







## Subjectivity and Identity of the Religious Experience of Modern Students

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### ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the identification of the interrelation between subjectivity, identity and religious experience of the individual as a resource potential of university youth, and its structural components and indicators are highlighted. The religiosity self-assessment criterion distinguishes groups of respondents with uncertain, low, medium and high levels of religiosity, in each of them, the features of the content and dominant forms of religious actions, the degree of activity are revealed. It has been proved that the religious experience that emerges in the context of traditional confessions is positively correlated with the identity and subjectivity of a religiously oriented individual and is a psychological resource for overcoming life difficulties. The content of strong correlations of individual activity aimed at self-change with feelings of stability and support due to participation in religious activities indicate that religious experience is indeed a definite resource for the subjectivity of young people with high and medium levels of religiosity. At this stage of the analysis, we can already conclude that groups with an average and high level of self-esteem of religiosity, 61% of respondents, consciously take an active part in religious holidays and other religious activities. At the same time, subjective activity in these groups remains low - the initiative of respondents has an average level of manifestation.

**Keywords:** Identity, Religious Experience, Subjectivity, Youth.

### 1. Introduction

In the modern, dynamically changing world, the most important qualities that ensure the stability and success of a person's life are subjective qualities [1]. These characteristics are the main subject resources of the individual, contributing to the resistance to global challenges and risks. At the same time, in times of crisis and uncertainty, a person turns to religious experience in search of spiritual guidance, which is explained by the significant role of religious practices in the life of a person and society [2]. This is evidenced by the increase in the proportion of Russians who consider themselves to be «religious people» - from 35% (December 2013) to 53% (June 2017) [3]. Consequently, to varying degrees, religion is represented in the collective and individual consciousness and has a significant impact on the world image of the modern individual and on his thoughts, actions and deeds. The problem is that subjectivity, identity and religiosity, as personal qualities, are becoming increasingly necessary in the practice of the life of the modern individual, but the nature of their interrelationship and mutual influence has not been sufficiently explored. Provided that the moral and ethical rules of behaviour of the individual and his environment are agreed upon, they can collectively act as a psychological resource of the individual, reducing uncertainty and enhancing its activity potential. In the case of misalignment and alienation, these personal qualities can act as a destabilizing factor that directs the activity of the individual in a destructive direction [4].

Therefore, it is important to study the features of subjectivity, religious identity and religiosity of modern man, to identify the natural connections between these personal characteristics.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the results of the study of the interrelation between subjectivity, identity and religious experience of the individual as a resource potential of the youth, studying at a University.

Traditionally, the subjectivity of the personality is considered as the ability to varying degrees to influence their relationships and a way of life [5]. In the framework of our research, the subjectivity of a person is considered as its ability to consciously influence its religious relations in the role of a representative of a particular religious group and to regulate the level of activity-initiative in religious actions.

Indicators of subjectivity in the space of religious experience:

- an indicator of reflection (self-assessment of the level of religiosity).
- an indicator of the degree of dependence (the performance of actions under external influence, i.e. with someone, on the initiative of others);
- an indicator of the degree of independence (the performance of religious actions for oneself, alone)
- an indicator of the degree of initiative (I myself take the initiative, invite others) [6]

The religious identity of a person is defined as the experience of the degree of one's own identity with the religious group to which the young person counts himself. [7] It also appears in several aspects:

- value aspect (how much the experience of oneself as a representative of one's religion is important and valuable to him);
- reflective aspect (as far as it is presented in the respondent at present and corresponds to his ideal);
- activity-motivational aspect (as far as the respondent is able to change this quality in himself if necessary).

The religious experience of the individual is understood as a system of different subjective states, resulting from the experience of contact with supernatural forces [8],[9] is considered in the following structure:

- the content of religious experience: the degree of religiosity, how much faith in God helps them to be strong, stable, feel pride in belonging to their religion, experience religious fear, worship of Almighty power, the guarantee of well-being, connection with ancestors, respect for traditions, support for difficult moments of life;
- forms of religious experience and the frequency of their application: how often such forms of religious experience are used in everyday life, such as prayers, verbal calls to higher powers, reading religious texts, fasting, participating in religious holidays, visiting churches, etc.;
- activity (subjectivity) in religious actions: how often and with what initiative various religious actions are practised in everyday life for oneself, alone, participate with someone, on someone else's initiative, or himself takes the initiative, invites others [10, 11].

Aimed at determining the level of religiosity of respondents, as well as identifying the features of their religious experience: the content, forms and degree of initiative (subjectivity) in religious actions, content analysis allowed for secondary processing of the results of a sociological study conducted by analysts of the Levada centre [12].

The original test "Diagnostics of religious identity", which is aimed at determining the characteristics of the respondents' religious identity, reflecting their value aspect, self-esteem, activity-motivational aspect of belonging to a particular religious group [13].

To identify and determine the relationship between religious experience, identity and subjectivity, we used a statistical analysis method to obtain average values and a correlation analysis method using the Chaddock's scale to identify the closeness of the relationship of features [14].

The study involved 85 girls and 42 boys (127 people) aged 18-26 years, studying at 1-4 courses of bachelor's degree at Adyghe State University.

Human life continues to grow rapidly, science and technology are the hallmarks of modern man. Modernity which is meant is a stage of life characterized by changes in the human mindset from a spiritual to materialistic.

Historically, this modernity movement emerged in the western Christian context and during the renaissance/enlightenment, at around in 1500. The main feature of this movement, according to Griffiths cited by Emanuel Wora, was the emergence of materialist philosophy and the end of the influence of medieval thought that was idealistic and spiritual [15].

Materialist thinking that characterizes modernity is further enhanced by Rene Descartes's concept of "cogito ergo sum" (I think therefore I am). In this concept, as Emanuel Wora said, Descartes tried to separate between thought and matter. For Descartes, the mind is the subject and matter is the object; it means that everything will be meaningful if I think. Descartes thus greatly magnified the ratio, and his rationalism had begun to be adopted by science. As a pioneer of modernity which influenced modern science, Descartes encouraged secession with the material world. Nature is not an integral part of the self, so nature can be treated according to our desires and choices [16].

Descartes's thought has clearly had a significant impact, especially in the secularization of science. Mulyadi Kartanegara considers that this secularization occurred in the west after the renaissance movement and after western society itself became secular as a consequence of the evolution of thought in science [17].

This view is, of course, very different from the nonmodern human thought that nature has a sacred aspect. Nature was believed to speak to the man, and all-natural phenomena had meaning, nature is also believed to be the source of religion because the structure of the cosmos contained a spiritual message for humans [18].

The development of science and technology is increasingly sophisticated. It cannot be denied that both, directly and indirectly, have an impact on

society. Science and technology, in fact, redefine the meaning of life of modern people and rearrange the organisation of people relationships. The number of communication technology devices that provide services not only on communication devices alone. Communities can interact more than just hear voices, but get to know a person who is closer through social media access [19].

The dissemination of information technology which consists of social media or information media that is increasingly massive, has had a major impact, especially in understanding religion. Many voices of religious understandings are facilitated by this information technology in a positive and negative way [20]. The emergence of various inclusive and radical understandings in Islam, for example, is the influence of the development of social media. Information media consisting of Facebook, YouTube and Instagram have been used by radical groups to spread their understanding. Thus, people should be equipped with knowledge on how they can use this information technology wisely and carefully.

Actually, there were some recent studies about technology and media related to religious discourses. Some studies consist of analyzing mediatization of religion, online piety and its discontent, Islamic radicalism and the movement in social media, Religious Authority and the New Media. However, there was no study which focuses on the effect of social media towards religious understanding. Hence, I believe that this study is very important. This study employs a qualitative method with descriptive analysis to explain the impact of and technology on the religious life of its adherents. Special attention is given to the impact of social media.

Religious beliefs and rituals are mysterious phenomena in our evolutionary history and have puzzled philosophers of science and evolutionary theorists. They have been fundamental elements of human societies, influencing our epistemological, ethical, and even aesthetic foundations. In the contemporary world, we live between two threatening currents of fundamentalism and religiophobia, which could be attributed to the overly polarized nature of the secular-religious dichotomy [21].

Accordingly, providing a new understanding and re-interpretation of the origins and purpose of religious beliefs and rituals could be helpful to combat these two threats. Although religions might seem to vary substantially, all religious traditions share remarkably similar underlying parallels that could lend themselves to evolutionary explanations and adaptive values. The goal of this paper is to provide a potential framework for understanding religious beliefs and rituals through evolutionary psychology lens [22].

Through understanding that we are consciously evolving species, we not only would acknowledge that our understanding, interpretation, and endorsement of religious beliefs should be evolving but also embrace religions for their evolutionary functions and as a heritage of humans' attempts to make sense of themselves and the external world [23].

A body of survey-based data has been developing recently, which suggests that a kind of experience, variously labelled religious, paranormal, mystical, etc., is much more widespread in Western society than was hitherto believed. It now seems probable that at a minimum, one-third of all adults in Britain and the United States would claim to have had this kind of experience. Furthermore, in spite of the variety of populations studied, variations in the questions used and in the type of interview employed, regularities exist across all these studies in the relation between the report of the experience, and a number of demographic and psychological variables. This consistency of pattern lends some confidence to the belief that what is being examined is a genuine phenomenon. But is its substantive content in fact what the authors of these surveys take it to be? A major weakness of large-scale survey work is that its sheer size makes a detailed study of content somewhat impractical, and even Greeley's monograph, which in this respect is the most detailed of the papers mentioned, depends on checklists of "descriptors" to obtain categories of experience. No doubt with this difficulty in mind, referring to Greeley's work, suggests the possibility that "much of what is currently called mystical experience is often confused with the experience of creativity, flashes of insight, serendipity and the like." From a Weberian standpoint, according to Robertson, these moments cannot be considered genuinely mystical because they are not "grounded in religious culturalist"[24].

This raises a hornets' nest of definitional problems not only in relation to the term "mysticism" which is understood in a wide variety of ways but also concerning its blurred relationship to other words like "paranormal," "transcendental," "religious" and so on. Nevertheless, there would be a fair amount of agreement that they refer more or less to one broad universe of discourse, and their inter-relations could provide the basis for some enjoyable exercises in semantics. In practical terms, however, it remains true to say that very little indeed is known, in a systematic way, of what people mean when they claim to have had experience in this general area. Some idea of the possible range of experience which can be contained under the heading "religious" is available from an examination of the remarkable set of accounts collected by the Religious Experience Research Unit in Oxford. However, this material is limited in that it consists of written reports sent into the unit as the result of appeals through the mass media. It, therefore, probably represents a highly biased sample of the population. In this paper, an account is given of an attempt to describe the frequency of report, content and meaning of "religious experience" for a random sample of a particular group of people [25].

## 2. Materials and Methods

The paper implements theoretical research methods - analysis and meta-analysis of pedagogical and psychological literature on the problem of subjectivity, identity and religious experience of the individual. Empirical methods: the original test "Diagnostics of religiosity and religious experience of the individual" is aimed at determining the level of religiosity of respondents, as well as identifying the features of their religious experience: the content, forms and degree of initiative (subjectivity) in religious actions, content analysis allowed for secondary processing of the results of a sociological study conducted by analysts of the Levada centre [26].

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Students on the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education course at Nottingham University are, typically, recent graduates from a university in the U.K. They have entered the School of Education for one year to qualify for a career in secondary school teaching. Their modal age is 22 years. From this group, using a table of random numbers, a sample of 100 people was drawn, 50 males and 50 females. Each person was invited for an interview in my office, and this invitation was accepted by all but two of the sample (the total was made up by drawing two additional names at random from the course list).

At the time of the appointment, each interviewee was given an explanation of the purposes of the project as outlined in the schedule (see Appendix I). When a person made a positive response to the question on religious experience, the interview normally lasted an hour or more. The form of the schedule was highly open-ended, in the hope that this would reduce biasing constraints due to my preconceptions. As an additional precaution, those who answered "yes" to question 5 were invited to volunteer a personally written account of their experience, just under two-thirds of those asked sent in such accounts.

Certain problems relating to the filter question, number 5, must be mentioned here. As noted above, it is notoriously difficult to define exactly what is meant by the term "religious experience", and part of the difficulty lies in the possibility that it covers more than one and perhaps a wide range of qualitatively different experiences. This problem was solved by giving an initial orientation in which I explained that my interest concerned what is usually, but not always, called religious experience. The filter question then asked whether the individual could ever remember "being aware of or influenced by a presence or a power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self."

This I took to be necessary, though not a sufficient condition for a working definition of religious experience, which appears to overlap other attempts to operationalize the concept. In practice, it was found that very few people had any difficulty in understanding the question, and a prepared list of illustrative examples borrowed from Hardy proved more or less redundant. The majority of those interviewed felt an initial reticence at expressing their experience, but a modified Rogerian style of interviewing allowed rapport to develop so that they tended to become more open [28].

### 3. Results and discussion

During the study, the levels of self-esteem of the religiosity of the participants were determined, and in accordance with them, four groups of respondents were formed.

The group with indefinite self-esteem of religiosity includes only 9% of the total number of respondents, half of them have not decided on belonging to religious groups or consider themselves atheists, the rest formally identify themselves as Islam or Christianity. Statistical analysis showed that members of this group feel pride and admiration for their religion, but the intensity of these feelings is below the average level (1.8 points out of 5 possible) They noted that they sometimes participate in religious holidays (2.3 points out of 5) and use personal appeals to God (2.0 points), and they use prayers, religious texts, fasting, and temple visits very rarely, or not at all. Apply. Members of this group carry out religious actions alone (2.3 points), they themselves rarely take the initiative and even less often do this with someone, and even on someone else's initiative (1.5 points each). Such religious experience gives them peace of mind and a sense of belonging to traditions (3.2 points)

It can be concluded that the representatives of this group have an unstable and sometimes contradictory religious character, they have a certain religious experience, occasionally perform actions of a religious nature, but mainly out of respect for traditions or in difficult life circumstances.

A group with low self-esteem of religiosity includes 30% of respondents. It is interesting that this group includes young men and women, on the one hand, who called themselves atheists (37%), but on the other, who

recognized low religiosity, therefore, the indicators of religiousness and degree of activity in this group are the lowest, in comparison with the rest of the groups. In the arsenal of their religious experience, participation in the holidays (1.4 points out of 5 possible), personal appeals to God (0.8 points), rare visits to the temple, and very rare fasting were noted. The activity of turning to religious actions is very low: if they do it, then rarely, alone, or with someone else's initiative (1.3 points), in isolated cases, they show their initiative in attracting others (1.0 point). This small religious experience gives them, like the previous group, respect for traditions, support in difficult moments of life and peace of mind. In terms of intensity, these states are also of a low level (2.1 points out of 5 possible).

As a result, it can be concluded that the respondents of this group have certain ideas about religion, religious rites, holidays, but their experience is superficial and formal, and they participate in religious activities only when necessary.

In the group with average self-esteem of religiosity (20% of respondents), there is a system of stable indicators of an average level (2.8 points out of 5 possible) for all indicators of the content of religious experience and religious actions: participation in holidays, personal conversations, church visits, prayers, observance fasting, etc. In the process of quite active and relatively diverse activity, they experience a wide range of feelings and emotions: pride in their religion (0.27 points out of 1.0), worship of it (0.23 points), respect for ancestors, traditions (0.27 points), etc. It should be noted that in this group, compared to the previous two groups, participants experience a feeling of support in difficult circumstances and peace of mind at a higher level - 0.38 points. They actively participate in religious activities both independently, in solitude, and with others, but rarely show their initiative. This indicates that respondents are quite actively involved in religious practice, have and expand religious experience under the influence of significant people.

#### 4. Conclusion

Subjectivity, identity, religiosity and religious experience are interdependent categories in the personality structure of religiously oriented young people. Religious experience, formed in the context of traditional faiths, increasing the identity and subjectivity of a person, helps young people to be stronger, more stable in difficult moments of life and, indeed, is a psychological resource for them to overcome difficult life circumstances.

These conclusions are only part of the problem, and they open up promising directions for further research into the factors that limit the resource possibilities of religious experience, and the conditions when it acquires properties that are destructive to the individual and his environment.

A group with high self-esteem of religiosity includes 41% of respondents. This is the largest group in terms of number, and all its members have clearly decided on belonging to their religious group. They revealed the highest in comparison with other groups, quantitative and qualitative indicators of subjectivity, identity and religious experience. They are more likely than others to participate in religious holidays (3.75 points), use personal treatment (3.38 points), and all other types of religious actions, rituals, but at a higher level compared to other groups. Respondents noted that the religious experience helps many of them to be sustainable in life (0.67 points out of 1.0), feel proud of their religion, (0.81 points), respect for their ancestors (0.50), support in difficult life situation (0.71), calm (0.58), etc.

In other words, the members of this group really show a high level of religiosity; their consciousness contains elements of a religious picture of the world and religious relations.

Correlation analysis of the data of the general sample of respondents revealed a galaxy of strong positive connections between self-esteem of the level of religiosity as an indicator of the level of reflection (one of the qualities of subjectivity) with most indicators of the content and forms of religious experience:

a) with indicators of the content of religious experience: faith in God helps to be psychologically stable ( $r = 0.701$ ); pride in belonging to one's religion ( $r = 0.718$ ); guarantee of well-being ( $r = 0.567$ ); support in difficult moments of life ( $r = 0.584$ );

b) with indicators of the forms of religious experience: reading prayers ( $r = 0.590$ ); verbal appeal to higher powers ( $r = 0.590$ ); participation in the holidays ( $r = 0.519$ ); visiting temples ( $r = 0.530$ ).

Thus, the acquisition of religious experience, namely participation in religious holidays, visiting temples, praying, and verbal appeals to higher powers increase the religiosity of the individual and help religiously oriented young people to be stronger, more stable in difficult moments of life.

Also, three galaxies of strong correlation relationships of indicators of the subjectivity of religious experience were identified:

1. The indicator of the degree of dependence "I am participating with someone, on someone else's initiative" (1 connection): positively correlates with the indicator "Visiting Temples" ( $r = 0.530$ );

2. The degree of independence indicator "I perform religious actions for myself, alone" (7 connections) positively correlates with psychological stability ( $r = 0.628$ ), pride in my religion ( $r = 0.513$ ), and support in difficult life situations ( $r = 0.556$ ), reading prayers ( $r = 0.729$ ), personal verbal appeals to higher powers ( $r = 0.703$ ), reading religious texts ( $r = 0.640$ ), fasting ( $r = 0.564$ ).

3. The degree of the initiative indicator "I take the initiative myself, invite others" (4 connections) positively correlates with reading religious texts ( $r = 0.520$ ), fasting ( $r = 0.538$ ), visiting temples ( $r = 0.527$ ) and participating with someone, on the initiative of others ( $r = 0.543$ ).

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