

# Dependence of the Social and Psychological Adaptability of Religiosity among First-Year Students

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## Abstract

Modern society is in dire need of finding and developing ways of mental health self-control that allow people as painlessly as possible to overcome various kinds of stress. Religiosity, as personal quality, which is expressed in the aggregate of certain properties of consciousness, behavior and attitudes can be considered as a factor that certainly affects the social and psychological adaptability. The objective of the article is to show by an example of students whose age is less than eighteen years of age, correlation peculiarities of religion and a number of characteristics of social and psychological adaptability. To achieve the objective we have chosen relevant psychological tests and used statistical methods. It has been shown that the internal religiosity does not directly affect the general characteristics of such psychological adaptability as the ability to self-regulation of behavior, communication and socialization of students with low levels of external religiosity. However, regulating mechanisms of social and psychological adaptability of the subjects differ greatly. Aspects of the research may be used in theoretical courses of lectures on the psychology of religion and religious studies, social psychology, as well as in practical psychology to better understand the motives of young people and the development of individual-oriented psychocorrective techniques that promote social and psychological adaptability, taking into account the level of internal religiosity of customer identity.

**Keywords:** social and psychological adaptability, ego defense mechanisms, communicative tolerance, inner religiosity, self-regulation, students

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Issue Urgency

Concept of individuality, as a relatively stable socio-psychological education was fixed in psychology. Basic characteristics of a personality, ensuring its integrity and interaction diversity with the ever-changing environmental reality, are related with such concepts as resistance to a variety of stressors and ability to select different exit strategies from stressful situations adequately. Psychological well-being, therefore, is largely dependent on the availability of skills recognition and overcoming stressful situations, as well as the skills of mental conditions self-control (Prokhorov, 2014).

The low level of social and psychological adaptability entails serious complications in the process of interaction with other people, self-knowledge, self-determination, self-regulation of mental states. In practical psychology a large number of methods to carry out psychological correction in order to improve the mental health of a person are developed. Nevertheless, a problem of finding adequate means of influence on the person, taking into account his personality remains relevant (Shustova, 2008; Fitzsimons & Finkel, 2010).

Youth age is the age when the personality is still in its formative stages, active development. At this age, a person is able to be more flexible, he is opened to new information, he is able to cultivate social and psychological adaptability, as a complex property of the personality, as intrapsychic mechanism of behavior organization, as the basis of social adaptation (Grishanov & Tsurkan, 1990; Rean, 2006).

The concept of unconscious defense mechanisms of the Ego that is one of the basic positions of the psychoanalytic approach makes a significant contribution to the theory of psychological adaptation (Leibin, 2008). As we know, psychological defense mechanisms are updated in a stressful situation and fulfill a relieving function of intrapsychic conflict, that is, act as a means of resolving the conflict between the conscious and

unconscious psyche realms. Today, most researchers believe that the function of defense mechanisms lies in intrapersonal conflict weakening (Granovskaya, 2007).

R. Plutchik offered original theoretical model of protection that is based on the general psycho-developmental theory of emotions developed by him (Plutchik, 1990). Under the concept of psychological defense the author means consistent distortion of cognitive and sensory image areas of the real situation in order to ease emotional stress that could threaten the person, if the situation was perceived by him as objectively as possible. Thus, psychological defense mechanisms can be considered as one of temporary, not conducive to the development of personality, means of solving the problems of psychological adaptation.

Communicative tolerance is one of the leading personality characteristics that determines its social position and certainly affecting the socio-psychological adaptability. V. V. Boiko believes that communicative tolerance is an indicator of person's mental health as socially active subject (Boiko, 2008).

High communicative tolerance is expressed in ability to take another person's personality traits in communication with him quietly, without irritation, even if they seem negative. According to G. V. Bezuleva and G. M. Shalamova people with a high level of communicative tolerance, are balanced and highly compatible with different people (Bezuleva & Shalamova, 2003). Personal adoption of such worldview in which it would have a high communicative tolerance is one of the most important conditions for social adaptation. At the same time, tolerance can be considered as a certain defensive strategy generated by the individual in response to the aggressive pressure of society.

Religiosity as a characteristic of individuality is a relatively stable system of properties and attributes correlated with each other. The intensity of religiosity, as a philosophical position that determines the direction of the personality development is expressed in relation to the concept of God and relevant to this relationship experiences, way of thinking and behavior. Religiosity cannot be ignored in the study of psychology of the modern person because the percentage of people who consider themselves religious, and who assure that they believe in the existence of a Creator, is very large (Zen'ko, 2009; Laurin, Fitzsimons, & Kay, 2010; Aaron & Grainne, 2012). It is accepted to separate not only quantitative criterion that is religious intensity, but also the quality criterion how the religiosity is implemented if this personal property is quite pronounced.

In psychology functional approach to religion is very common, consideration of not specific beliefs and spiritual practices, but psychological and social functions of religion. Religiousness as a psychological phenomenon can occupy a different place in the structure of personal motivation. Thus, one of the pioneers of the religion psychology G. Ollport has allocated so-called internal and external types of religiosity (Titov, 2013). Under external religiosity he meant superficial attitude to religion, in particular the human desire to comply with some external, ritual, traditional ways of turning to God in a greater degree of habit, or in connection with the requirements of the social environment, and not because of his own deep inner needs. Inner religiosity was seen as a deep personal need of informal search of communion with God, in His image that is significant for the subject.

G. Olport believed that it is internal religiosity that contributes preservation of mental health. It was assumed that the religious, focused on internal religious experience, communicative tolerance is developed in a greater degree. G. Olport and E. Ross developed a questionnaire "Religion Orientation Scale, Olport & Ross" (Wong-McDonald, 2004), which allows to determine how often qualities of external and internal religiosity are shown up.

The problem of correlation of unconscious defense mechanisms of the Ego, characteristics of communicative tolerance, and such indicators of social and psychological adaptability as the ability to self-regulation of behavior, communication and socialization remains open for research up to that moment. A large number of scientists are interested in finding answers to such questions as how much influence the intensity and quality of religiosity as personality traits on the level of socio-psychological adaptation and what are the underlying individual psychological mechanisms of social and psychological adaptability that contribute to the development of religiosity.

### *1.2 Hypothesis Research*

The hypothesis of our study is the assumption that the structure relationship among the characteristics of the social and psychological adaptability of the students will be different depending on the level of their internal religiosity. Qualitative differences in the structure of relationships may indicate on different individual psychological mechanisms of mental states self-regulation. It was believed that students with more advanced internal religiosity will have level of communicative tolerance, self-regulation of behavior, communication skills and sociability higher, and the overall intensity of the Ego defense mechanisms—lower than in the group of

subjects with low internal religiosity.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### *2.1 Objectives of the Study*

In the study, we solved the following issues: 1) on the basis of theoretical analysis of existing researches in the field of psychology of religion and socio-psychological adaptation to substantiate the necessity of the study; 2) choose the necessary techniques in order to diagnose the presence and severity of the studied characteristics; 3) carry out a comparative analysis of the results obtained in the group of students with high and low levels of internal religiosity using the methods of mathematical statistics; 4) present the obtained results in the form of specific findings and recommendations.

### *2.2 Theoretical and Empirical Methods*

To test this hypothesis we used the following methods:

- Theoretical analysis of the general and special literature on religion and selected psychological characteristics of social and psychological adaptability;
- Testing using psychological questionnaires;
- Mathematical methods of data processing (statistical analysis, pairwise comparison of correlation matrices).

### *2.3 Research Base*

First-year students boys and girls aged 17-18 from the department of Kazan Institute of Fundamental Medicine and Biology were involved in the study.

After determining the level of internal religiosity, the students were divided into two groups. The first group consists of students with low internal religiosity, the second group - students with higher levels of internal religiosity.

### *2.4 Methods Used in the Study*

- Multi-level personality questionnaire “Adaptability” (MPQ) A. G. Maklakova S. V. Chernyanina (Maklakov, 2008).

High scores on the methodology scales indicate developed adaptive qualities.

- Methodology “Lifestyle Index” (Plutchik, 1990)

High scores on the methodology scales indicate more active Ego defense mechanisms.

- Methodology “Communicative Tolerance” (Boiko, 2008)

High scores on the methodology scales indicate a low level of communicative tolerance.

- Religious orientation scale G. Olport, D. Ross (Titov, 2013)

High scores on the methodology scales indicate a high level of external or internal religiosity. When calculating scores according to the scales of religion deviation from the original instructions was allowed. Authors divided methodology questionnaire into two blocks. One of them is focused on the external dimension of religiosity, the other on the measurement the inside dimension of religiosity. The authors of the methodology propose a technique system of counting points on the scheme, which includes in any case, the answers from the two sets of questions. This allows determining the severity of the four characteristics of religiosity and relating them to each other. The objective of our study is to identify a tendency to external or internal religiosity. Therefore, the calculation of scores was significantly simplified. Each block was calculated separately, and the resulting data were used in the study.

Table 1. The total list of indicators analyzed in the study, with the assigned sequence numbers

MPQ		Communicative tolerance	
1	self-regulation of behavior	13	self-regulation of behavior
2	communicability	14	Using himself as a benchmark for evaluating others
3	sociability	15	Self-righteousness in the estimates of other
<b>Lifestyle index</b>		16	Inability to hide the unpleasant feelings when confronted with uncommunicative qualities of a partner
4	displacement	17	The desire to reeducate partners
5	replacement	18	The desire to create a customized fit, make a partner convenient
6	rationalization	19	Inability to forgive others mistakes
7	regression	20	Intolerance to physical or mental discomfort of a partner
8	negation	21	Inability to adapt to partners
9	projection	22	The overall level of tolerance
10	overcompensation	<b>Scale of religious orientation</b>	
11	compensation	23	External religiosity
12	The total voltage of protections	24	Internal religiosity

### 3. Results

Degree of manifestation analysis of psychological adaptability indicators with due regard to St'udent t-test for independent samples in the group with lower and higher level of internal religiosity gave us an opportunity to detect a number of significant differences (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparative analysis data of quantitative indicators of social-psychological adaptability in the studied groups taking into account Student's t-test

No. of indicators	X - arithmetic mean of index (low level of religiosity)	X - arithmetic mean of index (higher level of religiosity)	values of St'udent's t-test	Significance of differences (p)
1	35.00	36.45	-0.391	-
2	15.37	14.52	0.697	-
3	9.90	9.85	0.054	-
6	0.60	0.71	-2.918	0.01
8	0.53	0.62	-2.217	0.05
9	0.71	0.60	2.918	0.01
11	0.61	0.73	-2.963	0.01
14	7.3	5.45	2.310	0.05
17	6.17	8.24	-2.360	0.05
23	26.50	25.28	0.789	-
24	12.27	26.59	-17.344	0.001

In the group of students with higher levels of internal religiosity Ego rates such as rationalization (6), denial (8) and compensation (11) turned to be higher. In the group with lower internal religiosity Ego defense mechanism - a projection (9) is more pronounced.

Significant differences are observed on two characteristics of communicative tolerance. At that time, when less religious subjects expressed more desire to use themselves as a reference when assessing other (14), more religious students desire to re-educate partners (17).

In carrying out the correlation analysis using Spirmen rank correlation coefficient we revealed many significant ( $p = 0.01$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ) relationships. Table 3 shows only the strongest of them.

Table 3. Data of correlation analysis

low level of internal religiosity		high level of internal religiosity	
Values	correlation coefficient (r) when $r \geq 0.57$ , $p \leq 0.001$	values	correlation coefficient (r) when $r \geq 0.58$ , $p \leq 0.001$
1- 2	0.60	1-7	0.70
1-7	0.71	1-12	0.62
1-12	0.65	1-18	0.61
8-17	0.57	1-22	0.60
		2-4	0.67
		2-12	0.64
		2-22	0.58
		5-22	0.63
		7-22	0.60
		11-22	0.59
		12-22	0.70

It may be noted that in general, students with low levels of religiosity have significantly less internal relationships among indicators of different techniques.

Self-direction indicator (1) of less religious students is directly related to communication skills (2), in contrast to the second group. At the same time, more religious subjects have a direct link between the self-regulation of behavior (1), the desire to manipulate others (18) and a decrease in the level of communicative tolerance in general (22).

Students with more severe internal religiosity differ with many relationships among Ego defense mechanisms and indicators of communicative tolerance. Moreover, in all cases increase in defense mechanisms leads to a decrease in the level of communicative tolerance.

To determine the differences in the structure of the relationship among the same indicators of social and psychological adaptability we used the method of pairwise comparison of correlation matrices. Results are presented in the table (Table 4).

Table 4. Pairwise comparisons of correlation matrices of indicators of social and psychological adaptability in groups of students with different levels of internal religiosity

Persons with low internal religiosity	Individuals with higher levels of internal religiosity	TF	The significance of differences	Correlation among the indicators in the studied groups
r (coeff.Spirmen) Correlations	r (coeff. Spirmen) Correlations		(p)	
-0.41 ( $p=0.05$ )	0.47 ( $p=0.01$ )	-3.447	0.01	2-11
0.57 ( $p=0.001$ )	-0.36 ( $p=0.05$ )	3.651	0.001	8-17

Consider some valid patterns, reflected in the table below:

In the group of less religious students development of communicative qualities (2) leads to a decrease in the level of the Ego defense mechanism, as compensation (11), while in the second group we observe the opposite situation.

There are also differences in the structure of the relationship between defense mechanisms and characteristics of communicative tolerance. Relationship between the defense mechanism of denial (8) and the desire to re-educate the partner (17) foremost attracts the attention.

#### 4. Discussions

There is an enormous amount of researches related to psychological adjustment of the individual. Despite this, the study of a wide variety of adaptive aspects of human life does not lose its relevance. There are many important variables affecting the socio-psychological adaptability of each individual. Among others, age-related features and basic worldviews are very important.

The objective of our research is to study the mechanisms of social and psychological adaptability in a fairly wide range of people, bounded by the following conditions: age—17-18 years, studying in higher education institute, susceptibility to natural sciences.

We found no publications in which the problem of the social and psychological adaptability would be considered taking into account all individual psychological characteristics included in this research.

In general, in studied sample of students any external or internal religiosity was not strongly expressed. Nevertheless, it was possible to divide the students into two groups on the basis of internal religiosity. One group consists of those who are more inclined to believe in their own power or power of other people, rather than in help from above. In another group was made of students less confident and of students that admit there is external not human force that is able to influence their lives. It should be noted that the majority of those who entered into the second group, did not require religious education and specifically identify with a particular religious doctrine. The bulk of the students characterized the notion of “God” as “Someone Higher”, “Destiny”, “Universal Mind,” etc.

Results of the study suggest us to make the following conclusions:

- 1) We found significant differences in the severity of various defense mechanisms of the Ego and the characteristics of communicative tolerance among students with different levels of internal religiosity.
- 2) Mastering the skills of behavior self-regulation as one of the characteristics of social and psychological adaptability leads students of the first and second groups to various forms of interaction with other people.
- 3) We revealed different trends in the treatment groups in the relationship between communication and the defense mechanism of compensation, as well as the defense mechanism of denial and a desire to re-educate, persuade the other person in the course of interaction with him.

Summarizing the findings, it may be noted that students with less severe internal religious tend more often than other groups to blame in anything other people by projecting on them their own unconscious desires (the mechanism of projection). At the same time they are more eager to use themselves as a reference in the evaluation of other people.

Ego defense mechanisms dominate in more religious students. It allows avoiding an internal stress due to attempts at reasoning, logical explanation for their problems, classes in some activity that allows forgetting their inferiority complex (mechanisms of rationalization and compensation). In their relations representatives of this group often want to re-educate other people and show people that they are wrong.

In the group of students with weak internal religiosity development of the ability to control their behavior leads to the development of communication skills. In the second, more religious group skills of control over their behavior entails a greater tendency to manipulate others, and in general to communicative tolerance reduction.

In this regard, it can be assumed that developing the ability to self-control, the second group of students become more confident in their abilities and possibilities, but they connect this purchased power with not their qualities, but with the patronage of a Higher Power, which gives them a sense of security and gives a certain illusion of power over others.

A student with low internal religious development of communication skills leads to a weakening of the protective mechanism of compensation that may indicate on the importance to communicate with other people for them. Satisfactory communication gives them sense of security and confidence. Students with more severe

internal religiosity, on the contrary, acquiring communication skills are in need of compensation enhancement. Conceivably, active communication with others can lead them to even greater doubts about their position in society and to lowering of their self-esteem. Gain in compensation encourages them to seek new forms of self-realization.

The subjects of the first group in the amplification mechanism of denial, which is expressed as a rejection of events in capacity of truth that is obvious to others, tend to re-educate their partners, rather than agree with them. Representatives of the second, more religious group, on the contrary, in the amplification of denial seek to limit their interaction with a partner; they do not try to convince him in his own truth.

## 5. Conclusion

Our hypothesis that the structure of the relationships among the characteristics of the social and psychological adaptability of the students will be different depending on the level of their internal religiosity, and that qualitative differences in the structure of the relationship will point to a variety of individual psychological mechanisms of self-regulation of mental states has been confirmed.

The assumption that students with more developed internal religiosity manifest in general more developed social and psychological adaptability was not confirmed. This fact may be explained, at least, by the fact that the students could be characterized as those with internal religiosity very tentatively. About the fact of internal religiosity wrote the author of this methodology G. Olpor. To a large extent they can be attributed to a less confident and because of this fact looking for support in very uncertain and disordered fantasies about "Someone Higher".

Taking into account that this very vague idea of God is dominant among students who consider themselves quite religious people, still we can use the technique G. Olport and D. Ross as a diagnostic tool, reflecting the mentality peculiarities of students in this age category.

## 6. Recommendations

Article notes may be used in theoretical courses of lectures on the psychology of religion, religious studies, social psychology, as well as in practical psychology to better understanding the motives of young people and the development of individual-oriented psychocorrective techniques that promote social and psychological adaptability, taking into account the level of internal religious identity of customers and their age characteristics.

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