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## **PSYCHOLOGICZNY POMIAR RELIGIJNOŚCI UCZNIÓW POZNAŃSKIEJ SZKOŁY NIEPUBLICZNEJ ORAZ MŁODZIEŻOWEJ WSPÓLNOTY PARAFIALNEJ W OKRESIE PANDEMII COVID-19**

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF RELIGIOSITY AMONG STUDENTS OF A NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL IN POZNAŃ AND YOUTH PARISH COMMUNITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

### **Streszczenie**

Tematem artykułu jest religijność młodzieży z Archidiecezji Poznańskiej. Opiera się on na badaniach sondażowych przeprowadzonych w ósmych klasach społecznej szkoły podstawowej oraz wśród członków grupy młodzieżowej działającej przy parafii św. Jana XXIII w Komornikach. Młodzież, głównie dziewczęta, została przebadana trzema testami mierzącymi religijność w aspektach: emocji wobec Boga, personalnej relacji do Boga oraz spójności przekonań religijnych adolescentów. W części teoretycznej artykułu omówione zostają zagadnienia specyfiki adolescencji, w tym rozwoju religijności na tym etapie rozwojowym.

**Słowa kluczowe:** religijność, adolescencja, młodzież, pandemia Covid-19

### **Abstract**

This article investigates the religiosity of adolescents within the Poznań Archdiocese, employing survey research conducted within an elementary community school and St. John XXIII parish in Komorniki, located near Poznań. Students of the facility, mainly girls, were examined with three tests measuring religiosity in the following aspects: emotions towards God, personal relationship with God and the consistency of religious beliefs of the adolescents. The theoretical part of the article discusses the issues of the specificity of adolescence, including the development of religiosity at this stage of development.

**Keywords:** religiosity, adolescence, youth, pandemic Covid-19

### **Introduction**

The period of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing imperative for heightened isolation markedly curtailed the avenues for engaging in communal religious practices. While remote participation in Holy Mass liturgy remained feasible, the absence of direct contact impeded the formation of interpersonal relationships and the sense of closeness among members of parish and religious communities. This also applied to youth liturgical groups and prayer communities. It seems that at this stage of development, i.e. in adolescence, the loss of contact in a direct relationship may be particularly painful and may even contribute to developmental deficits in emotional and social functioning. Youth chaplains were also afraid that the religious development of this group of believers, whose religiosity was not yet fully developed, would also be inhibited.

Conversely, antecedent to the pandemic, specifically in the 30th year of school-based catechesis, disquieting reports emerged, primarily centered on high schools situated in urban centers. On the Internet, one could find information that students disappear from catechesis when they reach the age of majority or with changes in the schedule that place religion in the first or last class hour, and parents withdraw children from religion classes *en masse*<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, the students willingly engaged in volunteering, including the one organized by the church organization, which is Caritas.

A fundamental query emerges: What characterizes the religiosity of the youth amidst the pandemic? Unraveling this inquiry assumes significance owing to the constraints on the cultivation of religiosity during the pandemic and the anticipated adverse repercussions in the post-pandemic era. It leads to more detailed questions: Has the process of young people's departure from the faith, or rather its practice in the community of the Church, not already begun before the period of remote teaching and forced isolation? Has the pandemic strengthened this process or initiated it? There are also questions about the specificity of young people's religiosity, which is referred to by developmental psychologists as adolescents: Are there any specific dimensions of religiosity that are characteristic of adolescent people? Is the relationship or the emotionality accompanying the experience of faith more important?

This article endeavors to address certain facets of these inquiries, serving as an inaugural contribution to an extensive series of investigations on the religiosity of adolescents. This longitudinal study is slated for multi-year exploration under the auspices of the

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<sup>1</sup> „Dlaczego młodzież nie chce chodzić na lekcje religii?”; „Czy obowiązkowa religia sprawi, że młodzi zapelnia kościoły?”, dostęp 31.12.2022, <https://www.dziennikzachodni.pl>.

Department of Practical Theology within the Faculty of Theology at the University of Szczecin. Through these research endeavors, we aim to discern the distinctive characteristics of diverse youth environments and elucidate the dynamic shifts in the religiosity of young individuals within the contemporary milieu.

## 1. Religiosity and adolescence

As articulated by the apostle James in his epistle, “If anyone perceives himself to be religious and yet fails to govern his speech, he deceives his own heart, rendering his devotion baseless. True and untainted religiosity in the sight of God the Father manifests through benevolent care for orphans and widows in their distress, coupled with the preservation of one's own moral purity, uncontaminated by the influences of the world.” (James 1:26-27)<sup>2</sup>. The letter's author used the Greek word *θρησκεία*<sup>3</sup> to describe religiosity. The semantic field of this phrase allows it to be translated as: service to God, worship, worship, and even a taste for worship, a taste for worship<sup>4</sup>. When formulating a definition of religiosity on this basis, it should be pointed out that it is worship given to God in the form of worship, which, however, stems from a deep, inner human need. The apostle James further underscores the imperative that such worship should transcend theoretical or ritualistic aspects, advocating for its tangible manifestation through practical acts of mercy, diligent attention to the vulnerable, and conscientious efforts to safeguard its integrity from contamination by the influences of the surrounding world.

The issue of religiosity has not only a biblical and theological dimension, it is not indifferent to other disciplines and fields of knowledge. It is also dealt with by psychology, which, however, leaves the aspect of transcendence in the background or in a broader context, and focuses on its subjective aspects, which are also related to developmental, personality, emotional and motivational, and even clinical aspects<sup>5</sup>. The psychological analysis of religiosity does not focus on the supernatural factor<sup>6</sup>. A person's religiosity is shaped

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<sup>2</sup> *Biblia Tysiąclecia. Pismo Święte Starego i Nowego Testamentu*, access 30.08.2022, <https://biblia.deon.pl/rozdzial.php?id=1044>.

<sup>3</sup> *Grecko-polski Nowy Testament. Wydanie interlinearne z kodami gramatycznymi* (Warszawa: Vocatio, 1994), 1086.

<sup>4</sup> Remigiusz Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu*, (Warszawa: Vocatio, 1995), 158, 283.

<sup>5</sup> Zbigniew Kulesz, „Religijność w perspektywie psychologicznej”, *Studia Elbląskie* 14 (2013): 185, access 24.11.2022, [https://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/files/Studia\\_Elblaskie/Studia\\_Elblaskie-r2013-t14/Studia\\_Elblaskie-r2013-t14-s185-197/Studia\\_Elblaskie-r2013-t14-s185-197.pdf](https://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/files/Studia_Elblaskie/Studia_Elblaskie-r2013-t14/Studia_Elblaskie-r2013-t14-s185-197/Studia_Elblaskie-r2013-t14-s185-197.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Halina Grzymała-Moszczyńska, *Psychologia religii* (Kraków: Instytut Religioznawstwa Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1991), 45.

throughout his life and it is difficult to describe its development by identifying key tasks to be performed at each stage of this process or describing behaviors characteristic of it. The development of religiosity is particularly difficult to characterize in the case of teenagers, because they are subject to turbulent and dynamic physical and mental changes and shape their own, fully separate identity, often in opposition to the values instilled in them by the adult world.

### **1.1. The specificity of the period of adolescence**

The term adolescence comes from the Latin word *adolescere*, which means to grow up, to mature, to increase, to bring up<sup>7</sup>, and it is comprehensively translated as growing into adulthood<sup>8</sup>. Adolescence in the context of human development is the time that separates childhood from adulthood. This period, after a stable childhood, is characterized by high volatility and an increase in the dynamics of developmental processes that bring biological, mental, social and moral changes. In terms of physiology, in adolescence, there are changes in the structure and functions of the body, which takes place under the influence of the combined effects of nervous and hormonal processes, the so-called neuroendocrine mechanisms<sup>9</sup>. In the psychological aspect, the process of identity formation is the most important during adolescence. The choices an adolescent makes can greatly affect his or her further mental development and entering adulthood<sup>10</sup>. Developmental psychologists delineate two subperiods within adolescence: early adolescence, characterized by the onset of puberty and the transitional phase of maturation, and late adolescence, encompassing the later stages of adolescence marked by the maturing into young adulthood.

Early adolescence, also referred to as the early stage of adolescence, spans the developmental period typically occurring between the ages of 12 and 15. During this phase, the teenager experiences rapid and dynamic physical growth and weight gain within a relatively brief timeframe. This process is more intense in boys, starting later than in girls, and ending around the same time, around the age of 15. After these changes are completed, a person reaches sexual maturity<sup>11</sup>. Changes in physicality affect the self-image and determine

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<sup>7</sup> „Adolescere”, in: *Słownik łacińsko-polski. Glosbe*, access 21.09.2022, <https://pl.glosbe.com/la/pl>.

<sup>8</sup> Irena Obuchowska, „Adolescencja”, in: *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka. Charakterystyka okresów życia człowieka*, eds. Barbara Harwas-Napierała, Janusz Trempała (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2008), 163.

<sup>9</sup> Obuchowska, „Adolescencja”, 163.

<sup>10</sup> Obuchowska, „Adolescencja”, 166.

<sup>11</sup> Obuchowska, „Adolescencja”, 167–168.

emotionality, which at this time is characterized by instability and lability. Not without significance in this aspect are the complex neurohormonal processes that transform the body. Among numerous pre-adolescent individuals, anxiety exhibits an escalating trajectory, reaching its zenith around the ages of 13 to 14. Social anxiety dominates, as well as anxiety related to exposure or failure<sup>12</sup>. It is not uncommon for a teenager to deal with panic attacks and the phobias often associated with them, obsessive-compulsive disorders and generalized anxiety disorders<sup>13</sup>.

An extremely significant change also takes place in the processes of thinking. A child who used concrete and functional relationships in perceiving and describing phenomena and the surrounding world gradually begins to think more abstractly and logically. Therefore, simple explanations are no longer enough, teenagers are characterized by insight and openness to various options and the search for rational explanations<sup>14</sup>.

There is a time of primacy of relationships and peer relationships. They become an alternative to the family, which has so far been the basis for the child's social functioning. Peer groups are an opportunity and a threat at the same time. On the one hand, they contribute to the formation of an adolescent's personality, define the standards of social functioning, and belonging to them awakens and strengthens his sense of value. On the other hand, they may provoke risky behavior and promote alternative values to the world of values shaped by the family<sup>15</sup>.

During adolescence, moral autonomy is developed, which, however, is forged in a dynamic process of change. According to Kohlberg's concept, an initially adolescent teenager is characterized by interpersonal conformism, i.e. dependence on the majority, especially the one associated with the peer group. An important criterion for choices is also the possibility of achieving personal pleasure from the action. However, a little later, the adolescent's moral views evolve towards an increase in moral rigor associated with idealism and the search for rules of behavior in legal arrangements<sup>16</sup>.

The culmination of the maturation process leads to late adolescence, referred to as the stage of young adulthood. According to some developmental psychologists, it does not end until around the age of 20. Unlike adolescence, this period is a time of stability. The main

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<sup>12</sup> Obuchowska, „Adolescencja”, 172.

<sup>13</sup> Sara Mattis, Thomas Ollendick, *Lęk i fobie nastolatków* (Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, 2004), 9–20.

<sup>14</sup> Obuchowska, „Adolescencja”, 172–175.

<sup>15</sup> Obuchowska, „Adolescencja”, 176–178.

<sup>16</sup> Obuchowska, „Adolescencja”, 181–183; Ross Vasta, Marshall Haith, Scott Miller, *Psychologia dziecka*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1995), 484–485.

developmental tasks of adolescence are: reaching emotional maturity, developing interpersonal relationships, developing moral autonomy and educating, or rather choosing a worldview. However, the disturbance is the growing sex drive and the desire to satisfy it<sup>17</sup>.

The morality of a young person begins to be based on defending the rights of others, and finally ends in the achievement of the so-called the stage of universal ethical laws, which is characterized by an independent search for rules consistent with logical understanding<sup>18</sup>.

## 1.2. Development of religiosity in adolescence

The evolution of religiosity is an outcome of dynamic transformations oriented towards enhancing the quality of life, with a distinct focus on a divine orientation toward God. Increasing the level of the quality of life in religious development occurs through the improvement of man's relationship with God. In this process, psychological changes occur, which are marked by the feeling that in the relationship with God one is more and more the subject of this bond, and life takes on an internal character and becomes an autotelic value. A person may depend to a lesser extent on external factors, the influence of the environment, other worldviews, and thus is not at risk of losing a sense of meaning and a crisis of values. Religious development can occur as becoming and transforming the structures of religiosity, which takes place in the development potential. The determinants of this process may be: improving the forms of religiosity, increasing religious activity and integrating individual structures of religiosity into ever larger wholes<sup>19</sup>. Emotions accompanying the developing relationship with God and the increase in religious knowledge are also indicators.

According to Fowler's concept of religious development, the period from the age of 12 to early adulthood is the stage of conventional faith. Religion at this time refers to the so-called reflective awareness and the ability to assimilate a mutual perspective. This means that a friend or first love becomes like a mirror for the teenager. An adolescent is looking for his reflection, feedback in the reactions of others to himself. A man in this period of life is often convinced that people around him are staring at him, judging him, which causes his rebellion. Nevertheless, the gaze of those individuals whom he acknowledges and from whom he perceives acceptance functions as a reinforcing mechanism, contributing to the consolidation of the structures within his evolving personality. This mechanism is also important for the

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<sup>17</sup> Obuchowska, „Adolescencja”, 186–188.

<sup>18</sup> Obuchowska, „Adolescencja”, 188–189; Vasta, Haith, Miller, *Psychologia dziecka*, 485–486.

<sup>19</sup> Czesław Walesa, *Rozwój religijności człowieka* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2005), 57–58.

formation of a new image and a new relationship with God. Anthropomorphisms are no longer enough, children's ideas of the Absolute are falling into oblivion. At this stage, relationship becomes the way to rediscover God. What's more, it is built on the basis of these first relationships of friendship and love. The depth of these relationships becomes the leaven of a transforming faith<sup>20</sup>. Adults gradually cease to be an inspiration for their teenage children, their authority is gradually transferred to their peers. It is not, however, that the world of adults ceases to be a source of inspiration for a teenager, except that its sources are rather film heroes or icons of popular culture. Rebellion appears. The stimulus to oppose the world of adults, whose direct representatives are parents and teachers, is the "interpersonal self", which compiles foreign beliefs and a whole set of values. A peer becomes an idol. If the image of God does not refer to this mirror relationship, but its source is the world of adults, then there is a risk that the teenager will distance himself from God<sup>21</sup>.

During adolescence, a person experiences an identity crisis. He is afraid of contempt, lack of faith in him, he is indignant at falsehood, hypocrisy and indifference. Young people ask existential questions, they ask about the meaning of life, the need to learn, the value of faith in human life. The harmonious picture of the world from childhood is falling apart, and reality is perceived very critically. Young people who do not redefine God through the prism of the mirror relationship, in this period transfer a number of children's attitudes into the dimension of experiencing their religiosity: anthropomorphism (imagining God in a human way)<sup>22</sup>, animism (attributing specific intentions to inanimate objects)<sup>23</sup> and magical ritualism (magical treatment of religious rites)<sup>24</sup>. However, on the other hand, it is a time of shaping autonomous religiosity. Individual activity in this area and the processes of transcending and

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<sup>20</sup> James Fowler, *Stages of faith. The psychology of human development and the quest for meeting* (New York: HarperOne, 1995), 153.

<sup>21</sup> James Fowler, *Faith development and pastoral care. Theology and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 66.

<sup>22</sup> During a certain stage of cognitive development, a child attributes the attribute of omniscience to adults. This phenomenon holds significance not only for anthropomorphic perceptions that children form about nature but also extends to their conceptualization of God. Jean Piaget, *Mowa i myślenie dziecka* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2005), 189.

<sup>23</sup> According to research, children, up to the age of 7–8, did not subscribe to the notion that objects do not act according to their will due to a lack of volition; instead, they asserted that objects refrain from certain actions because they are not allowed to do so. Objects, therefore, possess will, yet this will is overwhelmingly constrained by obligation. Around the age of 7–8, the first notion of physical determinism emerges: certain movements, such as the shifting of clouds or the flowing of rivers, are increasingly explained not as a result of moral obligation but rather as a consequence of entirely physical compulsion. However, it is only around the age of 11–12 that a child definitively replaces the concept of a moral rule concerning objects with explanations that incorporate physical determinism. Jean Piaget, *Jak sobie dziecko wyobraża świat* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2006), 176–177.

<sup>24</sup> Conference of the Polish Bishops (Konferencja Episkopatu Polski), "Katecheza: Podstawa programowa" [Catechesis: Curriculum], (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2001), 50.

participation in the religious life of more perfect people (especially masters of inner life)<sup>25</sup> gain particular importance.

A teenager, already at the threshold of adulthood, reaches the stage of "individual-reflective" faith in the development of religiosity. The initiation of this belief is associated with a departure from apathetic reliance on external patterns. This is the time when a young man becomes an authority for himself, a model. Despite this, he still uses formal sources of values, beliefs and conventions, but he develops awareness that he alone decides about their choice and possible disqualification. The elimination of authority is related to the introduction of a social decision different from the earlier stage of "synthetic-conventional" faith. The key here are: the feeling of having one's own doctrine (philosophy of life) by the "self", changing over time and efficiency of self-assessment, as well as oneself against the background of others, taking into account the worldview and the influence of the group's experiences that create it<sup>26</sup>.

Studies of adolescents' religiosity, repeated quite regularly, indicate that faith in God is still maintained, in the range of about 40%, without doubt. About 25% of secondary school students declare their faith torn by doubts. However, the participation of young people in religious practices is significantly decreasing, and the participation of students of general secondary schools in religion classes is almost drastic<sup>27</sup>.

## 2. Studying the religiosity of adolescents

The culminating point of this article is the presentation of the results of research on the religiosity of adolescents. The selection of the subjects to the group was intentional. The selected youth represent two groups. The first of them are students of the eighth grade of the Social Primary School who attended religion classes during the pandemic, while the second consisted of adolescents who form a youth group operating at the parish of St. John XXIII in Komorniki. The study groups are therefore not representative of Poland. The research was of a diagnostic and survey nature. The religiosity of young people was measured in three aspects: emotions towards God, personal relationship with Him and religious beliefs.

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<sup>25</sup> Walesa, *Rozwój religijności człowieka*, 81.

<sup>26</sup> Anna Królikowska, *Pojęcia religijne młodzieży. Badania empiryczne detonacyjnego i konotacyjnego rozumienia pojęć* (Kraków: Wyższa Szkoła Filozoficzno-Pedagogiczna „Ignatianum”, 2008), 35–37, access 31.12.2022, [https://wydawnictwo.ignatianum.edu.pl/sites/wydawnictwo/files/publikacje\\_pdf/pojeciareligijne\\_krolikowska\\_1.pdf](https://wydawnictwo.ignatianum.edu.pl/sites/wydawnictwo/files/publikacje_pdf/pojeciareligijne_krolikowska_1.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> Kazimierz Świąś, „Religijno-moralny portret młodzieży polskiej i jego pastoralne implikacje”, *Roczniki Teologiczne* 66 (2018): 47–51, access 31.12.2022, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18290/rt.2018.65.6-4>.



## 2.1. Research environments

The history of social education in Poland dates back to 1989, when political changes in Poland enabled the establishment of non-public educational institutions. In September this year, classes for several six-year-olds began in a private apartment in Poznań, giving rise to the first school in Poland established on the initiative of the Social Educational Society, which was founded in Warsaw and became a promoter of the development of social education. At the end of 1989, the Board of Education and Upbringing gave permission to run a non-state school under the name of Social Primary School No. 1, located at 154 Grunwaldzka Street in Poznań. On September 1, 1990, 75 children started their education at the school. For over thirty years, the motto of the first social school in Poland has been the call "love and wisdom", and it is patronized by St. Urszula Ledóchowska<sup>28</sup>. There are currently about 100 similar schools in Poland run by the Social Educational Society. Almost 15,000 students attend them. children, and 2.5 thousand people are employed. people. In Western Pomerania, schools operate in Szczecin, Szczecinek, Darłowo and Kołobrzeg. The STO School Complex in Słupsk and the General Education School Complex in Piła are extremely dynamic<sup>29</sup>.

Parish of St. John XXIII was established on October 1, 2015 in Komorniki near Poznań. The first pastor and builder of the church was Fr. Thomas Ren. This community, despite being one of the youngest in the Archdiocese of Poznań, is developing very dynamically. Numerous pastoral and liturgical groups operate in the parish. One of them is the youth community, which was formed in 2016. Initially, its members were mainly students of the Komorniki gymnasium. However, soon high school students, students of technical colleges joined, and now they are also students of the last grade of primary schools. Winter and summer formation trips combined with active mountaineering, cycling and canoeing have become a tradition of the "young people of John XXIII". In addition, young people participated in meetings in Lednica, and a group of several people regularly participated in meetings animated by the Taizé community. Members of the group also undertook charity activities<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Magdalena Schmidt, „Historia szkoły”, access 27.12.2022, <https://spolecznajedynka.pl/o-szkole/misja-i-wartosci/historia-szkoly>.

<sup>29</sup> „Społeczne Towarzystwo Oświatowe”, access 27.12.2022, <https://sto.org.pl>.

<sup>30</sup> Archidiecezja Poznańska, „Nowa parafia w archidiecezji poznańskiej”, access 31.12.2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170902003747/http://www.archpoznan.pl/content/view/3724/107/>; „John XXIII parish (Parafia św. Jana XXIII)”, access 31.12.2022, <https://www.jan23.pl/>.

## **2.2. Characteristics of research groups**

In the case of Social Primary School No. 1, the study covered eighth grade students who attended catechesis in September 2020. The study was conducted during religion classes in three classes. The group of subjects consisted of 45 people. Girls dominated, constituting 60% of the respondents (27 people), and boys constituted 40% of the respondents (18 people).

The survey of members of the parish youth group took place at the same time during the group's Wednesday meeting. 17 people took part in the study and the vast majority of them were girls, who constituted 82% of the respondents (15 people). The surveyed people were both students of the eighth grade of primary schools in Komorniki and Luboń, as well as students of the first grade of secondary schools in Poznań (mainly high schools, including the archdiocesan one, but 3 people started their education in technical schools).

## **2.3. Research methods and tools**

The research was carried out using the "paper-and-pencil" method, i.e. the surveyed adolescents filled in previously prepared questionnaires. The following tools were used: the Polish adaptation of the Emotions to God Scale (EtG) by S. Huber, the Personal Relationship to God Scale (SPRdB) and the Consistency of Religious Beliefs Scale (SSPR).

### **2.3.1. Emotion to God Scale (EtG)**

Huber is the creator of the EtG scale. According to its author, the emotions expressed by the EtG refer to three theological categories: holiness, providence and justice. Perceiving God in these categories is the basis for formulating human expectations towards Him, which is the source of emotions experienced in this relationship<sup>31</sup>.

The original EtG questionnaire consists of 16 items, which are the names of basic and complex emotions that a person can experience in relation to God. The study used the Polish version of the EtG questionnaire, which was enriched with 4 additional items, so there were 20 items in total. The instruction boils down to the question: How often do you experience situations in which you feel the following emotions towards God? The examined person evaluates the frequency of feeling each emotion towards God on a 5-point scale (never, rarely,

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<sup>31</sup> Beata Zarzycka, Rafał. P. Bartzuk, „Polska adaptacja skali EtG S. Hubera”, in: *Psychologiczny pomiar religijności*, ed. Marek Jarosz (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2011), 265.

sometimes, often, very often). The score in the subscale is the sum of the points for the answers to the questions that make up the subscale divided by the number of items<sup>32</sup>.

The EtG scale has a hierarchical structure and consists of two main scales, which are "positive emotions" and "negative emotions". The "negative emotions" scale contains three subscales, referred to as: "anger", "anxiety" and "guilt". In the "positive emotions" subscale, the sum of the points for the answers is divided by 11, and in the "negative emotions" subscale – by 10. The results in the "anger", "anxiety" and "guilt" subscales are obtained by dividing the sum of the points for the answers, respectively, by : 2, 3 and 4. The results in the EtG subscales allow for the assessment of the frequency of experiencing particular emotions towards God: positive and negative (anger, anxiety and guilt). A high score (around 5) means a high frequency, and a low score (around 1) a low frequency of experiencing each emotion toward God<sup>33</sup>.

### **2.3.2. Personal Relationship to God Scale (SPRdB)**

The theoretical basis for the Personal Relationship to God Scale is Buber's concept. According to Buber's views, man's relationship to God can be described in three categories of relationship: dialogical, reciprocal, and actualized<sup>34</sup>.

A dialogical relationship occurs when a person is accompanied by openness to the voice of God. A man exchanges information with God, presents his own experiences, problems and experiences. At the same time, he is open to listening. In this type of relationship, a person is sometimes the subject, and in other situations the object of the relationship. This dialogue takes place through listening to the word and inner experience. The opposite of dialogue is monologue, which is characterized by talkativeness and anxiety of contact with God in silence. What is missing here is listening, and thus, opening to the information coming from the Creator<sup>35</sup>.

A mutual relationship occurs when a person is aware that he or she is both the subject and the object of the ongoing interaction. God in human consciousness mobilizes an individual to a specific type of action, demands that certain decisions be agreed upon. The difference between a mutual and a dialogue relationship is visible in the fact that in this case

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<sup>32</sup> Zarzycka, Bartczuk, „Polska adaptacja Skali Emocji do Boga (EtG) S. Hubera”, 268.

<sup>33</sup> Zarzycka, Bartczuk, „Polska adaptacja Skali Emocji do Boga (EtG) S. Hubera”, 268, 285.

<sup>34</sup> Marek Jarosz, „Skala Personalnej Relacji do Boga”, in: *Psychologiczny pomiar religijności*, ed. Marek Jarosz (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2011), 114.

<sup>35</sup> Jarosz, „Skala Personalnej Relacji do Boga”, 115.

there is not only an exchange of information, but the action and decision-making dimension is updated. On the other side of the continuum is a one-sided relationship characterized by passivity and an attitude of passive expectation<sup>36</sup>.

The updated relationship is localized in time and space and is dynamic in nature, depending on the current human situation. Man is constantly ready to meet God and includes all spheres of his life in the religious sphere, and God is experienced "here and now". Its opposite is an unactualized relationship, which is characterized by a lack of internal dynamism in experiencing the professed religion, it does not actualize it in everyday life experienced by man<sup>37</sup>.

The results obtained in SPRdB should be interpreted as an indicator of a personal relationship with God. The overall score, on the other hand, describes the intensity of the personal dimension of religiosity. The three mentioned subscales indicate the structure of the personal relationship<sup>38</sup>.

The test sheet contains a short instruction and 20 assertions that are answered on a seven-point Likert scale. An appropriate key is used to count the results, which enables the identification of assertions as indicators of particular relationship categories. Adding up all the results is an indicator of a personal relationship with God. Determining its level is possible thanks to the table of standards, which also allows you to convert the raw score to the percentile score<sup>39</sup>.

### **2.3.3. Religious Belief Coherence Scale (SSPR)**

The Religious Belief Coherence Scale is based on Chaim's concept. In the analysis of the coherence of religious beliefs, he relied on a variety of theoretical concepts, but ultimately divided beliefs into two groups, two dimensions. The first one, which allows us to analyze the coherence of beliefs, includes the dimensions of beliefs: basic (general knowledge about the principles of faith), church (knowledge about more specific aspects of the Church's teaching) and natural (conviction about the existence of God and his meaning in life, not necessarily related to knowledge of the doctrine and teaching of the Church). The second group makes it possible to verify orthodoxy, i.e. the compatibility of beliefs with the teaching of the Church within four thematic areas: theocentric assertions (describing the relationship of man to God

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<sup>36</sup> Jarosz, „Skala Personalnej Relacji do Boga”, 115.

<sup>37</sup> Jarosz, „Skala Personalnej Relacji do Boga”, 116.

<sup>38</sup> Jarosz, „Skala Personalnej Relacji do Boga”, 127.

<sup>39</sup> Jarosz, „Skala Personalnej Relacji do Boga”, 127.

and the world), Christocentric assertions (embracing the attitude to Jesus Christ and His saving role), eschatological life after death in its individual and social dimension) and Ecclesial assertions (describing the attitude towards the Church)<sup>40</sup>.

Thanks to this tool, depending on the purpose of the measurement, it is possible to diagnose the consistency of religious beliefs or their orthodoxy. In terms of the consistency of beliefs, the assessment is made in three dimensions: basic beliefs (PP) – 30 assertions, church beliefs (PK) – 10 assertions and natural beliefs (PN) – 5 assertions. The average results obtained by the respondents in these three categories allow to obtain a picture of the religious beliefs of an individual or group, and above all, their consistency or inconsistency. The diagnosis of orthodoxy refers to the analysis of beliefs examined in four dimensions (assertions) that have been characterized in the already mentioned subchapter 1.2.2 of this article. These are: Theocentric (9 assertions), Christocentric (12 assertions), eschatological (8 assertions) and ecclesial (14 assertions)<sup>41</sup>.

### **3. Test results and post-diagnostic conclusions**

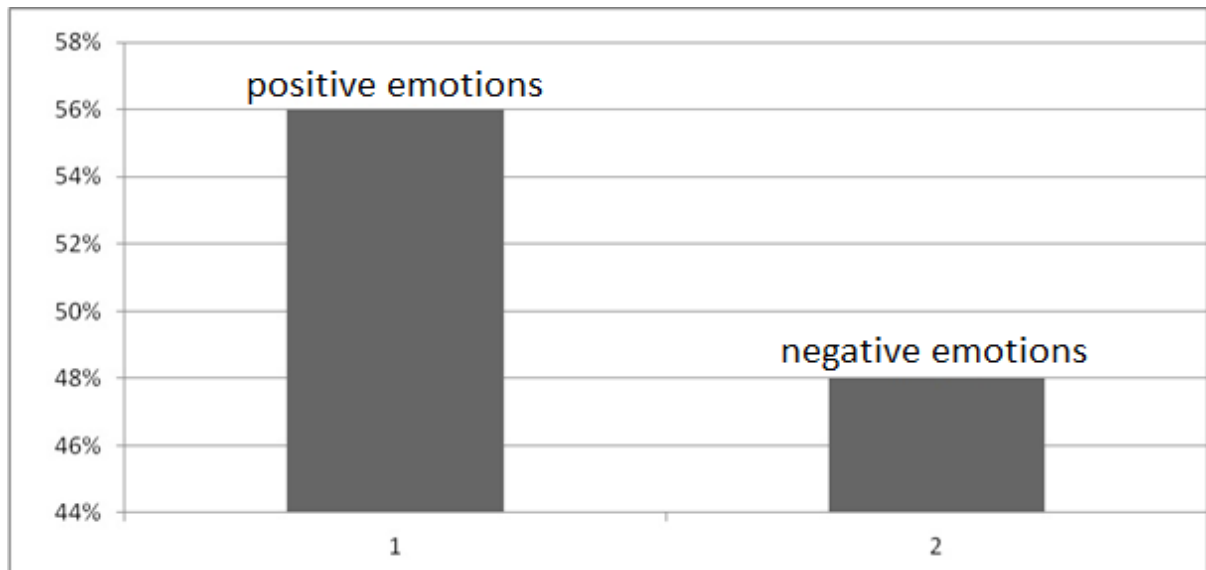
The research results will be presented separately in relation to the two study groups. There will also be a comparison of the results regarding the personal relationship and the coherence of beliefs of the surveyed groups. The results will be presented in the form of percentage ranks of the averaged results of individual scales, dimensions and subcategories defining: emotions towards God, the form of personal relationship with Him and the consistency of beliefs.

#### **3.1. Emotions towards God of eighth grade students of Social Primary School No. 1**

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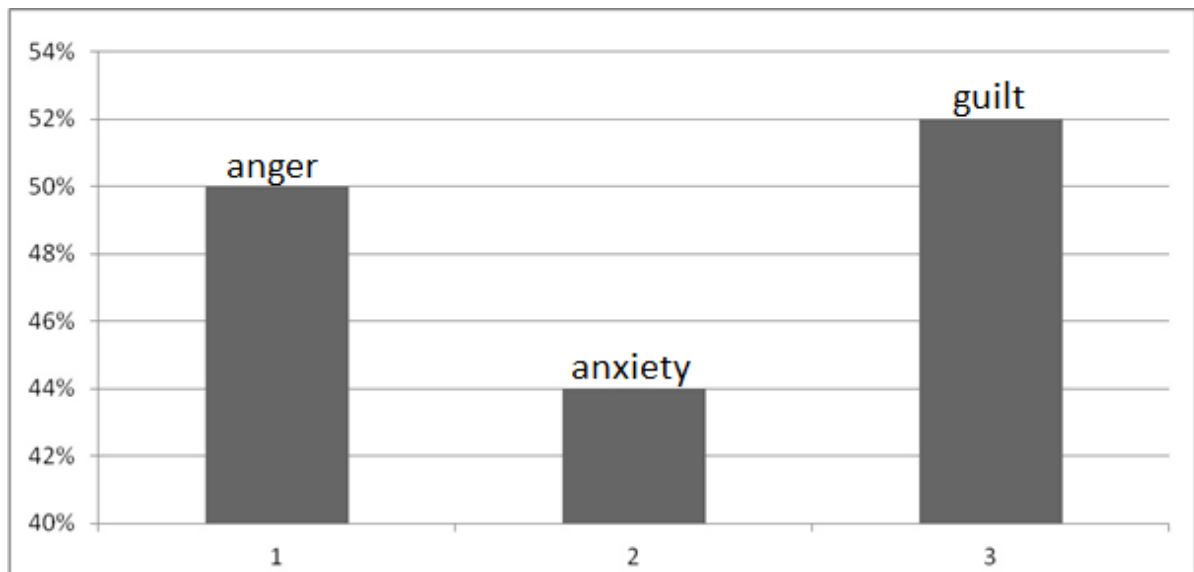
<sup>40</sup> Władysław Chaim, „Skala Przekonań Religijnych”, in: *Psychologiczny pomiar religijności*, ed. Marek Jarosz, (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2011), 91–95.

<sup>41</sup> Chaim, „Skala Spójności Przekonań Religijnych”, 95–96.



**Chart 1.** A Comparative Analysis of Emotions Toward God Among Eighth-Grade Students at Primary School No. 1. Insights from an Original Study.

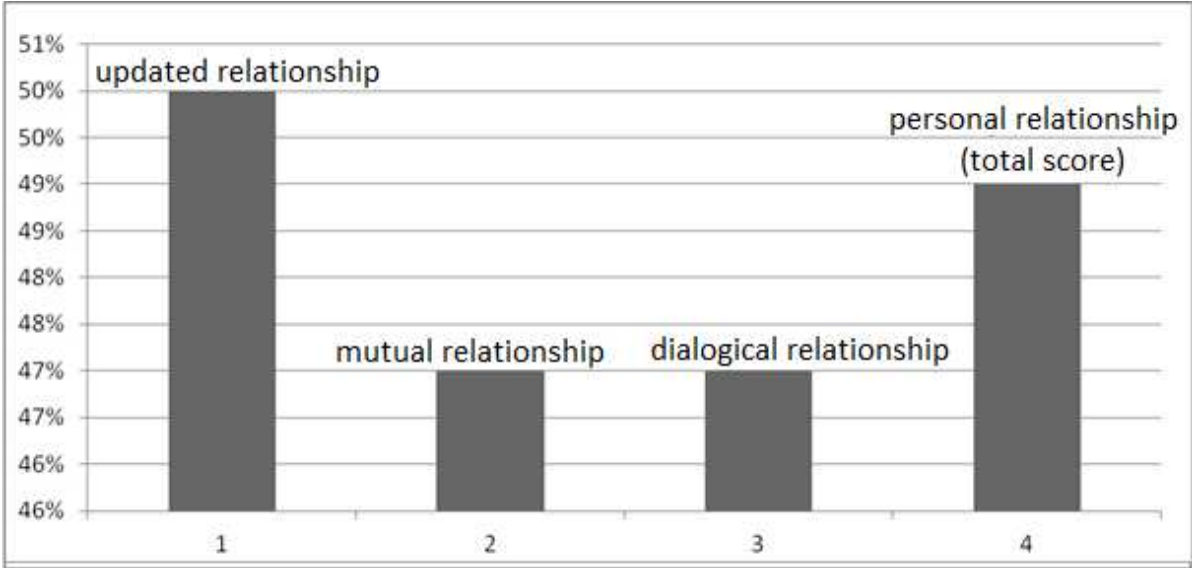
The level of positive emotions is higher than negative ones. The intensity of the dimension of positive emotions towards God can be described as medium, neither high nor low, while negative ones are in the borderline between medium and low.



**Chart 2.** Subscales of Negative Emotions: Anger, Anxiety, and Guilt. Insights from an Original Study.

In terms of negative emotions, the highest level of guilt towards God is found in the surveyed adolescents. However, this result does not differ significantly from the level of anger. The level of anger and guilt are in the range of average results, while in the case of anxiety it can be classified as low.

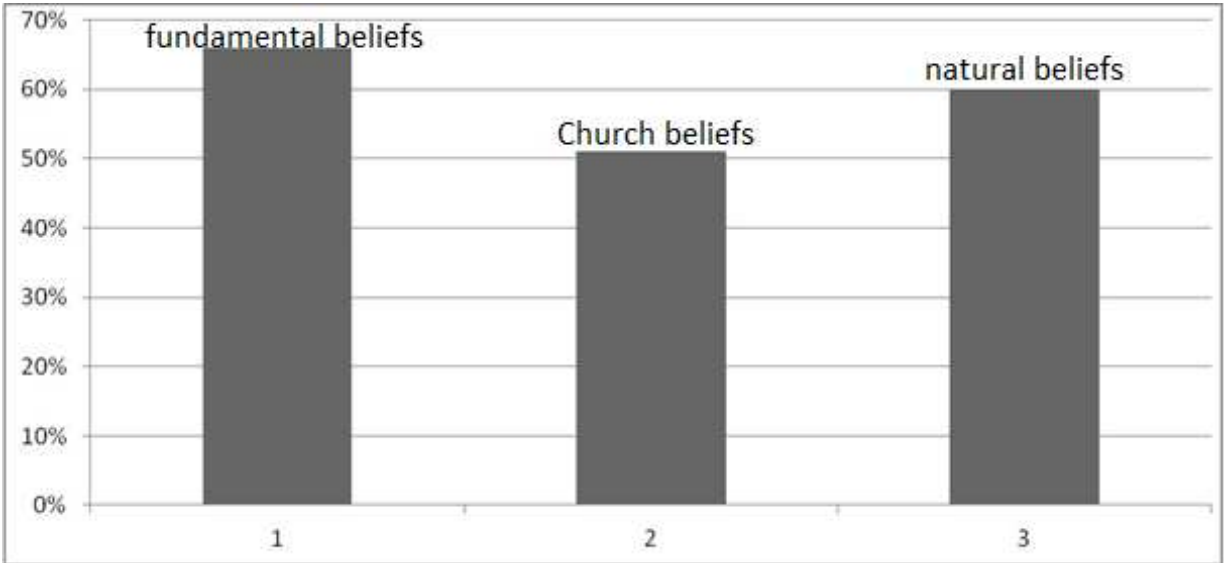
**3.2. Forms of personal relationship with God of eighth grade students of Social Primary School No. 1**



**Chart 3.** The Overall Level and Specific Dimensions (Updated, Mutual, and Dialogical) of Personal Relationships with God Among Eighth-Grade Students at Primary School No. 1: Findings from a Self-Conducted Study.

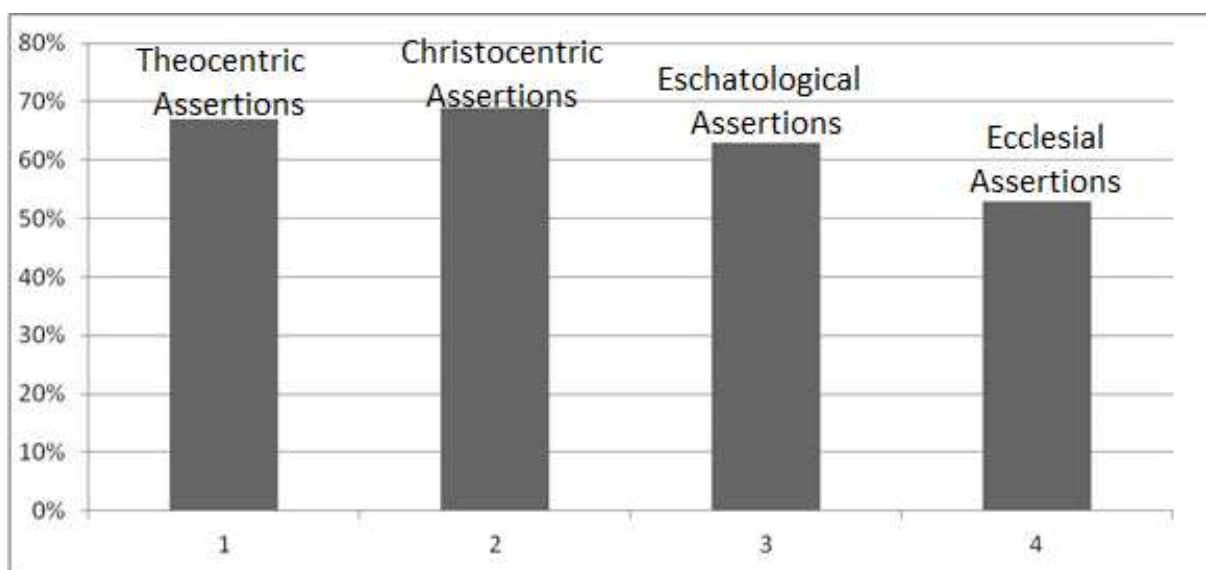
The overall level of personal relationships with God among eighth-grade students is situated at an intermediate, average level. The predominant aspect is the 'updated relationship,' representing the foundational form of engagement that signifies a readiness to encounter God.

**3.3. Religious Beliefs Among Eighth-Grade Students of Primary School No. 1**



**Chart 4.** Coherence of Religious Beliefs Among Eighth-Grade Students of Primary School No. 1: Insights from a Self-Conducted Study.

Although it seems that the students' religious beliefs are not entirely consistent, it should be noted that the discrepancy is not large. This allows us to say that in this case there is consistency of beliefs. Core and natural belief scores are on the borderline between average and high. This means that the respondents, especially in the case of assertions that were indicators of natural and basic beliefs, most often chose the answer "I agree". The respondents found it most difficult to agree with those beliefs that pointed to the Church as a place of realization of faith, but also of leadership and power.

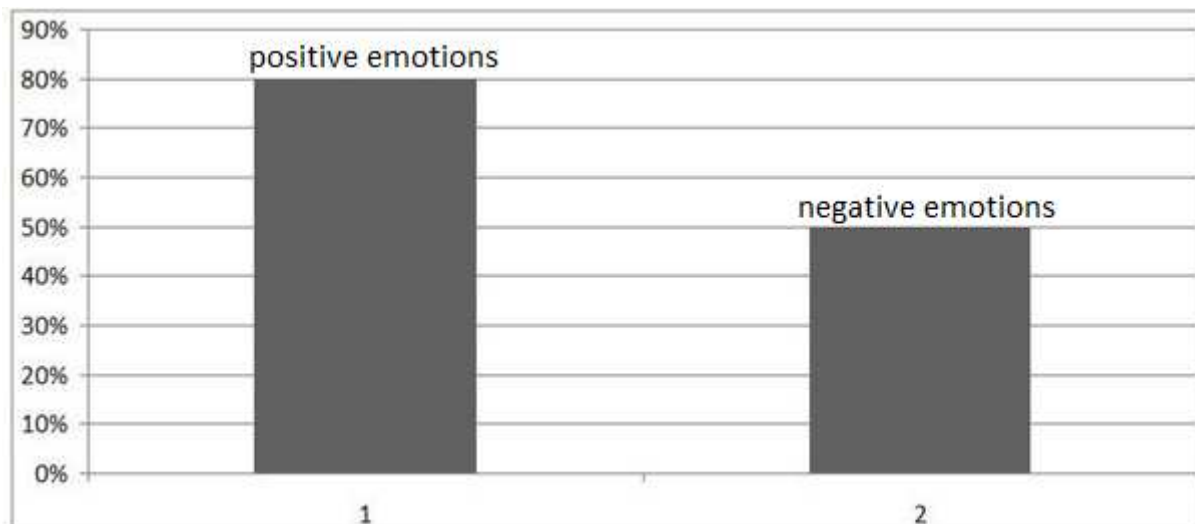


**Chart 5.** The Orthodoxy of Beliefs Among Eighth-Grade Students at Primary School No. 1: Findings from a Self-Conducted Study.

The Orthodoxy of Eighth-Grade Students at Primary School No. 1 hovers at the upper limit of the average range. Notably, Ecclesial Orthodoxy stands out, registering results at the higher bounds of the average spectrum. It can be considered that consistency in this respect has been maintained, although the chart shows a greater agreement of the respondents to theocentric, Christocentric and eschatological assertions than to those relating to issues related to the Church and its importance for professing faith.

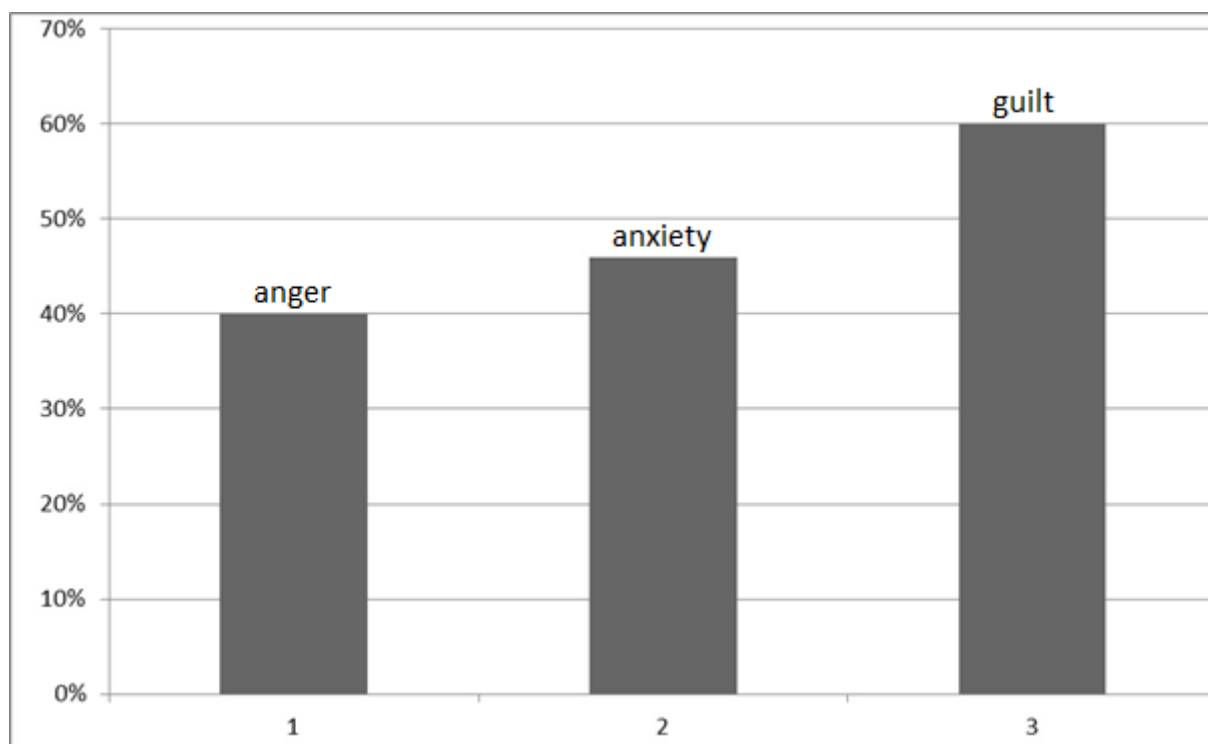
### **3.4. Emotional Responses Toward God Among Members of the Youth Group from the Parish of St. John XXIII in Komorniki (J 23)**





**Chart 6.** A Comparative Analysis of Emotional Responses Toward God Among the Youth Associated with St. John XXIII. Source: Self-Developed Research.

The level of positive emotions is much higher than negative ones. The intensity of positive emotions towards God can be described as high. Negative emotions are in the borderline between medium and low.

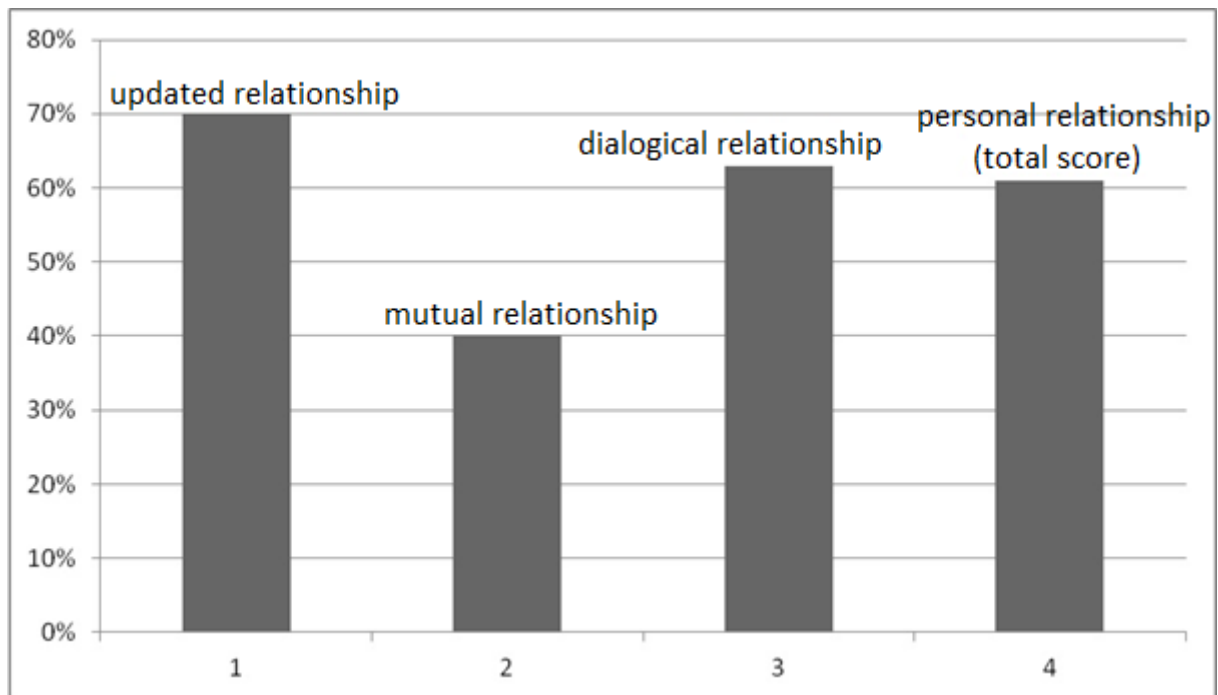


**Chart 7.** Subscales of Negative Emotions: Anger, Anxiety and Guilt. Source: Self-Conducted Study.

In terms of negative emotions in the surveyed youth, the highest level of guilt towards God, which, however, does not reach the high score range. By far the lowest is the level of

anger, the intensity of which can be described as low. The level of anxiety is in the range of average results.

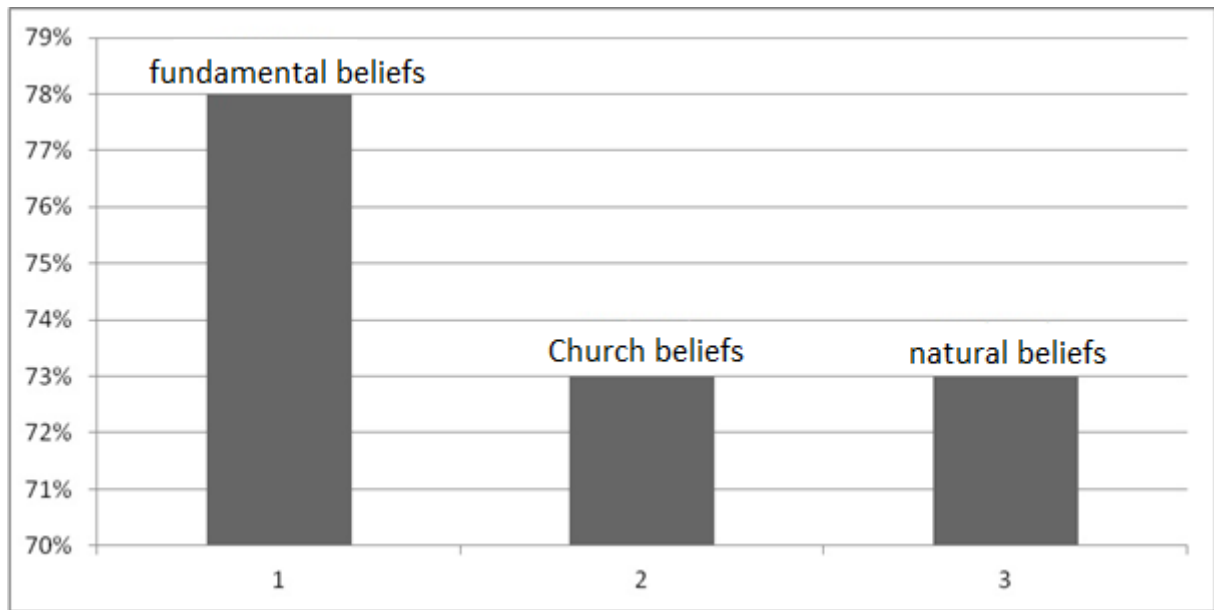
### 3.5. Forms of Personal Relationship with God Among the Youth Group Members from the Parish of St. John XXIII in Komorniki (J 23)



**Chart 8.** The general level of the youth's personal relationship with God from John 23 and its individual dimensions (updated, mutual and dialogical relationship). Source: Own study

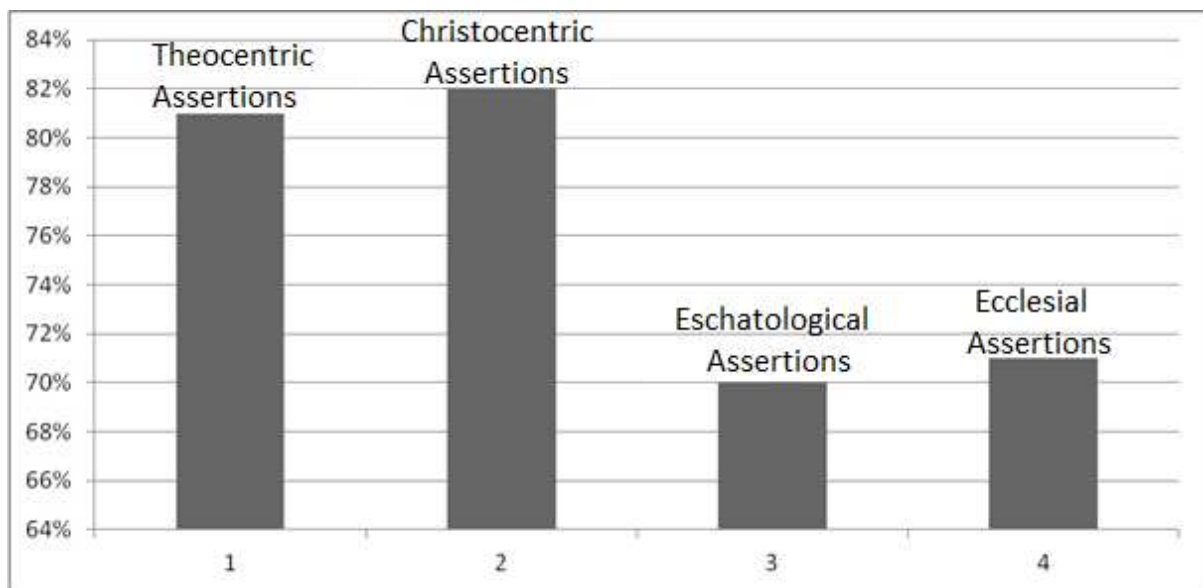
The general level of personal relationship to God of the members of the youth group from the parish of St. John XXIII in Komorniki is at an above-average level. The updated relationship definitely dominates, i.e. the one that is the most basic form of relationship and expresses readiness to meet God. However, a dialogical relationship is formed on a similar level, expressing openness to listening to God's voice and entering into a dialogue with Him.

### 3.6. Religious beliefs of a youth group from the J 23 parish



**Chart 9.** Consistency of Religious Beliefs Among Youth Participants of J 23. Source: Self-Conducted Study.

The religious beliefs of young people from the parish in Komorniki are consistent and in the range of high scores. This means that the respondents most often chose the answer "I agree".



**Chart 10.** The Orthodoxy of Beliefs Among Youth Participants of J 23. Source: Self-Conducted Study.

The orthodoxy of the members of the youth group from J 23 parish is above average. Slightly lower is the result of orthodoxy in the eschatological and ecclesial scope, which are within the upper limits of average results. It can be considered that consistency in this respect has been maintained, despite the fact that the chart shows a greater agreement of the

respondents to theocentric and Christocentric assertions than to those related to the issues related to the Church, its significance for professing faith and the issue of ultimate matters.

### **3.6. Comparative analysis**

Comparing the religiosity of eighth grade students of the Social Primary School and members of the youth group operating at the parish of St. John XXIII in Komorniki, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- the level of religiosity of young people from Komorniki is higher than that of eighth grade students participating in catechesis at a social school;
- the dialogical relationship of young people from Komorniki is at a higher level than that of the students of Social One, which proves that the former are more willing to listen to the voice of God and establish a relationship with Him;
- young people from Komorniki show a greater cohesion of religious beliefs and are more orthodox than their colleagues from Primary School No. 1;
- members of the youth group from the J 23 parish recognize to a greater extent the role of the Church in the process of shaping the faith;
- the religiosity of eighth graders from Primary School No. 1 is rather ambivalent, but there is an upward trend, which means there is a chance of its growth, while the youth from the parish in Komorniki is characterized by a high level of religiosity and its consistency;
- the greatest indicator of the religiosity of both groups are religious beliefs, especially those that describe the respondents' positive attitude towards God and the world, as well as Jesus Christ and his salvific mission;
- the most important form of personal relationship with God is an updated relationship, and in the case of parish youth also a dialogical one, which assumes readiness to establish a relationship with God, and in the case of young people involved in the parish, also specific manifestations of response to God's call;
- the level of positive emotions towards God among young people from the parish group is much higher than that of eighth graders from Primary School No. 1, however, the level of negative emotions in both groups is similar, which may indicate that involvement in the youth group is conducive to the growth of positive feelings towards God;
- in the context of detailed dimensions of negative emotions, guilt emerges as the predominant factor in both groups. Within the parish group, it slightly surpasses the levels observed in

students attending religion classes; however, the disparity is not substantial enough to warrant detailed conclusions based on this distinction.

- anger and anxiety in both groups are at a similar average level, but with a tendency to approach low scores.

- despite the fact that in the case of eighth graders from Primary School No. 1 positive emotions are slightly higher than negative ones, and in the case of youth from the J 23 parish group they are clearly higher, an important element of emotions experienced towards God in both surveyed groups is the sense of guilt.

## Conclusion

The conducted research, conducted both within the St. John XXIII parish and the Social Primary School, transpired subsequent to the 2020 holidays – a period characterized by a brief reprieve following the initial wave of the pandemic, coupled with aspirations for a return to normalcy. Determining the potential impact of these circumstances on the surveyed youth's level of religiosity proves challenging. However, it can be said that its level is higher than one might expect, taking into account the mass escape of students from catechesis, which is especially the case in secondary schools. Moreover, these studies show that when young people find their place in the parish, there is an increase not only in their religiosity in relation to their emotionality, beliefs, but also sensitivity to the needs of others. Thus, to paraphrase the words of the apostle James from the letter already quoted, they are characterized by a pure and unblemished religion towards God.

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