

CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF THE CITIZENS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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ABSTRACT

The study is focused on certain characteristics of the religious beliefs and practices of the Macedonian citizens that have been identified within the research project European Values Study. The general knowledge about the prevalence and significance of the religion in the lives of the participants surveyed were initially analyzed and commented, regardless of their religiosity and religious affiliation. This is followed by an in-depth analysis that is focused on the differences in attitude and evaluation of certain aspects of religion among participants who declared themselves as believers and those who declared themselves as non-believers, but the dispositive correlates of religiosity are considered as well. The last part of the study focuses on the findings from the comparative analysis of the characteristics of religiosity, attitudes and value preferences of the participants Christians and Muslims.

Keywords: religion, beliefs, practices, believers, Christians, Muslims

Introduction

Sociological definition of religion, religiosity and issues related to the need of the people to believe in the supernatural, the immaterial and the unknown, in recent decades are the subject of a series of theoretical debates, discussions and empirical analysis. One of the ongoing debates refers to the phenomenon of secularization which is analyzed from different theoretical positions and it was a subject of many empirical researches. Pickel (2009), for example, argues that the process of secularization is comprehensive and it takes place in almost all European societies, including the post-socialist countries. Bruce (2002) advocates similar standpoint on the dominance of secularization, but he further argues that religion has an important role in the "cultural resistance" and "cultural transition". Some authors, however, believe that the assumption that today we live in a secularized world is quite wrong. According to Berger, "The

world today, with some exceptions ... is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever" (1999:2). This position in a certain way is supported by Hamilton (2003), who argues that although the idea about the connection between technological development of modern societies and secularization was represented for a long time, however there are not enough solid evidences about it.

He believes that the religion has a significant impact on public life in several economically and technologically most developed societies in the world, as is the case with the USA and Japan.

Other studies, however, highlight the importance of analyzing the specific religious needs of the people in postmodern times, where it comes to typical transformation of traditional religiosity in certain spiritual practices or in so-called spiritual religiosity (Hervieu-Leger, 2000). In the last decades more empirical studies are published which consider the issue of the religious pluralism and various aspects related to it. Thus, for example, one of more interesting debates is that of the relationship between religious pluralism and secularization. Some authors take the position that religious pluralism strengthens the process of secularization, and others, who are mainly supporters of the theory of rational choice, deny it.

These and other contradictory standpoints undoubtedly indicate the existence of several types of theoretical and empirical inconsistencies in the answers to important questions about the nature of religiosity of modern man, which identify the need for performing systematic comparative and longitudinal tests of many theory assumptions. Thus, of course, it should be kept in mind that the process of studying the religion as an organized way of satisfying some of the human needs for security and design of the world we live in is sometimes affected by certain theoretical biases within the sociological determinations. Hamilton claims that "what theorists think religion is often depends upon the explanation of it they favour. They do not just seek to demarcate the sphere of investigation but also to state or imply things within the definition which support their theoretical interpretation of it." (2003: 31).

The extensive debates about the nature of the religiosity of modern man can include many questions related to the potential impacts of the changes within the societies in which serious and profound transition processes are taking place. A particular question that arouses significant interest among experts in the Republic of Macedonia is the revitalization of religion and its increasing role in the everyday life of citizens that is usually related to the transformation of the political system of the country since the early 1990. In relation to this question we can identify at least three complementary standpoints. The first is that the revitalization of the religion is more manifest than essential, meaning that the visible increase in the number of believers refers to the traditional and ritual believers, and not to the determined and enlightened believers. Several studies on the religiosity of the Christian believers agree on that, stating that the Macedonian believers in the post-socialist period are more affiliated to the religion, but that relation is still weak and their religious behavior is not constant (Matevski, 2008). The second standpoint emphasizes the direct and indirect effects of socio-political changes that took place in the last two decades. Based on this standpoint, even though initially seems that the revitalization of the religion is a result of the influence of the ideological concepts on the liberal democracy, however the reason for this should probably be identified in the reactivity to the conditions from the period of socialism. These conditions are characterized, among other, with emphasized affirmation of secularization, which implied not only secession of the Church from the state and public life, but also suppression of the religion as an important type of ideology. The third standpoint highlights the possible connection between ethnic, cultural and religious affiliation, and consequently, the need for reaffirmation of religious identity in the context of ethnic and cultural identity.

Another question that inevitably arises in the effort to understand the totality of contemporary religious beliefs and practices of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia is the one of the nature of the coexistence of different religious traditions in historical and contemporary context. On the current territory of Macedonia for centuries existed two dominant religious confessions

which to certain extent interacted: Orthodox Christianity and Islam.¹ Their relationship is mainly characterized by sporadic mutual influences in the realization of certain life practices. Throughout Macedonian history the two dominant religions had more tolerant relations, albeit the more or less open occasional conflicts. The ambivalent nature of their interaction partly influences the contemporary relations between the Orthodox and Islam followers, though it has effects on the level of social cohesion as well. The significance of the potential integrative function of the religion in the development of social relationships has been identified on several occasions, and today we have the same situation in which the Republic of Macedonia is a ground for organizing international conferences on dialogue among religions and civilizations.²

These and other questions aroused our interest in the general and specific characteristics of the religious beliefs and practices of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia. It was enabled by the participation in the international research project "European Values Survey" conducted in 2008. This project is simultaneously implemented almost every ten years in most of the countries in Europe starting from 1981. Generally, the project allows the assessment of multiple attitudes, values and life practices of the citizens which came across in various areas of social life: religion and morality, politics, civic activism, family and marriage, education, identity, social interaction, social distance, care for others, work and professional development, leisure, lifestyles and quality of life (Петковска, Поповски и Јованоски, 2010).

The analysis of the characteristics of religious beliefs and practices of citizens in this study is based only on data collected within the project and its primary goal is to provide empirically based responses to several specific questions: What is the representation of religion in the lives of participants

¹ Unlike Christianity which is present on the territory of Macedonia from the very beginning of its spreading to the European continent, "Islamic religion came to the Balkans by the Ottoman conquests, first with the migration of the Turkish population, and then with the Islamization of the native population" (Ташева, 1997: 71).

² The world conference on inter-religious and inter-civilization dialogue. Ohrid, 26-28 October 2007; 6-8 May 2010.

involved in the research? What tendencies are manifested by the participants identified themselves as believers concerning certain religious beliefs and practices? What attitudes and value preferences with regard to certain aspects of social life have participants that identified themselves as believers versus participants that declared themselves as non-believers? What religious beliefs and practices, attitudes and value preferences have the participants who declared themselves as followers of Christianity and those who declared themselves as followers of Islam?

Method

Sample

The survey encompassed 1500 participants, 845 (56.4%) were men and 652 (43.6%) were women. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 87 ($M = 42.78$). The majority of participants completed secondary education, i.e. 56.4% of them have graduated from high school, secondary technical school or vocational school, 22.9% have college or university degree, 18.1% completed or not completed primary school and 1.3% have no formal education. In terms of marital status, nearly two-thirds of participants were married (58.4%), and one-third has never been married or in a registered partnership (30.0%). More than half of the participants were unemployed (58.8%), and others have the status of employees (41.2%).

Instrument

The data were collected by standardized questionnaire that was prepared within the project "European Values Survey". For the purposes of this study, we analyzed the answers on certain number of questions included in the questionnaire and especially on those issues concerning social-demographic

characteristics of the participants, their religious affiliation, beliefs and practices and their attitudes and value preferences regarding certain aspects of social life. The data were collected individually in the participants' homes within the period from July to September 2008.

Results and discussion

Religious affiliation

The religious affiliation of the participants is determined based on their responses to the this two questions: "Do you belong to any religious denomination?" and "Which religion denomination do you belong to?." On the first question, the majority of the participants responded affirmatively, i.e. responded that they belong to a religion (93.1%), and a smaller part of them responded that they do not belong to any religion (6.9%). Regarding the religious affiliation the participants had the possibility to choose from 11 religions: Orthodox Christianity, Orthodox Catholicism, Christianity-Protestantism, Christianity-Jehovah's Witnesses, Islam (Islamic Religious Community in RM), Islam (Bekteshi Community) and Judaism, Buddhism, Scientology, Hare Krishna and other affiliations. Based on their responses the following data in percentages were obtained: 79.4% stated that they belong to Orthodox Christianity; 0.4% to Orthodox Catholicism, 0.1% to Christianity-Protestantism, 0.1% to Christianity- Jehovah's Witnesses; 18.3% to Islam (Islamic Religious Community in Macedonia), 1.0% to Islam (Bekteshi Community), and 0.1% to Buddhism. So, based on the religious affiliation it is obvious that most of the participants (97.7%) belong to two predominant religious affiliations in the Republic of Macedonia, i.e. Orthodox Christianity and Islam (Islamic Religious Community).

Given the high percentage of participators who declared themselves that belong to certain religion, their social-demographic characteristics are identical

to those given in the sample, consequently there is no need of differentiated description.

Religious beliefs and practices

While it is logical to expect a match between religious affiliation and religious self-identification, they rarely coincide completely. That is confirmed by the responses to the question "Independently of whether you go to church (mosque or other religious temple) or not, you would say you are: a) a religious person, b) a non-religious person, c) a convinced atheist?" 83.9% of the participants declared themselves as religious persons, 10.9% as non-religious persons, and 5.2% as convinced atheists. So, compared to the percentage of participants who answered that they belong to a particular religion denomination (93.1%), fewer participants declared themselves as religious persons, i.e. as believers. The reasons for the discrepancy between religious affiliation and religious self-identification probably should be searched in the fact that the religious affiliation, in general, is seen as an integral part of belongingness to a particular culture or community (collective identity), and religious self-identification as part of personal identity in which religious beliefs are an integral part of the personal value system.

In the assessment of the importance of the religion in the lives of the participants, in the context of few other social institutions and practices (work, family, friends, leisure and politics), participants who declared themselves as religious persons stressed the importance of religion as expected. The comparison between the average assessments of the importance of religion on scale from 1 to 4 shows that the religion is much more important for them ($M = 3.32$) compared to the participants who declared themselves as non-religious ($M = 2.76$) or atheists ($M = 1.86$) ($F = 129.37$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$).

If the analysis of specific characteristics of the religious beliefs and practices are limited to participants-believers, then in most cases the expected tendencies arise. For example, to the question "How important is God in your

life?" believers responded that God is very important for them. The arithmetic mean of the responses on a scale from 1 to 10 (where 1 means "not at all important" and 10 "very important") is 8.34. Also, to the question "Do you find that you get comfort and strength from religion or not?" high percentage of believers responded affirmatively (87.1%). But what is interesting is the fact that the answers of the believers on the questions about belief in the basic concepts of religious doctrines i.e. in God, heaven, hell, life after death and sin, are not so consistent. Although most of the participants respond that they believe in God (99.4%), two thirds of them believe in sin (67.0%), only half of them believe in heaven (56.5%), hell (51.2%) and life after death (53.6%). This finding indicates the possibility of differentiated attitude of the believers towards the basic religious concepts, or insufficient knowledge of these concepts. The believers do not question the belief in God, but when it comes to concepts related to the afterlife their beliefs are not so emphasized. Greater inclination towards the belief in sin than in afterlife suggests possible understanding of sin as a separate concept, which has less sacred and more secular traits.

The behavioral component of the religious beliefs was examined based on two questions. The first question refers to the frequency of attending religious services apart from weddings, funerals and christenings and the participants responded by choosing one of seven offered alternatives. The percentages of the believers are as follows: a) never - 1.9%; b) less often - 11.0%; c) one a year - 5.5%; d) only on specific holy days - 51.3%; e) once a month - 14.4%; f) once a week - 9.7%; g) more than once a week - 6.2%. Additionally the participants had the opportunity to respond to the question about how often they attended religious services during their childhood. The degree of matching in their answers is verified by calculating chi-square and it was concluded that the participants had the similar attitude to the religious services in their childhood (χ^2 (36, N = 1055) = 963.38, $p < 0.01$). The second question is related to time spent praying to God outside of religious services. The following responses are given to this question: a) never - 12.1%; b) less often - 23.5%; c) several times a year - 11.7%; d) at least once a month - 9.8%; e) once a week - 6.6%; f) more than once a week - 11.3%; g) every day - 24.9%. The test of the

correlation between the responses to these two questions indicated the existence of a positive correlation between the frequency of attending religious services and praying to God outside of religious temples (χ^2 (36, N = 1040) = 345.89, $p < 0,01$). These tendencies in the responses to these questions indicate three general aspects: first, there is a certain consistency and congruency in religious practices of the believers; secondly, the high percentage of believers who attend religious services apart from religious holy days implies that the majority are more ritual than convinced believers; thirdly, those believers who frequently attend religious services they dedicate more time for praying to God, and vice versa.

Dispositional correlates of religiosity

Having in mind the fact that the data are collected for different types of attitudes and value preferences of the participants in relation to many aspects of social life based on the applied questionnaire, the question on the correlation of some of the surveyed attitudes and value preferences with religiosity of the participants is posing.

One of the basic reference points of the value system inherent in every religion is the understanding and evaluation of good and evil. That understanding can be based on a continuum of final certainty in the absolute validity of the concepts of good and evil, to their absolute relativity and taking into account the effect of the circumstances in which they are reflected. In connection with the evaluation of the scope of the significance and applicability of the concepts of good and evil, the participants had the possibility to choose between these three alternatives: a) There are absolutely clear guidelines about what is good and evil. These always apply to everyone whatever the circumstances; b) There are absolutely clear guidelines about what is good and evil. However, deviating from these guidelines is sometimes justified by special circumstances; c) There can never be absolutely clear guidelines about what is good and what is evil. What is good and what is evil depends entirely upon the

circumstances at the time. The comparison of the responses of religious and non-religious participants showed that they differ significantly in the preference to the above alternatives ($\chi^2 (2, N = 1206) = 17.61, p < 0,01$). Moreover, as can be expected, the believers are more likely to have absolute understanding of good and evil, and relativisation for participants who declared themselves as non-believers.

When it comes to the trust that the participants have in people in general, and in the religious institutions, particularly (church / mosque), the collected data indicate the existence of two non-congruent tendencies. If the trust in religious institutions (expressed on a scale from 1 to 4) is expectably higher for the believers compared to the participants who are not believers ($t = 16,56, p < 0,01; M_b = 3,12, M_{nb} = 2,10$), the trust in people (by choosing one of the two alternatives: a) most people can be trusted, b) it is not possible to be too careful) is smaller for the believers than for the participants who are not believers ($\chi^2 (1, N = 1266) = 21,52, p < 0,01$). This non-congruency means that on the one hand believers are more careful and critical when evaluating the intentions and actions of people, and on the other hand, that they accept and idealize the meaning of the role of religious institutions.

Among the believers as opposed to the participants who are not believers we can notice different views when assessing the importance that the marriage nowadays it is supposed to have, and also when evaluating several factors that may have a potential impact on the development of successful and stable marital relations. The believers significantly disagree with the statement that marriage is an outdated institution ($\chi^2 (1, N = 1337) = 13.31, p < 0.01$) and are much more convinced that it is essential for the happiness of the people. However, regarding the factors contributing towards successful marriage they responded that for them more important is fidelity, shared religious beliefs, children and having time for the friends and for personal hobbies/activities. While in terms of the factors such as having an adequate income and good housing, same social background, agreement on politics, sharing household chores, being willing to discuss the problems that come up between husband and wife and happy sexual relationship, believers and non-believers share the

same view on their importance. In the context of attitudes towards marriage and marital relations, we could represent the responses of the participants on several questions related to the relationship between the parents and their children, as well as their mutual responsibilities. Specifically, those questions are related to the unconditional love of the children for their parents, parents' responsibility to take care of their children and the responsibility of adult children to take care for their parents. To all these questions the participants generally responded affirmatively, but when comparing the believers and the participants who are not believers, the positive tendency is even more obvious.

For the believers is typical that they are more critical when assessing the justification of several types of human activities that have serious moral implications (i.e. claiming state benefits to which one is not entitled, cheating on tax if there is a chance, taking and driving a car belonging to someone else (joyriding), taking drug marijuana or hashish, lying in your own interest, married men/ women having an affair, accepting a bribes in the course of their duty, homosexuality, abortion, divorce, euthanasia, suicide, paying cash for services to avoid taxes, have casual sex, avoiding a fare on public transport, prostitution, scientific experiments on human embryos, genetic manipulation of food stuffs, artificial insemination or in-vitro fertilization, death penalty). Despite the fact that in assessing the non-justification, i.e. justification of these activities (on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "never justified" and 10 "always justified") all participants showed the tendency towards manifesting similar trends in the responses, however, for the believers it can be noticed that they do not justify some activities compared to participants who are not believers. This especially applies to: divorce ($t = -3.65$, $p < 0,01$; $M_b = 4.67$, $M_{nb} = 5.51$), infidelity ($t = -3.32$, $p < 0,01$; $M_b = 2.04$, $M_{nb} = 2,67$), casual sex ($t = -6.14$, $p < 0.01$; $M_b = 2.99$, $M_{nb} = 4.40$), prostitution ($t = -4,76$, $p < 0,01$; $M_b = 1.86$, $M_{nb} = 2.62$), taking drugs ($t = -4.95$, $p < 0.01$; $M_b = 1.50$, $M_{nb} = 2.13$), euthanasia ($t = -4.34$, $p < 0.01$; $M_b = 2.97$, $M_{nb} = 3.88$), homosexuality ($t = -5,45$, $p < 0,01$; $M_b = 1.87$, $M_{nb} = 2.74$), death penalty ($t = -1.98$, $p < 0.05$; $M_b = 3.63$, $M_{nb} = 4.12$) and abortion ($t = -5.25$, $p < 0.01$; $M_b = 4.11$, $M_{nb} = 5.39$). Regarding the abortion it should be mentioned that the questionnaire included additional questions that allow more

distinctive analysis in terms of whether there are some circumstances in which the abortion could be justified. Two such circumstances were proposed: a) when a woman is not married; and b) when the couple does not want to have children anymore. Based on the responses of the participants it can be concluded that the believers, in both circumstances, to lesser extent approve the abortion than those who are not believers. This is confirmed by the values of the calculated chi-square test: a) $\chi^2 (1, N = 1231) = 18.33, p < 0,01$; и b) $\chi^2 (1, N = 1223) = 15.12, p < 0,01$. But what is interesting is the fact that despite these differences, if you analyze the approval of abortion under these circumstances only among believers, then it can be concluded that they were not exclusive in their responses. Namely, in the first case, 54.80% of them said that they approve the abortion, and 45.20% said they do not approve it, while in the second case, 52.30% approve the abortion and 47.70% do not approve it.

Religious beliefs and practices, attitudes and value preferences among Christians and Muslims

Given the fact that Christianity and Islam are religions that despite similarities also have significant differences in the beliefs and practices, as well as the fact that on the territory of Macedonia for centuries live followers to these two religions, one of the objectives of this research was the determination of the potential common and individual features of religiosity among participants Christians and Muslims. Although such features can be identified in terms of more questions which explicitly or implicitly are associated with religiosity, in this case they are related to the same questions which have already been discussed in the context of differences between believers and non-believers.

Based on the responses to the general question of the importance of religion in the lives of the participants, in the context of several other social institutions and practices (work, family, friends, leisure and politics), it can be noticed that the religion is important to all believers, but if we compare the

responses of the participants Christians and Muslims then we can see that Muslims consider religion slightly more important ($t = 2.25, p < 0.05; M_c = 3.29, M_m = 3.43$). This tendency is even more apparent in the responses to the questions: "How important is God in your life?" ($t = 8.59, p < 0,01; M_c = 8,07, M_m = 9,40$); "Do you find comfort and strength in religion or not?" ($\chi^2 (1, N = 1073) = 31.01, p < 0.01$ - this question affirmatively answered 84.4% of the participants Christians and 98.6% of participants Muslims). However, when the participants answered the question of belief in the basic concepts of religious doctrines, i.e. God, heaven, hell, life after death and sin, their responses indicated the existence of ambiguous tendencies that can be partly treated as a reflection not only to differences in the extent of belief, but also to their genuine religious understanding and appreciation. While both groups did not indicate any reserve when declaring themselves on the faith in God ($\chi^2 (1, N = 1126) = 0.12, p > 0.05$), i.e. almost all Christians (99.3%) and Muslims (99.5%) responded that they believe in God, in the case of belief in other listed concepts there are significant discrepancies. Muslim participants believe more in afterlife compared to the Christian participants ($\chi^2 (1, N = 897) = 86,83, p < 0,01$ - 82.0% of the Muslims versus 45.2% of the Christians); hell ($\chi^2 (1, N = 863) = 19,80, p < 0,01$ - 65.0% of the Muslims versus 47.1% of the Christians); heaven ($\chi^2 (1, N = 870) = 71,36, p < 0,0$ - 82.0 % of the Muslims versus 48.6% of the Christians). Quite opposite is the tendency when it comes to the belief in sin. In this case Muslim participants to lesser extent believe in sin compared to the Christian participants ($\chi^2 (1, N = 903) = 20,92, p < 0,0$ - 52.8% of the Muslims versus 70.7% of the Christians).

In terms of frequency of attending religious services apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, as one of the manifest forms of religious beliefs we can see deviations among Christians and Muslims from the previously presented results based on the responses of all participants-believers regardless type of their religious affiliation. The comparison of the percentages of the frequency of attending religious services expressed by choosing one of seven alternatives, indicates that Muslims, in general, attend religious services more often ($\chi^2 (6, N = 1144) = 161,47, p < 0.01$). Their responses are given in

percentages as follows: a) never -1.4% (C), 3.8% (M); b) less often - 12.1% (C), 6.1% (M); c) once a year - 5.0% (C), 7.5% (M); d) only on special holy days - 56.6% (C), 29.6% (M); e) once a month - 14.7% (C), 13.1% (M); f) once a week - 7.6% (C), 18.8% (M);) more than once a week - 2.5% (C) 21.1% (M). As it can be noticed the majority of the Christian participants attend religious services during special holy days, while the Muslim participants attend religious services more often apart from special holy days.

The differences in the relation to the carrying out religious practices between the two groups of participants become more apparent when it comes to the time the believers spend praying to God outside of religious services (χ^2 (6, N = 1035) = 186.13, $p < 0,01$). The Muslims indicated greater commitment to this form of religious activity in percents, by choosing one of seven offered alternatives, even in this case. The responses of the participants are given in percents as follows: a) never -14.6% (C), 3.2% (M); b) less often -27.7% (C), 8.7% (M); c) several times a year -12.3% (C), 9.1% (M); d) at least once a month -11.9% (C), 2.3% (M); e) once a week -6.0% (C), 9.1% (M); f) more than once a week - 11.6% (C), 10.0% (M);) every day -15.9% (C), 57.5% (M).

Participants Christians and Muslims show differences in terms of individual attitudes and value preferences associated with various life issues. One of more crucial differences is related to the valuation of the good and evil which is inherent to any religious belief. Based on the percentages of choosing one of three possible answers to the question about the meaning of good and evil Muslims showed tendency towards greater relativization the concepts of good and evil compared to the Christians, by taking into account the circumstances in which they become apparent (χ^2 (2, N = 1015) = 33,21, $p < 0,01$). Namely, to the alternative: "There are absolutely clear principles about what is good and what is evil. They apply to everyone regardless of the circumstances" 54.3% of the Christians and 40.6% of Muslims responded affirmatively. To the alternative: "There are absolutely clear principles about what is good and what is evil. However, the deviation from these principles is sometimes justified by the uniqueness of the circumstances" 21.6% of the Christians and 41.4% of the Muslims responded affirmatively. To the third

alternative: "There can never be absolutely clear principles about what is good and what is evil. What is good and what is evil depends entirely upon the existing circumstances" 24.1% of the Christians and 18.0% of the Muslims responded affirmatively.

One of the main characteristics of the attitude of the believers to the religion is the high level of trust that they have in the religious institutions, that is in the church or mosque. This is also confirmed in this study. But it is interesting the fact that there are significant differences in the level of trust in religious institutions displayed by the Muslims and Christians whereby the Muslims, on average, trust more those institutions than Christians ($t = 7.85$, $p < 0, 01$; $M_c = 3.04$, $M_m = 3.48$).

And finally, the comparative analysis of the responses of these two groups participants in terms of how unjustified or justified certain behaviors are which have relevant moral implications, indicates that despite the fact that they showed similar tendencies in the responses on scale from 1 to 10, however, there are significant differences in exponentiation of the non-justification, i.e. justification of most assessed behaviors. Namely, although both groups of believers, generally considered the assessed behaviors as more unjustified than justified, some behaviors for the Christians are not as unjustified as for the Muslims. This especially applies to: euthanasia ($t = 3,87$, $p < 0.01$; $M_c = 3.12$, $M_m = 2.33$); abortion ($t = 4.85$, $p < 0.01$; $M_c = 4.35$, $M_m = 3.18$); divorce ($t = 2.45$, $p < 0.01$; $M_c = 4.79$, $M_m = 4.21$); in-vitro fertilization or in-vitro conception ($t = 6.51$, $p < 0.01$; $M_c = 6.66$, $M_m = 4.93$). On the other side, however, the following things are not as unjustified as for the Christians: claiming state benefits which you are no entitled ($t = 14,44$, $p < 0,01$; $M_c = 1.33$, $M_m = 3.20$); cheating on tax if there is a chance; taking and driving a car belonging to someone else ($t = 11.28$, $p < 0.01$; $M_c = 1.33$, $M_m = 2.78$); taking drug marijuana or hashish ($t = 2.97$, $p < 0.01$; $M_c = 1.43$, $M_m = 1.77$); lying in your own interest ($t = 9.97$, $p < 0.01$; $M_c = 2.03$, $M_m = 3.88$); married men/ women having an affair; accepting bribes in the course of their duty ($t = 5.02$, $p < 0.01$; $M_c = 1.38$, $M_m = 2.96$); suicide ($t = 6.19$, $p < 0.01$; $M_c = 1.34$, $M_m = 2.01$); avoiding a fare in public transport ($t = 12.57$, $p < 0.01$; $M_c = 1.45$, $M_m = 3.02$); scientific experiments on human embryos ($t = 5.38$,

$p < 0.01$; $M_c = 2.51$, $M_m = 3.63$); genetic manipulation of food stuffs ($t = 10.34$, $p < 0.01$; $M_c = 1.88$, $M_m = 3.62$).

Conclusions

Regarding the nature of the issues examining the religious beliefs and practices and the results of the different levels of analysis of data collected in this study, we can conclude that there are some general tendencies related to the religiosity of the Macedonian citizens. First, it is obvious that most of the interviewed participants declare themselves as belonging to a particular religion and perceive themselves as religious persons, which undoubtedly leads to the conclusion that religiosity is a significant feature of the contemporary Macedonian society, regardless of its multi-confessional structure. But if we analyze the structure of the responses related to the religious beliefs and practices of the participants, we can note certain inconsistencies due to the influence of several factors, from different knowledge and practicing the fundamentals of religion, different religious and cultural traditions within the dominant religions to a different level of commitment and appreciation of certain aspects of religiosity. Second, for the participants who identified themselves as religious persons, i.e. believers is typical the positive evaluation and acceptance of most of assessed aspects of religiosity compared to the participants who are not believers. In addition, based on the expectations they have stronger and more consistent picture of good and evil as absolute categories which apply regardless of the circumstances in which they occur, as well as of the importance of marriage and family life. They manifest more critical attitude, i.e. reluctance to accept a range of activities of everyday life that have certain moral implications. And third, the comparative analysis of the responses of the believers Christians and Muslims shows that among them there are more differences than similarities which derive from the nature of religious doctrines that determine the behavior of the believers in Macedonian society. It was also determined that Muslims, unlike Christians show a greater degree of religious

commitment by attributing greater importance to the religion in human life. On the other hand, Christians believe more in the absolute validity of good and evil and to lesser extent justify the actions that violate certain social norms.

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ОДДЕЛНИ БЕЛЕЗИ НА РЕЛИГИСКИТЕ ВЕРУВАЊА И ПРАКТИКИ НА ГРАЃАНИТЕ НА РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА

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АПСТРАКТ

Во трудот се разгледуваат одделни белези на религиските верувања и практики на македонските граѓани кои се идентификувани во рамките на истражувачкиот проект Европско истражување на вредностите (European Values Study). Првично се анализирани и коментирани општите сознанија за застапеноста и значајноста на религијата во животот на учесниците кои се опфатени со истражувањето, без оглед на нивната религиозност и религиска припадност. Потоа, следува продлабочена анализа која е фокусирана на разликите во односот и вреднувањето на одделни аспекти на религијата меѓу учесниците кои се изјасниле како верници и оние кои се изјасниле дека не се верници и се разгледувани диспозициските корелати на религиозноста. Во последниот дел од трудот се изложени наодите од компаративната анализа на особеностите на религиозноста, ставовите и вредносните преференции кај учесниците христијани и муслимани.

Клучни зборови: религија, верувања, практики, верници, христијани, муслимани