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INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOSITY ON STRESS RESISTANCE AND SOCIAL ADAPTATION OF TEACHERS

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Abstract

The article presents the results of an empirical study aimed at studying the influence of religiosity on stress resistance and the quality of a person's social adaptation. The study was performed on a sample of secondary school teachers, representing a group with a high level of social stress. To study the religiosity of a person, the self-esteem method was used by direct scaling according to three main parameters: 1) religious knowledge, 2) religious worldview, 3) observation of religious rites. To study social stress and social adaptation, we used the L. Reeder test, "Anxiety and Depression" and self-assessment of emotional states (A. Wessman and D. Ricks). Using a correlation analysis, it was found that religiosity indicators have negative connections with indicators of social stress, anxiety and depression, on the one hand, and positive connections with indicators of successful social adaptation—calm, confidence, elation—on the other hand. The use of the multiple regression analysis method made it possible to identify the positive contribution of the religious worldview to indicators of successful social adaptation and the negative contribution to the indicator of the intensity of social stress. When discussing the results, an attempt was made to explain the influence of a religious worldview on the success of a person's social adaptation in situations of chronic stress.

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Introduction

Modern man lives in a world where social stress has become almost universal. This is due to the high intensity of life, a large amount of daily perceived information, the presence of social conflicts of various levels. The high level of social stress challenges not only the adaptive capabilities of the individual, but also the ability of society to ensure sustainable and safe development, to provide timely assistance to those people who experience high levels of social stress. At the same time, the question of factors affecting the stress resistance and adaptability of an individual becomes especially relevant. Available in the scientific literature data show that one of these factors is religiosity. However, estimates of the influence of this factor are rather contradictory. In this study, an attempt is made to assess the contribution of the religiosity factor to indicators of stress resistance and the success of social adaptation of an individual using the example of a social group with a pronounced level of social stress—teachers of secondary schools.

1. Problem Statement

The concepts of "social stress", "psychosocial stress" are increasingly used in the literature. They mean the type of psychological stress that occurs as a result of the effects of stressors of a social nature and manifests itself in situations of social interaction (Kaplan, 1996). Social stress plays an important role in the adaptation process, performing important functions: it allows an individual to give a generalized assessment of his interaction with the social environment, stimulates the development of adaptive behavior, mobilizes a person (and groups of people) to form social and political activity aimed at changing group interaction, to improve the social situation (Vasilenko, 2019). However, as numerous studies show, with high intensity and duration of social stress, it loses its adaptive potential and can cause impaired social adaptation (Koval, 2008; Kazakova, 2017; Manukhina et al., 2014; Ross et al., 2006; Reeskens & Vandecasteele, 2017; Shafirkin & Shtemberg, 2013; Zinchenko et al., 2011).

Studies of factors affecting stress resistance and adaptability of an individual have been conducted for a long time. The influence of personality traits, gender, social status, belonging to a certain culture, social attitudes on the perception of stress and the quality of social adaptation (Deng et al., 2018; Hamamura & Mearns, 2019; Li et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2019). As for the influence of a person's religiosity on its ability to cope with stresses, there is conflicting information. On the one hand, a number of empirical studies have noted a connection between religiosity and less severe stress disorders in extreme situations. So, in the research of Idrisov conducted among the civilian population involved in hostilities, believers showed less severe symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, they often fully recovered from mental trauma (Idrisov, 2002). Some studies show that religiosity is a contributing factor to the more efficient processing of mental trauma (Zagefka et al., 2016). It has been noted that religiosity can be a factor increasing the effectiveness of social support (Ju et al., 2018). Shcherbatykh, who studied stress in university students, noted the protective role of personality religiosity in stressful situations (Shcherbatykh, 2006). But there are conflicting data, for example, in the study of McIntyre, Venture, which studied the problems of social adaptation among Angolan youth after being in a war zone, found a positive relationship between the significance of religious values for a person and the severity of post-

traumatic stress disorder, especially depressive symptoms (McIntyre & Venture, 2003). All of the above shows that it is necessary to continue empirical research to study the problem of the influence of religiosity on stress resistance and the quality of social adaptation of a person.

2. Research Questions

The study was conducted in 2018–2019 on a sample that included 205 secondary-school teachers, i.e. social group with a pronounced level of social stress. Most of the examined were women (89.2 %). As for religiosity, the majority of teachers surveyed (71.2 %) consider themselves somewhat religious. Of the number of believers, 74.7 % profess Christianity, 25.3 % profess Islam.

We considered social adaptation as a process of an individual's active adaptation to the conditions of the social environment, as well as the result of this process (Dolgova & Vasilenko, 2016). Among the indicators of adaptation success, we included the prevailing emotional background, level of anxiety and depression.

To study the influence of religiosity on stress resistance and the success of teachers' social adaptation, we set the following tasks:

To identify the level of social stress among teachers of secondary schools and its impact on their social adaptation.

To determine the relationship between the religiosity of teachers and the intensity of social stress experienced by them.

Determine the contribution of teachers' religiosity indicator to indicators of their social adaptation.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify the influence of religiosity on stress resistance and the quality of social adaptation of an individual using the example of teachers of secondary schools as a social group with a high level of social stress.

4. Research Methods

To study the religiosity of a person, the method of self-assessment by direct scaling was used. The subjects were supposed to evaluate several indicators according to a 10-point system, corresponding to three main parameters: 1) religious knowledge, 2) religious worldview, 3) observance of religious rites. Self-assessments in the range of 1–3 points were considered to be low-level, in the range of 4–7 were the average level, the range of 8–10 points was considered to be high level.

To study social stress, we used the diagnostic technique of Reeder. To study the social adaptation of teachers, we used the methods of "Anxiety and Depression", "Self-assessment of emotional states" (Wessman and Ricks)

When processing the results, correlation and multiple regression analysis were used.

5. Findings

The study revealed that a significant proportion of teachers (34.6 %) are characterized by a high level of social stress. The low-level range was not identified for any respondent. Using the “Anxiety and Depression”, it was found that the proportion of teachers with reduced indicators of social adaptation is also quite large. A significant part of the teachers found values related to the high and critical areas in terms of Anxiety (28.7 %) and Depression (24.8 %). The emotional background of 39.5 % of teachers is characterized by a feeling of tiredness; many respondents note that it does not pass over the weekend and very quickly appears immediately after a vacation. A feeling of depression, helplessness, and exhaustion is characteristic of 26.8 % of teachers.

The results of a study of the religiosity of teachers are presented in table 01.

Table 1. Proportion of teachers with different levels of severity of religiousness

Religiousness parameters	Low level [%]	Average level [%]	High level [%]
Religious knowledge	64.4	32.7	2.9
Religious worldview	39.5	51.2	9.3
Observance of religious rites	58.0	37.6	4.4

The presented results show that most teachers note a low level of religious knowledge that they have and perform religious rites little. However, the majority of teachers assess the degree of the religious worldview formation as average.

Now consider the relationship between indicators of religiosity and indicators of social stress and indicators of social adaptation. For this, we used the correlation analysis. Table 02 presents statistically significant correlation coefficients (Pearson, $p < 0.05$).

Table 2. Correlation coefficients of the parameters of religiosity and the parameters of social stress and social adaptation

Indicators of social stress and social adaptation	Religious knowledge	Religious worldview	Observance of religious rites
Social stress	—	0.29*	0.16*
Anxiety	—	-0.21	-0.17
Depression	-0.17	-0.24	—
Calmness - Anxiety	—	0.21	0.19
Energy - Fatigue	—	—	—
Elation - Depression	—	0.14	—
Confidence - Helplessness	—	0.18	0.24

* The value of the indicator of social stress in the methodology of L. Reeder is inversely proportional to its intensity, therefore, the indicated correlation coefficients have a positive sign, although the relationship between religiosity and stress intensity is the opposite.

The presented data show that religiosity indicators have negative connections with indicators of social stress, anxiety and depression, on the one hand, and positive connections with indicators of successful social adaptation—calm, confidence, elation—on the other hand. The greatest number of connections with indicators of stress and adaptation has such a parameter of a person's religiosity as a

religious worldview, somewhat less has the observance of religious rites, the least is possessed by religious knowledge.

To assess the influence of teachers' religiosity on the quality of social adaptation, we used multiple regression analysis. The regression model included, as dependent variables, indicators of teachers' social adaptation—Anxiety and Depression. As the factors affecting the level of adaptation were considered the level of social stress, religious outlook, the number of academic hours at school, the duration of professional work at home (preparing for lessons, developing tasks, checking students' work, etc.), as well as satisfaction with family relationships, satisfaction with relationships with colleagues at work, satisfaction with wages and working conditions. The regression model accounts for 41 % of the variance of the Anxiety indicator and 46 % of the variance of the Depression indicator.

The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 03.

Table 3. Statistically significant standardized regression coefficients for the dependent variables “Anxiety” and “Depression”

Social adaptation factors	Anxiety	Depression
Social stress	-0.27*	-0.29*
Religious worldview	-0.16	-0.21
Number of academic hours at school	0.23	0.25
Duration of professional work at home	0.13	0.14
Satisfaction with family relationships	-0.29	-0.21
Satisfaction with colleagues	-0.21	—
Salary satisfaction	—	-0.17
Job conditions satisfaction	-0.15	—

* The value of the indicator of social stress in the methodology of L. Reeder is inversely proportional to its intensity, therefore, the indicated regression coefficients have a negative sign, although the intensity of social stress increases the indicators of anxiety and depression.

The data presented show that the factors that increase anxiety and depression among teachers include social stress and quantitative indicators of the load at school and at home. Factors that reduce anxiety and depression include satisfaction with family relationships and work colleagues, religiosity, and satisfaction with working conditions and payment.

6. Conclusion

Our study allows us to draw a number of conclusions:

1. About a third of secondary school teachers experience a high level of social stress, which makes a significant negative contribution to the indicators of their social adaptation. More than a quarter of teachers have a high or critical level of anxiety and depression, almost half feel chronic fatigue. This is a problem that deserves serious study in order to optimize the work of a teacher in Russia, as well as creating a system of psychological assistance to school teachers.
2. The religiosity of the personality is negatively associated with the intensity of social stress.
3. Religious personality contributes to a more successful social adaptation in situations of chronic stress.

The discussion of the results. The study revealed a positive effect of religiosity, especially a religious worldview, on stress resistance and social adaptation of a person. A person with a religious worldview perceives the world less stressful, adapts better in situations of chronic stress.

What explains this effect? In our opinion, we can assume the effect of several reasons. Firstly, a religious worldview allows a person to gain spiritual support from the Higher Forces. The Divine is an unconditional positive Being. Through communication with this Entity, a person feels less lonely and helpless.

Secondly, thanks to a religious worldview, a person acquires the meaning of everything that happens to them. This applies, in particular, to stress and suffering, which is considered in the religious worldview as tests that a person needs to pass on earth. This allows to rethink difficult life events, and the data available in the literature and psychotherapeutic practice show that it is the acquisition of the meaning of the experience that helps a person to resist the negative impact of difficult life situations (Prokhorov & Yusupov, 2010; Zhou et al., 2018).

Thirdly, a religious worldview reduces the level of a person's personal responsibility for what is happening to him or his relatives. This allows reducing own guilt for negative life events. Feeling guilty is one of the most traumatic experiences in difficult situations.

So, religiosity helps a person mitigate the effects of stressors, better adapt to chronic stress, fatigue, and anxiety. This enables a better understanding of the role of religion in the modern world.

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