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Religiousness and cognitive emotion regulation strategies in adolescence

ABSTRACT

Human religiousness is a complex and multidimensional reality embedded in basic human needs and connected with people's desires, anxieties, and hopes. The aim of the paper is to assess religiousness, considered in terms of meaning and cognitive emotion regulation strategies, in adolescents. The religious meaning system is a multidimensional construct encompassing convictions, beliefs, emotional connotations, and the rules of worship. In situations of negative events or unpleasant experiences, young people resort to various coping strategies. Cognitive emotion regulation strategies concern relatively stable conscious ways of regulating emotions, which consist in mentally handling the incoming information that evoke emotions. The study concerned young people aged 13 to 16 years (N = 130). Religiousness was assessed using D. Krok's Religious Meaning System Questionnaire (RMSQ) and cognitive coping strategies were measured using the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ) by N. Garnefski and V. Kraaij. The results show that there are relations between religiousness, understood in terms of the young participants' meaning system, and adaptive as well as maladaptive emotion regulation strategies. The results of the study are discussed in the light of theory and research.

KEYWORDS: adolescents, cognitive emotion regulation strategies, religious meaning system

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INTRODUCTION

Human religiousness is a phenomenon that scholars of various disciplines, including psychology, have been exploring for centuries. It is a complex and multidimensional reality, embedded in basic human needs and connected with people's desires, anxieties, and hopes. It refers to an individual's relationship with God and the system of beliefs. In psychology, its cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects can be an object of empirical research (Grzymała-Moszczyńska, 1991; Prężyna, 1981). Religiousness performs many positive functions in human life: it is a source of the system of values and personal development, it helps develop proper social relations, it protects against a sense of insecurity, and it allows to build basic trust stemming from the awareness that human fate is in the hands of Providence. It contributes to the development and integration of personality (Chat, 2009). Religion performs the social communication function, builds specific and deep bonds, helps overcome loneliness, satisfies the need for affiliation and closeness, and provides support in situations of difficult experiences (Chat, 2009; Kubacka-Jasiecka, Dorczak, & Opoczyńska, 1996; cf. Talik, 2013). Research also points to the importance of religiousness for the development and quality of the educational environment (Rostowska & Żylińska, 2009). Apart from the above, there are also self-psychotherapeutic functions of religiousness, whose existence Talik (2013) points out in her research, asserting that "religiousness liberates a person from a sense of insecurity by giving him or her the belief that life is being watched over and guided by Providence" (p. 31, translation mine). Religiousness is also a significant factor that reduces tensions and liberates from the sense of guilt (Chlewiński, 1982; Grzymała-Moszczyńska, 1996). It performs regulatory functions – it has a positive influence on people suffering from mental disorders such as depressions, neuroses, or addictions or exhibiting socially unacceptable behaviors (Talik, 2013). As a multidimen-

sional phenomenon, religiousness manifests itself not only in spiritual experiences but also in coping with stress by drawing on religious contents (Wnuk & Marcinkowski, 2012; Pargament, Koenig, & Perez, 2000), with a sense of support from God and from the community of the Church (Wnuk & Marcinkowski, 2012). It can also influence the formulation of goals necessary for psychological self-regulation, control emotions, and influence behavior (Cohen & Rankin, 2004; Krok, 2009).

The present research project is based on the conception of the psychology of religion in which religiousness is expressed in terms of meaning (Park, 2005; 2013; Van der Lans, 1996). The religious meaning system is a multidimensional construct encompassing convictions, beliefs, emotional connotations, and the rules of worship. A particular person's religious system is not only objective norms and principles but also a style of living, a way of looking at the world, and a way of reacting to events (Park, 2005, 2013; cf. Krok, 2012). In religiousness considered in terms of meaning, an important role is played by cognitive processes, thanks to which the reality surrounding a particular person is perceived and interpreted, as through a "lens" (Krok, 2009). Religiousness considered in terms of a system of meanings plays an important role in the processes of coping in stressful situations, especially when it comes to building a new way of looking at difficult situations – developing a new perspective in the light of which unpleasant events are perceived (Park, 2005). Religion as a system of beliefs allows people to understand the events they encounter and the changes taking place, to attribute meaning and sense to them, and to build a coherent interpretation of experiences, events, or circumstances (Park, 2013; cf. Krok, 2009). The religious meaning system has a global character and is made up of three components: cognitive, affective, and emotional, which reflect general beliefs, general goals, and the sense of meaning in life. General beliefs, such as belief in God, but also those concerning the norms of social life (such as justice, honesty, or truthfulness),

enable people to explain the events taking place around them. They make it possible to understand and interpret the events of everyday life, especially situations of loss, suffering, and tragedy. General goals reflect everything that people consider important in life, strive to achieve, or try to keep. The sense of meaning in life is associated with discovering that which gives value and purpose to life (Frankl, 1969; Popielski, 1996; Krok, 2009). Beliefs and goals have a considerable influence on all the spheres of personality: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. General meaning in the form of beliefs, goals, and a sense of meaning in life (in other words, the general philosophy of life) undergoes transformation into everyday meanings. Thus, religious beliefs contribute to the interpretation of events, general goals influence the formation of everyday strivings, and the sense of meaning in life manifests itself in the level of psychological well-being (Krok, 2009).

As a system, religion plays an important role also in the period of adolescence, particularly in difficult situations (cf. Talik, 2013). Adolescence is a time of identity formation, a time of looking for the answer to the question of who you are, what is important to you, and what you strive to achieve. It is also a time of confrontation between ideals and reality, between dreams and the possibility of their fulfillment; it is a time when sense is sought and meaning is given, a time of higher susceptibility to stress-inducing factors in the form of various difficult situations. Besides unpredictable life situations (such as an accident or death), childhood and adolescence involve specific difficult situations in the spheres of family, school, or peer groups (cf. Guszkowska, Gorący, & Rychta-Siedlecka, 2001). These include situations of insecurity (threat to health or position, failures), overload (too difficult tasks exceeding the person's capabilities), disturbance (obstacle, frustration), deprivation (unfulfillment of a strong need), or conflict. According to the transactional stress theory, stress is "a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources

and endangering his or her well-being" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 19; Lazarus & Folkman, 1987; Heszen, 2013). Coping with stress is understood as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Monat & Lazarus, 1991, p. 5). What is important in the process of coping is cognitive appraisal (primary and secondary), which precedes the process of coping. Primary appraisal refers to the degree to which a situation is perceived as threatening. Secondary appraisal concerns one's own perceived capabilities of coping. The best-known classification of coping strategies distinguishes between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Oleś, 1993). Other authors name three main coping styles: active behavior (i.e., reactions that change the situation), cognitive coping (reactions that change the meaning or appraisal of stress), and avoidance (reactions aimed at controlling unpleasant feelings) (Oleś, 1993). Problem-focused strategies are usually regarded as more adaptive. However, there are situations in which nothing can be changed, or ones in which emotions are too strong and problem-focused strategies may not bring the desired effect; in these cases, emotion-focused strategies can be more adaptive, particularly in the first stage of coping (Lazarus, 1993; Oleś, 1993). Negative events and difficult, stressful situations are a source of unpleasant emotions; therefore, coping with them can be considered in terms of emotion regulation. The concept of emotion regulation can be used in two ways: with reference to situations in which emotions are regulators of psychological processes (e.g., attention) and with reference to situations in which emotions themselves are subject to regulation processes such as a change from negative to positive, a change in intensity, or a change in duration (Cole, Martin, & Dennis, 2004, as cited in Marszał-Wiśniewska, Fajkowska, 2010, p. 19). In the second sense – emotion regulation is "all the extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating,

and modifying emotional reactions, especially their intensive and temporal features, to accomplish one's goals" (Thompson, 1994; as cited in Garnefski, Kraail, & Spinhoven, 2001, p. 1311). This broad understanding covers biological and social processes, unconscious cognitive processes, and specific behaviors (Thompson, 1991; Davidson, 2000). The approach taken so far in investigating the ways of coping in difficult situations has been to take into account the measurement of both cognitive and behavioral strategies. In recent years, Garnefski, Kraaij, and Spinhoven (2001) have proposed a somewhat different approach to the problem of emotional regulation. In their research they focus exclusively on cognitive emotion regulation strategies, which they understand as relatively stable conscious ways of regulating emotions conducive to the achievement of goals, whose aim is to modify emotional reactions by mentally handling the incoming information (Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2001). They distinguish two types of cognitive emotion regulation strategies: adaptive (positive, constructive), which facilitate behavior change in confrontation with difficult, negative events, and maladaptive (negative, nonconstructive), which hinder change and perpetuate behaviors detrimental to well-being and functioning. The authors identify the following types of adaptive strategies: 1. Acceptance – coming to terms with what has happened and the acceptance of what one has experienced; 2. Refocus on planning – focusing one's thoughts on what should be done in order to cope with an unpleasant, negative event; 3. Positive refocusing – turning one's thoughts towards positive events, as opposed to pondering over the unpleasant things that have happened; 4. Positive reappraisal – making a negative experience positively meaningful in terms of development and growth; 5. Putting into perspective – looking at a negative experience in the context of other negative experiences and diminishing its role in comparison with other events. The maladaptive strategies include: 6. Self-blame – blaming oneself for a negative experience; 7. Blaming others – putting the blame

for an unpleasant experience on others; 8. Rumination – continually thinking and dwelling on negative events combined with experiencing the feelings associated with it; 9. Catastrophizing – stressing the weight, the negative importance, or even the horror of the experience one has been through. Cognitive processes are helpful in managing or regulating emotions and feelings, which allows the person to maintain control over his or her emotions both during their occurrence in stressful situations and after difficult, stressful events (Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2001). In the present paper the term *cognitive emotion regulation strategies* is used interchangeably with *cognitive coping strategies* (cf. Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2001).

RESEARCH AIM AND METHOD

Most studies to date have been devoted to the assessment of broadly understood coping strategies or styles based on different theories of stress (Carver & Scheier, 1989; Heszen, 2013; Parker & Endler, 1990; Wrześniewski, 2007). There are no studies concerning young people in Poland that are devoted exclusively to cognitive coping or emotion regulation strategies. The existing studies that examine young people and adults from this perspective concern foreign populations (Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2001; Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006, 2007). The first Polish studies using the CERQ examine adult samples (Marszał-Wiśniewska, 2006; Marszał-Wiśniewska & Fajkowska, 2010), and Mihalca (2013) adapted the method for the study of children and young people. Also lacking are studies on cognitive ways of coping in the context of religiousness understood in terms of the religious meaning system.

The aim of the present study was to assess religiousness understood as a system of meanings, to explore the cognitive coping / emotion regulation strategies used by teenagers, as well as to

identify the relations between these cognitively defined variables. The aim was therefore to find answers to the following questions:

What is the level of religiousness understood in terms of the religious meaning system in teenagers?

What cognitive emotion regulation strategies do young people use in the process of coping with stressful situations?

What relations are there between young people's religiousness understood in terms of a religious meaning system and the type of cognitive emotion regulation strategies applied in situations of difficulties, negative events, or unpleasant experiences in life?

What cognitive coping strategies are used by young people with high and low religiousness understood as a religious meaning system?

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in the study were adolescents aged 13 to 16 years, $N = 57$ (47.9%) girls and $N = 62$ (52.1%) boys (mean age $M = 15.39$, $SD = 1.34$). A considerable majority of the young participants (75.6%) lived in the countryside and nearly ¼ of them (24.4%) lived in towns. The largest number of participants (around 45%) were technical high school students, nearly 41% attended junior high school, and a little more than 14% of the adolescents attended senior high school. A vast majority of the participants (nearly 94%) had siblings. Only 16.5% of the young participants' mothers had university education, nearly 40% had secondary, 35% vocational, and less than 8% – elementary education. In the case of fathers' education, the figures are similar. Nearly ¾ of the participants described their families as having an average material status, a little more than 20% of families were very well-off, and a negligible proportion (less than 1%) saw their families as very poor.\

QUESTIONNAIRES

Two research methods were applied in the present project. We used D. Krok's Religious Meaning System Questionnaire (RMSQ) to measure religiousness, and the tool used for assessing cognitive emotion regulation strategies was the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ), whose authors are N. Garnefski and V. Kraaij (2001).

The Religious Meaning System Questionnaire (RSMQ; Krok, 2009). The RSMQ measures religiousness as a factor that gives sense and meaning to human thinking and activity and enables general assessment of religiousness in terms of meaning (Park, 2005; Krok, 2009). The RMSQ consists of 20 statements rated on a 7-point scale in terms of the extent to which the participant agrees with each of them. The scale comprises two main dimensions of the religious meaning system: Religious Orientation and Religious Meaningfulness. Religious orientation helps a person understand the surrounding world and his or her own life. Religious contents can be the strength one draws on to take up everyday activities and overcome difficulties. This dimension makes it possible to specify the extent to which a person treats religion as a system allowing them to explain personal matters and everything they encounter on a daily basis (Krok, 2001). The other one, religious meaningfulness makes it possible for a person to interpret everything that life brings in terms of meaning and purpose. This dimension shows to what extent a person takes advantage of his or her religiousness in order to find the meaning and value of life in the events that happen (sometimes very difficult ones, such as illness, suffering, death, or failure) (Krok, 2001). Example statements: Religion answers the question of what is good and what is evil; Religious practices play an important role in my life. The participant's task is to respond to the statements and rate them as shown in the instruction. The score on

each dimension is computed by adding up the ratings given to its items. The overall score is the sum of the scores on the two dimensions. The scores on the Religious Orientation and Religious Meaningfulness dimensions range from 10 to 70 and the overall score ranges from 20 to 140. The interpretation of results is performed separately for the two dimensions, Religious Orientation and Religious Meaningfulness, as well as for the overall score. The RMSQ has acceptable psychometric properties. Its test-retest reliability was verified in a group of 128 people with a two-week interval between measurements. Pearson's *r* reliability coefficient was .81. In order to test the validity of the scale, we compared it with the Centrality Religious Attitude Scale by Prężyna (1977). The correlation between the dimensions was *r* = .79 in the case of the overall score, *r* = .80 in the case of the Religious Orientation scale, and *r* = .77 in the case of the Religious Meaningfulness scale.

The Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ; Garnefski & Kraaij, 2001). The CERQ used in the present study is the Polish version of the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire for the study of children and adolescents aged below 16. The author of the Polish translation and preliminary validation is A. Mihalca (2013). Just like the version for adults (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2007; Marszał-Wisniewska & Fajkowska, 2010), this questionnaire consists of 36 items concerning various ways of mentally coping with difficult situations. Based on theory and research, nine cognitive emotional regulation strategies were distinguished; each of them refers to what a person thinks after the experience of threatening or stressful events. The participants' task is to rate on a 5-point scale (from 1 – *almost never*, to 5 – *almost always*) how often they have a particular kind of thoughts with reference to a difficult or unpleasant situation. Example statements: *I think about how I can cope with it; I think that I am the one to blame for it; All the time I try to understand why I feel the way I do; It simply happened – I cannot help it.* The questionnaire comprises nine scales

(four statements in each) corresponding to the emotion regulation strategies distinguished: Self-Blame, Acceptance, Rumination, Positive Refocusing, Refocus on Planning, Positive Reappraisal, Putting Into Perspective, Catastrophizing, and Blaming Others. The psychometric properties of the questionnaire are acceptable. Cronbach's alpha reliability (internal consistency) of the Polish version of the questionnaire is .83 (Oleś & Woźny, 2014), and the reliability coefficients of its scales range from .50 (Acceptance) to .81 (Positive Refocusing) (Michalca, 2013). The validity of the questionnaire is confirmed by the negative relations of adaptive emotion regulation strategies with anxiety and depression as well as by the positive relations of nonadaptive coping strategies with the intensity of depression and anxiety (Mihalca, 2013).

RESULTS

In view of the normality of distributions of the studied variables, parametric tests were used in the analysis of results, namely: Student's *t*-test for assessing intergroup differences and

Pearson's *r* correlation coefficients for investigating the interrelations between the variables.

The Participants' Religious Meaning System

Using the Religious Meaning System Questionnaire, we assessed the general level of religiousness in teenagers and measured particular aspects of religiousness on the dimensions distinguished (Table 1).

The total score obtained by the teenage participants in the RMS Questionnaire points to a moderate intensity of religiousness in the whole sample ($M = 9.26$, $SD = 1.72$). Adolescent's scores are higher than those of adults with different levels of education (secondary: $M = 7.98$; incomplete higher: $M = 7.09$; higher: $M = 7.69$) in Krok's study (2009). A similar direction of differences was

Table 1. The Level of the Religious Meaning System – RMSQ Scores (*M* and *SD*) for the Whole Sample, for Girls, and for Boys; Student's t-Test of the Significance of Differences

DIMENSIONS	TOTAL (*N* = 119)		GIRLS (*N* = 57)		BOYS (*N* = 62)		DIFFERENCES	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p* <
Orientation	4.40	0.91	4.55	0.97	4.26	0.85	1.71	.1
Meaningfulness	4.85	0.94	5.04	0.97	4.69	0.90	2.02	.05
Total	9.26	1.72	9.59	1.81	8.95	1.61	2.02	.05

found for the scales of Religious Orientation (people with secondary education: $M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.13$; people with incomplete higher education: $M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.16$; people with higher education: $M = 3.92$) and Religious Meaningfulness (respectively: $M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.13$; $M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.15$; $M = 4.77$, $SD = 0.12$). This means that, to the participants, religiousness is an important dimension of building beliefs concerning themselves and the world, and thereby it becomes an important source of meaning and helps them understand their own life, the surrounding reality, and the principles governing it. The mean scores on the Religiousness Orientation and Religious Meaningfulness subscales are similar ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.91$ and $M = 4.85$, $SD = 0.94$, respectively). It can be said that the religious meaning system allows the participants to understand the world and their own lives and that religious content play a motivating role in the process of coping in daily life as well as in difficult situations. The religious meaning system enables the participants to interpret their own lives in terms of purpose and meaning, to discover the right beliefs, expectations, goals, and values.

The analysis of results in terms of the gender variable reveals that girls scored significantly higher than boys on general religious meaning system ($M = 9.59$, $SD = 1.81$) as well as on the Religious Meaningfulness dimension ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 0.97$). This

means that girls perceive their religiousness to a greater extent as help in seeking the sense of life, achieving goals, and discovering the value of life. The score obtained by boys (M = 8.95, SD = 1.61) indicates that religiousness is also important to them in discovering the value of life and making it meaningful, though less so than to girls. There are no significant differences between girls and boys, however, on the Religious Orientation dimension (it is only possible to speak of a tendency of girls to score higher), which means that for boys and for girls religious orientation plays a comparably important role in the formation of beliefs concerning themselves and the surrounding world and that religious contents constitute an important frame of reference in life in their interpretation of current experience as well as unpredictable or undesirable events.

Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies in Adolescents
Further analyses concern the assessment of the emotion regulation strategies used by adolescents in difficult situations. The CERQ scores for the whole sample, for boys, and for girls are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Level of Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies – Scores (M and SD) for the Whole Sample, for Boys, and for Girls; t-Test of Significance

CERQ SCALES	TOTAL N = 119		GIRLS N = 57		BOYS N = 62		DIFFERENCES	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	t	$p <$
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Self-blame	12.37	3.07	12.91	3.04	11.88	3.04	1.83	.1
Acceptance	12.40	2.31	12.66	2.42	12.16	2.19	1.19	.1
Rumination	13.04	2.60	13.78	2.58	12.35	2.44	3.10	.002
Positive refocusing	13.07	3.15	12.05	3.46	14.01	2.51	-3.55	.001

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Refocus on planning	13.95	2.67	13.89	2.84	14.01	2.51	-0.24	n.s.
Positive reappraisal	13.00	2.89	12.40	3.07	13.56	2.62	-2.22	.05
Putting into perspective	12.71	3.07	12.47	3.19	12.93	2.93	-0.81	n.s.
Catastroph-izing	11.65	3.08	12.08	3.25	11.25	2.89	1.47	n.s.
Blaming others	9.84	3.12	9.12	3.29	10.50	2.83	-2.44	.02

The results obtained in the CERQ indicate that in situations of negative experiences young people usually use the planning strategy – namely, they think of what to do next and plan some kind of way out of or solution to problem situations or plan to alleviate the effects of negative events or unpleasant experiences. Besides planning, teenagers employ the strategies of positive refocusing and positive reappraisal. This means that in negative situations young people also try to focus on something positive and strive to turn their thoughts towards positive, pleasant events. Moreover, the participants try to make a reappraisal by attributing positive meaning to a negative experience in terms of development and growth. They make attempts to notice the positive aspects of the negative situation and perhaps to draw conclusions concerning how to avoid such situations in the future. These are typical adaptive strategies that help to solve a difficult situation. Still, besides these adaptive strategies, which the participants use the most often, there is the rumination strategy (a maladaptive one), which consists in dwelling on and mentally reliving a negative event together with the negative emotions that it was accompanied by. Of the emotion regulation strategies that were examined, catastrophizing had the lowest scores, which means that the participants

put little emphasis on the weight and importance of the negative event they have experienced as a catastrophe or misfortune.

The comparative analysis in terms of the gender variable shows that girls and boys differ significantly in the emotion regulation strategies they employ. The significant differences concern several strategies: boys significantly more often use the strategies of positive refocusing, positive reappraisal, and blaming others. Girls engage in rumination significantly more often. Thus, boys try to use the mechanism of turning their attention away from what is unpleasant towards positive experiences to a greater extent than girls do; they try to turn their attention towards good events instead of thinking about what was unpleasant. They seek the positive meaning and value of what has happened more than girls do in terms of the value and possibility of development and growth. They also resort to external causal attribution more than girls do, using the strategy of blaming others. Compared to boys, girls are more inclined to dwell on negative events as well as on the emotions and effects associated with them. Girls also scored a little higher than boys on the acceptance strategy, understood as coming to terms with what has happened and blaming oneself – an inclination to put the blame for what has happened on oneself – but it is only legitimate in this case to speak of a tendency in the direction of differences (p < .1) There are no significant differences between girls and boys in the following strategies: refocus on planning, putting into perspective, and catastrophizing. Thus, girls and boys similarly often use adaptive strategies consisting in focusing on the problem and planning steps to solve the unpleasant situation; they similarly often put unpleasant events into broader perspective and look at them in the context of other events, trying to diminish the influence of negative experiences and their role compared to other situations. There are no gender differences, either, when it comes to stressing the horror, importance, or weight of a negative event or experience. Overall, considering both adaptive and maladaptive emotion regulation

strategies, we found no significant differences between girls and boys in maladaptive strategies and a tendency in the direction of differences in adaptive strategies, with boys scoring higher.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RELIGIOUS MEANING SYSTEM AND COGNITIVE BEHAVIOR REGULATION STRATEGIES

Further analyses concern the relationship between the religious meaning system and its dimensions and cognitive emotion regulation strategies. The obtained coefficients of correlation between the variables are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The Relationship Between the Religious Meaning System (RMSQ) and Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies (CERQ) – Results for the Whole Sample (N = 119); Pearson's r Correlations

	RELIGIOUS MEANING SYSTEM		
COGNITIVE EMOTION REGULATION STRATEGIES	RO	RM	OS
Self-blame	.14	.17	.17
Acceptance	.15	.10	.14
Rumination	**.26****	**.23***	**.27****
Positive refocusing	.01	-.02	-.00
Refocus on planning	.14	**.22***	**.19***
Positive reappraisal	.16	.10	.14
Putting into perspective	.12	.08	.11
Catastrophizing	**.23***	.03	.14
Blaming others	-.17	**-.29****	**-.25****

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

The obtained correlation coefficients suggest the existence of relations between the religious meaning system and cognitive emotion regulation strategies. The highest positive relationship

with the overall religious meaning system score (OS) is found in the case of the rumination strategy ($p < .01$), and a negative relationship with the overall RMSQ score is found in the case blaming others ($p < .01$). The religious meaning system also co-occurs with refocus on planning ($p < .05$). Possessing and being guided in life by a religious meaning system – that is, having religious beliefs, faith in God, being guided in life by a system of norms and values – co-occurs in the young participants with an inclination to mentally relive and excessively dwell on negative, unpleasant, and stressful events. By contrast, there is a negative relationship between religion in the participants' life and the use of the blaming others strategy. This means that the greater is the importance of the religious system in a young person's life, the more inclined the person is to blame others for various misfortunes or unpleasant experiences that happen to him or her. When it comes to the relations between the examined components of the religious meaning system and cognitive coping strategies, religious orientation is positively related with rumination ($p < .01$) and catastrophizing ($p < .05$), while religious meaningfulness is positively related with rumination ($p < .01$) and refocus on planning ($p < .05$) and negatively with blaming others ($p < .01$). In order to check if the relations found for the whole sample would be confirmed for the groups of girls and boys, we checked the patterns of correlations between the studied variables for these two groups separately. The correlation coefficients are presented in Table 4.

The analysis of the obtained correlation coefficients reveals different patterns of correlations between the variables in the groups of girls and boys. In the group of girls, the overall RMSQ score corresponds the most strongly with the catastrophizing strategy ($p < .05$), which means that, in girls, having religious beliefs is associated, above all, with the use of the maladaptive strategy in stressful situations that consists in emphasizing the horror and importance of those situations. It is therefore associated with the

Table 4. The Relationship Between RMSQ Scores and Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies (CERQ) in the Groups of Girls and Boys; Pearson's r Correlations

COGNITIVE EMOTION REGULATION STRATEGIES	RELIGIOUS MEANING SYSTEM GIRLS (N = 57)			RELIGIOUS MEANING SYSTEM BOYS (N = 62)		
	RO	RM	OS	RO	RM	OS
Self-blame	.01	.16	.09	.24	.14	.21
Acceptance	.14	.16	.16	.14	-.00	.07
Rumination	.12	.24	.19	**.35****	.14	**.27***
Positive refocusing	.07	-.01	.03	.06	.11	.09
Refocus on planning	.10	.06	.08	.20	**.42****	**.34****
Positive reappraisal	**.35****	.08	.23	.03	.21	.14
Putting into perspective	**.27***	.14	.20	-.02	.08	.04
Catastrophizing	**.31***	.21	**.28***	.10	-.21	-.06
Blaming others	-.13	-.17	-.16	-.14	**-.36****	**-.28****

** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$

occurrence of and focus on negative emotions. In boys, the overall RMSQ score is related the most strongly with refocus on planning ($p < .01$), blaming others (negative correlation, $p < .05$), and rumination ($p < .05$). In boys, having religious beliefs co-occurs with the adaptive strategy of planning steps to solve the difficult situation, but also with dwelling on difficult situations and blaming others for unpleasant events. In the group of girls, religious orientation is the most strongly related to positive reappraisal, catastrophizing ($p < .01$), and the strategy called putting into perspective, whereas in the group of boys it is the most strongly related to rumination ($p < .01$). There are no significant correlations between the religious meaningfulness dimension and cognitive emotion regulation strategies in the group of girls, while in the group of boys religious meaningfulness is related to refocus on planning ($p < .01$) and blaming others (negative correlation, $p < .05$).

THE LEVEL OF THE RELIGIOUS MEANING SYSTEM AND
COGNITIVE EMOTION REGULATION STRATEGIES

The next analysis concerns the comparison of cognitive coping strategies in terms of the intensity of the participants' religiousness measured using the RMSQ. For this purpose, using the quartile deviation method, two extreme groups were distinguished: one with high ($N = 27$) and the other one with low intensity of the religious meaning system ($N = 27$). As the normality of distribution criterion was not met, the nonparametric Mann–Whitney U test was used for most of the scales. The results of comparisons are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Comparison in Terms of Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies for Groups With Low ($N = 27$) and High Religiousness (N = 27); *Mann–Whitney U Test / Student's t-Test

STRATEGIES	LOW RELIGIOUSNESS		HIGH RELIGIOUSNESS		DIFFERENCES	
	M	SD	M	SD	U/t	p <
Self-blame	11.8	2.9	12.8	2.9	280.0	n.s.
Acceptance	11.62	2.1	12.9	2.6	254.5	.06
Rumination*	12.25	3.0	13.88	2.7	-2.059	.05
Positive refocusing	12.37	3.7	13.66	3.5	278.5	n.s.
Refocus on planning	13.48	2.2	15.07	3.4	218.0	.02
Positive reappraisal	12.62	2.4	14.40	3.4	231.5	.05
Putting into perspective	12.18	3.15	14.03	3.0	251.5	.05
Catastrophizing	11.03	2.7	12.14	3.5	289.5	n.s.
Blaming others	10.77	3.06	9.40	3.5	261.0	.1

The results of the comparison indicate that the teenage participants with different levels of religiousness differ significantly in the constructive strategies of planning ($p < .02$), positive reappraisal, and putting into perspective ($p < .05$) as well as in the

maladaptive strategy of rumination ($p < .05$). Adolescents characterized by a high level of religiousness more often use adaptive ways of coping in difficult situations, but besides those there also occurs the rumination strategy – dwelling on negative events. It is legitimate to speak of a tendency in the direction of differences in the case of the strategies of acceptance and blaming others – individuals with a higher level of religiousness are more likely to blame others compared to participants with low religiousness.

The results of the study show that the religious meaning system plays an important role in coping with difficult, negative events and experiences in young people. It correlates with both adaptive and maladaptive emotion regulation strategies that young people use in difficult situations.

DISCUSSION

The scores obtained in the study conducted on young people using the Religious Meaning System Questionnaire are higher than the scores obtained by adults with different levels of education (Krok, 2009). This refers to overall scores as well as to subscale scores. The study reveals that the level of education differentiates between adults in terms of the general intensity of religiousness and its components. The question arises of whether the participants' age, their level of maturity, and the specificity of adolescence can be of importance when it comes to the intensity of religiousness and identification with religious values. Adolescence is the time of looking for one's own identity and the time when beliefs and attitudes are formed, including attitudes to religion. It is the period when the norms and values adopted in the process of socialization undergo verification, sometimes connected with youthful idealism and perception of the world in black and white. On the one hand, a rejection of previous authorities may take place, and on the other, what happens is the

process of maturation and integration, leading to greater religious awareness and maturity, when religion often becomes a point of reference and support in difficult situations. It is in this period that worldview formation takes place (Maćkowiak-Deskur, 2002), and religion may be a source of important mechanisms or ways of coping in difficult situations, including specific religious coping strategies (Talik, 2013). The scores obtained in the RMSQ indicate that among the young participants there are people with a high intensity of religiousness as well as ones with medium or low religiousness. The fact that a considerably high proportion of participants came from rural communities prompts the question of how strongly the upbringing environment or the parents' education level is related to the high intensity of religiousness in young people.

The analyses performed reveal that, compared to boys, girls are characterized by a higher level of religiousness understood in terms of a religious meaning system, including a higher level of religious meaningfulness – girls interpret life in terms of sense, meaning, and purpose to a greater extent than boys; they also exhibit a tendency to explain life in religious terms more frequently. Perhaps this is due to their stronger identification with the system of values, norms, and beliefs transmitted by parents. Boys, by contrast, may exhibit a greater need for autonomy and independence, sometimes for rebellion against authorities, which may be reflected in their beliefs and worldview (Oleszkowicz & Senejko, 2013).

Research shows that in situations of negative experiences young people use opposing cognitive strategies: planning and positive reappraisal vs. rumination. Due to the specificity of the adolescence period, on the one hand young people use more and more mature mechanisms of coping in difficult situations, and on the other – exhibiting greater sensitivity and emotional lability – they are susceptible to the influence of detrimental factors. As a result, they may easily give in to a tendency to dwell on and

relive difficult events and the emotions associated with them. This way of coping may also be related to the problems of the adolescence crisis (Oleszkowicz, 1995).

Analysis concerning the use of coping strategies in terms of gender reveals no significant differences between girls and boys in the strategies of acceptance, planning, putting into perspective, and catastrophizing. In difficult situations, boys and girls similarly often accept what has happened, focus on what must be done to solve the situation or to minimize its effects, look at the situation from the perspective of experience and compare it to other events thus diminishing its role, as well as emphasize the importance of the negative event.

Compared to girls, boys use the following strategies more often: positive refocusing, blaming others, and positive reappraisal – which may have an adaptive significance. Girls, by contrast, more often use rumination, which is consistent with the results obtained for women, who resort to maladaptive cognitive regulatory operations, including rumination (Jackson & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001). Girls are more strongly engaged in the experience of emotional states, which may be due to their hormonal economy, disrupting the experience of positive emotions in favor of negative ones. Their way of experiencing and coping with difficult situations may also stem from insufficient ability to confront threatening situations (Jackson & Nolen-Heksma, 2001). Girls' and boys' use of maladaptive coping strategies may stem from a certain degree of immaturity of coping mechanisms at this stage of life and from lower resistance to difficult situations that may be a challenge to big for adolescents to cope with. The tendency of boys to use adaptive strategies more frequently may stem from their higher task-orientedness, genetically or temperamentally determined. Temperamental traits are significantly related to the use of adaptive or maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies (Marszał-Wiśniewska, 2006). Personality traits, such as introversion or neuroticism, may be related to re-

ligiousness (cf. Chlewiński, 2000; Francis, Pearson, & Carter, 1981; Prężyna, 1977). It is therefore legitimate to believe that they may also be related to the kind of cognitive coping strategies a person uses. This can be an object of further research.

The obtained results point to significant relations between the religious meaning system and cognitive coping strategies. The general level of religiousness and religious meaningfulness correlate negatively with blaming others. Blaming others is a form of indirect aggression. Faith and religious feelings (e.g., worship, respect, gratitude, forgiveness) foster the formation of positive relationships and the well-being associated with them (Emmons, 2006). The positive relationship of religiousness with rumination and planning may stem from higher sensitivity and mindfulness, which allows repeated rumination as well as solution planning. The role of mindfulness in spirituality and religion is pointed out by Emmons (2006). The positive relationship of religious orientation with rumination and catastrophizing may be related to an attitude in which faith is a potential source of problems or even suffering: a difficult situation can be perceived as abandonment by or punishment from Providence (Pargament et al., as cited in Krok, 2009, p. 166). Such perception of negative events would explain the inclination to dwell on threatening situations and to treat them as involving a kind of horror.

As follows from the analyses performed, the patterns of correlations between cognitive strategies and the religious meaning system are somewhat different in girls and in boys. In girls, the religious meaning system correlates with catastrophizing, while in boys it correlates positively with positive reappraisal and rumination and negatively with blaming others. Religious orientation is associated with positive reappraisal, putting into perspective, and catastrophizing in girls and with rumination in boys. There are no significant relations between religious meaningfulness and cognitive strategies in the group of girls, while in boys religious meaningfulness is related to planning and negatively to blaming

others. These somewhat different patterns of correlations between religiousness and cognitive coping strategies in girls and boys are probably determined by numerous factors, such as: temperamental traits, personality traits, emotionality, psychological resistance, maturity, the level of identity development, the degree of identification with the educational environment, and the principles and models transmitted in the upbringing process. Religion as a system of meanings as well as the cognitive coping strategies used are probably related to young people's higher reflectiveness and sensitivity in the period of "storm and stress," the period of looking for and forming their own identity and of better adaptation connected with the performance of developmental tasks.

The present study confirms the importance of religiousness in the process of coping in adolescents. The significance of faith in the process of coping and adaptation in immigrants' children is stressed by Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010). Nooney (2005) draws attention to the positive influence of religion on coping processes and mental health in adolescence. Koenig, George, and Siegler (1988) point to the significance of coping strategies in elderly people. Generally, faith and religious beliefs contribute to better coping with stress (Pargament, 1996; cf. Stríznec, 1995). Religion can also perform important therapeutic functions and can be treated as one of the human personal resources (Brown, 1996).

The obtained results can be treated as a preliminary inquiry into the relations between religiousness and cognitive coping strategies, inspiring further research concerning young people and further exploration of these issues in connection with other psychological variables.

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