

M. Akmadi* , G. Kenzhakimova , R. Umbet 

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

*e-mail: akmadi.moldir@gmail.com

ASSESSMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY AND WELL-BEING AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE OF KAZAKHSTAN

The study investigates and evaluates the relationship between religion, spirituality, and well-being among young people. The study aims to understand how Kazakh youth's religiosity and spirituality affect their well-being. The importance of the study lies in its significant contribution to understanding social changes in Kazakhstan, providing both empirical evidence and conceptual ideas on the relationship between the aspects mentioned above. The research methods are based on the measurement of the Duke University Religiosity Index (DUREL) for assessment of organizational, non-organizational, and internal religiosity, and the Pemberton Happiness Index and the Gallup Healthways Well-being Index were also used to measure the well-being of respondents. The study included 2,654 participants from all regions of Kazakhstan, using quotas based on region, age group, and gender, ensuring data representativeness. The results of the study showed that religious and spiritual people feel more comfortable, with a high level of positive emotions and a lower level of negative ones such as stress and depression. Whereas atheists and agnostics, despite higher rates of optimism about future perceptions, face greater difficulties in managing stress. The value of the study is that it provides new evidence on how religious and spiritual factors affect youth well-being. The work contributes to understanding how religious beliefs contribute to emotional well-being. The practical significance of the study is that its results can be used as supporting material in the development of programs aimed at young people, taking into account religious and spiritual factors. The data obtained complement existing literature on the influence of religion and spirituality on well-being, opening up new possibilities for further research in this field.

Key words: sociology of religion, religiosity, spirituality, well-being.

М.А. Ақмади*, Г.А. Кенжакимова, Р.С. Умбет

¹Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан

*e-mail: akmadi.moldir@gmail.com

Қазақстан жастары арасындағы дін, руханият пен әл-ауқаттың өзара байланысын бағалау

Зерттеу жастар арасындағы діндарлық, руханият және әл-ауқат арасындағы байланысты зерттеуге және бағалауға бағытталған. Зерттеудің мақсаты қазақстандық жастардың діндарлығы мен руханилығы олардың әл-ауқатына қалай әсер ететінін түсіну. Зерттеудің маңыздылығы оның жоғарыда айтылған аспектілер арасындағы байланыс туралы эмпирикалық дәлелдер мен тұжырымдамалық идеяларды ұсына отырып, Қазақстандағы әлеуметтік өзгерістерді түсінуге қосқан елеулі үлесі болып табылады. Зерттеу әдістері ұйымдық, ұйымдық емес және ішкі діндарлықты бағалау үшін Дьюк университетінің діндарлық индексі (DUREL) өлшеуге негізделген және респонденттердің әл-ауқатын бағалау үшін Пембертонның бақыт индексі мен Gallup Healthways әл-ауқат индексі қолданылды. Зерттеуге жас тобына және жынысына негізделген квоталауды пайдалана отырып, деректердің репрезентативтілігімен Қазақстанның барлық өңірлерінен 2654 қатысушы қатысты. Зерттеу нәтижелері оң эмоциялардың жоғары деңгейі және стресс пен депрессия сияқты жағымсыз эмоциялардың төмен деңгейі болған кезде діни және рухани адамдар өздерін жақсы сезінетінін көрсетті. Атеистер мен агностиктер болашақты қабылдауға қатысты оптимизмнің жоғары деңгейіне қарамастан, стрессті басқаруда үлкен қиындықтарға тап болады. Зерттеудің құндылығы бұл діни және рухани факторлардың жастардың әл-ауқатына қалай әсер ететіні туралы жаңа мәліметтер береді. Жұмыс діни нанымдардың эмоционалды әл-ауқатқа қалай ықпал ететінін түсінуге ықпал етеді. Зерттеудің практикалық маңыздылығы оның нәтижелерін діни және рухани факторларды ескере отырып, жастарға бағытталған бағдарламаларды әзірлеуде көмекші материал ретінде пайдалануға болатындығында. Нәтижелер діндарлық пен руханилықтың әл-ауқатқа әсері туралы қолданыстағы әдебиеттерді толықтырады, бұл осы салада одан әрі зерттеуге жаңа мүмкіндіктер ашады.

Түйін сөздер: дін әлеуметтануы, діндарлық, руханият, әл-ауқат.

М.А. Ақмади*, Г.А. Кенжакимова, Р.С. Умбет
Казахский национальный университет им. Аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан
*e-mail: akmadi.moldir@gmail.com

Оценка взаимосвязи религии, духовности и благополучия среди молодежи Казахстана

Исследование направлено на изучение и оценку связи между религиозностью, духовности и благополучием среди молодежи. Цель исследования заключается в том, чтобы понять, как религиозность и духовность казахстанской молодежи влияют на их благополучие. Важность исследования заключается в его значительном вкладе в понимание социальных изменений в Казахстане, предоставляя как эмпирические доказательства, так и концептуальные идеи о связи между выше сказанными аспектами. Методы исследования основаны на измерении индекса религиозности Университета Дюка (DUREL) для оценки организационной, неорганизационной и внутренней религиозности, а также был применен индекс счастья Пембертона и индекс благополучия Gallup Healthways для оценки благополучия респондентов. Исследование включало 2654 участника из всех регионов Казахстана, используя квотирование на основе региона, возрастной группы и пола, обеспечивая репрезентативность данных. Результаты исследования показали, что религиозные и духовные люди чувствуют себя более благополучнее, где наблюдается высокий уровень положительных эмоций и меньший уровень негативных, таких как стресс и депрессия. В то время как атеисты и агностики, несмотря на более высокие показатели оптимизма относительно восприятия будущего, сталкиваются с большими трудностями в управлении стрессом. Ценность исследования заключается в том, что оно предоставляет новые данные о том, как религиозные и духовные факторы влияют на благополучие молодежи. Работа вносит вклад в понимание того, как религиозные убеждения способствуют эмоциональному благополучию. Практическая значимость исследования заключается в том, что его результаты могут быть использованы как вспомогательный материал при разработке программ, ориентированных на молодежь, учитывающих религиозные и духовные факторы. Полученные данные дополняют существующую литературу, касающуюся влияния религиозности и духовности на благополучие, что открывает новые возможности для дальнейших исследований в данной области.

Ключевые слова: социология религии, религиозность, духовность, благополучие.

Introduction

Relevance of the study. In recent years, among the young people of Kazakhstan, there has been a growing interest in religion and spirituality, in connection with which, the study of the relationship between religion, spirituality, and well-being in Kazakhstan is an important direction. In recent years, the growth of religiosity among Kazakh youth is not only growing but also spontaneous; young people often do not consciously come to religion. Young people come to religion in search of landmarks in life that are frequently related to personal experiences or problems (Abdiraiymova, 2023: 6). Moreover, young people do not always have deep knowledge of religion, and religious precepts, in connection with which they may practice a religion that combines superstition or occult practices (Maulsharif, 2022: 74). However, for some young people religion is not as part of their spiritual development and in this case they are more focused on spiritual practices, but these processes are part of the overall process. Although in some cases people separate spiritual practices from religious, they thus define them-

selves as «spiritual people» (Rysbekova, 2015: 26).

When studying religiosity and spirituality it is important to consider the relationship with various aspects of well-being, including life satisfaction, emotional balance, etc. Religiosity and spirituality have an immediate connection with the perception of subjective well-being. But this influence is different because spirituality positively affects well-being through such factors as a sense of purpose and interconnectedness, personal growth, and resistance to life difficulties (Ryff, 2021: 914). The influence of religiosity can vary depending on the level of religious adherence of a person (Villani, 2019: 1525). In general, religious, and spiritual values and beliefs contribute to the understanding of important life questions about the existence and meaning of life, which also helps improve well-being. In this regard, the analysis of the relationship between well-being and the level of religion/ spirituality among young people is of particular interest.

The subject of the research is to assess the relationship between religiosity, spirituality, and well-being. *The object of the research* is Kazakhstani youth aged 18 to 35.

The purpose of the research is to analyze and assess the relationship between religiosity, spirituality, and well-being.

Research question: how does religiosity or spirituality affect subjective and emotional well-being?

Literature review

The relationship between religion and well-being is evident in various aspects. Religious organizations have traditionally done a great deal of work in the field of social welfare, helping poor and needy people. It has also become the basis for modern social services, where the core is a set of values such as mercy and justice. Religious groups also continue to organize charitable projects and social services that directly improve the quality of life of vulnerable segments of society. Bufford (1991) argues that spiritual well-being plays a crucial role in the general perception of quality of life, as it conceptualizes spiritual well-being as having two aspects. The first is religious welfare, which has to do with human relations with the higher power. The second aspect is existential well-being, which consists of life satisfaction and meaning. People with high spiritual well-being are more satisfied with life and have better mental health indicators, and in this case, religion plays a central role in giving the person a harmonious and directed position in life (Bufford, 1991: 59).

The religiosity of prayer, belief, and worship helps to cope with life problems, reduce stress, and increase life satisfaction, practices such as prayer contribute to happiness and reduce stress, while religious beliefs, for example, seeking divine support have a positive impact on mental health and contributes to human well-being. Overall, spirituality improves well-being regardless of religiosity, as some studies show that high levels of well-being are observed among participants with high spirituality, whether or not it is related to religious practice (Wills, 2009: 49). Also, religiosity, which is not spiritual, is relatively insignificant in terms of psychological well-being and sometimes even associated with negative traits including dogmatism and lower self-realization (Ivtzan, 2013: 915; Achour, 2015: 984).

Moreover, religiosity may be associated with the search for meaning and significance of life, which in turn is closely related to higher levels of subjective well-being. For example, in religious people, religion becomes an integral part of the person and daily life and affects such feelings as humility, inner peace, and self-improvement, thus promoting emo-

tional stability and reducing stress. Religious communities can provide a fairly substantial network of social support, as in general religious activity strengthens social ties and creates feelings of belonging and support, which are positive factors for subjective well-being (Wills, 2009: 50; Tiliouine, 2009: 55; Achour, 2015: 985).

Religiosity has the greatest impact on psychological well-being in Western countries with a Christian majority, where social institutional and cultural factors have enhanced religious participation, while Eastern countries such as China and Japan, are people who practice Buddhism and Taoist religions with strong support for internal practices in forms of meditation and spiritual research that also improve psychological well-being but often do not reflect openly through violent emotions (Lai, 2013: 607; Bufford, 2023). People who are more likely to practice religiosity, using prayers and posts as well as giving to others, tend to demonstrate a higher level of subjective well-being. Especially important in times of ill health when religious practices can be used as a coping strategy that allows people to cope with life difficulties (Lai, 2013: 607; Tay, 2014: 163; Wenger, 2011: 520).

Religiosity is best understood as a multidimensional construction that includes ritual practices such as prayers or posts, and social practices associated with religious altruism. The interesting thing is that social aspects of religion, such as helping others and charity, seem to be more relevant for maintaining subjective well-being than ritual actions themselves (Williams, 2007; Tiliouine, 2009). Health problems do not diminish the influence of religion. On the contrary, people with health problems are very attached to religious practices as they become one of the ways to deal with disease and maintain their psychological balance. This is very relevant for countries with poor health, where religiosity may come to replace some of the missing supporting functions in pursuit of well-being. The relationship between religiosity and well-being remains consistent even with health-related adversities such as pain, anxiety, and sleep problems, which supports the hypothesis that religiousness acts internally by promoting psychological well-being. Religious altruism also predicts well-being more than ritual practice, especially in times when the person experiences stress and health problems, indicating that the social aspects of religiosity such as charity and helping others, play an important role in improving the overall well-being (Cummins, 2006; Tiliouine, 2009). Some studies show that the relationship be-

tween religion and well-being may not always be static, and their variability can be due to different factors. Religion influences well-being because it gives value to understanding oneself and fitting into society, no matter how complex or dynamic the relationship is, the sense of belonging, security, and meaning that comes from religious communities, is often added to personal well-being (Hackett, 2014: 398).

Materials and methods

The study used the Duke University Religiosity Index (DUREL) to measure religiosity, which covers three key aspects: organizational religiousness (participation in collective religious practices), non-organizational religiosity (individual religious practices), and inner religiosity (depth of personal religious beliefs). The scale gives a score from 5 to 27, which allows for the determination of the degree of religiosity of the respondent (MacDougall, 2024: 295). Well-being was measured by the Pemberton Happiness Index and the Gallup Healthways Well-Being Index, as well as the Gallup Healthways Well-Being Index. The Pemberton happiness index consists of two main components (Vazquez, 2012: 34). The first case is measured as «memorable well-being», which includes eleven points, which are measured by life satisfaction scales, subjective happiness, and psychological well-being, which are evaluated on a scale from 0 to 10, where high scores indicate higher levels of well-being. The second aspect measures «experienced well-being», and evaluates people's feelings and condition in real time. Includes ten points, covering positive and negative emotional events, the score of the well-being experienced also varying from 0 to 10. The Gallup Healthways Well-Being Index covers six aspects of well-being, such as overall life assessment, emotional and physical health, healthy behavior, work environment, and access to basic things. The subjective well-being of respondents was also studied using the Cantril scale, which is one of the widely accepted tools for assessing subjective life satisfaction (Skopec, 2014: 117).

In this study, the general population consists of young people aged 18 to 35 years, permanently residing in the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The total sample size was 2654 respondents throughout Kazakhstan. To ensure a proportional distribution of respondents by region, the sample sizes were calculated according to the general population. Respondents were selected based on quotas

for key characteristics such as region of residence, age cohorts, and gender. The territory of the sociological survey covers all regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan – the cities of republican significance Astana, Almaty, and Shymkent, 17 regional centers, as well as rural settlements. Data collection was conducted in two languages - Kazakh and Russian, depending on the respondent's choice. Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 27.0.1.0, a licensed version.

Results and discussion

The study was conducted throughout Kazakhstan, including all 17 regions and 3 cities of republican importance. The analysis of data on the administrative division of Kazakhstan was recorded by geographical principle, where the southern, northern, western, eastern, and central regions. The survey included 2,654 respondents. The selection of respondents was made by a quota sample, taking into account such criteria as region of residence, age, and sex. Data collection was conducted in Kazakh and Russian languages using the Professional 3KA license program (license E-B-9979) from September to December 2023. The socio-demographic analysis showed the following distribution: 52.6% women (N = 1397) and 47.4% men (N = 1257). The age groups with the highest proportion of respondents were 18-24 years old – 55.2% (N = 1464), 25-29 years old – 21.7% (N = 576), and 30-35 years old – 23.1% (N = 614). According to the data obtained, the largest number of respondents live in megacities and southern regions due to the high population in these regions, therefore, the data show the following results by region: Southern region – 22.4% (N=594), Northern region – 9.7% (N=258), Western region – 13.9% (N=369), Eastern region – 6.3% (N=168), Central region – 4.4% (N=117). In the major cities, the indicators were as follows: Astana – 10.9% (N=288), Almaty – 25.9% (N=688), Shymkent – 6.5% (N=172). Urban population 81.3% (N=2159) and rural 18.6% (N=494).

Data on marital status showed that the majority of respondents are not married – 61.8% (N=1639), married – 27.5% (N=730), also divorced – 7.7% (N=203) and widows – 3.1% (N=81), the last category is the smallest group in terms of family status. In general, the data show a predominance of single or unmarried people in the sample of respondents, which is expected among young people. Further analysis of the presence of children shows that most of the sample, 65.8% of respondents (N=1745), do

not have children. The remaining respondents were as follows: 19.4% (N=515) reported having 1-2 children, 9.4% (N=250) had 3-4 children, and 5.4% (N=143) more than 4 children, which means that families with 1-2 children predominate among those with children.

The educational level of respondents distributed as follows: 48% (N=1274) have higher education, 4.6% (N=123) have postgraduate education, secondary education – 16.4% (N=435), secondary vocational – 10.4% (N=277), primary vocational – 4.9% (N=130), technical and professional – 4.0% (N=107). Respondents with primary education make up a smaller proportion – 3.8% (N=100), while the main secondary education – 7.1% (N=189). Only 0.7% (N=19) of respondents did not have any level of education, in general from the data it can be seen that most respondents have secondary or higher education.

The ethnic composition of respondents reflects the demographic structure of Kazakhstan. Kazakhs make up 64.7% (N=1716), which corresponds to the main ethnic group of the country. In the second place the Russians – 15.9% (N=421), which also corresponds to the significant role of this ethnic group, further data showed the following: Germans (2.4%, N=64), Uzbeks (3.1%, N=82), Uyghurs (3.0%, N=80), Ukrainians (1.9%, N=51), Tatars (3.2%, N=85), Tajiks (1.2%, N=33), Asians – 4.6 (N=122) are the category «Others».

The employment rate was 59.7% (N=1584), indicating a very high labor force participation rate. At the same time, 40.3% of respondents (N=1070) were not employed at the time of the survey, including unemployed students. The most represented sectors among the employed respondents are education, science, and culture (18.4%, N=291), commerce and catering (12.9%, N=204), IT (8.6%, N=137), and health (7.3%, N=116). The financial banking sector accounts for 6.2% (N=99), industry – 6.5% (N=103), lower proportions of respondents are in communication and transport (5.1%, N=81), public and municipal services (5.3%, N=84), construction (4.7%, N=75) and housing and public utilities (4.5%, N=72). Military service, clergy, and agriculture also represent some shares, albeit very small – from 1.6% to 4.9%.

The data on the material situation of families reflect the differentiation in the level of well-being since the most vulnerable category of the population is represented by 6.6% of families who do not have enough money even to meet basic physiological needs – food, in this case, the families are below

the poverty line. A slightly smaller group (14.6%) can afford food but have serious financial problems when buying clothes. The proportion of households that cannot afford to buy essential household durables is 21.4%, which places them in the lower middle class. This group can meet basic needs but has problems with buying expensive goods. The largest category – 27.7%, is the category of people who have enough money to buy basic household appliances but cannot afford additional and less needed goods that are expensive, this indicates that they are in the middle class, which is generally financially sound, but limited in its luxury. About 16.2% of households can provide for themselves, except for the purchase of cars and other expensive goods. The most well-off group was – 12.5%, who had no problems, their budget allowed them to buy everything without restrictions. This group includes the wealthiest families, and their standard of living can be described as very well-off. The results for the personal income of respondents were also very diverse. Low incomes below 45,000 tenge – observed in 12% (N=319). Interestingly, 87 respondents out of 319 are people over 25 years old. The significant category of respondents has income from 45 001 to 200,000 tenge (29.8%) and can be attributed to the lower and middle class.

The largest proportion of respondents is concentrated in the stratum with income 200 001-400,000 tenge and is 27.7%, which indicates their belonging to the middle class. This class has a stable income level that can fully meet basic needs. Further income from 500 001 tenge to 13.6% of respondents, which shows that in the structure of society, there is a small but significant share of citizens with high income and 10.6% of this category in the age 30-35 years, which is very expected. The last 9.9% indicated a lack of income, which is also expected since most of them are students, and some are also on maternity leave.

Questions on the identification of the level of religiosity, and spirituality showed that a high percentage of respondents consider themselves as spiritual people – 73.4% (see Figure 1). This can be explained by the importance of spiritual and ethical values among our population. In this context, spirituality can be understood not only in the religious sense but also in a broader sense as a desire for self-improvement, personal development respect for traditions, etc. In Kazakhstan, especially in rural areas, family and community ties are highly developed, where spiritual aspects of life, respect for elders, charity, and humanism play a significant role. These

aspects of spirituality can hardly be linked to religion alone, which may explain such a high percentage of those who identified themselves as spiritual but not. Religious people.

As shown in Figure 1, in comparison with spirituality, religious consider themselves – 55.7% (N=1477), this result can be explained by the historical context when during the Soviet Union religion was marginalized from public life, and although religious traditions were revived since the collapse of the Soviet Union, many Kazakhs still separate spirituality from religiosity. Moreover, the sense of modernization and urbanization can affect the younger generation, which also leads to a decline in religion, because with the growth of education and scientific views, playing a huge role, many have begun to question traditional religious beliefs or prefer to perceive religion as a minor part of their lives (Uecker, 2017: 147; McPhetres, 2018: 12). Also, the influence of globalization and cultural exchange through social networks has led to the spread of different philosophical and spiritual practices that are not necessarily related to religion. People are increasingly choosing individual paths of spiritual search, preferring to independently seek answers to important existential questions, and avoiding the rigid

framework of official religious institutions (Sbalchiero, 2024: 10). 57.3% of the respondents to some extent agreed with the statement «I consider myself both religious and spiritual», this may indicate that a significant part of people not only observe religious rites but also find spiritual development in religion. In Kazakhstan, where Islam is the dominant religion, religious rites are usually combined with spiritual practices. However, they disagree with the above statement – 50.6% of respondents noted that religion is more important than spirituality, which indicates that for some people spiritual and religious practices are not related. But in this case, the results also showed that the age factor has a significant influence on the perception of religious and spiritual aspects, as older respondents still preferred to consider themselves more spiritual than religious. In this case, it may be indicative of a more critical perception of religion and a shift in priorities toward spirituality in older age groups. For example, a total of 53.3% of respondents in the 18-24 age group are likely to agree that religion is more important than spirituality, and this figure already decreases as the age category increases. However, it is also interesting that the spread of atheistic views is also more common among 18-24-year-old (36%) respondents.

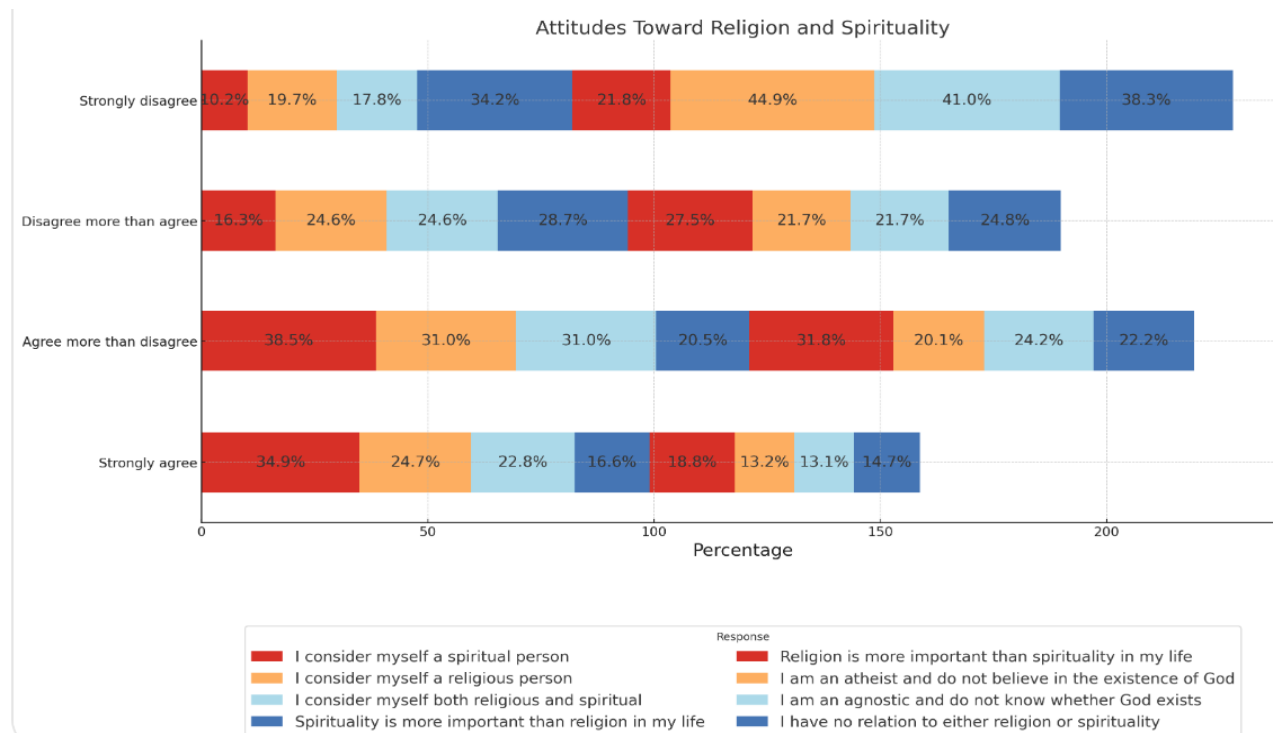


Figure 1 – Diverse beliefs: religion, spirituality, and non-religious perspectives

These figures decrease with the age of the respondent, as seen in the group of believers and atheists. For example, when asked «I am an atheist and do not believe in the existence of the Supreme God Allah», analysis by chi-square criterion showed that there is indeed a statistically significant relationship between age and belief. The value of the chi-square Pearson criterion is 19.162 with 6 degrees of freedom, and the p-value of this significance is 0.004, the result obtained will allow us to refute the null hypothesis, namely the hypothesis of no connection between variables and conclude that that age is a factor in how we treat religious and atheistic beliefs. The ratio of plausibility (19.781, $p = 0.003$) and linear-linear (9.588, $p = 0.002$) may be an important fact that as respondents age increases, the proportion of those who completely disagree with the atheistic claim, is increasing, and the approval rate is decreasing. Ultimately, young people between the ages of 18 and 24 tend to agree with atheistic views or express doubts more often than others. In contrast, older age groups (30-35 years) will express strong disagreement with these views, possibly due to different life experiences, social environments, and value orientations. Similar results were obtained regarding the belief «I am agnostic», the dispersion obtained shows that with increasing age respondents are less inclined to agree with agnostic statements. Overall, the result showed that young people in the category of 18-24 more strongly consider themselves religious or atheist, while young people aged 30-35 more choose spirituality.

Religiosity, spirituality, and well-being

One of the important factors in studying well-being is the level of subjective perception of life satisfaction. The study examined subjective well-being based on a Cantril scale, where results are almost equally divided between those who are at the bottom of the «suffering» ladder and those in the satisfactory position, the «struggling» ladder, and «prosperous». According to the results obtained, the scores of believers (48.7), spiritual (48.2), and those who identify themselves as both spiritual and religious (47.3%) are almost equal, and only the agnostics, atheists, and those who do not consider themselves to be in any category of indicators are about 10% higher. However, the sum of the categories of «struggling» and «thriving» have similar results. Although atheists may experience more crisis moments in their current state, they may have a relatively optimistic view of their future (see Figure 2). The State's General Assembly is not a party to the Convention.

The most optimistic about future well-being are atheists, agnostics, and people who do not fall into any category, as is confirmed by a moderate positive correlation shown in Figure 2. Religions show more restraint, and positive optimism in the perception of their future well-being, although this relationship is much weaker (0.121). Spiritual people show the weakest correlation (0.059), which may indicate that spirituality has a lesser effect on their perception of future well-being. The results emphasize that, regardless of religion or lack thereof, respondents have a positive perception of their future well-being, but atheists and agnostics show the most pronounced optimism. Some studies have similar results, which note that a higher level of subjective well-being in the future may be related to the development of analytical thinking in respondents who consider themselves atheists, or agnostics.

Atheists and agnostics tend to be more reflexive than religious believers, which partly explains why non-religious people may feel happier in the future. The higher level of analytical thinking can enable them to better cope with life problems and make more informed decisions (Pennycook, 2016). The results of the indicator of emotional well-being included the following indicators: smile, laughter, learning and doing something interesting, respectful attitude, pleasure, happiness, anxiety, sadness, anger, stress, and depression. Analysis of the presented table showing emotional well-being concerning religion and belief reveals significant differences in levels of both positive and negative emotions among different groups (see Fig. 3).

Religious respondents show the highest scores on key indicators of positive emotions, such as «smile/laughter» (58.8%), «respect» (65.8%) and «happiness» (60.5%), which may indicate greater satisfaction with life and strong social support. Spiritual respondents also show relatively high values for these categories, such as «happiness» (59.5%) and «respect» (64.5%), but they are slightly lower than religious ones. The category of atheists and agnostics shows noticeably lower positive emotions. For atheists, the «smile/laugh» rate is 44.5% and «happiness» 41.6%, which may indicate a less pronounced emotional satisfaction. Similar results are observed in agnostics, whose «smile/laughter» and «happiness» scores are 44.2% and 44.9%, respectively. Regarding negative emotions, atheists and agnostics show higher values of such indicators as stress, where the atheists – 32.2%, while the agnostics – 34.2%, depression (21.1% and 22.1%) and anxiety (35.0% and 39.4%).

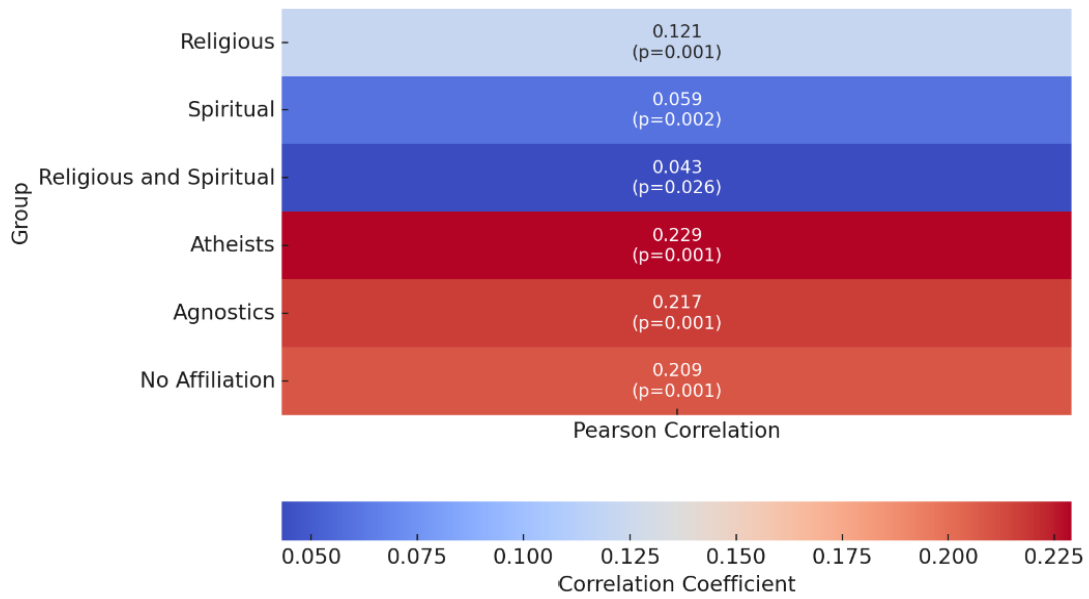


Figure 2 – Correlation of future well-being perception across different groups

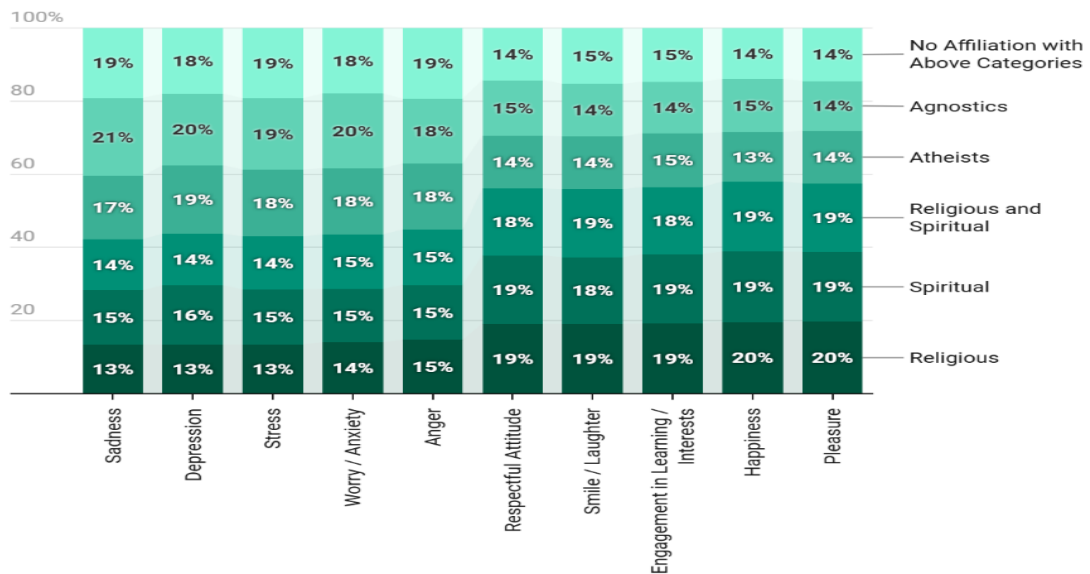


Figure 3 – Emotional well-being indicators across different belief groups

Moreover, anxiety and depression rates are also higher than those of religious and spiritual respondents. The results obtained may indicate difficulties in managing stress and experiencing negative emotions among atheists and agnostics compared to religious and spiritual respondents. Atheists and agnostics often face problems related to finding the ultimate meaning of life, which can lead to reduced

satisfaction with life and increased stress (Sedlar, 2018: 244). Atheists who do not make sense through religious beliefs may have difficulty finding a purpose in life, which affects their well-being. Religious people rely on their faith and the religious community to support them in managing stress and emotions, which becomes a coping mechanism that is less available to unbelievers (Park, 2013: 157).

Overall, the analysis shows that religious or spiritual beliefs are associated with higher levels of positive emotions and lower levels of negative states. This can be explained by both personal beliefs and social support inherent to religious and spiritual groups. At the same time, atheists and agnostics may have more emotional difficulties, which requires further study to understand the reasons for these differences. Other similar studies show that religious and spiritual beliefs can contribute to better emotional health and reduce the level of negative emotions such as anxiety and depression. Religious people tend to experience more positive emotions, such as happiness and satisfaction with life, through a sense of purpose, social support, and inner strength that religion or spirituality can provide (Villani, 2019: 1528).

Conclusion

The study of the relationship between spirituality, religiosity, and well-being revealed significant differences in levels of subjective and emotional well-being among groups of participants who differ in degree of religiousness or spirituality. The analysis showed that those who identify themselves as religious or spiritual personalities show statistically significantly higher positive emotion levels such as joy, and life satisfaction, and also significantly lower negative emotions, including stress, anxiety, and depression. It is important to note that the results of the study do not indicate a direct causal relationship, high level of well-being in believers may be due not only to religious or spiritual practices themselves but also to other factors correlated with religiosity. Respondents who identify themselves as believers often show a high social inclusion, and belonging to communities, which is known to have a positive impact on emotional well-being. Regular attendance at religious services can help to develop a sense of community and social support by providing access to mutual aid and emotional support. Moreover, many religious and spiritual teachings offer stress-coping strategies, self-regulation techniques, and a sense of meaning in life that can also help to reduce anxiety and depression.

The increased wealth is probably due to several interrelated factors. First, religious belief often provides a solid foundation for meaning and purpose in life, this sense of meaning acting as a buffer against stress, providing coping mechanisms and a sense of control over life's problems. Second, religious communities provide invaluable social support, thereby

enhancing emotional well-being. The sense of belonging and easily accessible support systems inherent in these communities mitigate feelings of loneliness and isolation, which are often essential factors for depression and anxiety. Finally, structured routines and rituals associated with religious practices can provide a sense of order and predictability, adding to emotional stability. Spiritual people, although they exhibit slightly lower positive emotions than their religious counterparts, still demonstrate a high level of happiness and respect. This suggests that the pursuit of spiritual growth and understanding, even beyond formal religious structures, plays a vital role in well-being. Spirituality often focuses on personal development, self-reflection, and the connection to something bigger than yourself, strengthening your inner strength and sense of purpose. The concrete manifestation of spirituality depends heavily on the cultural context in societies where spiritual values have important cultural significance, the benefits of spiritual practices will probably be more pronounced. In addition, the emphasis on awareness and self-awareness often found in spiritual practices can contribute to emotional regulation and stress-reduction techniques. In contrast, atheists and agnostics reported lower levels of positive emotions and higher levels of stress and depression. But this difference does not indicate an absolute connection, as it does not necessarily mean that atheism or agnostics inherently leads to lower well-being. Instead, it may reflect the lack of the above-mentioned benefits provided by religious or spiritual communities and belief systems. The lack of an already existing structure for meaning-building and coping mechanisms can make people more vulnerable to negative emotional states. However, the unexpected discovery was the high level of optimism about future well-being demonstrated by this group, as evidenced by a moderate positive correlation. The result suggests that atheists and agnostics can use alternative coping strategies, such as analytical thinking and forward-looking planning. Their critical thinking skills, often associated with skepticism about traditional beliefs, can allow them to maintain positive expectations for the future despite current emotional problems. Forward-looking, combined with as strong a reliance on autonomy and secular support networks as possible, can offer a unique path to well-being that requires further study. Further research should examine the specific coping mechanisms used by this group to better understand their resilience, despite the apparent absence of traditional religious or spiritual support systems.

The impact of socioeconomic factors, social support networks outside religious structures, and access to mental health resources should also be taken into account in future analyses, to provide a better understanding of the complex interactions between belief systems and well-being.

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Information about authors:

Akmadi Moldir (corresponding-author) – PhD doctor of the Department of Sociology and Social Work, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: akmadi.moldir@gmail.com;

Kenzhakimova Gulnara – candidate of Sociological Sciences of the Department of Sociology and Social Work, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: Gulnar.Kenzhakimova@kaznu.edu.kz;

Umbet Raushan Sabitkyzy – PhD student in Sociology (8D03101) of the Department of Sociology and Social Work, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: rauka.phd@gmail.com

Авторлар туралы мәлімет:

Ақмади Мәлдір Арманқызы (корреспондент-автор) – әлеуметтану және әлеуметтік жұмыс кафедрасының PhD докторы, Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: akmadi.moldir@gmail.com;

Кенжақимова Гүлнара Аляевна – әлеуметтану және әлеуметтік жұмыс кафедрасының әлеуметтану ғылымдарының кандидаты, Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: Gulnar.Kenzhakimova@kaznu.edu.kz;

Умбет Раушан Сабитқызы – әлеуметтану және әлеуметтік жұмыс кафедрасының әлеуметтану мамандығы бойынша докторанты (8D03101), Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: rauka.phd@gmail.com

Сведения об авторах:

Ақмади Мәлдір Арманқызы (автор-корреспондент) – доктор PhD кафедрасы социологии и социальной работы Казахского национального университета имени Аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: akmadi.moldir@gmail.com;

Кенжақимова Гүлнара Аляевна – кандидат социологических наук кафедры социологии и социальной работы Казахского национального университета имени Аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: Gulnar.Kenzhakimova@kaznu.edu.kz;

Умбет Раушан Сабитқызы – докторант по специальности Социология (8D03101) кафедры социологии и социальной работы Казахского национального университета имени Аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: rauka.phd@gmail.com

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