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YOUTH RELIGIOSITY: A BIBLIOMETRIC COVERAGE AND QUANTITATIVE ASSESEMNT OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS

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Abstract

Due to its complex character, the evaluation of the way an individual is religious involves multidimensional approaches, which includes both aspects of creeds and effective manifestation. The exhaustive bibliometric analysis reveals eight main research themes of interest, at the interaction of religiosity and youth. In the context of assessing religiosity, the paper further provides an analysis of the religious phenomenon among Romanian adolescents and young adults. It employs an exploratory factor analysis for identifying the specific religiosity dimensions, and principal components analysis for reducing dimensionality and for a more in-depth analysis. Both adolescents and young adults exhibit a relatively strong level of internal religiosity, which pertains to personal beliefs and faith. Additionally, both groups demonstrate a moderate level of external religiosity, which refers to religious practices and behaviours.

Keywords: bibliometric analysis, youth, internal and external religiosity, exploratory factor analysis, principal component analysis.
JEL Classification: I12, N34, Z12

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1. Introduction

A vast philosophical literature is dedicated to the introspection of human actions through the prism of morality, as a set of rules for organizing life based on fundamental values (good, honour, fairness, sincerity, responsibility) that allow the functioning and development of the human personality within various social systems. Schopenhauer believed that understanding the essence of all things is determined by our understanding of the moral significance of human activity. Kant, drawing on Plato's ideals, argued that morality arises from an individual's internal motivations and their unconditional adherence to moral principles. He held those who do not do so responsible for their lack of morality. Schopenhauer supported Kant's view on the existence of inherent evil in humans and the consciousness of good. He also emphasized the limitations of human consciousness and the role of religion as a moral foundation in different historical contexts. While ancient societies rewarded morality with earthly happiness, religious societies invoked heavenly rewards and encouraged enduring injustices and hardships. In the 19th century, characterized by Darwinism, scientism, socialism, and advancements in science and technology, there was a shift away from traditional moral and religious perceptions. Nietzsche's proclamation of "God is dead" in a secularized world removed the traditional foundations for giving meaning to things, leaving society in a state of absolute nothingness.

Children and childhood involve contradictions, motivations, feelings, determining particular behavioural structures of future adults. Capitalizing on human potential requires its development, taking into account the internal characteristics of the individual who defines the identity in a community with predefined structures. The understanding of the human person from the perspective of freedom and responsibility towards Creation and towards fellow human beings implies a reflection on spiritual concerns.

Each person relates to nature, society, universe, seeks its place and purpose, religion trying to offer an integrative perspective. The framing of perspectives within the boundaries of a confession can distort the overall image when compared to other beliefs, while still acknowledging the religious nature of educated individuals. Regardless of specific confessions, religious beliefs embody the transcendent aspect of humanity and contribute to its resilience and spiritual growth. The growing scientific understanding of the universe's infinite diversity reinforces the notion of the educated person's religious inclination. Nurturing young minds through a thoughtful education that emphasizes enduring values, depth, goodness, and beauty, in harmony with human consciousness and reason, is crucial for humanity's sustainable progress.

Evaluating the way in which an individual is religious involves multidimensional approaches, corresponding to the complexity of this social construct. Cutting and Walsh (2008) mention the existence of at least 177 scales proposed to analyse religiosity. The considered dimensions target various aspects: organizational religious activity, non-organizational religious activity, and subjective religiosity (The Duke University Religion Index - DUREL)

(Koenig and Büssing, 2010); concern, convictions, emotional involvement and guidance (Joseph and DiDuca, 2007); public practice, private practice, religious experience, ideology and the intellectual dimensions (Huber and Huber, 2012); beliefs and commitment, constructs in line with the concept of those who believe (iman) and do good deeds (amal soleh), paired in the holy verses of the Quran (Mohd Dali et al., 2019) or beliefs and behavioural practices (Jana -Masri and Priester, 2007); the psychology of religion and spirituality, through positive/negative religious coping methods (RCOPE) (Pargament et al., 2011).

In this study we examine the level of religiosity with regard to internal religiosity, individuals' internal relationship with God, and external religiosity, individuals' involvement in external activities, such as church/synagogue attendance and prayer (Nasim et al., 2006, Roman et al., 2022). Internal religiosity refers to the deeply held personal beliefs, values, and spiritual experiences of an individual within a religious context. It focuses on the internal aspects of religious faith and practice, such as one's personal relationship with the divine, personal convictions, and the internalization of religious teachings and values.

External religiosity refers to the outward expressions, behaviours, and practices associated with religion that are observable to others. It encompasses the visible aspects of religious involvement, such as attending religious services, participating in rituals, adhering to religious rules and regulations, and engaging in religious activities within the community. External religiosity focuses on the public display of religious affiliation and adherence; it can be influenced by social factors, cultural expectations, and the desire for social acceptance or conformity and may also influence other behaviours, such as risky habits (Roman et al., 2022). The empirical analysis benefits of a large homogenous sample on young individuals, from one of the most religious European countries, Romania.

The main purpose of this study is to analyse the religious phenomenon among young individuals and address the following research questions: (RQ): (1) what are the main topical trends in the analysis if the youth religiosity? (2) are there any differences in religious beliefs and practices between adolescents and young adults? (3) what is the way of being religious of adolescents and young adults? (4) what is the intensity of the association between the internal and the external religious phenomenon among adolescents and young adults?

The research makes multiple contributions. Firstly, at the theoretical level, it identifies the key topics of debate concerning the religious phenomenon among young people. The paper thoroughly examines existing research spanning a wide time frame and provides a clear discussion of the main findings. Secondly, two dimensions are proposed to evaluate the religious phenomenon using statistical measures, considering the demographic group of Romanian youth as a case study for both the internal and external dimensions. Lastly, a comparative analysis of religiosity between teenagers and young adults is conducted to identify the defining elements that shape one's religious identity.

The paper is structured as follows. The second section of literature review offers an overview about the religion phenomenon from the perspectives of young people, as reflected

in the bibliometric analysis. The third section presents the research design, data collection, and the methods applied in the statistical analysis, while the Section 4 of results presents the most relevant findings. In the end, the significant discussions and conclusions are exposed.

2. Youth and religion: main themes explored through a bibliometric analysis

In order to evaluate the existing knowledge in the field, a term co-occurrence analysis was performed using the *VOSViewer* tool for bibliometric analysis On May 14, 2023, the Web of Science platform was searched for the scientific articles that would be included in the study. The keywords "religio*" and "young" were used. 1012 articles were selected in the sample when Citation Topics Meso - Religion is taken into account. Of the 17287 terms, 692 meet the threshold of 10, as the minimum number of co-occurrences of a term. Based on the relevance score calculated, the most relevant terms (415) were selected. In the co-occurrence network (Figure 1), the terms were structured in eight clusters, highlighted with different colours and reflecting specific research themes.

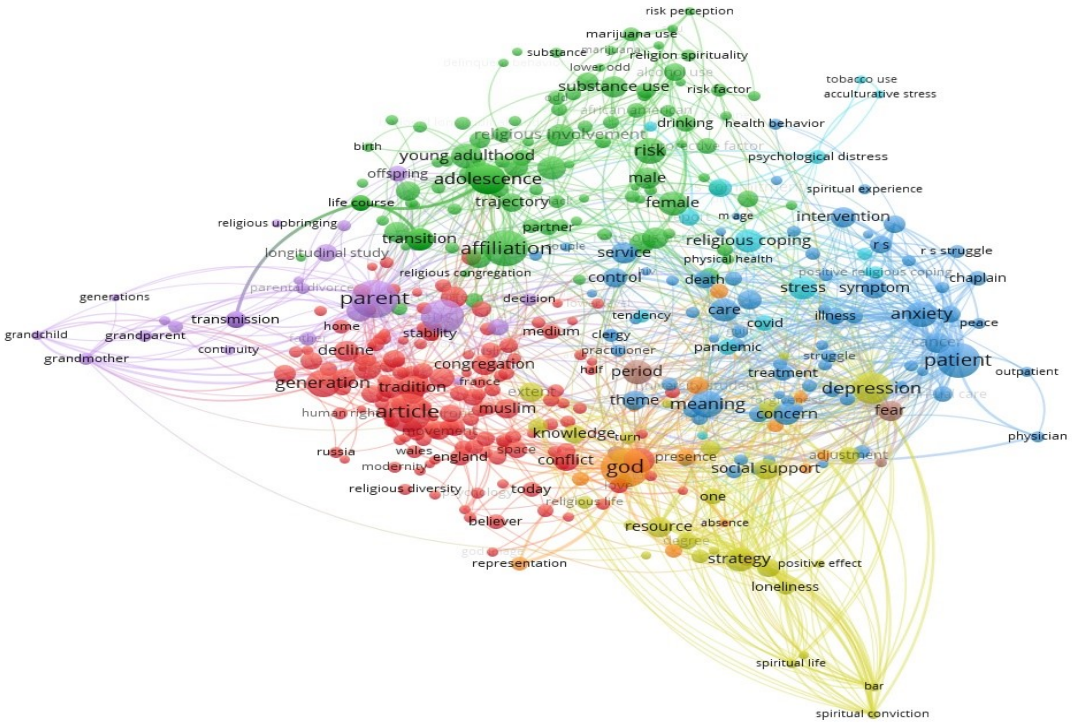


Figure no. 1: Terms co-occurrence analysis

Source: authors' processing using VOSviewer

2.1. Research theme 1 (red cluster in Figure no. 1): The religious phenomenon: ideology and evolution

Religion and ideology have a social basis, especially in the structure of social relations and organization, with a degree of autonomy generated by culture (Durkheim, 1995). In human

evolution, at historical crisis points, when traditional values no longer correspond or are subject to challenges, ideology constitutes a set of rhetorical or persuasive discourses to offer an alternative, more conscious understanding of the social order and the place of the individual in it (Geertz, 2014). He defines religion as a system of symbols that establishes moods and motivations in the individual, formulating an order of existence, giving it an aura of factuality that offers it the character of a unique reality.

Changes at the societal level, as well as cultural diversity, cause changes at the level of the religious phenomenon, which presents a cognitive function, for understanding the world under the conditions of the impossibility of scientific explanation of some aspects; action function, as a result of limited human capacities to solve certain problems. In this sense, religion intervenes when people ask for help (Frazer, 1890); anxiety reduction function: the Latins considered it as "primus in orbe deos fecit timor"; social function, religion being an eminently social phenomenon, in which religious representations, as collective representations, express collective realities. The moral superiority of the collective over its members is promoted, thus maintaining its solidarity (Durkheim, 1995), ensuring social cohesion; compensatory function in a socially stratified society, which promotes hope for a better life after death, the illusory happiness of the people; religion is an opium of the masses (Marx, 1844).

Eliade approached religious phenomenon through the prism of the irreducibility of the sacred, which cannot be explained by social and psychological analyses. The cosmogonic myth allows overcoming the state of sin, giving individual a place in the subsequent evolution of the sacred dimension. The presence of the sacred, an immaterial, infinite element, is transposed into everything that is profane, finite, temporal, which constitutes our world. The loss of contact with the sacred, observed in the Western world, imposes a new humanistic culture.

The evolution of science in modern societies does not mark the end of religion; it did not cause the disappearance of the need to believe. Modernity from a religious perspective promotes that faith proliferates in proportion to the uncertainty caused by the pace of change in all areas of social life, beyond the dogmas of institutional religions, by promoting the principle of the autonomy of individuals, who create small belief systems corresponding to their own aspirations and experiences (Hervieu-Léger, 2006).

Mellor (1993) proposed reconsidering the concept of tradition in modern religious contexts by focusing on reflexivity, suggesting that traditions that have been subjected to critical questions of modernity become reflexive traditions that can provide new, dynamic forms for the expression and development of religion in the context of modernity. The characteristic feature of modernity is radical doubt, the placing under the sign of uncertainty of knowledge, even in the natural sciences. Unlike pre-modern traditions, which functioned as normative structures, contextualized to activities and experience, in modernity, reflexivity excludes normative contextualization of tradition. Although religious traditions have become more reflexive, "individuals still choose to place themselves within them in order to structure their belief and activity with reference to overarching norms", keeping them vigorous.

2.2. Research theme 2 (green cluster in Figure no. 1): Religious affiliation

The specific cultural context, considered from a religious perspective, influences children's development. In approaching the impact of religiosity in its dimensions of affiliation on the child's development, it is necessary to include the context and religious cultural experiences. Religious affiliation is associated with improvement of self-esteem, related with life satisfaction and happiness (Diener and Diener, 1995). Children's experience in the context of religious affiliation affects their development in different ways. Complementary to affiliation, certain religious circumstances determine children's self-esteem. Children's self-esteem may be indirectly enhanced by family religiosity by giving them access to supportive relationships in the faith community and by assisting them in developing a personal relationship with God. Children's experiences of God do not seem to be influenced by whether or not they attend a religious school. It appears that religious education has an impact on children's understanding of God without necessarily having an impact on how they feel about God (Smith and Crosby, 2016).

The degree to which people internalize religion as a significant aspect of their life has extensive impact for how people interact with one another. Many different family-related values and behaviours are influenced by the messages and doctrine that Judeo-Christian religious institutions propagate, the formal social support networks and family activities that these institutions provide, and the informal social networks formed in religious circles. Religious theologies and the level of religious participation or commitment affect family problems, the impact of religion on interpersonal relationships among family members contributing to the well-being of family members (Pearce and Axinn, 1998).

Religion generates differences in fertility and child rearing (religious beliefs about the right and responsibility of parents to educate children – Alwin, 1986; Ellison, et al., 1996), as well as regarding education and female employment rates (Glaeser and Sacerdote, 2008; Feldmann, 2007). Correlatively, in explaining the patterns of wealth accumulation and inequalities in wealth ownership, a relevant factor is religion, through religious participation and affiliation. Research has highlighted that Jews enjoy higher earnings, while conservative Protestants accumulate relatively little wealth. No significant differences were identified between Protestants and Catholics. Religion is a defining element in family life, the family approach and culture determining the modelling of economic behaviour and the creation of social inequalities (Keister, 2003). In the case of Jews, fertility rates are low, thus avoiding the dilution of inherited wealth. Also, rates of female employment when children are young are low in Jewish families, efforts being focused on investing in their education, creating premises for acquiring skills necessary to accumulate wealth (Chiswick, 1986). The countries with a large portion of the population practicing the Protestant religion present higher employment rates, particularly among women (Feldmann, 2007). In Protestant families, fertility rates are relatively high, reducing the accumulation of wealth by diluting both the size of their

inheritance and the time allocated to each child, reducing the chances of significant savings at maturity.

2.3. Research theme 3 (blue cluster in Figure no. 1): Anxiety and religion

The risk factors in the development of anxiety are of a personal nature, linked to the genetic background, personality, health status of the young person, or environmental (tense social relations in the community or in the family, traumatic experiences, unstable social and economic environment). Youth assign particular meanings to knowledge and events depending on the intrinsic characteristics or the way in which young brains encode information. As the incidence of a present stressful factor or in the case of anticipating a stressful factor, anxiety affects the balance of the individual, especially in the case of young people. Thus, juvenile anxiety implies a restlessness specific to human growth and development, young people becoming preoccupied with essential problems, such as their own person, life, spiritual and religious values, but also generated by the environment. Studies on the relationship between religious variables and anxiety reveal multiple, sometimes contradictory aspects, specific to the complex nature of youth, religiosity and the connection between them. A pattern of both positive and negative relationships between religion and anxiety was found, depending on religious affiliation, religious variables, which is most evident among young adults (Harold and Linda, 1993). Peterman et al. (2014) highlighted a modest positive association between religious service participation/youth group participation and anxiety in mid-adolescence, with increased anxiety as a measure of more active religious service participation as a result of self-reported guilt. For youth, a negative association between hope and anxiety is evident only in the presence of religion/spirituality, in its absence, hope not being related to anxiety (DiPierro et al., 2018). In societies where family and religion are linked, during the formation of values and relationships, religion contributes to the internalization of family orientation, giving security to young people (Sabatier et al., 2011).

2.4. Research theme 4 (yellow cluster in Figure no. 1): Community and religion

The focus of the concept of religion is on the way it connects people, physically and metaphysically, on the interaction of individuals, on interpersonal relationships, on the social support conferred (Ladd and McIntosh, 2008). With reference to the necessity of communion between individuals in the execution of religious rituals, McCauley and Lawson, 2002 consider that cultivating an exclusively personalized, self-referential spirituality does not imply the depth of the context oriented towards others.

In the context of technological development and the large activation of youth on social networks, the church adopts specific communication strategies. The use of Twitter, Facebook and YouTube provided feedback on strategies to form a strong virtual community, on the most

controversial issues, in an attempt to ensure commitment to the church and sharing of the vision of the world (Baraybar-Fernández et al., 2020).

2.5. Research theme 5 (lila cluster in Figure no. 1): Family structure and functioning, and religion

The family-religion relationship requires a multidimensional approach, considering the interdependencies and the complex aspects it involves.

A first aspect is religious education in the family, through religious training, performing religious practices at home, the religious importance of parents, discussing religion at home. Furthermore, values such as love and forgiveness are cultivated in the family. Complementary, success in the intergenerational transmission of religious beliefs and practices is ensured to a great extent when children are confronted with visible behavioral models. Church attendance may be associated to a greater extent with parental child-rearing orientations than with confessional differences (Alwin, 1986). Thus, both from a conceptual and behavioral perspective, if children grow up in families in a religious way, the probability of a similar manifestation is higher.

The family climate is an important factor in the formation of individuals. Parent-child relationships, characterized by different degrees of parental support and control - democratic education (Hutsebaut, 1995), or authoritarian (Vergouwen, 2001) - create the premises for the transmission of religion, children being willing/less willing to accept parental religious values.

Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) identified a link between individual differences in childhood attachments to parents and later religious beliefs and involvement, particularly beliefs about God and personal relationship with God, as adults. In the case of avoidant relationships with mothers, God and religion can represent a compensator, a substitute attachment figure.

The family structure is an important factor in the religious formation of young people. Religion promotes marriage, the formation of family relationships, sexual fidelity or parental processes (Vermeer, 2014), marital stability (Call and Heaton, 1997; Kunz and Albrecht, 1977), mediating cases of domestic violence, affecting the environment in which young people develop. Growing up in a single-parent family negatively affects the intergenerational transmission of religion, while growing up in a family with married parents ensures a similar acquisition of religiosity (Vermeer, 2014).

And in the case of a non-religious person, the family is important, constituting the framework for carrying out the accepted rituals.

2.6. Research theme 6 (turquoise cluster in Figure no. 1): Religious coping

When faced with trials and changes beyond their capacity, people engage in a dynamic coping process that can be separated from the initial event and its outcomes. Also, when in

difficult situations, the individual is assumed to be a proactive agent who considers a variety of options. Religious coping is the application of religious principles or practices to deal with challenging circumstances. Health behaviors, psychological well-being, physical health, and emotions of efficacy were all impacted by religious coping.

From the theological perspective, forgiveness/religious purification, the search for religious support are important for the individual, while poorer effects were associated with reappraisals of God's powers, spiritual discontent (Pargament et al., 2000). For young people, forgiveness, and positive religios coping are positively associated with life satisfaction, and negatively with anxiety (Ayten and Karagöz, 2021).

George et al. (2000) mention a link between religious practices and the reduced occurrence of physical and mental illnesses, reduced mortality and the likelihood of recovery or adaptation to physical and mental illnesses. Generative mechanisms involve healthy behaviors, social support, and a sense of coherence or meaning provided through religion. The religious practice, as religious service attendance and prayer, in adolescence are positively associated with psychological well-being, mental health, health behavior, physical health, and character strength outcomes for young adults (Chen and VanderWeele, 2018).

With references to the connections between religious affiliation, the value of religion, how often children and adolescents attend church, on the one hand, and their health status and psychological health, on the other hand, studies have shown that religious beliefs and participation is associated with better health status, suggesting that religion may promote a healthy environment for children's development (Chiswick and Mirtcheva, 2012).

Three different sets of procedures can be used by religious organizations to improve ties amongst family members. First, religious organizations spread the notion that healthy family ties are preferable. Judeo-Christian ideology has traditionally supported union, procreation, and close bonds within the family. The Bible makes clear recommendations for parent-child relationships: both parents and children have to respect and obey one another. The assistance that religious institutions provide for families is part of the second set of procedures. Churches and other religious institutions frequently plan specific events to encourage family connection and healthy relationships. By uniting friends and family members inside the same social group, religion plays a part in the third set of mechanisms in the closure of social links (Pearce and Axinn, 1998).

Spiritual support contributes to increasing the sense of coherence and improving psychological well-being (Mackenzie et al., 2000).

2.7. Research theme 7 (orange cluster in Figure no. 1): The presence/absence of God

For Christians, Jews and Muslims, God is the greatest presence of all realities. The divine presence implies a special specificity, different from our presence: visible and audible. This

does not mean that God is invisible and inaudible. Not everything that is absent is invisible or not everything that is invisible is absent. If God is invisible present, can He be invisible absent? In the dilemma of the presence and absence of God, we must distinguish between God who is invisible but present, an invisible God absent, but who can be present, and God as a fiction (Dalferth, 2009).

The presence of God implies on the one hand the way of representation, and on the other hand the way of spiritual perception. It is possible that for a child the promoted representation of God does not correspond to the own image. In a study based on drawings representing God, Harms (1944) identified three stages: the fairy-tale stage (the pre-school age); the realistic stage (ages seven to twelve); and the individualistic stage (above thirteen years), arguing that God is a deeply psychological concept, which cannot be rendered in words, but through symbols, metaphors. Also, in his study, Tamm (1996) found that half of the drawings had an anthropomorphic character, explainable by the existence of some archetypal anthropomorphic conceptions of God that remain latent in societies with strong institutional religion, but which come to more vivid life in secularized societies.

When the young person begins to organize the own existence, the contradictions multiply. Through the process of own experience of life, the individual forms own cognitive mechanisms. The personal concept of God should not necessarily be linked to the fight against anxiety, but to the perspective of creative response to life (Underwood, 1986).

Young people with a high level of empathy, who consider wisdom and pleasure as most important values in personal character, and family security in the social character, present a higher level of experience of God's presence than those with a low level of empathy, who consider pleasure and freedom as most significant values in personal character, and family security in social character. The sense of accomplishment, for young people with a high level of empathy, and social recognition, for young people with a low level of empathy, explain the variance of religious experience of God's presence. Equality, for empathic young people, and salvation, for the others, explain the variance of religious experience of God's absence (Głaz, 2015).

2.8. Research theme 8 (brown cluster in Figure no. 1): Fear feeling

The terms included in this cluster are: Allah, fear, feeling, conflict, and reflect a strand in the literature associated with Muslim denomination.

The analysis conducted identifies key aspects in researching the religious phenomenon among young people, which can be correlated in various patterns with significant implications. The religious perspective on individuals encompasses multiple aspects, including faith and religious practice, without requiring a direct correlation between the two. It is possible for an individual to have faith without active engagement in religious practices. Spiritual beliefs in a higher power, even in the absence of belief in God and corresponding practices, can be

considered as a spiritual component. Similarly, religious conviction, encompassing religious beliefs, practices, religious affiliation, family beliefs, and rituals, contribute to the religious phenomenon and its implications, such as religious coping. Internal motivations, such as identity formation and answering existential questions, as well as external motivations influenced by family, religious practices, and community affiliation, support religious beliefs and the acceptance of religious doctrines.

Moreover, the analysis performed enables the identification of research gaps and the establishment of research objectives. Therefore, the aim of this paper consists in the comparative analysis of the religion phenomenon of the adolescents and young adults from the internal and external perspectives, which seems to be less explicitly addressed in the current research.

3. Data description and variables. Research methodology

The dataset utilized in the study ("FES Youth Studies in East Europe"; Umbreș et al., 2014) encompasses a representative sample of 1,302 participants from the Romanian population aged 15-29. The comprehensive questionnaire employed in the study covers various topics, including youth leisure and lifestyle, religion and social affiliations, family and friends, concerns and aspirations, and education and employment. This dataset offers detailed information about religious behaviour and facilitates a distinct analysis of the two dimensions of religiosity: religious beliefs and religious practices.

The religious structure of young Romanians closely resembles that of the overall population, 85.3% identifying as Orthodox. (Catholics comprise 7.1% of the sample, followed by Protestants, neo-Protestants (5.8%), and individuals practicing other religions (0.3%). A small proportion (1.5%) of respondents identify as atheist or have no religious affiliation.

In this paper, religiosity is assessed using a set of variables that would account for beliefs and for manifestation of religiosity. Four items are related to the beliefs, measured by the following set of ordinal variables: "there is God", "there is heaven and hell", "God created the world", and "God is the source of moral prescriptions and duties". These variables have the values (1) "I believe", (2) "I doubt" or (3) "I do not believe". The second set regards external religious activity, captured by the following ordinal variables: “frequency of going to church/mosque/synagogue to attend a religious service” “frequency of praying”, “frequency of celebrating religious holidays”, and “frequency of fasting”. All these variables in the dataset are measured using ordinal response options such as "regularly," "often," "sometimes," or "never."

To examine the factors influencing youth religiosity, we utilized the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Since the scale used in the study was not designed for measuring various aspects of religiosity, we did not initially assume that the items explain any specific dimensions. Hence, we employed EFA for identifying the

potential specific factors, using SPSS (Baglin, 2014). In a second stage, we apply PCA for reducing the dimensionality of each of the identified factors. As the purpose is to assess the differences between adolescents and young adults, the analysis was conducted separately for each subsample.

According to Kabacoff (2020), EFA is a set of methods designed to uncover the underlying structure of a given set of values. It aims to identify a smaller set of latent variables that can explain the relationships between observable variables. In our research, the main objective of using EFA was to explore the connections among the sample items associated with religiosity and identify a reduced number of latent factors that could account for the patterns of covariance among the variables. By reducing the data's dimensionality, EFA helps reveal hidden structures and simplifies data interpretation. During the EFA process, the technique analyzes the correlations or covariances among variables to identify factors based on the shared variance. Each factor represents a common underlying dimension or concept that contributes to the observed correlations among the items. Before conducting the EFA, we performed a correlation analysis on the items and several tests, such as the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity, to assess the adequacy of the data.

Table no. 1: Sample description

Variable		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
RELIGION	Orthodox Christian	1106	84.9	85.3	85.3
	Roman Catholic	77	5.9	5.9	91.3
	Greek Catholic	15	1.2	1.2	92.4
	Protestant	34	2.6	2.6	95.1
	Neo-Protestant	41	3.1	3.2	98.2
	Muslim	2	0.2	0.2	98.4
	Other Religion	1	0.1	0.1	98.5
	Atheist / no religion	20	1.5	1.5	100
SEX	Male	648	49.8	49.8	49.8
	Female	654	50.2	50.2	100
ETHNICITY	Romanian	1190	91.4	91.4	91.4
	Hungarian	69	5.3	5.3	96.7
	Roma/Gypsy	38	2.9	2.9	99.6
	Other	5	0.4	0.4	100
Working	Yes, full time	405	31.1	31.4	31.4
	Yes, part-time	42	3.2	3.3	34.7
	Yes, casual or seasonal	88	6.8	6.8	41.5
	No	728	55.9	56.4	97.9
	Another situation	27	2.1	2.1	100
Age	Young adults	896	68.8	68.8	68.8
	Adolescents	406	31.2	31.2	100
	Total	**1302**	**100**	**100**	

Source: authors' processing using FES data

The sample has the structure presented in Table no. 1, following the main demographic characteristics.

The sample is representative for the Romanian youth population, it is gender balanced, and replicates the general population structure in perms of ethnicity and religious denomination. Moreover, we notice that 69% of the respondents are young adults (19-29 years old), while 31% are adolescents (14-18 years old).

4. Empirical results and discussions

We firstly conduct the exploratory factor analysis for identifying the potential explanatory factors. In order to investigate whether the data were suitable for EFA, Bartlett's test of sphericity was applied. It confirmed that the data were in favour of the alternative hypothesis (p-value<0.001) and therefore adequate for an EFA. Similarly, the value 0.791, greater than 0.7, of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy, recommends that the data are appropriate for EFA.

The results suggest that there are two different factors explaining religiosity. Varimax rotation was employed, as an orthogonal rotation method commonly used to simplify and interpret the factor structure. It aims to maximize the variance of the squared factor loadings within each factor, leading to a more straightforward and interpretable factor solution. During the Varimax rotation, the factor loadings are reconfigured by rotating the factor axes in the factor space.

The results presented in Table no. 2 show that two factors were extracted, as also highlighted by the scree plot (Figure no. 2). The first factor explains 30.6% of the overall variance, while the second factor explains 25.7%. Cumulated, the two factors cover 56.4% of the overall variance.

Table no. 2: Results from the exploratory factor analysis

Total Variance Explained									
Factor	**Initial Eigenvalues**			**Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings**			**Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings**		
	Total	**% of Variance**	**Cumulative %**	**Total**	**% of Variance**	**Cumulative %**	**Total**	**% of Variance**	**Cumulative %**
1	4.495	44.951	44.951	4.096	40.96	40.96	3.063	30.631	30.631
2	1.955	19.546	64.497	1.544	15.445	56.405	2.577	25.774	56.405
3	0.845	8.449	72.947						
4	0.604	6.043	78.99						
5	0.5	4.998	83.988						
6	0.486	4.86	88.848						
7	0.367	3.674	92.522						
8	0.324	3.245	95.767						
9	0.253	2.527	98.294						
10	0.171	1.706	100						
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.									

Source: authors' processing using FES data

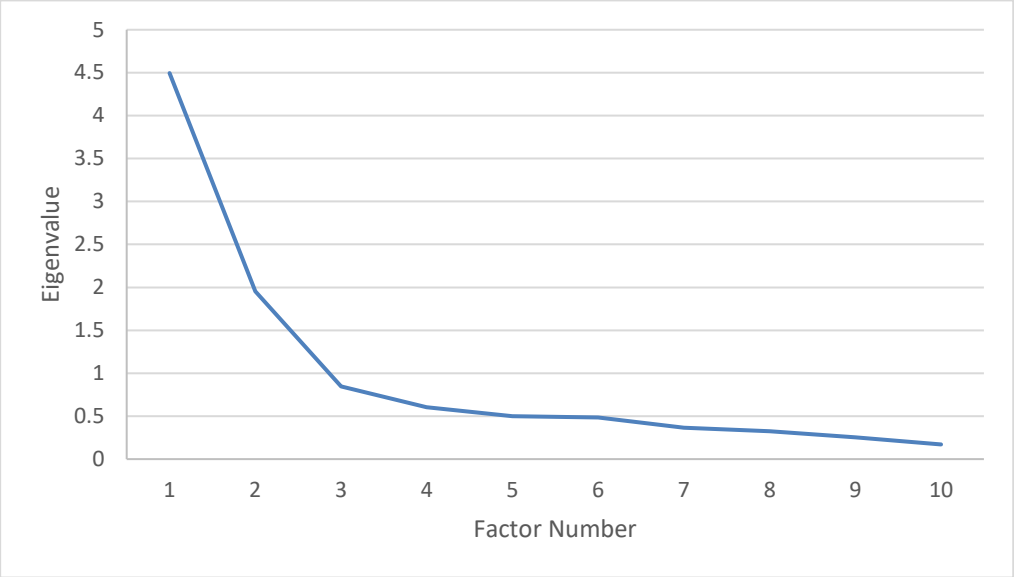


Figure no. 2: Scree plot

Source: authors' processing using FES data

The rotated factor matrix suggest that the following variables are included in the first factor (i) "there is God", (ii) "there is heaven and hell", (iii) "God created the world", and (iv) "God is the source of moral prescriptions and duties".

The second factor includes the following variables: "frequency of going to church/mosque/synagogue to attend a religious service", "frequency of going to confession", "frequency of praying", "frequency of celebrating religious holidays", "frequency of Going on a pilgrimage", and "frequency of fasting".

Table no. 3: Factor matrix and rotated factor matrix

	Factor Matrix		**Rotated Factor Matrix**	
	Factor		**Factor**	
	1	**2**	**1**	**2**
Do you believe, doubt or not believe in the following?: There is a God	0.752	-0.43	0.854	0.147
Do you believe, doubt or not believe in the following?: There are heaven and hell	0.728	-0.428	0.834	0.133
Do you believe, doubt or not believe in the following?: God created the world	0.794	-0.446	0.897	0.161
Do you believe, doubt or not believe in the following?: God is the source of moral prescriptions and duties	0.64	-0.275	0.668	0.195
How often do you: Go to church to Mass	0.658	0.29	0.323	0.642
How often do you: Pray	0.693	0.119	0.459	0.533
How often do you: Go to confession	0.576	0.463	0.15	0.724
How often do you: Celebrate religious holidays	0.502	0.286	0.206	0.54
How often do you: Go on a pilgrimage	0.395	0.477	0.002	0.619
How often do you: Fasting	0.553	0.53	0.089	0.761
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. 2 factors extracted. 6 iterations required.				

Source: authors' processing using FES data

Therefore, our first result confirms that there are two factors that express religiosity, related clearly to the internal and external participants' engagement in religious activities, as an expression of their beliefs. Individuals with high levels of internal religiosity have a strong personal commitment to their religious beliefs and engage in religious practices as a result of their deep-seated faith. They may prioritize their personal spiritual growth, seek inner meaning and purpose through their religious beliefs, and strive for a personal connection with the divine.

However, there may be differences in religiosity between adolescents and young adults. We present the descriptive statistics for the items related to religiosity in an attempt to identify the differences between adolescents and young adults (Table no. 4).

Table no. 4: Descriptive statistics of the items for adolescents and young adults

	Adolescents		**Young adults**		**Min**	**Max**
	Mean	**Std. Dev.**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev.**		
Internal dimension						
Do you believe, doubt or not believe in the following?:						
There is a God	1.17	0.442	1.29	0.572	1-I believe	3-I do not believe
There are heaven and hell	1.35	0.589	1.46	0.658	1-I believe	3-I do not believe
God created the world	1.26	0.553	1.36	0.635	1-I believe	3-I do not believe
God is the source of moral prescriptions and duties	1.37	0.610	1.45	0.677	1-I believe	3-I do not believe
External dimension						
How often do you:						
Go to church to Mass	2.86	0.893	3.01	0.878	1-Very often	4- Never
Pray	2.35	0.885	2.42	0.966	1-Very often	4- Never
Go to confession	2.99	0.808	3.15	0.790	1-Very often	4- Never
Celebrate religious holidays	2.12	0.957	2.35	0.975	1-Very often	4- Never
Go on a pilgrimage	3.61	0.650	3.60	0.670	1-Very often	4- Never
Fasting	3.17	0.870	3.16	0.846	1-Very often	4- Never

Source: authors' processing using FES data

The analysis of religious beliefs of young people revealed that the adolescents, as well as young adults strongly believes in God, in the myth of divine creation, in existing heaven and hell to a greater extent than young adults, considering God the source of moral prescriptions and duties. The level of their belief is high, the median value is 1 (mean being also closer to the value 1), corresponding to "I believe". The aspiration for good, truth, solidarity is formed in children both with stories, myths, legends, and with religious education that teaches the child principles with which attitudes and behaviours are formed for life. There was a predisposition towards external individual manifestations (prayer, fasting, etc.) or at the family level (religious holidays) in the case of young people. Again, adolescents seem to have a greater involvement in religious activity. Our results are consistent with those of Desmond et al. (2010).

Adolescence represents a stage in religious development, considering becoming religious as a continuous process throughout life (Regnerus and Uecker, 2006).

The young adult accumulates knowledge that partially destroys the assimilated construct without being provided with another fully convincing one. The definite benefit that remains lies in the internal core, with the assumption of the principles that ensure the congruence of development, solidarity, altruism and not the dissolution of society, it helps in resisting easy and destructive temptations. Religion is a means of protection for adolescents in strengthening their attitude towards harmful factors that can affect their health, keeping them out of dangerous situations and giving them examples to follow in difficult cases. Even participating in religious events limits time for other concerns and provides socialization with people who respect religious morals (Cotton et al., 2006).

The non-parametric correlation coefficients show a strong degree of correlation among the exploratory items of internal factor, both for adolescents and young adults, the highest association being between the trust in God existence and in the word creation (Table no. 5 and Table no. 6).

Table no. 5: Correlation Matrix – adolescents

Factor		**Internal**				**external**					
	Factor	**F1.1**	**F1.2**	**F1.3**	**F1.4**	**F2.1**	**F2.2**	**F2.3**	**F2.4**	**F2.5**	**F2.6**
internal	F1.1	1									
	F1.2	0.658	1								
	F1.3	0.758	0.698	1							
	F1.4	0.533	0.605	0.586	1						
external	F2.1	0.341	0.377	0.377	0.380	1					
	F2.2	0.415	0.391	0.399	0.384	0.548	1				
	F2.3	0.289	0.301	0.324	0.249	0.543	0.362	1			
	F2.4	0.211	0.168	0.169	0.187	0.439	0.460	0.345	1		
	F2.5	0.179	0.233	0.199	0.220	0.395	0.238	0.352	0.172	1	
	F2.6	0.280	0.289	0.319	0.292	0.500	0.313	0.494	0.249	0.410	1

Source: authors' processing using FES data

At the level of the items included in the external factor, strong associations are found between go to church to mass, pray, and go to confession for both categories of young people. Unlike adolescents, young adults associate to a greater extent going to church to mass with fasting, praying with confession. The statutory rules of the churches support these conclusions because in the Orthodox Church, e.g. if you don't fast it's difficult to go to confession and if you don't you don't receive communion and forgiveness. Young people may hold moral beliefs but are hesitant to express them outwardly or regularly engage in religious practices. This reticence may be due to inconsistent personal religious practices rather than a lack of faith. Limited exposure to religious institutions during primary education or weak religious influence within their families, especially when surrounded by like-minded individuals, can contribute to this attitude. Additionally, in highly secularized societies with diverse religious groups, rigid

religious affiliations claiming absolute truth may discourage young individuals when exposed to other religious practices. On the contrary, among young immigrants from countries with a strong religious imprint, there is an exacerbation of external religious manifestations in the effort to maintain their identity (Phalet et al., 2018).

Table no. 6: Correlation Matrix – young adults

Factor	Index Factor		internal F1.1	F1.2	F1.3	F1.4	external F2.1	F2.2	F2.3	F2.4	F2.5	F2.6
internal	F1.1		1									
	F1.2		0.724	1								
	F1.3		0.789	0.740	1							
	F1.4		0.567	0.601	0.651	1						
external	F2.1		0.365	0.379	0.412	0.354	1					
	F2.2		0.485	0.427	0.493	0.456	0.601	1				
	F2.3		0.354	0.370	0.387	0.311	0.640	0.509	1			
	F2.4		0.331	0.277	0.318	0.298	0.474	0.544	0.452	1		
	F2.5		0.185	0.136	0.202	0.147	0.443	0.274	0.460	0.232	1	
	F2.6		0.290	0.314	0.335	0.341	0.618	0.496	0.648	0.375	0.433	1

Source: authors' processing using FES data

Predominantly low and moderate correlations are identified between internal and external factors of religiosity, the highest being between belief in God and prayer in the case of adolescents and between believe that God created the world and pray, in the case of young adults. The lowest association is observed between adolescents believe in heaven and hell existence and celebration of religious holidays, respectively between considering God the source of moral prescriptions and duties and going on a pilgrimage (Table no. 5 and Table no. 6). All the correlations are positive and significant at the 0.01 level.

Reliability analysis reveal a great internal consistency of the items in the two factors, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values being for adolescents, in the case of internal index: 0.885, and of external index: 0.807, and for young adults, in the case of internal index: 0.897, and of external index: 0.854). The method is appropriate to the data set, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin coefficient values (for adolescents, in the case of internal index: 0.822, and of external index: 0.830, and for young adults, in the case of internal factor: 0.819, and of external index: 0.863). The Bartlett's test for sphericity was performed, showing no redundancies in the employed items the (p-value corresponding to the test statistic being less than 0.05).

The communality analysis was performed to assess the contribution of the variance of each factor and cumulative to the model. For both adolescents and young people all the factors included in the internal factor present high communalites. Celebrate religious holidays and going on a pilgrimage present some good communalities, with values between 0.577 and 0.678.

The first component determines 75.69% of the adolescents' internal religiosity, and 77.157% from that of young adults (Table no. 7).

In the case of adolescent's external religiosity, the first component determines 51.30% of the variation and 58.686% in the case of young adults (Table no. 7).

Table no 7: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Adolescents						
Internal religiosity						
1	3.027	75.687	75.687	3.027	75.687	75.687
2	0.470	11.748	87.434			
3	0.294	7.357	94.791			
4	0.208	5.209	100.000			
External religiosity						
1	3.078	51.300	51.300	3.078	51.300	51.300
2	0.936	15.606	66.906			
3	0.622	10.374	77.280			
4	0.532	8.860	86.140			
5	0.458	7.633	93.773			
6	0.374	6.227	100.000			
Young adults						
Internal index						
1	3.086	77.157	77.157	3.086	77.157	77.157
2	0.494	12.355	89.512			
3	0.253	6.323	95.835			
4	0.167	4.165	100.000			
External index						
1	3.521	58.686	58.686	3.521	58.686	58.686
2	0.849	14.155	72.841			
3	0.542	9.038	81.879			
4	0.434	7.227	89.106			
5	0.341	5.682	94.788			
6	0.313	5.212	100.000			

Source: authors' processing using FES data

Table no. 8: Component Matrix

Adolescents				Young adults			
Internal religiosity factor		**External religiosity factor**		**Internal religiosity factor**		**External religiosity factor**	
Do you believe, doubt or not believe in the following?: God created the world	0.905	How often do you: Go to church to Mass	0.831	Do you believe, doubt or not believe in the following?: God created the world	0.929	How often do you: Go to church to Mass	0.854
Do you believe, doubt or not believe in the following?: There is a God	0.886	How often do you: Go to confession	0.762	Do you believe0, doubt or not believe in the following?: There is a God	0.901	How often do you: Go to confession	0.836
Do you believe, doubt or not believe in the following?: There are heaven and hell	0.884	How often do you: Fast	0.730	Do you believe0, doubt or not believe in the following?: There are heaven and hell	0.893	How often do you: Fast	0.806
Do you believe, doubt or not believe	0.801	How often do you: Pray	0.711	Do you believe0, doubt or not believe	0.783	How often do you: Pray	0.768

Adolescents				Young adults			
Internal religiosity factor		**External religiosity factor**		**Internal religiosity factor**		**External religiosity factor**	
in the f3ollowing?: God is the source of moral prescriptions and duties				in the following?: God is the source of moral prescriptions and duties			
		How often do you: Celebrate religious holidays	0.660			How often do you: Celebrate religious holidays	0.678
		How often do you: Go on a pilgrimage	0.577			How often do you: Go on a pilgrimage	0.626

Source: authors' processing using FES data

To answer the RQ2 and the RQ3, our results confirm differences and similarities in the religious activity of the adolescents compared to young adults. In both cases the level of internal religiosity is rather strong, and the level of external religiosity is moderate. Both groups are more inclined to an internal religiosity rather than to an external one. However, the young adults express lower religiosity levels compared to adolescents on both dimensions.

Table no. 8 shows the item "Do you believe, doubt or not believe in the following: God created the world" has the highest contribution to the latent factor of internal religiosity, while the frequency of going to church has the highest contribution to the external religiosity. During ancient times and the Middle Ages, theology served as the fundamental basis for comprehending the world, as there were no scientific explanations to challenge its structure in a rational manner. However, contemporary scientific advancements in understanding creation present contradictions to the traditional views upheld by the Church. Consequently, these scientific discoveries impact the connection between young individuals and their faith in God (Weber and Weber, 2021), as they may find it challenging to reconcile their beliefs with the new knowledge they encounter.

Finally, to answer the RQ 4, we assess the relation between the two identified factors. Between internal religiosity and external religiosity, it is a moderate positive correlation for adolescents (Spearman correlation: 0.471, sig. 0.000), and a slightly stronger association for young adults (Spearman correlation: 0.505, sig. 0.000). In a strongly secularized society, young people harmonize the internal core of faith with external manifestations, often limited to the individual (prayer) or family level (celebrated religious holidays). Religious experience favours the formation of religious beliefs and attitudes. For children, the absence of religious practice makes religious learning more difficult (Hyde, 1961).

5. Conclusions

Due to its complex character, the evaluation of the way an individual is religious involves multidimensional approaches, which includes both aspects of creeds and effective manifestation. An individual's beliefs, sense of belonging and behaviour from a religious perspective may or may not be consistent with their religious beliefs. In this context, the paper addresses the religious phenomenon was carried out from a multidimensional perspective. Two dimensions were identified, related to an internal and external religiosity. Both adolescents and young adults exhibit a relatively strong level of internal religiosity, which pertains to personal beliefs and faith. Additionally, both groups demonstrate a moderate level of external religiosity, which refers to religious practices and behaviours.

The paper also highlights that both adolescents and young adults tend to prioritize internal religiosity over external religiosity. However, it suggests that young adults generally express lower levels of religiosity compared to adolescents on both dimensions, indicating a potential decrease in religious engagement as individuals transition into adulthood. This may be related to factors such as personal exploration, shifting priorities, and increased autonomy, that contribute to variations in religious activity and expression (Regnerus et al., 2004).

This paper's findings have implications for individuals, religious institutions, and society. Recognizing the importance of values in personal development is crucial, as morality is integral to human perspective. Religion serves as a guiding transcendental element, leading humanity towards ideals of good, justice, and truth. Religious institutions can foster a connection between youth and divinity by understanding how young people engage with religion and encouraging individual expressions of belief. Empathy towards youth culture and creating an environment for discussions about God's role can strengthen their connection to their faith community, countering the trend of drifting away from religion. Analyzing the relationship between religiosity and value priorities is vital in a changing society to revitalize moral and social construction, ensuring the functioning and balance of society.

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