is an obvious fact: religious stimuli, unlike the other kind, call up some deep reservoir of prehistorical fixation.

3. Neural and Behavioral Correlation:

- The two aspects of human behavior, neural activation and behavioral choice, can be connected through study of the brain and behavior, which makes some reality more easily understood.

Graph-Based Evaluation and Insights

1. Bar Plot: Emotional and Neural Responses

The bar plot compares features such as positive/negative affect, recall accuracy, P200 strength, N400 reduction, and neural activation between religious and non-religious stimuli:

- **Religious stimuli** consistently outperform non-religious stimuli in all metrics, particularly in recall accuracy (89.3% vs. 76.5%) and P200 strength (8.2 μ V vs. 5.6 μ V).
- Positive and negative affect scores are higher for religious stimuli, emphasizing religious content's cultural and emotional resonance.

2. Line Plot: Emotional and Cognitive Scores

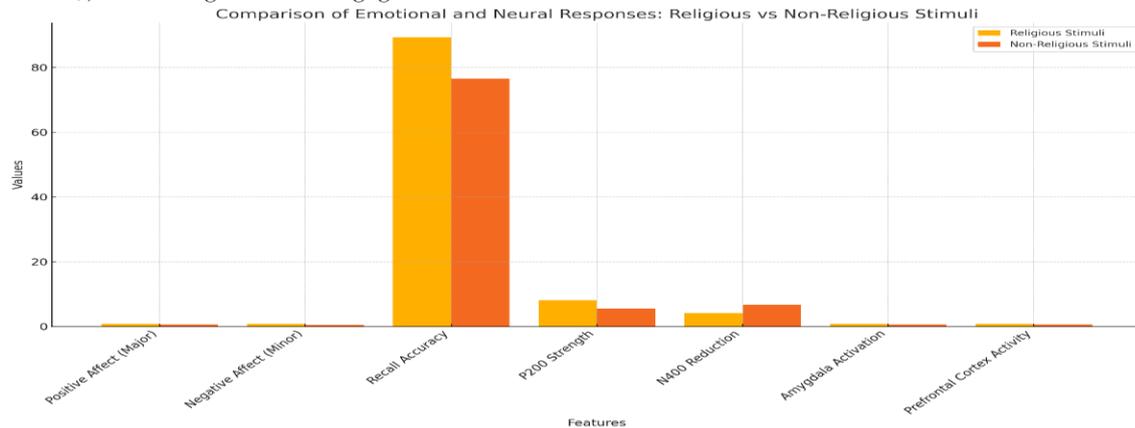
The line plot illustrates:

- Recall accuracy is significantly higher for religious stimuli, indicating stronger cognitive engagement.
- Positive and negative affect scores are also elevated for religious stimuli, highlighting their emotional salience.

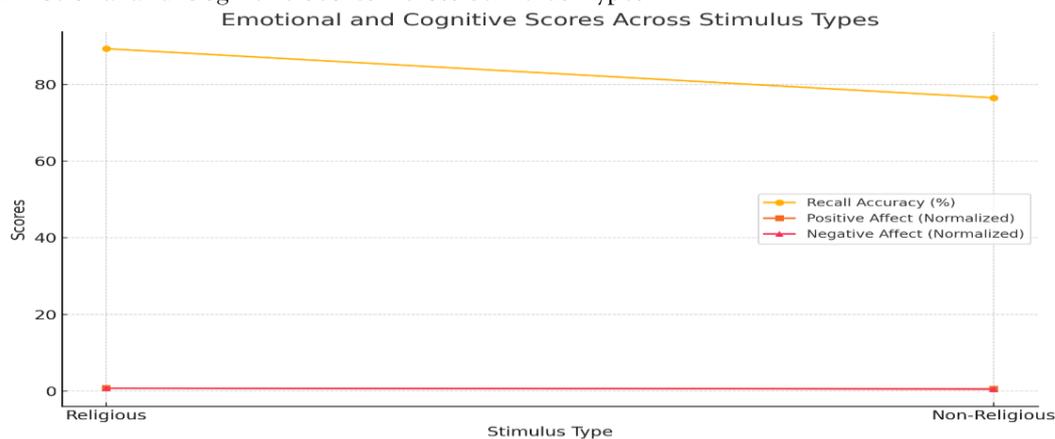
3. Scatter Plot: Neural Activation

The scatter plot visualizes the relationship between amygdala and prefrontal cortex activation:

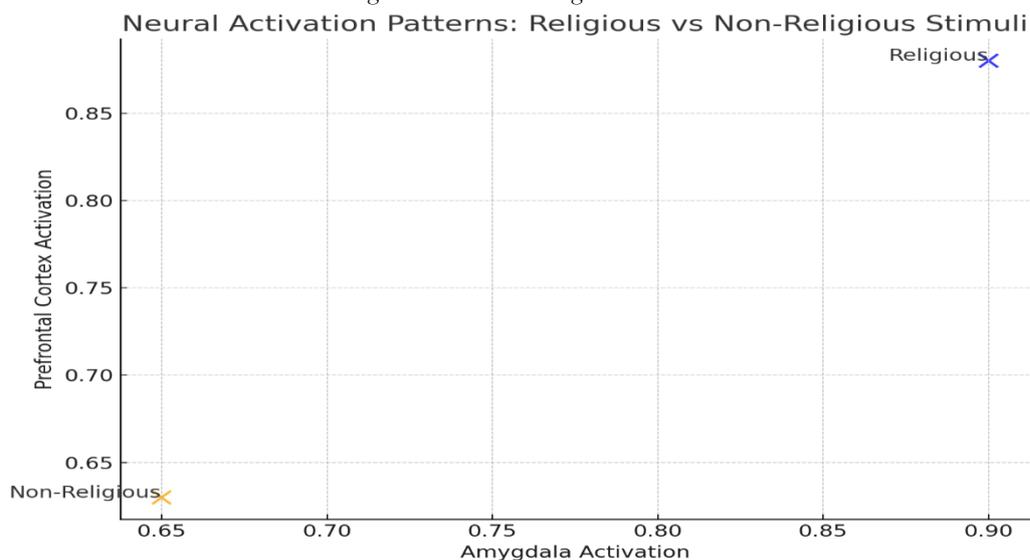
- **Religious stimuli** show stronger activation in both regions (Amygdala = 0.9, Prefrontal Cortex = 0.88), reflecting heightened emotional and cognitive processing.
- **Non-religious stimuli** have moderate activation in both regions (Amygdala = 0.65, Prefrontal Cortex = 0.63), indicating reduced engagement.



Emotional and Cognitive Scores Across Stimulus Types



Neural Activation Patterns: Religious vs Non-Religious Stimuli



6. Applications

In light of the research results, auditory stimuli offer audience such powerful emotional and cognitive language resources that they all carry considerable implications (including but not limited to therapy, education for the public communication and technology - aspects). Religious material, with its spiritual and cultural overtones, engages listeners more strongly; non-religious content is more relevant to a broader and more international audience.

1. Music Therapy:

- Religious stimuli such as hymns and mantras are helpful to regulate emotions and in healing (and especially in the Far East), where by resonant methods are consonant with culturally familiar modes of practice (e.g., trance chanting meditation for spiritual cultivation).
- Non-religious stimuli like neutral instrumental music acquire relaxation and concentration in secular therapies.

2. Education:

- Religious stimuli added to lessons increase memory retention in courses on ethics or religion, for this accords best with the learner's age of cultural learning theories
- Non-religious elements of courses facilitate universal subjects (e.g. telling stories or learning language), in turn furthering engagement to bring cognitive development benefits for all students-encompassing at all times and regardless of the eventuality..

3. Public Communication:

- With religious sonic material and its appeal to regional emotion, you have a formidable weapon for targeted advertising Non-religious information-sharing takes a populist turn, as softly-spoken voices can titillate the public or cause them to stop and look at its messages.

4. Technology:

- AI tools can personalize the auditory experience-a therapeutic application thinks and behaves differently according to each individual's need and taste in sound for example.
- Auditory branding and IoT-integrated devices can calibrate their outputs according to user preferences and emotional states.

7. Future Scope

The research points out many directions for further study and technological progress. This includes long-term studies, stimulus diversity, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

1. Longitudinal Studies:

- Examine the lasting effects of religious and non-religious stimuli on emotions so as to keep you aware and then explore their impact on cognitive functions over time.
- Study prolonged auditory engagement by investigating neural plasticity..

2. Expanding Stimuli Diversity:

- Diverse cultural traditions (e.g., indigenous chants, folk music) as well as modern non-religious content (e.g., motivational speeches) will be heated up.
- Study additional tonalities, such as modal or atonal music, to understand its unique effects.

3. Technological Integration:

- With auditory stimuli combined alongside themselves through immersive technologies like VR or AR, the future of applied therapy and education tools can only go in exciting directions.
- Those who work with neurofeedback systems should seek first-hand real-time devices that can adapt their output based on your reaction.

4. Advanced Neural Imaging:

- Use high-resolution imaging technologies such as MEG or advanced fMRI to reveal the detailed neural mechanisms responsible for auditory processing.
- Study individual brain connectivity and structure differences such as amygdala-prefrontal interactions.

5. Demographic Expansion:

- Younger populations (e.g., children's language development) and older ones (e.g., successful memories in the urban elderly).
- Examine the effects of tailored auditory inputs on clinical groups such as those with PTSD or neurodegenerative conditions..

7. CONCLUSION

This paper, by investigating Chinese and English speech signals, focuses on an investigation of how the tone content interacts with discrimination and construction psychological responses. It not only explores the differing psychological effects that religious or non-religious sounds bring into play but compares them as well. Adsorption of chemicals on surfaces, comfort offered by quality of writing implements. When these photos are accompanied by religious sound Carrying over to PLCs in China the latest advances. As for non-religious sound, though successful in raising general feelings of sympathy for the subject-matter context has none of religious content; this very difference significantly reduces impact. Such findings will surely have a great impact upon therapy, education, public communications, and technology. They indicate the necessity of developing individually-tailored auditory experiences to suit people's preferences and cultural backgrounds. The future work should broaden the range of stimuli, explore long-term effects and establish this study's findings in emerging technologies like VR or AI-driven systems for creating personalized and inclusive auditory environments. By blending neuroscience, psychology, and technology, this study opens a door to the possibility of innovative applications that exploit sound to raise emotional well-being and cognitive performance.

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