

RELIGIOUS COPING MECHANISMS OF KAZAKH YOUTH IN STRESSFUL SITUATIONS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS OF RELIGIOSITY

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ABSTRACT

In the context of globalization, several factors can be noted that affect the stress of young people. For example, the abundance of information, the desire for an ideal life on social networks, the decline of cultural values, and economic instability, several factors can lead to the current Internet generation becoming discouraged or stressed. This article examines the psychological functions of religious coping strategies and religiosity of modern Kazakh youth in difficult psychological periods, that is, in stressful situations. The theory of "religious coping" proposed by Kenneth I. Pargament was used as a theoretical basis in the study. The main method of the study was the analysis of the results of a survey conducted among students of higher education institutions in Kazakhstan and studies in international scientific literature. Empirical data showed that the majority of students perceive religious practices as an important means of maintaining emotional stability and overcoming life's difficulties. In addition, respondents noted that spirituality contributes to the formation of meaning in life, strengthening the sense of psychological security, and social adaptation. As a result, it was determined that religion is an important socio-psychological resource that supports the psychological adaptation, emotional stability and social integration of young people in the conditions of modern Kazakhstan.

Keywords: Religiosity, Religious Coping, Kazakh Youth, Spirituality, Psychological Adaptation, Meaning in Life.

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Қазақ жастарының стресс жағдайындағы «діни копинг» механизмдері және діндарлықтың психологиялық функциялары

Аңдатпа. Жаһандану жағдайында жастардың стресске ұшырауына әсер ететін бірнеше факторларды атап өтуге болады. Мысалы ақпараттың көптігі, әлеуметтік желілердегі идеал өмірді аңсау, мәдени құндылықтардың құлдырауы, экономикалық тұрақсыздық сынды бірнеше факторлар қазіргі интернет ұрпақтарын өмірден түңілдіруге немесе стресске түсуіне алып келуі мүмкін. Бұл мақалада қазіргі Қазақ жастарының психологиялық қиын кезеңдерінде, яғни стресс жағдайындағы діни копинг стратегиялары мен діндарлықтың психологиялық функциялары қарастырылады. Зерттеу барысында Кеннет И. Паргемент ұсынған «religious coping» теориясы теориялық негіз ретінде қолданылды. Зерттеудің негізгі әдісі ретінде Қазақстандағы жоғары оқу орындарының студенттері арасында жүргізілген сауалнама нәтижелері және халықаралық ғылыми әдебиеттердегі зерттеулер талданылады. Эмпирикалық деректер студенттердің басым бөлігі діни тәжірибелерді эмоционалдық тұрақтылықты сақтаудың және өмірлік қиындықтарды еңсерудің маңызды құралы ретінде қабылдайтынын көрсетті. Сонымен қатар респонденттер руханилықтың өмірлік мағына қалыптастыруға, психологиялық қауіпсіздік сезімін күшейтуге және әлеуметтік бейімделуге ықпал ететінін атап өтті. Нәтижесінде діннің қазіргі Қазақстан жағдайында жастардың психологиялық бейімделуін, эмоционалдық тұрақтылығын және әлеуметтік интеграциясын қолдайтын маңызды әлеуметтік-психологиялық ресурс екені анықталды.

Түйін сөздер: діндарлық, діни копинг, қазақ жастары, руханилық, психологиялық бейімделу, өмірлік мағына.

Механизмы религиозного coping у казахской молодежи в стрессовых ситуациях и психологические функции религиозности

Аннотация. В контексте глобализации можно выделить несколько факторов, влияющих на стресс у молодежи. Например, обилие информации, стремление к идеальной жизни в социальных сетях, упадок культурных ценностей и экономическая нестабильность – все это может привести к тому, что нынешнее интернет-поколение будет испытывать уныние или стресс. В данной статье рассматриваются психологические функции религиозных стратегий преодоления трудностей и религиозность современной казахстанской молодежи в сложные психологические периоды, то есть в стрессовых ситуациях. В качестве теоретической основы исследования использована теория «религиозного преодоления трудностей», предложенная Кеннетом И. Паргументом. Основным методом исследования стал анализ результатов опроса, проведенного среди студентов высших учебных заведений Казахстана, и исследований в международной научной литературе. Эмпирические данные показали, что большинство студентов воспринимают религиозные практики как важное средство поддержания эмоциональной стабильности и преодоления жизненных трудностей. Кроме того, респонденты отметили, что духовность способствует формированию смысла жизни, укреплению чувства психологической безопасности и социальной адаптации. В результате было установлено, что религия является важным социально-психологическим ресурсом, поддерживающим психологическую адаптацию, эмоциональную стабильность и социальную интеграцию молодежи в условиях современного Казахстана.

Ключевые слова: религиозность, религиозное адаптирование, казахская молодежь, духовность, психологическая адаптация, смысл жизни.

Introduction

Modern society is progressing amidst radical socio-cultural changes. Accelerating individuation along with a weakening of social and existential stability and a rise of social environments fraught with different types of risks have all brought a very high level of psychological stress in everyday life. Economic insecurity, changing roles in society, incessant flow of information and higher intensity of social comparison have all contributed to a decrease in the individuals' capability to foresee the future which in turn has led to an increase in the demands made on their psychological adjustment resources. Therefore, contemporary stressors are not only rising in quantity but also in complexity, which results in increasing the need for new kinds of internal coping mechanisms. In these circumstances, the religiosity also has significantly transformed. In old times, religiosity was mainly thought of in terms of churches, rituals that didn't change, and community practices. However, in modern secular societies, it has become more and more individual and based on personal experience. Thus, Religion is not so much tied to a formal label as it is to the way a person finds meaning in life, spiritual needs inside a person, and the experience that is personal and subjective. Consequently, this change implies that religion should not only be considered a social institution but also a psychological phenomenon that takes place in the inner world of an individual. Hence, from this viewpoint, present-day religiosity is very much linked with the ways in which individuals find meaning in and manage their life struggles.

In this sense, religious coping has become a very influential concept. Religious coping

can be defined as overcoming psychological difficulties through the invocation of religion. Religious coping is a process where individuals turn to religious faith, refer to religious characters, and engage in religious activities, to find subjective meaning in their sufferings and to control their psychological adjustments when faced with stress and crisis situations. Kenneth Lord Pargament's framework holds that religiousness as a symbolic system, empowers people to restore emotional balance, and making sense of hard times, even giving them a reason to live their life when confronted with stress, uncertainty, or life crises from an existential viewpoint [2, p. 112]. Pargament identifies two types of religious coping. First positive religious coping is one form and the includes aspects such as turning to God for help when things are difficult praying being patient and getting support from members of religious communities. Alongside this Pargament brings to the fore a negative religious coping too emphasizing that it is there. This sort of coping is realized through the idea that one is being punished by God for one's sins e.g. the belief that one is suffering due to sinfulness or through God's retribution. Both types of religious coping can be found among Kazakhs. Negative expressions in particular are found in destructive religious movements and sectarian environments. This study mainly focuses on the analysis of survey data of Kazakh youth practicing traditional Kazakh Islam. Nowadays, with the decline of traditional social support systems and the rise of individual responsibility, religion-based coping probably acts as one of the main ways through which people can help themselves psychologically with their internal resources. Therefore, it is still

quite a very good idea to study religious coping as one of the main notions that show the psychological nature of contemporary religiosity. Considering religious coping as a personal adaptation resource not only gives a psychological insight into current religious trends but also accurately interprets the role of religion in the maintenance of psychological well-being and life stability.

In the international academic circles, the religiosity and psychological well-being link has been one of the most studied topics in the past few decades. Through empirical studies, mainly inside Muslim societies, it has been shown that religion is not only a system of belief but also a major socio-cultural resource strengthening psychological resilience. The most common explanation in modern psychology of the religion of this phenomenon is the religious coping theory that resulted in a large number of researches. As an example, a research carried out in Saudi Arabia on women with cancer revealed that participants who had a high degree of religiosity displayed considerably higher psychological resilience and emotional stability [4, p. 220]. The authors decided that religious rituals are a significant factor in the control of fear, uncertainty, and emotional distress. Likewise, research done in Muslim communities in Norway by Ishaq, Østby, and Johannessen (2021) showed that people with strong religious beliefs were less prone to mental health issues [10 p. 100]. Studies first conducted in the USA and then extended to Iran, Turkey, and other European countries connect religion with aspects like social support, finding meaning, and moral stability. However, in Kazakhstan, research on this topic is very limited and only indirect research is available at the moment. But the rise in young people being more religious and the increasing appearance of conversion to different religions show the importance of studying this issue further [11, p. 174]

S. Faruk, M. Asadullah, and A. K. T. Tsang researched Muslim communities in Canada. First, the authors explored the ways of adjusting mental health services to the religious and cultural features of Muslim communities. Then, they discovered that systems of support that recognize the religious perspectives of individuals are much more effective. The authors stated that religion is an important factor in maintaining cultural unity and social security for migrant and minority communities [7, p. 70]. Furthermore, Megan Smith and her team

explored a faith-based culturally adapted intervention model with young Muslim women. The research showed that by tailoring psychological treatments to the participants' cultural and religious traits not only builds trust in therapy but also helps to alleviate depressive symptoms [22, p. 11]. This underscores why it is so crucial to blend religion and culture with modern psychological aids.

Ali Heidari and colleagues, through a research conducted among medical students in Iran, also found mindfulness in spiritual practices to be positively linked with psychological well-being. The authors acknowledged that spiritual practices could help individuals in increasing the capacity for emotions regulation, the conclusion was drawn from. [9, p. 131].

Methodology

The purpose of the paper is to determine the use of religious beliefs and spiritual practices as a psychological resource by Kazakh students in situations of stress and life difficulties, their relationship with a sense of security, emotional state and meaning in life. The study was conducted in a cross-sectional design based on a quantitative approach, and the theory of religious coping proposed by K. I. Pargament was taken as a theoretical basis. Empirical data were collected through an online survey among approximately 300 students studying at higher educational institutions in Kazakhstan. 61% of the respondents were men, 39% were women.

The survey included indicators of the role of religious practices in overcoming life difficulties, feeling the support of God or higher powers, emotional comfort, a sense of security, meaning in life and general emotional state. The questions were based on the concepts of relying on religious beliefs, seeking help and receiving spiritual support in Pargament's theory.

Descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages were used in data analysis. Possible relationships between religious practices and psychological indicators were considered comparatively, and the results were compared with international studies. Because the study was cross-sectional, the relationships identified were interpreted as subjective assessments of respondents and observed trends rather than as causal relationships. Since the sample was limited to students, the results cannot be directly generalized to young people in general.

Main part

Religious Coping and Psychological Well-Being among Kazakhstani Youth

The theory of religious coping was first introduced by Kenneth I. Pargament in his studies during the 1990s. However, this theory has neither lost its relevance in Europe nor in other parts of the world. Actually, it has become more significant especially in the context of globalization and in periods when people experience stress and illness like during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pargament argues that religion is a major source of strength for people when they go through psychologically difficult times and it even aids their endurance. For instance, he illustrates that religion can be of great help to individuals by arming them with direction, backing, and hope, which in turn enables them [19, p. 794]. Specifically, religion is a very important aspect in the method of solving life problems. Besides religious faith, people can get emotional support from problem-helping source individuals, especially, in the situation of stress [20, p. 94].

After its independence, Kazakhstan witnessed a growing number of young people turning to religion. Moreover, local religious scholars have often pointed out that the youth are the main supporters of most faiths in today's Kazakh society. However, the same age group makes up the largest number of people drawn to harmful religious sects. Therefore, the question of youth and religion has ended up being one of the most highly intertwined problems of the present-day Kazakh nation. This phenomenon might be explainable by a number of different factors but psychology should definitely be given a prominent consideration among them. Adolescents is an age range when the persons experience fundamental evolutionary changes in all aspects of one's being and situation. At this stage, one goes through personality development, finding the reason for existence, and figuring out one's place in the community all of which also gives rise to the meeting with psychological, affective, social, and ethical issues [12, p. 86].

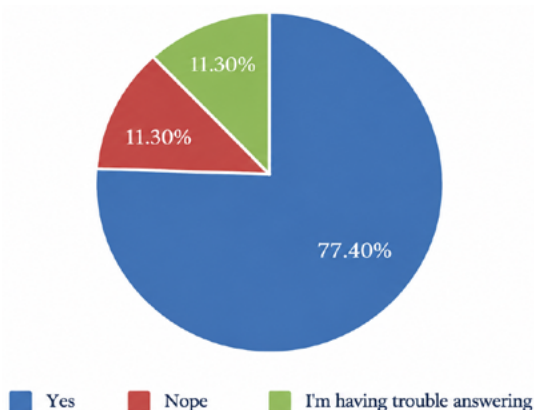
Many international and local scholars have done huge research work on young people's inclination towards religion. Youth are often exposed to psychological problems such as stress and depression caused by the feelings of confusion, insecurity and anxiety about life [14, p. 420]. Many young individuals at this phase encounter their first time separation from family, which might make family connections weaker

and cause them to feel lonely besides other psychological problems. This, in fact, happens mostly during the student period when a great number of these people move to cities different from their home one for their higher studies and decided to start their adult life independently without their parents. In these situations, a considerable number of youth would go to God as an attachment figure and ask for spiritual support. That is why, among other reasons, adolescence and youth rise as the times at which religious development and transformation can be seen most clearly [3].

Therefore, the survey was implemented among 300 university students who attend higher educational institutions in Kazakhstan to identify the mechanisms of religious coping among Kazakh youth in stressful situations and also to investigate the psychological functions of religiosity. By means of this survey, we wanted to find out the level of religiosity of the youth, the importance of spiritual activities, and their impact on the psychological state. 61% of respondents were male and 39% were female.

First question asked the respondents was: "Do you think that religious worship and religious practices can help to overcome life difficulties?" Their answers to this question are below.

1-diagram - The role of religious worship and religious practices in overcoming life's challenges



Most of the respondents, according to the survey, 77.40%), considered religious practices like worship, prayer and other spiritual activities as an important element of how people solve problems in their life. On the other hand, 11.40% of the respondents shared that the religious practices do not play a significant role or they found it difficult to answer

the question. As shown on the graph, most of the participants in our study view religious practices as an important source of emotional support and a means of achieving inner stability. Quite a few studies on an international level indicate a similar trend. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, an international meta-analysis identified religious coping strategies, prayer, faith and spirituality, for helping people to lessen their anxiety and their capability to handle stress [18, p. 513]. Similarly, research done in the US, Turkey, Denmark, and Czech Republic on religion and psychological well-being revealed that religiosity and spiritual beliefs are great indicators of happiness and psychological resilience especially in the religious communities [21, p. 4586].

Moreover, a large majority of 84% of the students considered their mental state to be either "satisfactory" or "very good." Besides that, 59% of the students said that they often feel the meaning and purpose of life. The statistical examination indicated an important connection between religiosity, spirituality, and the experience of life meaning. Especially, the students who identified spirituality as a significant personal resource showed greater degrees of being pleased with life.

Religion as a Source of Social and Cultural Adaptation

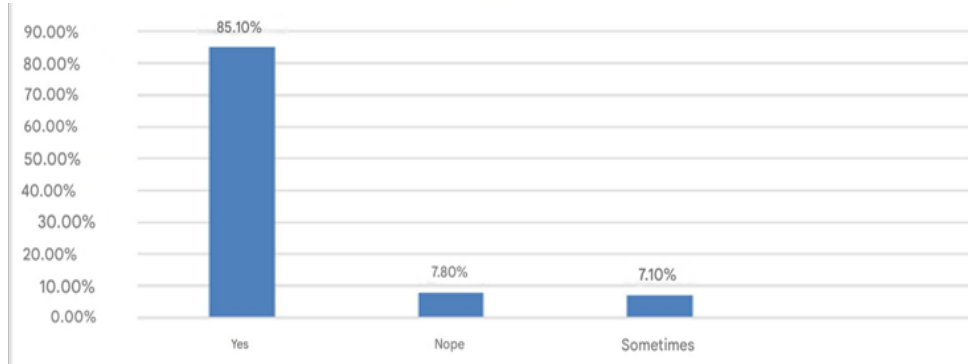
Moreover, these results are linked with the socio-cultural features of the Kazakhstani community. While Kazakhstan as a post-Soviet state endured an extended era of anti-religiosity measures, religion slowly came to play an important role at both communal and personal levels after independence. In fact, young people nowadays tend to view religion not so much as a set of institutional commitments but rather as a medium for personal spiritual ex-

periences, guidance in life as well as source of mental peace. Hence, the rise of religiosity as youth's religious coping mechanism is actually the reflection of the historical and cultural changes at large.

For example after the collapse of the Soviet Union during the economic crisis of the 1990s the population of Kazakhstan went through social instability and an ideological vacuum. In such a situation, many people started to rely on religion for moral support and spiritual foundation. According to researchers, the period saw an increase in missionary work of new religious groups in Kazakhstan, especially Protestant churches from the United States, South Korea, and several European countries. Although economic crises do not always lead directly to religious conversions, they did, however, provide the fertile ground for religious practices and new religious movements [13, p. 28].

The majority of our survey participants (85.1%) indicated "yes" when asked, "Do you think that feeling God or higher powers are with you makes you feel safer?" Whereas, 7.8% said "no," and 7.1% chose the option "sometimes." As shown in the chart, most of the respondents linked their feeling of safety and security to God or higher powers. Psychologically speaking, the feeling of safety is a very important aspect of emotional well-being. The results of this research align with studies in psychology of religion showing that religious beliefs and experiencing spiritual support help in decreasing anxiety, emotional stabilization, and psychological well-being improvement. For instance, in the research named The Role of Perceived Attachment to God in Times of Distress on Psychological Well-Being researchers have found that recognizing God as

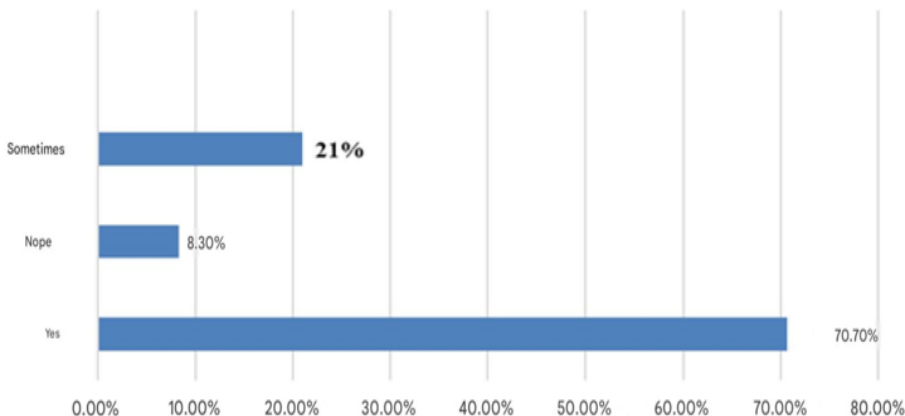
2-diagram - Does feeling like God/higher powers are with you help you feel more secure



a “source of protection and support” not only assists people to manage stress but also leads to high psychological well-being. The authors

note that belief in God provides a feeling of security and emotional stability [13, p. 11].

3-diagram - Do you feel support and comfort in difficult situations by relying on your religious beliefs



70.7% of those surveyed said that their religious beliefs helped them feel supported and comforted during difficult times in life. 21% said that they only rarely felt such emotions like that while 8.4% said they did not feel at all. Most of the students in our research showed that religious beliefs help them feel supported and comforted when they have hardships in life. Also, on a broader scale, studies done in other countries have come up with similar results indirectly. For instance, research in Indonesia went so far as to highlight religiosity, social support, and self-efficacy as key factors that influence a person's subjective well-being. According to the authors, religious belief has the power to modify individuals' mindsets about life challenges and make them more resilient at a psychological level [6, p. 153]

Besides this, researchers like Aminnuddin N., Puasa S. and Iqbal N. have proven through their research that religious coping styles and personality traits are indeed in a significant relationship. Their study underlines that religion is a socio-psychological phenomenon intricately linked with one's internal psychological makeup [5, p. 1125].

Nabi (2024) investigated the link between Islamic moral values and subjective well-being through his research, which is also in line with the results found in Kazakhstan. According to the writer, akhlaq in Islam, the realization of moral values such as patience, gratitude, forgiveness, and spiritual responsibility, is capable of increasing individuals' contentment with life and simultaneously lowering stress levels

[17, p. 101]. This decision can clarify the relationship between spirituality and the sense of meaning in life among the young population of Kazakhstan.

Graça L. and Brandão T. researched religious coping among university students. Their findings show that religious coping is significantly linked with development of psychological resilience and experiencing greater satisfaction in life. According to the authors, different religious coping methods have an impact on how a person controls their emotions, therefore they are key components of one's psychological adaptation [8, p. 344].

Psychologist Talha H. Mallhi and co-authors also came to a similar conclusion. These researchers studied how religious coping strategies could affect the psychological adjustment of university students in Saudi Arabia during the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors conducted an online survey and discovered that religious activities were effective in lowering anxiety and psychological distress. Especially, praying, having faith in God, and studying religious texts were significantly instrumental in preserving the students' emotional stability [16, p. 142]. Similarly, the research results carried out in Kazakhstan demonstrated that most students recognized spiritual practices as a means of attaining inner peace and finding emotional support [16, p. 142].

The empirical study conducted in Kazakhstan thus, to some extent, supports the main conclusions of the international scientific literature. The results obtained show that in young

people religion is a system of faith as well as a significant cultural tool which, among other things, provides emotional stability, helps in the creation of life meaning, and facilitates socio-psychological adaptation. Within the Kazakhstani setting, religion is strongly linked with people's spiritual experiences and their ways of explaining life's challenges, which enables it to be regarded as a major socio-psychological phenomenon in the context of the contemporary post-secular society.

As mentioned earlier, the results of the empirical research in Kazakhstan revealed that spirituality strongly contributes to young people's mental health and gives them a sense of purpose in life. Still, the impact of religion on young people's lives goes beyond their deepest faith or mental framework only. To contemporary Kazakhstani youth, religion has gradually turned into an effective way to deal with their daily problems. In this aspect, the question of religious coping strategies becomes especially relevant from a scientific point of view. Religion as a coping mechanism is probably one of the most widely researched topics in both the psychology of religion and social psychology. Kenneth I. Pargament introduced the concept of "religious coping", seeing religion as a meaning-making system through which people can make sense of stress, uncertainty, and situations of crisis in life. According to Pargament, people try to make sense of their problems not just through logic but also at metaphorical and spiritual levels, and religion in turn supports mental balance and a feeling of hope during the course of this [1, p. 500].

In the course of the survey, several students mentioned that prayer and spiritual practices were their first choice during the exam periods, moments of anxiety for the future, or when family problems arose. A number of participants shared that through worship and putting their trust in God, they are able to lessen their internal fears and release the emotional stress. It can be derived from these results that religious coping mechanisms are mainly utilized by young people in Kazakhstan to manage their emotions as well as to find meanings in their lives. Likewise, the research of Salsa Zha-fira Soraya and Ratna Nila Puspitasari delved into the Islamic coping mechanisms amongst Indonesian students undergoing quarter-life crisis. The researchers observed that spiritual activities made the youngsters emotionally robust even in moments of fear of future and life uncertainty [23, p. 288]. Students in Kazakhstan are facing examination stress and career issues

besides social pressure along with this they are turning to spiritual practices. Only this part is strongly in line with these findings.

Given the post-Soviet traits of Kazakhstani society, this phenomenon becomes even more significant. Even though religion was somewhat removed from public life during the Soviet time, since independence the personal and mental importance of religion among teenagers has surfaced coming stronger and stronger. Nowadays, students, in many cases, do not think of religion as something that keeps people under control through institutions; instead, they find the religion a source of inner quietness, spiritual comfort, and a way of life. Hence, the use of religious coping in Kazakhstan is seen to be another kind of tool for dealing with the challenges of social changes.

Religious beliefs and practices among the youth of Kazakhstan, as shown above, serve them not only as a basis for mental support or a means of alleviation of stress but also as a highly significant way of their socio-cultural assimilation. At present Kazakhstani society is characterized by the influence of globalization, urban life, the spread of digital means of communication, and the changing of people's value systems. In fact, during this time of change, religion frequently provides young people with social stability, a sense of cultural identity, and a basis for their life orientation.

The empirical study carried out among Kazakhstani students showed that these students quite often connect religion with morality and culture, and also see it as part of their social identity. When asked, many of them said that Islam is not only a religion but also a great part of the historical culture of the Kazakh people, their family upbringing, and their national values. Many of them even went as far as to say that religion is what gives us the "right way to live," helps us "not to cross moral lines," and "strengthens our spiritual side." This example indicates increasing reliance on religion as a socio-moral compass among the youth of present-day Kazakhstan. The results further revealed that religion plays a significant part in social adaptation. Especially, for students who relocated from villages to cities or changed their social-environment, it was found that religious groups provided a sense of security and belonging to such individuals through a familiar social space. Some respondents pointed out that the mosque communities and spiritual networks have a role in the creation of new social ties. This means that, in the Kazakhstani setting, religion most probably serves as

a means of social integration apart from being an individual experience.

Furthermore, in the course of the study, most of the students characterized religion as a spiritual resource that can help to overcome the moral issues in the modern society. The respondents often shared their views on the "growing materialism," the "fall of trust between people," and the "lessening of spiritual values." In this regard, religion seems to be an essential tool for maintaining social order and cultural continuity. This result reveals that the social role of religion in Kazakhstani society is not limited to just religious practice only.

Therefore, findings of the empirical research carried out in Kazakhstan have confirmed that the main points of international scientific literature. The data achieved revealed that the role of religion was greatly increased among Kazakh youth as it brought them ways of renewing their emotional stability, offering them a framework for the construction of meaningful life and making psychological adaptation easier for them.

Conclusions

The findings indicate that the students who participated in the study perceive religious faith and spiritual practices as important subjective resources for dealing with life difficulties. In the survey, 77.4% reported that worship, prayer, and other forms of religious practice play an important role in overcoming challenging situations. This suggests that, for a substantial proportion of the participants, religious activity is perceived as a source of psychological and emotional assistance in times of difficulty.

A similar pattern emerged with regard to perceived security. A total of 85.1% of respondents stated that a sense of the presence of God or a higher power makes them feel safer. Furthermore, 70.7% indicated that their religious beliefs provide support and comfort during difficult periods, while 21% reported experiencing such feelings only sometimes. Taken together, these responses demonstrate that, from the participants' perspective, religiosity is closely associated with feelings of security, comfort, and emotional reassurance.

The survey also revealed notable patterns concerning subjective well-being and the perceived meaning of life. Overall, 84% of respondents assessed their emotional state as "satisfactory" or "very good," while 59% reported that they frequently experience a sense

of meaning and purpose in life. The analysis points to an association between religiosity, spirituality, and the perception of meaning in life. At the same time, the cross-sectional design of the study does not permit any conclusion about a direct causal effect of religiosity on psychological well-being. Rather, the findings provide empirical grounds for examining the relationship between religious experience, spirituality, and subjective indicators of psychological well-being.

The observed patterns are broadly consistent with Kenneth I. Pargament's theory of religious coping. In particular, the participants' responses suggest that prayer, worship, and turning to God during periods of difficulty can function as mechanisms through which individuals obtain emotional reassurance and interpret adverse experiences. Within the present sample, these practices were primarily associated with dimensions of positive religious coping, including seeking divine assistance, attaining a sense of inner peace through religious experience, and interpreting difficult circumstances within a spiritual framework.

At the same time, the findings should be interpreted within the methodological boundaries of the study. The sample consisted exclusively of university students and therefore cannot be considered representative of all Kazakhstani youth or the broader population of Kazakhstan. In addition, male participants constituted a larger proportion of the sample. The study also relied on self-reported assessments of religious beliefs and psychological experiences. Accordingly, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence of an objective or direct effect of religion on mental health. Rather, they reflect how the participating students themselves perceive the role of religion in coping with difficulties and maintaining psychological well-being.

Within these limitations, the findings point to several interconnected functions of religion among a segment of contemporary Kazakhstani youth. Religious experience may serve as a resource for coping with challenging circumstances, while religious belief is associated with perceived security and emotional reassurance. Spirituality and religious worldviews may also provide frameworks through which young people interpret meaning and purpose in life. At the same time, religious orientations may intersect with social and cultural identity and influence the development of moral orientations.

These findings also indicate that the contemporary role of religion among young peo-

ple cannot be examined exclusively through institutional affiliation or ritual participation. In the accounts reflected in the survey, religion emerges as a personal experience, a framework for interpreting difficult circumstances, and a source of emotional reassurance. Examining these psychological dimensions of religiosity therefore offers an additional perspective for understanding the processes of social and psychological adaptation among young people in Kazakhstan.

A comprehensive assessment of religious coping, however, requires attention to both its positive and negative dimensions. Pargament's theoretical framework recognizes that religious coping can involve adaptive as well as potentially maladaptive forms of religious response. Future research should therefore examine not only supportive aspects of religious belief but also experiences such as excessive guilt, perceived divine punishment, religious doubt, intrareligious conflict, and other forms of negative religious coping. Incorporating these dimensions would provide a more balanced understanding of how religious beliefs and practices function in the lives of young people.

Overall, the study demonstrates that a substantial proportion of the participating Kazakhstani students regard religion and spiritual practices as meaningful resources for coping with life difficulties, obtaining emotional reassurance, and strengthening a sense of security. The findings consequently support the need for further investigation of the relationships among religiosity, meaning in life, emotional well-being, and perceived security. Future studies could strengthen the empirical basis of this research by incorporating participants from different regions of Kazakhstan, comparing university students with employed and unemployed young people, examining positive and negative forms of religious coping separately, and applying correlational or regression-based statistical methods.

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