

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING, RELIGIOSITY AND COPING STRATEGIES

The dissertation addresses a problem of pronounced scientific and scientific-applied value, which has been the subject not only of research interest in recent decades, but has remained relevant throughout the centuries. The topic of well-being provokes the existential searches of each individual, philosophers and researchers, psychologists, cultural scientists, etc. Many modern studies are dedicated to the relationship between psychological well-being and religiosity in relation to how to deal with stress. In this regard, the dissertation seeks to provide new determinants for coping with stress and improving psychological well-being, expanding the theme through the religious beliefs of the person.

In addition to the consistently established results for the role of these pre-detectors, there are also a number of paradoxes and contradictions that keep the topic up to date and provoke research searches.

The first part of the research theoretically set out the main definitions and components of the constructs examined. Followed was the eudemonic approach of studying psychological well-being and the theoretical model of Carol Diane Ryff. The main strands of the study of religiosity such as orientation and coping and the link with psychological well-being are presented, with a focus on their research and results. The nature and approaches in studying stress and coping strategies are also thoroughly presented to justify the choice of Carver and colleagues' model and tool.

In the second part of the dissertation the theoretical design and the model of the survey are presented. The aim is to study the psychological well-being of religious and non-religious persons in relation to their coping strategies, which are rationalized through eight specific tasks. In general, psychological well-being at an individual level is allowed to be linked to coping strategies applied, different in religious persons compared to non-religious ones. Four private hypotheses were found, examined in a sample of a total of 305 persons, with 192 persons included in the main study.

In line with the purpose and the raised hypotheses, a set of tools including quantitative and qualitative methods has also been selected. The following questionnaires are attached: Short Form of the Scale of Psychological Well-being of C. Ryff, Bulgarian adaptation by P. Kalchev (2014); Questionnaire for Strategies for Dealing with Stress, Bulgarian adaptation by Rusinova-Hristova, Karastoyanov (2000); Questionnaire for the Study of Religious Coping Strategies (Pargament, 1990) and Questionnaire for Measuring Internal and External Religious Orientation (ROS; Batson, Ventis, 1982), adapted by the author of this study. Other methods applied are a focus group and analysis of materials and publications in online communities.

The results, presented consistently in three chapters, confirm the overall hypothesis of the study that the psychological well-being of the individual is related to the coping strategies it implements. The results obtained, unlike studies in other cultures establishing, higher psychological well-being in religious persons, do not provide evidence to this effect. There are higher scores on almost all components of psychological well-being in non-religious persons, with a significant difference noted in terms of *dimension of self-acceptance* and *positive relationships*. The results obtained also reflect a specific cultural characteristic of those who

are Orthodox Christians and those who are not religious. Gender also proves to be a characteristic defining an individual's psychological well-being. Non-religious women boasting higher overall well-being (mostly *autonomy and self-acceptance*)).

Significant differences in the coping strategies used were identified depending on the religiosity and gender of the persons surveyed. As expected, there is a different acceptance of the coping strategy "*Conversion to religion*", and in non-religious persons it is perceived as passive and emotionally focused, while in religious it has an ambivalent character (actively collaborative and as a passive, protective reaction). Religious persons make greater use of the active strategy "*Purposefulness*", but also emotionally focused strategies such as "*Acceptance*" and "*Psychological disengagement*". Non-religious and religious persons come close in the preference and implementation of strategies such as "*Active Coping*" and "*Planning*", as well as in "*Positive rethinking*".

Psychological well-being, according to the results obtained, is significantly related to the general coping strategies applied by religious and non-religious persons depending on their activity/passivity. Active types of strategies, such as "*Active coping*", "*Planning*" and "*Positive rethinking*" – roughly equally applied by religious and non-religious individuals – are essential to psychological well-being. Passive types of strategies – "*Psychological disengagement*" and "*Acceptance*" – are more applied from religious individuals and are negatively linked to psychological well-being. Passive coping strategies and seeking support in religion have emerged as negatively linked to psychological well-being, above all in non-religious individuals.

Among the preferred religious coping strategies are "*Spiritual support*" and "*Catechetical understanding*", the second is formulated only for a specific aspect of this study, that favors psychological well-being, especially in terms of "*Mastering the environment and purpose in life*". The hypothesis of higher psychological well-being in persons with internal religious orientation is partially confirmed.

The results obtained outline specificities in the way religious and non-religious persons experience their sense of well-being in general and in its individual aspects, in terms of coping strategies in general and religious terms, presenting the role of individual and socio-cultural characteristics, summarized in the profile of religious and non-religious persons.

The results obtained contribute to clarifying the individual determinants of psychological well-being and strategies for dealing with stress and the role of religiosity.