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COPING BEHAVIOR OF ORTHODOX RELIGIOUS STUDENTS IN RUSSIA

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Abstract: This article presents a study of coping behavior regarding Orthodox religious students in Russia. The paper analyzes the investigation results concerning psychological features of modern Orthodox students from two universities in Russia (Moscow). The data collection methods are: Folkman and Lazarus's coping-test, Smirnov's psychometric techniques "Questionnaire of religious activity" and Shcherbatykh's "Test for revealing of the level of individual religiosity". The study suggests that coping behavior is connected with the level of religiosity.

Key Words: Coping behavior, Orthodoxy, psychological peculiarities of orthodox students, religiosity, structure of individual religiosity, types of religious people.

Introduction

An exploration of the ways to overcome difficulties in life by relying on the personality has led to the emergence of the new research area: the study of coping, or coping behavior.¹ This direction has been actively developing in both western and Russian psychological investigations. For example, during the study of stress mechanisms. R. Lazarus and S. Folkman² have developed the cognitive theory of coping. Extensive coping observations such as those reported by R. Lazarus and S. Folkman show little focus on the connection between coping behavior and psychological aspects of religiosity.

Followers of the psychoanalytic approach, in particular, Vaillant³, Kroeberg⁴, and Haan⁵ developed the theory of the ego-oriented coping, considered the process of coping with the difficulties in the form of psychological defense mechanisms. They offered the idea that coping is a personal premise with the true high stability which predetermines a person's response to a particular factor of stress. Coping behavior is in the second level of this model. Coping behavior is "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to deal with the specific external and/or internal requirements, which are estimated as excessive or exceed the human resources."⁶ Coping investigations reported by these authors do not consider peculiarities of coping behavior for Orthodox believers.

The lack of scientific studies which examine specific psychological and personal characteristics of believers determines the need for our investigation. While many detailed studies analyze the origin and the foundation of religion, the concept of religious faith (Hume)⁷; problems in cognitive psychology of religion, the essence of religion and its types (Kant)⁸; issues of the importance of religion in society (Hegel)⁹; basics, "the roots" of religion (Feuerbach)¹⁰; the question of religious faith (Scheler)¹¹ to date there has not been much work published on psychological features of Orthodox students. These works may be regarded as the foundation for theoretical, ethical and empirical analysis of the problem of coping behavior.

Considering Western studies of the psychology of religion, the works devoted to the analysis of religiosity are the most valuable to our approach. In these works the concept of religiosity is considered as:

- Definite type of man's relationship to the world based on feelings and emotions of the individual experiences¹²;
- A natural part of human's inner life¹³;
- The feeling that the world is a part of something supernatural. The highest goals of the human existence are realized in the supernatural world¹⁴
- The source of the meaning and the purpose of human life (Maslow¹⁵, Frankl¹⁶, Fromm¹⁷);

- A social and psychological quality of personality (Pavenkov).¹⁸

Kenneth Pargament in his book "The Psychology of Religion and Coping: Theory, Research, Practice"¹⁹ builds the bridge between the world of religion and the world of psychology, stressing that religious faith can help people to overcome difficult life situations. D. Batson, L. Ventiks²⁰ and E. Fromm²¹ have identified a variety of criteria for the typology of believers. These works allow us to show the psychological peculiarities of believers, and create the theoretical basis for the empirical study of believers.

Methodology of the current study

The present study represents the investigation of the coping behavior of Orthodox believers in Moscow universities. The data analyzed was collected from two groups in two Orthodox universities in Moscow.

Psych diagnostic research was carried out only in the classrooms designated of the educational institutions. Participants to study were 284 Orthodox young people (age 20-32 years):

- students of the Orthodox St. Tikhon state university, majoring in theology, missionary, history, pedagogic, church music, arts for church, social sciences, additional education (195 people - 63 man and 132 women);
- students of the Russian Orthodox Institute of St. John the Evangelist from the departments of: philosophy, theology, history-philology, economics and law (89 people - 21 boy and 68 girls).

Admission to these universities is possible only for Orthodox believers. We gave detailed answers to all questions of everyone, who participated in our investigation. Empirical research included a study of three different characteristics and structures of the religious personality. We focused on three topics during our research: the degree of religiosity, coping behavior and the locus of control.

During the first phase of investigation, we applied Sokolovskaya's²² questionnaire in order to reveal three groups of religious personalities. We surveyed 284 students in order to separate the experimental and the control groups. During the second phase it was important to determine the degree of religiosity of the participants to the investigation for analysis of their coping behavior and locus of control.

Shcherbatykh Yu²³ revealed that for the analysis of the degree of individual religiosity it is necessary to identify such characteristics as: expression of religious identity; the trend of faith in the Creator and belief in the existence of a higher power who created the world. During the second phase of the study, for revealing of the above mentioned characteristics and for determining the groups of believers, we used the

following research methods and tests:

1. "Test for revealing of the level of individual religiosity".²⁴ This method was analyzed in the work of E. Medvedeva²⁵ and actively used in other psychological researches, in particular, in the articles of N. Usova, A. Kashapova²⁶, O. Devlikamova²⁷ and etc.

2. The psychometric technique "Questionnaire religious activity".²⁸ This technique was analyzed by Medvedeva²⁹ and has been applied in the dissertation of Grosheva³⁰.

For further investigation of the coping behavior and work with experimental and control groups at the third stage, we used the method "Coping test WCQ (Ways of Coping Questionnaire)" R. Lazarus and S. Folkman³¹. A version of this test was adopted to Russian population by a community of scientist under the guidance of prof. L.I. Vasserman³². This method was actively used in the works of Russian psychologists, in particular, A. Bolotova, M. Nachaturova³³, E. Rasskazova, T. Gordeeva³⁴ and others.

Results

Relying on the application of Sokolovskaya's questionnaire, we divided our sample on three experimental groups, separated by the criterion of the degree of expression of the religiosity.

Group 1 - truly religious - 65-90 points;

Group 2 - formal religious - 40-65 points;

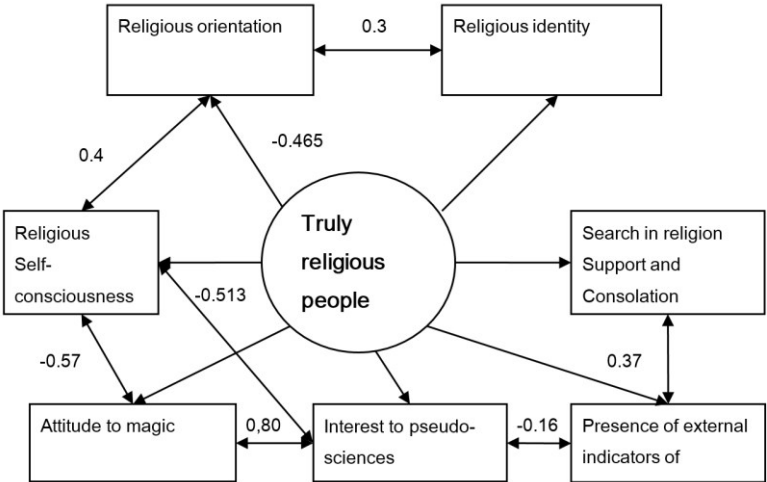
Group 3 - not-religious - 0-40 points.

According to the results, the first group was formed by 98 people - 34.5%; the second, by 105 people - 36.97% and third group was formed by 66 people - 23.24%. There were 15 people who were not included in any group as they had not scored at least 15 points. This group makes no object of our study, as the focus of our investigation is only on religious personalities. Statistical calculations were performed by using standard Microsoft Excel packages and the SPSS v.22.0. data processing software for Windows.

For the analysis of the characteristics of correlations between parameters within a group of religious people, we used Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. The advantage of using such a measure of correlation is that Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is a non-parametric measure. We mention that there are other measures of correlation which are parametric in the sense of being based on possible relationship of a parameterized form.

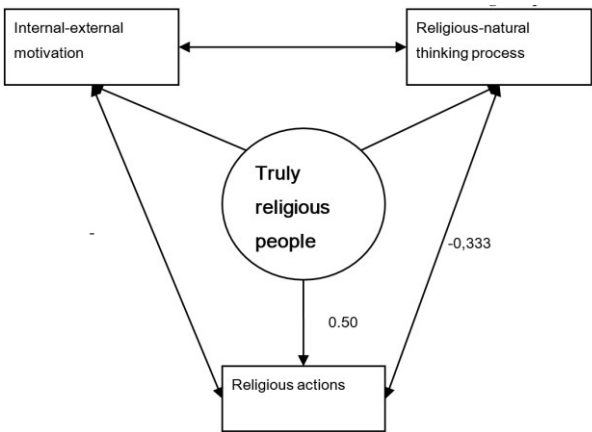
The results demonstrate the existence of significant relationships between the parameters of these methods (figure 1 and figure 2).

Figure 1. Correlation 1. Selected variables - "truly religious people" (according to "Test for revealing of the level of individual religiosity" (Shcherbatykh))



Some arrows are unidirectional because they show one connection between the indicator of religiosity level and the selected variables. These variables are expressed as characteristic of people who have a specific level of religiosity. Some arrows are bidirectional because they show interconnection between two selected variables according to the specific test.

Figure 2. Correlation 2. Selected variables - "truly religious people" (according to test MIRA)



We have found (Fig. 1) a significant correlation between the variable

"religious orientation" and the variable "religious identity" (0,34). The identity of this group of religious people is characterized by the high level of religious self-consciousness, in which religious orientation (0.492) is manifested. The fact that the people within this group are religious active was confirmed by correlation with the indicator "religious actions" (0.504). The search for religion support and consolation is associated with the presence of external indicators of religiosity (0.369). The religious outlook, the perception of religious symbols as real objects is accompanied by religious activities (participation in the ceremonies, conversion to God, the practical following religious principles, etc).

At the same time, the higher the manifestation of their religious self-consciousness (-0.57), the lower the positive attitude to magic. Similarly, the lower interest to pseudo sciences is expressed, the higher religious self-consciousness are, that is inner need in religious beliefs (-0.513) and religious orientation (-0.465).

It is needed to note that the higher attitude to magic, the higher the interest to pseudoscience (0.803), while expression of the inner religious motivation decreases the level of natural thought (-0.303) (see. Fig. 2)

This data shows that the interest in magic and pseudo-sciences, which include beliefs, theories, or practices that have been or are considered scientific, but have no basis in scientific fact, as well as asthenic experiences, that is condition caused by consciousness of own weakness and imperfection in comparison with Theos, and before-religious experiences, that is transcendent conditions of consciousness, which do not contain Theos, are shown to have much less significance to religious people. This group is characterized most clearly by the following qualities: deeply religious consciousness, religious activity, expressed in religious actions, religious orientation.

Figure 3. Correlation 3. Selected variables - "religious people" (according to "Test for revealing of the level of individual religiosity" (Shcherbatykh))

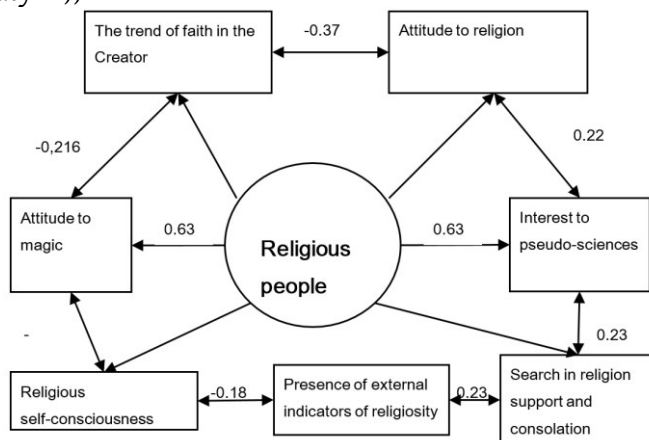
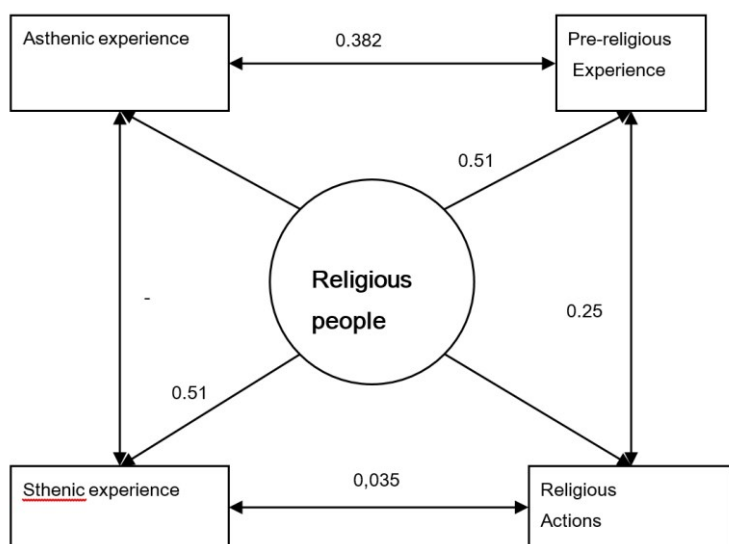


Figure 4. Correlation 4. Selected variables - "religious people" (according to test MIRA)



The given data (see Figure 3, Figure 4) allows us to talk about the ambivalence of the religious feelings of this group of students. On the one hand, we observe positive relationship between attitude to magic and interest to pseudoscience (0.629), and on the other hand this students look in religion for support and consolation (0.23), which is associated with feelings of weakness, not-self-sufficiency, compared with self-sufficient and all-powerful God.

The presence of external indicators of religiosity correlated with the search in religion for support and consolation (0.23). We observe the negative correlation between the asthenic and the sthenic experience (-0.485), which prove the contrary positions of these two types of religious experiences. Sthenic experience is enthusiastic gratitude inspired by the feelings, experience that arises in connection with religious practice of communication with Theos.

Pre-religious experiences of this group of students still tend to do religious actions (0.25). It is interesting to note that there is inverse correlation between attitude to religion and the tendency of faith in the Creator and of the existence of the higher power that created the world (-.368). In general, these students' positive attitude towards religion is not always accompanied by deep faith of true religious people. Then we will analyze correlations of the given valuables with low-level religious people.

Figure 5. Correlation 5. Selected variables – “low-level religious people” (according to “Test for revealing of the level of individual religiosity” (Shcherbatykh))

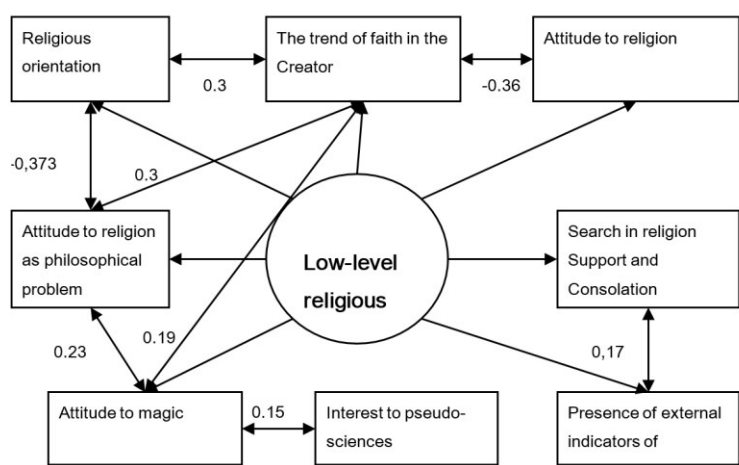
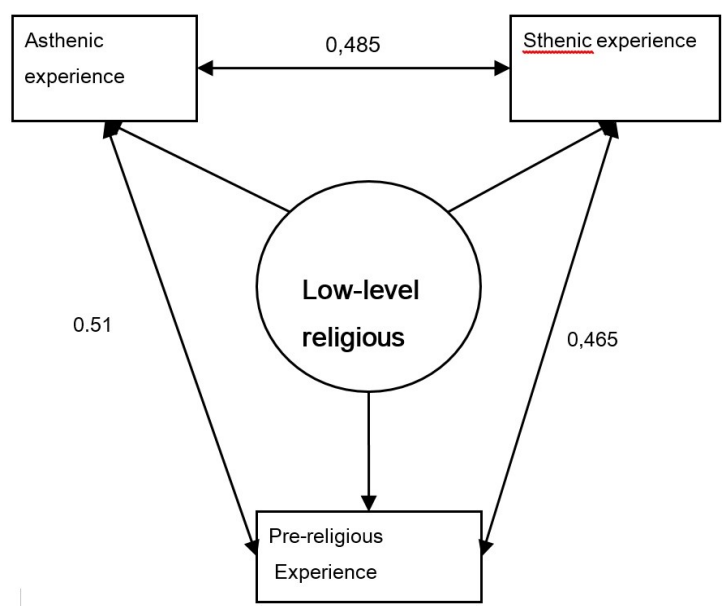


Figure 6. Correlation 6. Selected variables - "low-level religious people" (according to test MIRA)



As figure 6 shows low-level religious group of students has inverse correlation between attitude to religion and the trend of faith in the Creator and belief in existence of the higher power that created the world

(-0.36). It is evidence of low level of religiosity of this group of students.

The higher the faith in the Creator, the higher the attitude to religion as a philosophical problem (0.34). The faith of this group of young people is more philosophical and does not involve deep religious feelings and spiritual experience. This statement is proved by the fact that the higher religious orientation of these students, the lower the attitude to religion as a philosophical problem (-0.373).

This group of students demonstrates the ambivalence and contradictions of religious feelings. So the positive correlation between the scales of assessment of interest to pseudoscience and attitude to magic (0.15) is observed. At the same time they are characterized by religious thoughts. It is evidenced by the positive correlation between indicators of trend of the faith in the Creator, the belief in existence of a higher power that created the world and the religious orientation (0.38). The religious feelings include the combination of asthenic, asthenic pre-religious experiences. So sensation of inferiority and weakness in front of Absolute (asthenic experience) is positively connected with feelings of delight, the burst of energy in the relationship with Absolute (sthenic experience) (0.485). Faith in the Creator correlates with magical views (0.197). It also indicates the low level of religious faith. The connection between asthenic and sthenic experiences (0.485) confirms that the religiousness of this group of students is a quasi-religious phenomenon in which scientific, quasi-scientific, religious and magic elements of worldview are interweaved.

Thus, the given results show that despite of the medium level of attitude to religion as philosophical concept and scientific thought the level of religious activity, orientation, motivation, self-consciousness is low. The tendency of faith in the Creator, belief in the existence of a higher power that created the world and the existence of both external and internal religious motivation indicate religiosity of these people, which does not express in the active religious activity. These people believe in the Absolute, accept Orthodoxy as their religion, but their "relationship" with Orthodoxy is determined by individual ideas.

According to our point of view there are three types of behavior:

1. Protective behavior - unconscious, involuntary level of self-regulation
2. Conscious behavior- realizable and arbitrary level of self-regulation, which does not demand much effort.
3. Capturing behavior - realizable, willed, demanding efforts level of self-regulation.

We have developed the three-level model of self-regulation which is presented in figure 7.

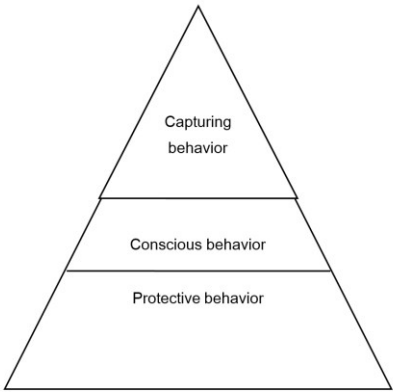
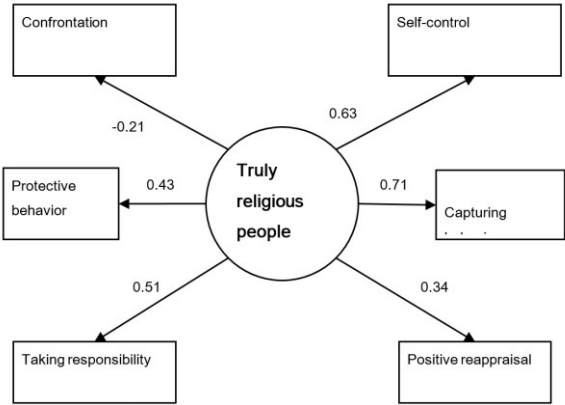


Figure 7 Three-level model of self-regulation

The criteria for this classification is the level of consciousness in efforts for overcoming of difficult life situations. The lowest level of psychological protection in this classification becomes "fragmented" and "disintegration" of the human ego. We consider the capturing behavior as the highest form of coping behavior, in which ability and willingness to control itself is formed and developed in the person. Religious faith can act as a way of self-regulation and the person participates actively in the resolving of difficult situations.

This typology leads to the need to find methods of research that can detect the level of development of the methods of adaptation. We have applied the method "Coping test" S. Lazarus and C. Folkman. The purpose of this test is to determine the coping strategies, ways to overcome the difficulties in the various areas of mental activity. Correlation analysis of indicators of religiosity with the parameters of the subscales of coping test has revealed the presence of close correlations. The results of the empirical research are presented on the figure 8.

Figure 8. The results of correlation analysis of selected variables - "true religious people" (according to coping test R. Lazarus and Folkman S.)



The given data indicates significant correlation between the type "truly religious people" and the parameter "taking responsibility" ($r = 0.51$; $p = 0.01$). Truly religious people trust Absolute and are answerable for their actions not so much in front of people as in front of the Absolute. This is because of the fact that truly religious people takes upon them the responsibility for resolving life problems, not only of their own but also other people's problems. They do not have hopes for themselves and their own forces and efforts. They hope for the help and support of the Absolute. Awareness of this responsibility in front of the Absolute leads not only to constructive but also often to destructive self-criticism for committed actions and mental acts.

The negative correlation between the parameter "confrontation" and the type of true religious personalities ($r = -0.21$ at $p = 0.01$) is observed. Truly religious people do not seek to behave according to confrontational strategy of behavior. Given behavior's strategy is often considered as non-adaptive because the conflict type of behavior often leads to destructive consequences. Truly religious people try to avoid the conflict strategy, despite the fact that in condition of moderate use it allows to increase a person's abilities to resist difficulties and achieve own interests.

We have found a significant correlation between the true religious type and the valuable "self-control" ($r = 0.63$; $p = 0.01$). Truly religious students are characterized by high regulation of activity, strive for self-possession and self-control. These qualities help truly religious people to overcome difficult life situations and solve problems in their life. Positive revaluation ($r = 0.34$; $p = 0.01$) also helps in overcoming negative experiences.

Problems are considered by truly religious people in the religious context, as given by God that assists to consider these problems not as a negative factor, but as the factors and stimuli of their personal development, like written in the Bible. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2). Through the faith, a person can over-personally consider problematic situations, include them in the broader context of the Providence's actions and spiritual causes of phenomena. For this group of students the value of the Orthodox community is mainly spiritual.

This data show not only advantages, but also disadvantages in the psychological condition of true religious people. On the one hand, the presence of significant correlation between the true religious type and the protective behaviors ($r = 0.43$ at $p = 0.01$) shows that such students do not know exactly how to deal with difficult situations and can express non-adaptive behavior. Values, which are based on this behavior, may lead religious identity to completely different limits, which are "beyond" difficult life situations.

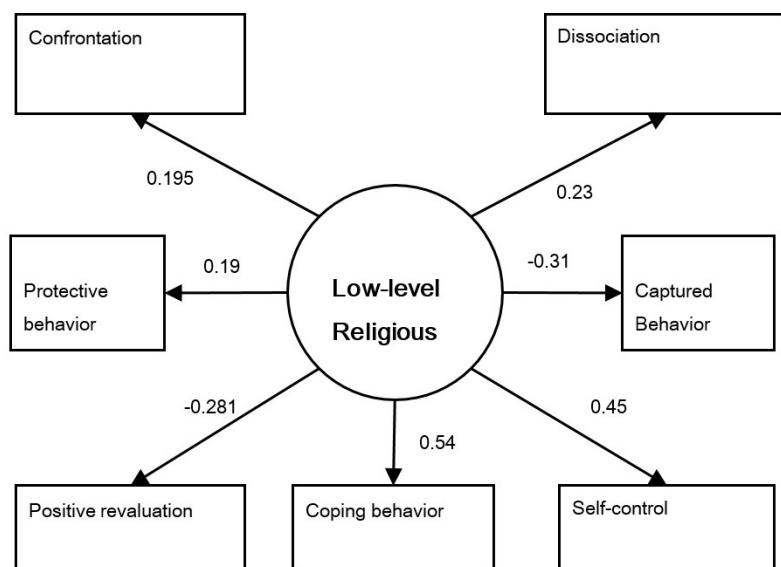
On the other hand, significant correlation between the true religious type and the captured behavior ($r = 0.71$ at $p = 0.01$) indicates the high

ability of the religious person through active overcoming and solving difficult life problems. We call this contradictory combination of high activity with maladaptivity "active-maladaptive behavior."

The figure shows the presence of highly significant correlation between type "religious personality" and indicator "dissociation" ($r = 0.54$; $p = 0,01$). The second type of religious people overcome negative experiences arising in difficult situations through psychological distancing from the problem. This group's level of faith does not allow to holistically consider the problem as given by God's Providence. As a result religious people try to attract resources of their social capital, seeking support among their relatives, priests, members of the Orthodox community, friends and known people. For this group the value of the Orthodox community is mainly social rather than spiritual. They take part in Orthodox rituals often without understanding its spiritual essence. Thus, the social component in their religious outlook often prevails over the spiritual and mystical component. It is proven by significant correlation between religiosity and "search of social support" ($r = 0.45$; $p = 0.01$). Observed correlations between this type of people, "self-control" ($r = 0.23$; $p = 0.01$) and "taking responsibility" ($r = 0.21$; $p = 0,01$) are weaker in comparison with true religious people. It indicates that the less level of religiosity, the less the person seeks to resolve life problems by minimizing the influence of the emotion, increasing control over own behavior and criticizing own self for the consequences of own actions. The less the degree of religiosity, the less the using by religious students of the strategy of "positive revaluation" ($r = 0.19$ at $p = 0.01$).

Observed correlations among the types "religious people" and "protective behavior" ($r = 0.35$; $p = 0,01$) and "captured behavior" ($r = 0,44$; $p = 0,01$) indicate the presence of active-maladaptive behavior in this group of students. The conclusions which we formulate for truly religious people are confirmed for this group of students. The correlations are not so significant as in the case of truly religious students. Thus, the higher the level of religiosity is, the higher the level of active-maladaptive behavior is.

Figure 9. The results of correlation analysis of selected variables - "low-level religious people" (according to coping test R. Lazarus and Folkman S.)



Correlative analysis shows that correlation between the type of „low-level religious people” and „protective behavior” ($r = 0.19$; $p = 0.01$) is positive and correlation between the type of "low-level religious people" and „captured behavior” ($r = -0.31$; $p = 0.01$) is negative. It indicates that their behavior is not "active-maladaptive". Active - maladaptive behavioral strategies are the result of self-examination and human tendency to act in the direction of the evaluation of the own-self as "carrier" of free causality. At the same time positive correlation between the type of "low-level religious people" and the parameter "coping behavior" ($r = 0.54$ at $p = 0.01$) is observed. Low-level religious students consciously overcome the difficult life situations through relying on their own resources and efforts.

Low-level religious students often implement the strategy "confrontation" to overcome difficult life situations. It is proven by correlation between the type of "low-level religious people" and "confrontation" ($r = 0.19$; $p = 0.01$). Thus, the less religiosity there is, the higher the desire to overcome difficult life situation through conflict interaction with the social environment is.

The strive for solving the problem through implementation of strategies of self-control ($r = 0.45$; $p = 0.01$) or dissociation ($r = 0.23$; $p = 0.01$) expresses in lesser extent, than in the case of religious students. A negative correlation link between the type "low-level religious people"

and "positive revaluation" ($r = -0.28$; $p = 0.01$) is observed. The less religious faith there is, the less the strive for solving problems through implementation of positive revaluation and consideration it as stimulus to the personal development is.

Research ethics

It is needed to stress some questions concerning aspects of research ethics. This investigation was conducted on the principle of anonymity. Another principle of participation in the investigation was voluntariness. The list of requirements of the majority investigations in Russia does not include the compulsory of signing any informed consent form. All prospective participants gave freely voluntarily verbal consent to take part in the research. More than 3 people bare witnesses to consent. Participants were offered the right to leave the study at any moment. All participants did not suffer from psychological consequences. Therefore the investigation was conducted in accordance to the requirements of the research ethic.

Conclusions

The social and psychological analysis of coping behavior of Orthodox religious students reported in this study suggests that there is connection between the level of religiosity and the strategies chosen for the way out from difficult life situations.

According to our investigation results, the behavior of true religious people is "active maladaptivity". Active maladaptivity is a way of self-position and self-identification in the world.

Externally active maladaptivity is manifested in the form of protective behavior ($r=0.43$; $p=0.01$). Moreover, its essence is the trust in Absolute and the need to be humble in front of the current situation as "given by God".

"Maladaptive activity expresses in the phenomena of creativity, cognitive (intellectual) activity, and over-normative activity."³⁴ Detailed analysis of active maladaptive behavior was conducted by V. A. Petrovsky. He identifies several forms of currently active maladaptive behavior of individual:

- 1) Non-foreclosure of the outcomes of the forthcoming experience - the denial of the external conformity (emotional balance, enjoyment, benefit) of future actions.

- 2) Possibility of approaching to the Non-foreclosure as the attraction to him - the birth of a new goal (new motives, goals, tasks, attitudes);

- 3) The Incarnation of these opportunities in different forms of activity - the realization of opportunities in the action corresponds to the will;

4) Reflection (assessment, understanding of the consequences of own actions from the point of view of their relevance for activity, communication, self-awareness) - establishing the meaning of the produced discoveries for the activity, communication, self-awareness is the answer to the question of the need of just done.³⁵

Religious students solve problems through the positive revaluation and by considering them as stimuli for the personal development. They can be supported by their priests and members of the Orthodox community. Low-level religious students solve their problems through relying on their own abilities and forces.

Notes

¹ *Acknowledgement*: The authors would like to thank the anonymous referees of this journal for their useful comments.

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- ³⁵ Anna Podgornova, "Fenomen neadaptivnoy aktivnosti v sovremennom obshchestve," *Poznavatel'nyy Otkrytyy zhurnal* 7(2013): 103.

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Appendix. The test for determining the structure of individual religiosity of Y. V. Shcherbatykh

1. Do you agree with the statement that religion is a primordial human attribute?
2. Do you admit the existence of not only the real world, but also of another world unknown to us, that you cannot feel yourself?
3. Have you ever tried to get support from higher powers by prayer?
4. Do you wear a cross?
5. What do you think, is it possible to overcome the difference between science and religion?
6. Do you think that God is not omnipotent, because He cannot completely defeat the devil?
7. Do you feel the inner need to go to church?
8. Could you live according to the following verse from the Gospel: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you" (Mt.5:44)
9. Do you agree with the views of atheists, that nescience supports faith in God and knowledge destroys it?
10. Can you use magic tricks to charm beloved person?
11. Do you think that religion is the best consolation for normal man in his troubles and tribulations?
12. Do you have icons at home?
13. Do you believe in telepathy - the transfer of thoughts from one person to another?
14. Do you put hope in the supreme judgment when good will be rewarded and evil will be punished?
15. Does the faith give answers to the basic questions that concern you?
16. Do you think that only the teaching of religion in schools can inculcate morality and obedience in children?
17. Can you say that religion has brought more good to people than harm?
18. Do you suppose that wizards and witches exist?
19. Do you agree with the statement of the Christian religion, that sufferings have a deep meaning, because they teach human patience and

make them think about the more just life in the other world?

20. Do you think that it is desirable to baptize the child?

21. Do you agree with the statement that a person can take strength and information from space charging by the cosmic energy?

22. In your opinion, is this statement true or not: "The universe could have not appeared by itself, and it is created by Someone"?

23. Do you pray to God for help in important matters, or in the case of illness of relatives?

24. Can an atheist be a moral person?

25. Do you believe in the existence of immortal soul, which cannot be destroyed after the physical death of a person?

26. Do you believe in the possibility of "whammy" and "curse"?

27. Do you disagree with the phrase "servant of God", which a priest pronounces during Baptism, Wedding and Communion?

28. Do you think that if a person puts the candle during prayer, the prayer has more chances to be listened by God?

29. Do you listen astrological forecasts?

30. Is it possible to say that a man's destiny is predetermined by heaven and a person cannot change it?

31. Do you think that you are a genuinely religious man?

32. Do you think that destruction of religion in the Soviet time caused the destruction of public morality?

33. Is it needed from scientists to make attempts to confirm or deny the existence of God?

34. Do you think about possible failure when a black cat runs across your path?

35. Are the atheists right when they say that prayer to God is related to the human disbelief in his/her own strength, and therefore speaks about his weakness?

36. Do you know by heart at least one prayer?

37. Do "energy vampires" who have strong negative bio-field and can suck the energy of other people exist?

38. Observing harmony and perfection of the earthly nature, do you think that perhaps, this perfection was created by Creator?

39. Do you think that fasting is something more than just diet?

40. Do you think that it is needed to save religion at least because it supports morality in modern society?