

## The Role of Religion in the Formation of the Family Values of Youth

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**Abstract.** *The object of the article is to define the theoretical approach to the conceptual model of empirical study of the influence of religious values of Muslim and Orthodox youth on their attitude to the foundation of family, to determine variables and indicators of this model, to present the results of the sociological research, showing the nature of the influence of religiosity on the values of young people in the conditions of modern Russia. A questionnaire survey was used as a method of empirical research. Based on the analysis of empirical data, the nature of changes in the value paradigm of family and marriage, depending on the degree of religiosity, and the role of internal and external factors of the social environment are shown. The mechanism of their influence is revealed. The significance of religiousness of youth as a factor of formation of attitude to family and marriage is defined, and the probability model of its formation is developed.*

**Keywords:** religiousness of modern youth, family values, motives and norms of behavior.

### Introduction

In the modern world, religion continues to play a crucial role in the development of society, the formation of its value structure, norms of behavior, including the sphere of family and marriage. The attitude of society and, in particular, youth to religion characterize religiosity and those ideological orientations, which are expressed in a complex of religious properties of consciousness, behavior, and relations to reality.

At present, values of young people are changing, which is typical of a moral crisis. This is promoted by the lifestyle of modern society: belittling of the importance of motherhood and fatherhood in comparison with career success leads to the fact that the creation of a family and the birth of a child is not a happy planned stage of people's lives. For young people, religion is one of the tools to overcome the moral crisis. Relying on them, young men form a special system of values where the family and marriage play an important role<sup>1</sup>.

The modern young family is experiencing serious problems: it meets even more difficulties in performing its functions (reproductive, recreative, educational, communicative, and regulatory). In such circumstances, the recourse to traditional values (particularly, religious ones) can be a way out of the existing "deadlock", an instrument to address the problem of conflict between family values and the desire of young people to adapt to a modern life that provides a very little room for family and marriage. Under such conditions, scientific monitoring of the problem of the influence of religiosity on the perception of family values by young people is necessary as an initial stage in determining the essence of the problem and identifying the possibilities of solving it.

### Literature review

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<sup>1</sup> Gladiola Mrejeru "Aspecte metodologice ale educației religioase la vârsta școlară mică," in *Astra Sahvensis*, V (2017), no. 9, p. 65.

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The empirical study of the role of youth religiosity in relation to family and marriage involves the determination of theoretical approaches and a system of concepts that allow to describe and explain the influence of religion, motives, and norms on the formation of youth attitude towards family and marriage based on the results obtained.

Despite all the changes, religion continues to play an important role in the life of states and society. In modern Russia, adepts of a religion can safely live alongside unreligious people and atheists. Despite such diversity, there must be agreement on family values such as marriage, children, and family relations. Throughout the world, religious traditions greatly influence the mentality of a person and subsequently his/her actions. Russia has historically formed two of the most common religious confessions: Orthodoxy and Islam. Moscow is one of the many centers of Russia, where representatives of these confessions interact with each other, share ideas about life values and the place of family in their values system.

Authors of many works show that the modern person has vague representations about religion and the God. It places in question true religiosity of the modern person, even if they consider themselves as adepts of a world religion<sup>2</sup>.

At the present stage, family, family relations, and values are considered from different positions - some researchers point to the crisis of the monogamous family (A.I. Antonov, V.M. Medkov, M. Y. Harutyunyan, V.M. Tseluyko, etc.).<sup>3</sup> The other research it from the perspective of natural transformation of social family structures of society, as a response to global social shifts (I.S. Golod, A.G. Vishnevsky, T.A. Gurko,<sup>4</sup> Flavia Samson, Dorina Loredana<sup>5</sup>.

A.I. Antonov defines the family as a group of people, bound by joint family activities and connected by bonds of "matrimony – parenthood – kinship" which is a single set of mandatory functions. Therefore, they are carrying out the reproduction of the population and social continuity of family generations, as well as the socialization of new members of society and support for the existence of family members<sup>6</sup>.

Two important characteristics of the family should be explained. This is, first of all, the fact that the family is defined as a small social group, so the viability of the family is dependent on the solution of difficulties within the group

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<sup>2</sup> Giussani Luigi *Religious Awareness in Modern Man*, Crossroads Cultural Center <http://www.crossroadsnyc.com/files/RelAwareness.pdf>, accessed on 20.04.2018.

<sup>3</sup> A.I. Antonov, *Sociology of the family*, Moscow,, 2005; V.M. Tseluyko, *Modern family: socio-psychological and ethical problems*, Volgograd, 2001. A.I. Antonov, *Family microsociology*, Nota-Bene, Moscow, 1998; I. Yu. Shilov, *Family psychology: psychology and pedagogy of the family*, St. Petersburg, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> S.I. Golod, *Family and marriage: historical and sociological analysis*, SPb, 2004, T.A. Gurko, "Transformation of the Family Institute: Statement of the Problem," in *Sociological Research*, X (2005); A.G. Vishnevsky, "Demographic modernization of Russia and its contradictions," in *World of Russia*, IV (2004), p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Flavia Samson, Dorina Loredana Sofian, "Educația religioasă în familia modernă," *Astra Salvensis*, V (2017), no. 9, p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> A. I. Antonov, V. M. Medkov, *Sociology of the family*, Moscow, Moscow State University, 2005, p. 66.

communication. It is communication between family members, power and leadership in the family, conflicts, interaction of the family with the social environment, with grandparent family, etc. The listed phenomena are the basis of social and psychological aspects of the family study as a social system.

The second peculiarity of the family as a small social group is the increased emotionality in relations between the family members with the expression of such feelings as love, affection, as well as hatred, dependence and negativism. The family is the most important factor of the emotional well-being of the person, determining the affective tone of the person's attitude.

Religiosity is the ideological orientation of the individual and the group, expressed in the totality of religious properties of consciousness, behavior, relationships. There is such a concept as the degree of religiosity. It is expressed by the values of following the religious norms, cults, rites, requirements by adepts. Global sociological researches show that more than half of the inhabitants of our planet (59%) consider themselves as religious people. Every fifth inhabitant of the Earth (23%) identified himself as a non-religious man. Only 13% of the respondents considered themselves as atheists<sup>7</sup>.

Studying changes of religiosity in the European countries, D. Hervieu-Léger has come to conclusion about the existence of a special phenomenon called "religious modernity". It is the personalized dispersion and, at the same time, the disintegration of religious codes, which supported general certainties among religious communities<sup>8</sup>.

The problem of religious affiliation is, first of all, not a theological question of the choice of faith, but a factor of personal identification with a certain religious confession (i.e. an element of identity). Often people make the connection with a certain ethnos, territory, and way of life through religion. "The enlistment of a person to a certain religion, traditionally represented by institutionalized confessions that influenced the historical formation of the Russian society, plays the role of sustainable identification ground, and not pure and simple religious orientation"<sup>9</sup>.

Over the past decades, there has been a steady increase in the number of adepts of non-traditional religions or beliefs. According to statistics, young people under the age of 25 years show the most active interest in non-traditional religions. First of all, they are students, as well as scientific and technical, artistic intellectuals. They are the most advanced groups of the Russian societies, which notice the social changes faster than other people and are exposed to these changes<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup>Global Barometer on Hope and Despair - [http://www.wingia.com/en/services/about\\_the\\_end\\_of\\_year\\_survey/global\\_results/7/33/](http://www.wingia.com/en/services/about_the_end_of_year_survey/global_results/7/33/) (accessed: 10.04.2018)

<sup>8</sup> D. Ervier-Léger, "In search of certainty: paradoxes of religiosity in the societies of advanced modernity," in *State, religion, church in Russia and abroad*, XXXIII (2015), no. 1 p. 256.

<sup>9</sup> M. M. Mchedlova, "The role of religion in modern society," in *Sociological research*, XII (2009), p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> O. I. Sgibneva, "The religious situation: the main parameters of the research," *Sociology of religion in the late modern society: materials of the international scientific conference. NIU "BelGU", September 12, 2014*, Belgorod, Publishing house "Belgorod", 2014, p- 89-93.

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The penetration of new religious movements to Russia began in the 70s of the last century. There are Oriental religious doctrine, Christian-oriented cults, as well as neo-paganism and interconfessional religious doctrines. These organizations differ in ideological grounds but have a number of commonalities, such as active missionary activity, aggressive commercialization, and the strict hierarchy of management structures<sup>11</sup>.

It is difficult to assess the degree of religiosity of the modern Russian society. Based on the ethnic principle of the calculation of religious affiliation, currently, there are 120 million Orthodox Christians, 600 thousand Catholics, more than a million adepts of the Armenian Apostolic Church, 14 million Muslims, 230 thousand Jews and 900 thousand Buddhists. The application of this principle leads to large numbers that do not correspond to reality in the detailed study.

Monitoring studies show that in 1996-2016 the level of religiosity of Moscow youth rose from 50% to 60%, reaching its peak in 2014 (64%)<sup>12</sup>.

The least religious group is the youth aged 18-29 years (59%). The students particularly stand out among them (60%)<sup>13</sup>.

Thus, despite the apparent decline in the religiousness of the population, a large proportion of Russians considers themselves as the adepts of a particular religion and follows religious rules that can be directed towards strengthening family values.

### **Methodological framework of research**

The purpose of the study was to identify the nature and factors of the formation of religiousness of modern youth in respect of the relationship to family and marriage. The objectives of the study were as follows: First, to determine the nature of the influence of religiosity on the creation of a family in the youth environment, comparing Muslim and Orthodox youth. Secondly, to determine the status of the parameters of the stability of marital relations in terms of subjective evaluation of Orthodox and Muslim youth. Third, to construct a probability model of forming the attitude of modern youth to family and marriage among Muslim and Orthodox youth.

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Sociology of Lomonosov Moscow State University. A survey questionnaire was developed, a study population was formed. The primary source of empirical research was young people between the ages of 17 and 30 who identified themselves as "Muslims" or "Orthodox" (according to their words). The questionnaire contained closed and open questions. Five hundred people were surveyed by the method of personal interview. The study maintained an approximate equality: 240 Muslims and 260 Orthodox. All respondents were divided into two conventional groups: religious (call themselves believers and adhere to cult traditions at

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<sup>11</sup> O. F. Lobazova, "The study of religiosity in the framework of the integrative approach," in *International Scientific and Research Journal*, VIII (2016), no. 1-4, p. 76-78.

<sup>12</sup> *Votserkovlennost Orthodox* [Electronic resource] FOM. July 3, 2014. URL: <http://fom.ru/TSennosti/11587>, accessed on 15. 04. 2018.

<sup>13</sup> D. A. Tikhomirov, "Features of religiosity of Moscow students," in *Monitoring of public opinion: Economic and social changes*, III (2017), p. 177-191.

least once a month); non-religious (which adhere to cult traditions only several times a year) are conventionally religious. The totality of respondents was formed using a method of purposeful sampling using a "snowball". In the course of the survey, we faced the problem of inconsistency of the "religiosity" category. In the case of young people, it is mostly conventional, since strict adherence to religious requirements has been noted for the small part of the respondents. In addition, some of the respondents may be attributed to atheists, whose worldview is greatly influenced by the traditional religious system, prevailing in different areas of their residence.

### **Findings and discussion**

First of all, it was necessary to compare the declared religiosity of youth and their actual behavior. In this regard, we analyzed their relation to the institutionalized religion. That is: what they think of the Institute of God. How often do they communicate with God through prayer? Do they attend religious institutions? Our research began with the definition of the basic element of any religion - the understanding of God.

Among those who consider themselves as Orthodox and Muslims, there is a similar differentiation of ideas about God. Among the Orthodox there are two variants of the answer: sense-making value and psychological support (45% in total). The variant of the answer "element of culture" (21%) was slightly behind. Only 14% of respondents consider God as a moral model, another 11% have not formed their explanations and use the definition of "something supernatural." In the group of Muslims, more than 1/3 indicated that they understand God as sense-making value ("the meaning of life", "the beginning of everything", "the main value of life", etc.). 19% called God an element of culture and tradition. Only 12% consider God as a subject of psychological support. 14% called it "supernatural" (more than in the group of Orthodox). This means that is the indefinite and unexplainable concept for them. Among Muslims, the proportion of those (8%), who consider God as a tool of self-improvement, spiritual and moral development, is two times higher.

In general, faith in God is an important part of realizing reality for young people. It is worth paying attention to a large number of variants of representation of God that are almost equally popular. This can speak of the lack of a unified view of God among young people living in large cities. On the one hand, they are influenced by the traditions of their family, especially the older generation (grandparents), who preserve religious traditions. On the other hand, the development of society, involvement in science and education will inevitably transform religious images into the representation of modern youth. The result is a mixed situation, where religious and atheistic ideas about God are mixed. This is typical for the youth of all faiths, but to a greater extent, for the Orthodox.

To the question of compliance with the requirements of religion, 70% of the Orthodox responded negatively, that is, they do not observe all requirements of religion. Only 8% of respondents believe they are complying with all the precepts of their religion. Among Muslims, 24% are confident that they are complying with all the precepts of Islam. Approximately 43% believe that they do not comply with

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all precepts of religion. Formally, we can add to this group those who could not answer (33%). These people have reasonable doubts about this issue. As a result, it turns out that approximately equal number of young people, both Orthodox and Muslim (80-90%), do not strictly comply with all requirements of their religion.

The study of the most significant values for Orthodox and Muslim youth showed a great differentiation of answers – all of the 11 options were chosen. Two groups of vital values prevail among Orthodox and Muslim youth: material well-being and family. If for those who consider themselves Orthodox the priority belongs to the material values (100%), then for the Muslims family is a priority (95%). From other variants of values, Orthodox youth also chose independence, friends, health, justice, and Muslims chose faith and religion, health and friends.

Thus, despite the structural changes in the family, the family itself has not lost its position as a value (a group of the two most important priorities). It only began to compete with the material values. For Muslim youth, the family remains in the first place in the hierarchy of life values, but for the Orthodox, it is already on the second place.

These results show that the inner need of man to live, to develop among family members and under their influence is still a socially and personally significant need. On the other hand, there is a noticeable systemic shift in the value orientations of young people. The younger generation is often not the best, including the matters of orientation towards material values and attitudes to love, family, and children. Consequently, the tendencies of value development, both Orthodox and Muslim youth in the conditions of modern Russia are approximately clear – weakening of family value and growth of material values. The differences lie in the fact that among the Orthodox youth these changes began earlier, than among Muslims (for this reason the processes began later).

The proportion of those who place successful work and professional growth (career) above the family is higher among the Orthodox youth. This was noted for 28% of the Orthodox youth. In the group of Muslim youth, this value was 2.5 times less. These results can be approved by official statistics, which shows the steady increase of the average age of marriage and childbirth for women and men. The average age of birth of the first child in Russia is already 28.7 years (in 2010 it was 25 years), and the average age for marriage is 26.4 years<sup>14</sup>.

Among Orthodox youth there is a high proportion of those who do not consider it necessary to marry officially (about 30%), and 15% believe that this may depend on the specific circumstances. For young people who consider themselves Muslims the situation is different: Almost 80% are for official marriage only and 18% are ready to consider additional conditions in decision-making. The proportion of opponents of official marriages in this group is minimal.

Thus, the analysis of the results obtained during the survey showed that the vast majority of young people are going to create a family. It can be argued that

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<sup>14</sup> E. Shcherbakova, "The average age of the mother at birth of the first child increases, but differences in the birth rate are preserved," in Demoscope <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2017/0711/barom03.php>, accessed in 04. 04. 2018.

many young people at this age are aware of the need to make a life choice, choose a spouse, and believe in the need for marriage. However, they postpone it to the distant perspective and do not consider the official marriage the only possible variant. Probably, the fashionable institute of "civil marriages" plays not the last role in this.

Concerning the ideal age of marriage, Muslim youths were more conservative, since the youngest groups dominated in the answers: 18-20 years and 20-35 years. Whereas among Orthodox Christians the trend towards the later age of marriage is obvious – 33% chose the age of 25-30 years, and more than 20% chose the age over 30 years.

The question of the influence of religion on the choice of marriage partner showed the fundamental differences in the answers. If among the Orthodox youth the religious affiliation of the marriage partner is not of great importance (only 15% are not ready to marry a representative of another religion), then among the Muslims 66% expressed the negative answer, and another 22% willing to think and assess the circumstances.

Most of the respondents would like to find a well-paid job before marriage. In the group of Orthodox youth, 20% would like to find occupational work; another 22% would like to have time to complete education, 15% to receive a profession and to buy a residence. More than 33% of Muslims dream of finding a good job before marriage, the other options composed 15% of Muslims. The following variants are among them: Complete the education, find an occupational work. The other options are: start their business, build a house, travel, have a good rest, etc.

A very similar situation is seen concerning the actions the marriage partner should do before the beginning of family life. It is possible to conclude that among Orthodox and Muslim youth the opinion that before the beginning of family life (marriage) the future spouses should do very much is confirmed. Most of the answers relate to the creation of conditions for good family support in the future: education, work, career, housing, etc. Thus, regardless of religious identity, young people place their marriage in dependence on additional conditions (not only the presence of a suitable partner), first of all, financial. It can be assumed that for these reasons the age of marriage and the birth of children is shifted. As a rule, these actions are postponed to the last moment.

Thus, the analysis of the vital priorities and the dominant values of the Orthodox and Muslim youth pointed to the general similarity. However, for the second group traditional values (including family values) have the greater importance. Religious traditions and opinion of the spiritual dignitary have no influence on family life for 36% of respondents from the group of Orthodox. In the Muslim group, only 7% of young people chose this option.

According to the majority of Muslim youth, religious traditions and opinions of a spiritual dignitary may influence their marriage (34%) and distribution of social roles in the family (32%). Among the Orthodox youth, 2 times fewer respondents the mentioned areas of family life. According to the youth, religious demands and opinions of spiritual authorities can affect the choice of the marriage

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partner and the number of children to a lesser extent. The reason is that it is influenced by a complex of factors.

Thus, there were fundamental differences among Orthodox and Muslim youth on this issue. For the latter, religious tradition remains important in many family matters, although not in all of them. For the Orthodox such influence is minimal and remains only in a small number of spheres (conclusion of marriage and social roles in the family).

With respect to the permissible number of marriages (which includes several divorces), the following data were obtained: 55% of Orthodox and 75% of Muslims are convinced that religion allows to marry more than once. Moreover, 37% of Muslims and 26% of Orthodox believe that it allows to marry many times, 45% of Muslims and 32% of Orthodox think that it is possible to marry only several times. It is noteworthy that 40% of young people considering themselves Orthodox think that religion allows to marry only once. The problem of preservation of commitment in marriage is actual. Moreover, in the minds of young people, the longevity of marriage is not connected with commitment, devotion, and sacrifice. Participation in the study of respondents of both sexes and religions, and its results only confirm the assumption that the formation of family values is a complex and multifaceted process, which requires deep understanding, competent organization, interaction between different departments, structures and social institutions.

Most of the Muslim youth (45%) believes that religion defines the distribution of social roles in the family. Only 25% of respondents who identify themselves as Muslims say that religion requires equality. The most widespread opinion was not revealed among the Orthodox - several variants received 25% of answers: equality, a man does not decide. The answer to the question about the impact of religion on the family behavior has shown that Muslim youth try to follow religious norms and values in family life (42%) and rely upon the situation to a lesser extent (32%). In the Orthodox group, almost 80% take decisions in the family, based on the real situation, not according to the requirements of faith.

More than 60% of Muslims think that family happiness is influenced by religion, that is, adherence to all religious norms guarantees family happiness. In particular, some people cited an excerpt from Quran, which seems to say this (the words of the Prophet Muhammad): "Love to parents is from faith, love to a close person is from faith, modesty is from faith, love to the motherland is from faith, to induce to the approved and to forbid censured is from faith, removal of something interfering and harmful to others from a road is also from belief», and this means that all bad in a life and a family comes from unbelief. There is only 1/3 of the optimists in this question among the Orthodox. However, there is a high proportion of those who think that religion, under additional conditions, guarantees happiness in the family.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, the results of the study revealed the ambiguity of the assessment of the influence of religiosity on the family values of youth. There is no doubt that the



influence of religion on the system of young people's perceptions of family and marriage remains. This influence is stronger for the Muslim community. However, even among a group of young people who identify themselves as religious people, the role of religious traditions in the formation of family values is not decisive. Despite the fact that young people classify themselves as representatives of one of the religions and are loyal (understanding) to the important role of religious norms and traditions in family life, they have not formed a full understanding of this phenomenon.

In our view, the main problem of youth, regardless of religious preferences, is that young people do not have a proper understanding of the normal, spiritually healthy family and value system.

It can be assumed that Muslim and Orthodox youth are at different stages of modernization of their worldview. For Muslim youth, there is still a strong influence (often distorted or adapted to new conditions) of religious traditions, particularly in the area of the definition of family values. This is achieved through closer family ties, pressure from the Muslim community, and greater discipline. Religion is not an authoritative institution for Orthodox youth. It only plays the role of cultural identification. Its impact on the life of Modern Orthodox youth is minimal.

As we can see, for both Muslims and Orthodox religion is becoming a more subjective and personal issue, and young people most often adapt it, to a large extent, according to their individual and personal needs. In particular, such situation is observed in the sphere of family relations. In this case, we can talk about the process of reducing the influence of religion on the formation of family values of youth.

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Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 451-459