

EXPLORING THE RELIGIOSITY OF ROMANIAN EMERGING ADULTS: PSYCHOLOGICAL AND DEMOGRAPHICAL CORRELATES

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ABSTRACT. Studies examining religiosity/spirituality (R/S), gender, parental education level and psychological well-being report divergent findings, most of them being on North American populations. This research aimed to explore the relationship between R/S and psychological well-being of Romanian emerging adults. The relationship between R/S and demographical variables such as gender and parents' educational level was investigated. We explored these relationships in a sample of Romanian emerging adults, (N=468 female, 54.2%; M_{age}=24; Sd=8.68), 57.9% from theological faculties of various denominations and 42,1 % non-theological. Our findings show that R/S is higher as parents' educational level is lower, with male emerging adults being more religious than female ones and theology students being more religious than non-theology ones. Moreover, the results revealed a significant relationship between R/S and some facets of psychological well-being. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed, with emphasis on the particularities relevant for the Romanian socio-cultural context.

Key words: *religiosity, spirituality, psychological well-being, emerging adulthood, gender*

Introduction

Emerging adulthood is a topic that is often investigated under the umbrella of adolescence, or under adulthood topics. This is a relatively new developmental period, that begins at the age of 18 and ends at about the age of 29 (Arnett, Žukauskienė & Sugimura, 2014). Thus, there is a need to study diverse constructs regarding this developmental period of emerging adulthood,

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especially the ones related to the cultural and religious facets (Abo-Zena & Ahmed, 2014). Emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) is characterized through a series of turning points in youth's life such as moving away from home, going to college etc. Arnett (2004) points out that this developmental stage does depend on some complex cultural and demographic aspects. Such aspects would be: "longer and more widespread education" (Arnett et al., 2014, p.156), with a delay when it comes to major life decisions such as getting married, forming a family and having children (Arnett et al., 2014). By investing in their education and self-development they can continue exploring their identities in various social roles, their perspective on life, the world in general and human relationships (Arnett, 2000). Ergo, as Abo-Zena and Ahmed (2014) argue religiosity and spirituality are being contemplated during this period. The challenges of changes brought in their lives can have an impact on their well-being (Arnett, Kloep, Hendry & Tanner, 2011). According to the literature we can notice an improvement in the mental health and well-being of adolescents transitioning to emerging adulthood, but still the highest rates of depressive symptoms (Mirowsky & Ross, 1999; Vaillant, 2002) and negative affect (Charles, Reynolds & Gatz, 2001) are registered among individuals in their 20s (Arnett, 2011). This does seem to decrease past the middle of emerging adulthood, and as Arnett (2011) argues, emerging adulthood with all its facets is an area that does need future research especially considering various social, demographic (e.g., gender) cultural and contextual factors. For this reason, exploring these variables in different populations is a valuable research endeavor.

Defining religiosity and well-being

Defining religiosity has been a challenge in the research community (Giordano, Prosek & Lankford, 2014). A common model of religiosity defines it by splitting the concept into two relevant dimensions: intrinsic and extrinsic (Singh & Pooh, 2017). While extrinsic religiosity is seen as being instrumental and serving an external need (e.g., to be seen in a good light by the community), intrinsic religiosity is associated with deep commitment and personal engagement (e.g., purpose and meaning in life) (Allport, 1966; Allport & Ross, 1967). Also, another common operationalization is to separate it into two very distinct concepts: religiosity and spirituality; religion being associated with more negative connotations and spirituality with positive ones (Pargament, 1999; Hood, Hill & Spilka, 2009). While religiosity is seen through the lens of organizations, institutions, doctrine and community, spirituality is the more individualized aspect and it involves personal meaning and transcendence (Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butter, Belavich, Hipp, Scott & Kadar, 1997). It is generally

accepted now in the research community, that spirituality and religiosity are distinct concepts with no related components. It is common to define religiosity in behavioural terms such as frequency of prayers, attending various services, whereas spirituality is defined in emotional, subjective terms such as feeling a connection with the divinity (Bodling, Heneghan, Walsh, Pil Yoon & Johnstone, 2013). For the purpose of this research, we adopted the view of religiosity from previous research conducted in a similar context (see Negru-Subtirica, Tiganasu, Dezutter & Luyckx, 2016). We defined religiosity through three dimensions: (1) behavioural, (2) cognitive (i.e., the thoughts and beliefs one has in relation to the divine and sacred) and (3) emotional. The latter one fits in the former view on spirituality, because it covers the personal and subjective experience, while the first dimension, fits in the view of religiosity (i.e., behaviours that one does in search for the divine and sacred). We will use the term religiosity/spirituality (R/S), having them both covered in these three dimensions.

When it comes to defining well-being, two main perspectives are dominant in research models. On one hand, there is the *hedonic perspective* that is dubbed as *subjective well-being* and is defined as one's desire to seek pleasure, thus inviting happiness in one's life (Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999). On the other hand, there is the *eudemonic perspective* also known as *psychological well-being* and it is characterized by self-determination, meaning in one's life, self-realization, striving to achieve one's goals and understand one's personal strengths (Ryan & Huta, 2009). In the present research, well-being is defined according to Ryff (1989, 2014) which fits in the latter understanding of well-being. Carol Ryff defines psychological well-being through six dimensions: (1) *purpose in life* (i.e., how much one feels that their life has direction, purpose and meaning), (2) *autonomy* (i.e., how much one feels that they live in accordance to their own personal convictions), (3) *personal growth* (i.e., how much one feels that they utilize their personal talents and invest in their potential), (4) *environmental mastery* (i.e., how much one feels that they can handle their life situations), (5) *positive relationships* (i.e., how much one feels that they have deep connections with significant others) and (6) *self-acceptance* (i.e., how much one knows and accepts themselves while also taking into consideration knowledge of personal limitations).

Religiosity/spirituality has been linked to psychological well-being during various developmental periods (e.g., Davis, 2005, Powers, Cramer & Grubka, 2007; Ryff, 2014; Vosloo, Wissing & Temane, 2014; Lee & Zhang, 2018). In the last years a body of research has addressed links between religiosity/spirituality and well-being related to emerging adulthood (for reviews, see Bowman & Small, 2012; Singh, 2014; Hwang, Zhang, Brown,

Vasilenko & Silverstein, 2021; Upenieks & Ford-Robertson, 2022). According to WHO (2006), well-being is related to health outcomes with implications on a psychological, physical and social level. Also, the literature shows a connection between religiosity/spirituality and many psychological and other health related aspects during one's life. For example, mental health (Koenig, McCullough & Larson, 2001; Rahim & Rafiq, 2015) and decreased risk behaviours such as substance abuse, alcohol abuse (Kagimu, Guwatudde, Rwabukwali, Kaye, Walakira & Ainomugisha, 2013; Meyers, Brown, Grant & Hasin, 2016), criminal behaviour etc. Despite those findings, some literature revealed an opposite view on the topic. Recent studies have found religiosity/spirituality to be linked to these high-risk behaviours (e.g., Faigin & Pargament, 2011; Stearns & Mckinney, 2017) and increased anxiety and depression (e.g., Exline, Yali & Sangerson, 2000; Winterowd, Harrist, Thomason, Worth & Carlozzi, 2005). These links have been long studied mainly on North-American populations.

Gender and religiosity/spirituality

A large portion of the research literature that set up to investigate the relationship between gender and religiosity/spirituality came to the conclusion that women tend to report higher levels of religiosity/spirituality (Desmond, Morgan & Kikuchi, 2010). When it comes to emerging adults and these concepts, there is a lack of diversity in the available research, as far as the population demographics are concerned. Most of the available research has a Christian bias (Mattis, 2014) and usually refers North-American population. Another important aspect is defining *gender* and *sex*. In this research we use the term gender, but we refer to the biological, binary construct that differentiates males and females.

A couple of differences stand out within the literature, when looking at different dimensions of religiosity. As far as behavioural religiosity is concerned, on one hand, involvement and personal investment tends to decrease earlier among male emerging adults compared to female (Arnett & Jensen, 2002; Desmond et al., 2010; Stoppa & Lefkowitz, 2010). On the other hand, other research does not show a significant difference (Sullins, 2006). Regarding the emotional dimension, it tends to be more increased among females (Sullins, 2006). However, according to Sullins' (2006) research, in some nations, males score higher than females on active religiosity (i.e., the equivalent of behavioural religiosity from our operationalization). As Mattis (2014) argues, when taking a closer look at the results, it appears that the differences are due to various aspects such as country, denomination, culture etc.

Family and religiosity/spirituality

The family plays an important role in modeling religiosity/spirituality in one's life. That does not stop after adolescence, it continues into emerging adulthood as well (Smith & Snell, 2009; Nelson, 2014). In a qualitative research on Romanian emerging adults, Negru, Haragas & Mustea (2014) have taken a closer look into the role that parents play in the development of religiosity/spirituality. According to the research, parents model religious behaviour and are also religious educators. Also, according to the The Barometer for Public Opinion (Bădescu, Comşa, Sandu & Stănculescu, 2007) 83% of Romanian adults continue to evaluate the family of origin as "the most important aspect in their life" (Negru et al., 2013, p. 384). As far as cultural aspects are concerned, in Romania children are baptized in the Orthodox Christian Church at a very early age, under one year from birth (Negru et al., 2014). Hence, family religiosity/spirituality can continue to impact one's life, as major life events are further intertwined with R/S (i.e., marriages, baptisms, funerals, requiems etc.).

Beyond parental religiousness (e.g., Myers, 2006), parenting (e.g., Hardy, White, Zhang & Ruchty, 2011; Petro, Rich, Erasmus & Roman, 2017) and the parent-child relationship (e.g., Dollaite & Marks, 2009), other factors seem to be related to increased religiosity among offspring. One factor is parents' educational level (Samani & Latifian, 2008).

The Romanian context.

While a major part of the research on the investigated topic covers North American youth, Eastern-European emerging adults are less represented in the literature. Romania is characterized by a revival in the domain of religiosity/spirituality (Negru et al., 2013). This can be seen both at a societal and individual level. At a societal level, post-communist Romania equates religiosity with national identity (Pickel, 2009, Stan & Turcescu, 2007). According to Pickel (2009) Romania is one of the most religious nations in Europe (Voicu & Constantin, 2010). While there are other countries in Europe with an increased level of religiosity, Romania appears to be the country with the highest church attendance among Orthodox European countries (Halman & Draulans, 2006; Pollack & Pickel, 2009). During the national survey, according to the National Institute of Statistics (2012), in 2011 85.04% of the population identified as Christian-Orthodox, 4,56% as Christian Roman-Catholic, 3,15% reformed, 3% neo-protestants, 0,84% Christian Greek-Catholic and 1,80% others; only 0,23% of the population declared to be atheist or without any religious affiliation. As argued above, this can be the result of children being baptized in a religious faith under the age of one.

Therefore, based on the literature review, we formulated the following objective and hypothesis for our present research.

Objective

The aim of this research is to explore the relationship between religiosity/ spirituality and psychological well-being and demographic variables (gender, parents' educational level) in a sample of Romanian emerging adults.

Hypothesis

We hypothesized that a significant positive relationship would be found between religiosity/spirituality and psychological well-being among students that are Romanian emerging adults.

We hypothesized that religiosity/spirituality would be higher among female, compared to male Romanian emerging adults.

We hypothesized that religiosity/spirituality of Romanian emerging adults would be higher when the educational level of the mother is lower.

We hypothesized that religiosity/spirituality of Romanian emerging adults would be higher when the educational level of the father is lower.

We hypothesized that religiosity/spirituality would be higher among theology students, compared to non-theology students.

METHOD

Participants

864 Romanian students (N=468 female, 54.2%; $M_{age}=24$; $Sd=8.68$) were recruited in this study. They were university students in major cities from Romania (Cluj-Napoca, Oradea, Craiova). The students were from theology (N=507, 57.9%) and non-theology (N=369) faculties. The Theology degree was: Orthodox Christian (N=268), Greek-catholic (N=86) and neo-protestant (N=153). As far as the religion of all participants is concerned, there are these categories: Orthodox Christian (N=308), Catholic Christian (N=82), Reformed Christian (N=83), Protestant Christian (N=199), monotheist such as Muslim and Hebrew (N=124) and Other, which means lack of response (N=60).

Instruments

In Table 1, we present the instruments, with details and examples of items. The questionnaires were translated from English to Romanian through the back-translation method (Brislin, 1970) by a team of four academics. The

four versions were then discussed and analyzed until a consensus was reached and the wording was finalized. The final step was to check the Romanian version, translated back to English, with the original English one.

Demographics. Demographic information included in this study is: age, gender, educational level, mother and father educational level. The data was collected together with the religiosity and psychological well-being instruments.

Religiosity/Spirituality. Adapted scales from the instrument Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness and Spirituality (BMMRS, Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999) were used. The items were drawn from the NIA/Fetzer Short Form employed in the General Social Survey (Appendix A, Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999). The items that were used were chosen in order to capture three dimensions of religiosity: (1) cognitive, (2) behavioural and (3) emotional. The participants responded on a scale from 1 (never) to 8 (more than once a day) for the cognitive dimension; 1 (never) to 6 (more than once a week) for the behavioural dimension and on a scale from 1 (never) to 6 (more than once a day) for the emotional dimension. For each subscale the internal consistency ranges from .80 to .87 as reported for different dimensions of the scale

Well-being. The Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989) was used. This instrument includes six dimensions: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Purpose in Life and Self-Acceptance. The responses on the 44-item instrument were rated on 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strong disagreement) to 6 (strong agreement). For each subscale the scores can range from 9 to 54. The scale was adapted in Romanian (Costea-Barlutiu, Balas-Baconschi & Hathazi, 2018). The internal consistency of the scale is ranging from .86 to .93 (Ryff, 1989).

Table 1. Scales, subscales and sample items for questionnaires

Instrument	Subscales and sample items
Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness and Spirituality (Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999)	<p><i>Cognitive religiosity</i> (seven items):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Values/beliefs</i> (two items): "I have a strong feeling of responsibility for relieving the pain and suffering in the world." • <i>Beliefs about forgiveness</i> (three items): "Because of my religious beliefs I forgive the ones that hurt me." • <i>Religious meaning</i> (two items): "I have a feeling of mission or calling in my own life." <p><i>Behavioural religiosity</i> (nine items):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Organizational religiosity</i> (two items): "I attend religious services."

Instrument	Subscales and sample items
The Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Religious commitment</i> (two items): “I take part in the activities of my religious community other than attending services.” • <i>Private religious practices</i> (five items): “I read the Bible and other religious books.” <p><i>Emotional religiosity</i> – Subjective/emotional dimension of religiosity (six items): “I feel the presence of God.”</p> <p><i>Autonomy</i> (seven items): “Others can very rarely convince me to do something that I do not want to do.”</p> <p><i>Environmental Mastery</i> (eight items): “Even though my life is busy, I have the satisfaction of keeping up with everything.”</p> <p><i>Personal Growth</i> (eight items): “In my opinion, people can grow and evolve at any age.”</p> <p><i>Positive Relations with Others</i> (seven items): “Most people consider me as a loving and affectionate person.”</p> <p><i>Purpose in Life</i> (seven items): “I am satisfied with what I have accomplished in life.”</p> <p><i>Self-Acceptance</i> (seven items): “Even though my past has had many ups and downs, I would not wish to change it.”</p>

Procedure

The participation was voluntary and no incentives were given for the involvement in the study. The questionnaires were distributed on-site at the end of classes and the students were asked to complete the consent form and research measures in pen and paper. The questionnaires were collected and introduced in a database.

RESULTS

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the three dimension of religiosity (behavioural, cognitive and emotional) and psychological well-being formulated in nine subscales: self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose in life, environmental mastery, personal growth and positive relations with others (see Table 2). Some correlations are significant at the .01 level (two-tailed), others are significant at the .05 level (two-tailed) and some are not. By looking at the magnitude range of Pearson’s *r* we can support the following affirmations (Grove & CIPHER, 2017). It was hypothesized that a positive relationship would exist between religiosity/spirituality and psychological well-being among Romanian emerging adults. This hypothesis is partially confirmed, in general the relationship is positive, but the strength of the correlation is between low and medium. We did find a lack of correlation, that is detailed below.

There was a positive and moderate correlation between cognitive religiosity and the psychological well-being subscales: (1) purpose in life, $r(791) = .30, p = .001$; (2) environmental mastery, $r(785) = .35, p = .001$. There was a positive and moderate correlation between behavioural religiosity and the psychological well-being subscale environmental mastery, $r(783) = .30, p = .001$. We did not find any negative correlations, but we did find a lack of correlation between behavioural religiosity and the psychological well-being subscale personal growth $r(806) = .02, p = .653$. For this subscale, both emotional with $r(806) = .09, p = 0.021$) and cognitive with $r(784) = .11, p = .003$ religiosity have small positive correlations. To sum up, it appears that there is a small to moderate relationship between religiosity/spirituality and psychological well-being.

It was hypothesized that religiosity would be higher among female, compared to male students. We did not succeed to confirm this hypothesis, as it can be seen by the results (see Table 3). To test the differences among means of males and females regarding R/S on all three dimensions, a t-test for independent samples was computed. There was a significant difference in the scores for males and females when it came to all three dimensions of R/S: for cognitive religiosity $t(820)=10.32, p=.001$; for behavioural religiosity $t(817)=13.76, p=.001$ and for emotional religiosity $t(845)=9.17, p=.001$. The results suggest that the males from our sample have an increased R/S on all three dimensions compared to the females from our sample. By looking at the magnitude range of Cohen's *d* we can support this affirmation (Cohen 1988, 1992). Specifically, when comparing male and female participants on cognitive Table 2.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1.Cognitive religiosity	.								
2.Behavioral religiosity	.85**	.							
3.Emotional religiosity	.82**	.78**	.						
4.Self-Acceptance PWB Subscale	.23**	.16**	.19**	.					
5.Autonomy PWB Subscale	.16**	.12**	.11**	.67**	.				
6.Purpose in Life PWB Subscale	.30**	.22**	.22**	.79**	.67**	.			
7.Environmental mastery PWB Subscale	.35**	.30**	.25**	.74**	.70**	.79**	.		
8.Personal growth PWB Subscale	.11**	.02	.09*	.60**	.57**	.64**	.59**	.	
9.Positive relations with others PWB Subscale	.23**	.12**	.12**	.63**	.53**	.64**	.61**	.61**	.

Note. PWB = Psychological Well-being

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (two tailed).

Correlations between religiosity/spirituality and psychological well-being $t(820)=10.32, p<0.05$, Cohen's $d=.73$, and emotional religiosity $t(845)=9.17$,

$p < .05$, Cohen's $d = 0.65$, we can notice a moderate effect size; while for behavioral religiosity $t(817) = 13.76$, $p < 0.05$, Cohen's $d = .98$, we can notice a large effect size.

Table 3. t tests for religiosity/spirituality and gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Sd	Cohen's d
Cognitive religiosity	Female	453	3.51	.96	0.73
	Male	369	4.16	.80	
Behavioural religiosity	Female	455	2.77	.96	0.98
	Male	364	3.79	1.10	
Emotional religiosity	Female	464	3.40	1.10	0.65
	Male	383	4.04	.85	

Note. $p < .05$

In order to test for our next two hypothesis, we conducted two sets of multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) with the last level of parental graduated education as an independent variable and the three dimensions of religiosity as dependent variables. The F -values with multiple pairwise combinations using LSD significant difference test, are presented in Table 4 (for mothers) and Table 5 (for fathers).

Regarding our third hypothesis, that R/S among students that are Romanian emerging adults would be higher when the mother's educational level is lower, has been confirmed. The lower the mother's educational level, the higher the offspring's R/S is, on all three dimensions. There was a statistically significant difference in offspring's R/S based on mother's educational level, $F(9, 119) = 18.13$, $p < .0005$; Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.819$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. In Table 4 the differences can be seen for the last graduated educational level: secondary, high-school and college.

Table 4. Multivariate analysis – mothers' educational level and offspring religiosity/spirituality

		N	Mean	SD	F	η^2
Cognitive Religiosity	Secondary	304	4.10	.78	26.73*	.093
	High-school	277	3.74	.94		
	College	193	3.35	1.03		
Behavioral Religiosity	Secondary	304	3.57	1.02	25.88*	.090
	High-school	277	3.16	1.13		
	College	193	2.68	1.19		
Emotional Religiosity	Secondary	304	3.76	1.01	9.17*	.034
	High-school	277	3.79	1.00		
	College	193	3.34	1.11		

Note. $p < .05$

Table 5. Multivariate analysis – fathers' educational level and offspring religiosity/spirituality

		N	Mean	SD	F	η²
Cognitive Religiosity	Secondary	96	4.18	.84	12.16*	.030
	High-school	457	3.79	.92		
	College	230	3.62	.97		
Behavioral Religiosity	Secondary	96	3.69	1.00	14.23*	.035
	High-school	457	3.23	1.14		
	College	230	2.96	1.17		
Emotional Religiosity	Secondary	96	4.02	.89	8.41*	.021
	High-school	457	3.65	1.03		
	College	230	3.50	1.11		

Note. $p < .05$

Our fourth explorative hypothesis, that emerging adults' R/S would be higher when the father's educational level is lower, has been confirmed. The lower the father's educational level, the higher the offspring's R/S is, on all three dimensions. There was a statistically significant difference in offspring's R/S based on father's educational level, $F(6, 115) = 5.00$, $p < .0005$; Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.963$, partial $\eta^2 = .19$. In Table 5 the differences can be seen for three last graduated educational level: secondary, high-school and college.

Finally, the hypothesis stating that R/S would be higher among theology students, compared to non-theology students has been confirmed. To test the differences among means of theology and non-theology students regarding R/S on all three dimensions, a t-test for independent samples was computed. On all three dimensions of R/S there was a statistically significant difference in emerging adults' R/S based on the faculty profile. There was a significant difference for: cognitive religiosity $t(832) = -21.73$, $p = .001$; for behavioural religiosity $t(829) = -28.76$, $p = .001$ and for emotional religiosity $t(857) = -19.80$, $p = .001$. By looking at the magnitude range of Cohen's d we can support this affirmation (Cohen 1988, 1992). The results are presented in table form as well (see Table 6).

Table 6. t tests for religiosity/spirituality and faculty type

	Gender	N	Mean	Sd	Cohen's d
Cognitive religiosity	Theology	473	3.51	.58	0.83
	Non-theology	361	4.16	.93	
Behavioural religiosity	Theology	468	3.95	.71	1.96
	Non-theology	363	2.31	.94	
Emotional religiosity	Theology	492	4.20	.65	1.32
	Non-theology	367	3.02	1.08	

Note. $p < .05$

DISCUSSIONS

The aim of this research was to explore the relationship between religiosity/spirituality (R/S) and psychological well-being (PWB) in a sample of Romanian emerging adults. We opted for a more complex definition and operationalization of religiosity and spirituality. A large portion of the literature addresses these concepts either by using a single dimension or more dimensions into a unitary religiosity construct (for a review of the most popular approaches see Seligman & Peterson, 2004). Our approach involved addressing three dimensions of religiosity (i.e., cognitive, behavioural and emotional), based on previous research conducted in a similar context, also on a Romanian population (see Negru-Subtirica, Tiganasu, Dezutter & Luyckx, 2016). Further, we wanted to take a closer look at psychological well-being due to its protective role in sustaining the long-term psychological and physical health among individuals (Steptoe, Deaton & Stone, 2015; Chatterjee et al., 2021).

The results of the study show that there is a relationship between R/S and some dimensions of PWB, but not all. The correlations were moderate between cognitive religiosity with the dimensions: purpose in life, environmental mastery, respectively between behavioural religiosity and environmental mastery. These results are in line with the literature that has shown that religious participation is related to increased PWB, especially on the purpose in life dimension (Ryff, 2014). Considering the participants of this study, them being (57.9 %) theology students, this result can be better understood. The subscale purpose in life is related to one feeling a sense of directedness, having an aim and objectives for living while giving meaning to the past and future (Ryff, 2014). And the subscale environmental mastery referring to having a sense of being able to manage the environment, improving one's surroundings and having control over external activities (Ryff, 2014). Looking at these two PWB dimensions and their relationship with behavioural and cognitive religiosity, while also having in mind the percentage of students from theological faculties, we can anticipate a deeper intertwining that is worth exploring in the future. When looking at the comparisons within this sample, between non-theology and theology students, we notice a significantly increased cognitive and behavioural religiosity among the latter. As Negru-Subtirica and colleagues (p. 15, 2016) argued, "the cultural context influenced theological students' personal development in a pervasive manner, marking an unbearably light and perpetual presence in their everyday lives". This implies effects on their behaviour and cognition, by having the belief that one can manage their life and also act upon said belief. Religious faith can offer them parameters that guide and structure their lives. A potential explanation may lie in the religious individual's perception of

internal control, compared to the less or non-religious peer (Pargament, 1997). Finally, this being a correlational study, we can affirm only that these dimensions of PWB might increase, especially as behavioural and cognitive religiosity increase.

The other dimensions of PWB (autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance and positive relationships with others) had a small correlation with all three dimensions of R/S, except between behavioural religiosity and personal growth where there was none. Usually, emotional religiosity defined as spirituality is related with this facet beyond late adulthood (Wink & Dillon, 2003; Frazier, Mintz & Mobley, 2005). Hence, it might not be apparent as much, yet.

Not having a strong relationship between PWB and R/S partially contradicts the existing literature (Vosloo et al., 2009). According to Arnett (2011) emerging adulthood, is associated with lower well-being especially before the middle of it. Changes tend to appear later in life, towards the end of emerging adulthood and especially during late adulthood (Wink & Dillon, 2003; Frazier et al., 2005; Ryff, 2014; Papadopoulos & Rethymno, 2020; Hwang, Cheng, Brown & Silverstein, 2022). Considering $M_{age}=24$ of the participants in this research, they arguably fit in this description. Thus, a question arises whether R/S is a resource for PWB.

Also, in the present study we investigated the relationship between R/S and demographic variables such as gender and parental educational level. We did not succeed to confirm our hypothesis regarding male and female R/S. Males have a moderately increased cognitive and emotional religiosity and a largely increased behavioural religiosity. Just as Mattis (2014) argued, by taking a closer look at the results, there do seem to be differences in relation to various aspects such as culture or specific contextual characteristics. In the present study, the results might be better understood when taking a closer look at the characteristics of our sample. 57.9% (with 71.2 % of them being male) of the participants are students from various theological faculties, even though the female-male distribution in the whole sample is almost equal (54.2% female), we believe this can shed light at least in part on these results. Students from theology faculties have various obligations to attend religious services, an aspect that enters under the behavioural dimension of religiosity. In addition, this part of the sample consists of emerging adults who experience religion both as a personal and professional pursuit; these cultural and contextual characteristics might lead to increased cognitive and emotional religiosity as well. Once again, the comparisons within this sample of emerging adults, between non-theology and theology students, offer us a frame for a better understanding of these results. The within subject comparison analysis (i.e., theology and non-theology profile) emphasizes the significant differences on all R/S dimensions.

Our third and fourth hypothesis were confirmed, parents' educational level is related to increased R/S on all three dimensions. The lower the parental educational level, the higher the offspring's R/S is, on all three dimensions. This result is in line with the present literature, when it comes to the mothers (Benson, Masters & Larson, 1997; Samani & Latifian, 2008; Desmond et al., 2010). More so, we shed light on another important less studied aspect: the father's educational level and its relationship to R/S. This exploratory pursuit that we conducted added to the knowledge regarding the Romanian context, in which family is still "the most important aspect" (Negru et al., 2013, p.384) in adults' lives. The literature shows the relationship between increased R/S and parents' educational level in adolescence, especially on the behavioural dimension (e.g., service attendance; Desmond et al., 2010). The results in our present study confirm the continuity of parental influence on offspring late in life (Smith & Snell, 2009; Nelson, 2014) on more than the behavioural dimension of R/S. According to Arnett (2014), during emerging adulthood the authority of the parents decreases in general, but attachment to family continues to be relevant and important. That being so, it appears that it is of relevance to have knowledge of R/S for both parents.

Limitations and future directions

The sample for this research was comprised only of students, hence we are indeed in line with the literature of emerging adulthood (EA). EA being considered an extended adolescence with more opportunities for autonomy and exploration, while having sufficient economic and adult support (Arnett, 2000). Still, this could be a limitation when it comes to all emerging adults, especially when wishing to have a clear picture of both positive and negative trajectories during EA. Future research could include a more diverse sample, when it comes to employment and financial support.

Looking at the relationship between gender and R/S, we have opted for the biological perspective. This has its limitations; gender can be seen as society's binary differentiation between "maleness" and "femaleness". There is an increasing body of literature that raises the question of defining gender in a more nuanced way, on a spectrum (see Davidson, 2007; Vosloo et al., 2009; Mattis, 2014).

When it comes to the parent-child relationship with R/S, future studies should look at other factors such as socio-economical elements that can come hand in hand with lower parental education and contribute to increased R/S. Also, we suggest that a closer look is needed, in order to take into account, the differences that can arise when parental and offspring gender together with

their relationship quality is studied (see Negru et al., 2014; Halgunseth, Jensen, Sakuma & McHale, 2015; Stearns & Mckinney, 2017; 2019; 2020).

Finally, considering the results presented here, a longitudinal study would be useful in order to develop a better understanding in how psychological well-being tends to increase with age. Future research could include the above-mentioned parental variables, other significant relationships (e.g., clergy, friends, romantic relationships; see Nelson, 2014) and an even more nuanced sample, including emerging adults that are secularized.

To sum up, by continuing to contribute to the line of research started on Romanian emerging adults (see Nelson, 2009; Negru et al., 2014; Negru-Subtirica et al., 2016), we shed a light on the relationship between religiosity/spirituality and psychological well-being in a diverse sample of Romanian emerging adults. This diversity includes various socio-economical statuses, different regions in the country and areas of origin. Considering the demographic variables, we can have a better understanding of this particular social and cultural context. On a theoretical level, the present findings suggest the necessity to have an in-depth approach on psychological well-being and religiosity/spirituality.

In light of the relationship between religiosity/spirituality and psychological well-being, we argue that specialists that offer psychological and theological aid ought to acknowledge this and integrate it in their work. Also, the results of the present research have useful and important practical implications for colleges and universities' policies and practices. Various services that these institutions offer such as psychological, pastoral counselling and psychotherapy, can include R/S dimensions in personnel training. For the secular institutions, they can consider including pastoral counselling or specialists with training on R/S as well. Furthermore, for theological institutions, this can raise awareness in the importance of spiritually guiding emerging adults during this developmental period. Especially considering that emerging adulthood has been proposed as a "critical period" for the manifestation of resilience (Arnett, 2011). Thus, practitioners that get in contact with emerging adults can extend their evaluation to religious and spiritual aspects (e.g., beliefs, doubts, practices etc.), that show a sensitivity towards cultural and contextual aspects (Abu-Zena & Ahmed, 2014).

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