

RELIGIOSITY AND EXISTENTIAL FULFILMENT OF MUSLIMS AND BUDDHISTS LIVING IN RUSSIA

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The article is devoted to the study of the relationship between existential fulfilment as one of the indicators of psychological well-being, and religiosity among Russian citizens practising Islam and Buddhism. We also compare existential fulfilment of Muslims and Buddhists and Russians from the general population. We understand existential fulfilment, based on A. Längle's existential analytical approach, as the personal realization of the four fundamental existential motivations (FMs). We first briefly consider how the main themes of the FMs are reflected in the world outlook and practice of both Islam and Buddhism. In an empirical study on a sample of Muslims (N = 181) and Buddhists (N = 131) we used the original Russian version of the Test of Existential Motivation and an "objective" indicator of religious involvement: a survey form for assessing religiosity level includes questions about the frequency of religious practices. A positive correlation was found between existential fulfilment and religiosity. Regression analysis showed that religiosity is a significant predictor of existential fulfilment, independent of the gender, age, place of residence of respondents and the method used for data collection. The level of realization of the 2nd FM, concerning emotionality and value of life, among Muslim participations, was significantly higher than among Buddhist participants. In the levels of realization of other existential fundamental motivations and in the general indicator of existential fulfilment, no significant differences were found between the representatives of two religious groups. Comparison of existential fulfilment indicators for Muslims and Buddhists with similar indicators for a neutral Russian sample from the general population demonstrated that the level of realization for all fundamental existential motivations was significantly higher for believers. Further studies are needed for testing our results in other countries and using representatives of other religions.

KEYWORDS: existential fulfilment, religiosity, psychological well-being, fundamental existential motivations, Islam, Buddhism

RELIGIOSITÄT UND EXISTENZIELLE ERFÜLLUNG VON IN RUSSLAND LEBENDEN MUSLIMEN UND BUDDHISTEN

Dieser Artikel beschäftigt sich mit einer Studie der Beziehung zwischen der existenziellen Erfüllung, eines der Indikatoren für psychologisches Wohlbefinden, und der Religiosität unter russischen Bürgern welche Islam und Buddhismus praktizieren. Wir vergleichen auch die existenzielle Erfüllung von Muslimen, Buddhisten und Russen aus der allgemeinen Bevölkerung. Dabei verstehen wir die existenzielle Erfüllung, gestützt auf A. Längle's analytischen Ansatz, als personale Verwirklichung der vier Grundmotivationen (GM). Zu Anfang untersuchen wir zu welchem Maß die Hauptthemen der Grundmotivationen in den Weltanschauungen und der Ausübung von sowohl Islam also auch Buddhismus vorhanden sind. In einer empirischen Studie auf einer Stichprobenbasis von Muslimen (N = 181) und Buddhisten (N = 131) verwendeten wir die Russische Originalversion des Test zur Existenziellen Motivation und einen „objektiven“ Indikator für religiöses Engagement: ein Umfrageformular für die Bemessung der Ausprägung der Religiosität, welche Fragen zur Häufigkeit religiöser Praktiken beinhaltet. Eine positive Korrelation zwischen existenzieller Erfüllung und Religiosität wurde so festgestellt. Die Regressionsanalyse wies darauf hin, dass Religiosität ein signifikanter Prädiktor für existenzielle Erfüllung ist, abhängig von Geschlecht, Alter, Wohnsitz der Teilnehmer und der verwendeten Sammelmethode für die Daten. Im Bezug auf Emotionalität und Lebenswert war der Verwirklichungsgrad der 2. GM bei muslimischen Teilnehmern signifikant höher als unter den buddhistischen Teilnehmern. Auf der Ebene der Verwirklichung anderer existenzieller Grundmotivationen und in der allgemeinen Indikation existenzieller Erfüllung waren keine signifikanten Unterschiede zwischen den Vertretern beider religiösen Gruppen feststellbar. Der Vergleich der Indikatoren existenzieller Erfüllung für Muslime und Buddhisten mit ähnlichen Indikatoren einer neutralen russischen Probe der allgemeinen Bevölkerung zeigte, dass der Verwirklichungsgrad aller existenziellen Grundmotivationen bei den Gläubigen signifikant höher lag. Weitere Studien werden benötigt um unsere Resultate in anderen Ländern, auch unter Einbeziehung von Vertretern anderer Religionen, zu untersuchen.

SCHLÜSSELWÖRTER: existenzielle Erfüllung, Religiosität, psychologisches Wohlbefinden, existenzielle Grundmotivationen, Islam, Buddhismus

Introduction

Is religiosity the factor in modern society, which furthers the individual's existential fulfilment? Within the framework of the existential paradigm in psychology, all we have been able to find in support of this is research undertaken by S. Maddi: using a questionnaire on hardiness, designed to operationalize the concept of "existential

courage" or "the courage to be" and involving a sample consisting of 53 senior officers of the US Army, a moderately positive correlation was found between tenacity of life and religiosity (Maddi 2004a, 2004b).

In the course of our recent research it has been established that existential fulfilment can be regarded as one of the features of an individual's subjective well-being (Shumskiy, Osin & Ukolova 2017). Interrelation between reli-

giosity and psychological well-being have been studied by several authors using different concepts of well-being and life satisfaction in various sample groups. Most researchers maintain that there is a positive link (Argyle & Hills 2000; Ardel, 2003; Lewis & Cruise 2006; Dehejia, DeLeire & Luttmer 2007; Snoep 2008; Ritter, Preston & Hernandez 2014). Yet at the same time there are studies in which no link is found between religiosity and subjective well-being (O'Connor, Cobb & O'Connor 2003; Sillick, Stevens & Cathcart 2016). In Russia a recent study was published, which had been carried out within the framework of the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey, that indicates a positive link between religiosity and life satisfaction using a sample of Russian Orthodox Christians (Bryukhanov & Fedotenkov 2017).

In this context, our research aims to study the relationship between religiosity and existential fulfilment. It is essential to note that, on the one hand, modern existential analysis, starting out from the concept formulated by M. Scheler and V. Frankl, has deep roots in the personalist philosophical tradition of Christian culture (Shumskiy 2016). On the other hand, the theory and practice of modern existential analysis is based on ideas which are transcultural (for example, support, space, security, relationships, attention, fairness and so on) (Längle 2003), and for this reason, from our point of view, it can be applied to representatives of other religions. In Russia, alongside Orthodox Christianity, Islam and Buddhism are also religions which have traditionally been adhered to by a significant part of the population. It is for this reason that this study has been focused on the link between religiosity and existential fulfilment among Muslims and Buddhists living in Russia.

Existential fulfilment as the realization of the four fundamental existential motivations

In accordance with the structural model of modern existential analysis, we understand existential fulfilment as the realization in human's life of the four fundamental existential motivations (FM), defined by A. Längle (2003 2016). This structural model, including the prerequisites for the realization of FM, is illustrated in Table 1.

Each of the fundamental existential motivations is bound up with the key question facing man:

- *Can I be in this world?*
- *Do I like to live?*
- *Do I have the right to be myself?*
- *In what do I see meaning?*

FM (Content)	Prerequisites for the realization of FM		
1 FM (Possibility of being in the world)	Space	Protection	Support
2 FM (Value of life)	Relationships	Time	Closeness
3 FM (Value of self)	Justice	Attention	Appreciation
4 FM (Meaning)	Structural context	Field of activity	Value in the future

Table 1: Theoretical structure of fundamental existential motivations and their prerequisites.

If a person feels that he *can* do something, if he *likes* it, if he also sees that he *has the right to it* and feels that this action has *meaning*, then we are talking about a truly personal existential will. The more situations of this kind there are – both in everyday reality and on the broader horizons of our lives – the higher is individual's existential fulfilment. Subjectively speaking, existential fulfilment is experienced by the individual as “inner consent” with his actions and life (Längle 2009).

Let us now briefly consider how the main themes of fundamental existential motivations are reflected in the world outlook and practice of both Islam and Buddhism.

Islam and Buddhism through the lens of fundamental existential motivations: a short review

1st FM – protection, support, space, fundamental trust

According to M. Scheler, religion gives a person “a hopeful sense of being protected by a force which definitely will do everything rightly” (Scheler 1997, 209). V. Frankl suggested that religion has a psycho-hygienic and psycho-therapeutic influence thanks to the fact that it enables the individual to find spiritual support in the Absolute (Frankl 2000). The system of religious beliefs helps the individual to come to terms with the bewildering confusion of modern life, giving him confidence that behind the outer chaos lie hidden order, wisdom and divine plan. Thanks to his religious belief, a wider space for existence opens up to the individual: now he has not just an earthly world, but a spiritual one as well. In that spiritual world the individual finds an undoubted support in the unchanging fundamental patterns of the world and sense of fundamental trust – the basic experiences, on which his very

existence is founded (Längle 2012).

In the context of the 1st FM, Islam and Buddhism do not appear to be significantly different from other religions based on belief in supernatural forces and beings (divinities, spirits), which are objects of veneration.

2nd FM – relationships, closeness, time, value of life

Religious belief is of pronounced emotional and sensual nature. Moments of mystical experience bring the individual a powerful sense of the obviousness of the sacred: they pave the way to a personal relationship with the divine and, as a result, enable the individual to experience the value of his own life. Yet in the context of the 2nd FM there is a difference between the religious practices of Islam and Buddhism.

In Islam the community (*umma*) has a very special significance. It has a hierarchical structure: it is headed by spiritual mentors (muftis and imams), whose task is to enlighten and unite its members. Their joint performance of religious rituals serves to strengthen individual members' sense of community, enhancing the bonds between them and providing mutual support. In the Muslim community elderly people enjoy profound respect and esteem: wherever possible, all important decisions within a family require their blessing, while children and young people are seen as being under the care of their elders. Horizontal links within the community are no less significant than the hierarchical ones. Often, a group consisting of relatives and neighbours, enjoys a highly significant influence over all aspects of the life of an individual member of the community in relation to the organization of work, leisure and family life, which in the West are regarded as a personal matter for every individual. Much attention is paid to the key events in the life of each member of the community. Given that the community has many members, the life of each of its members is filled with a kaleidoscope of interesting events – weddings, birthdays, religious festivals, shared prayers and fasting. Interaction between community members and interest shown in how its other members are faring are not burdensome duties: they constitute the interest and dynamics characterising the life of every Muslim (At-Tahkhan 2008; Haque & Mohamed 2009).

The role of the community in Buddhism is different from that found in Islam. Here the community creates the best possible conditions for those who have firmly decided to work on the extension of their inner awareness in order to attain enlightenment. Constant control of the words, thoughts and actions by the community helps individual members to advance towards their goal without losing strength or time (Torchinov 2000). Members of a Buddhist community are more like colleagues working on a

shared project: there is less intimacy between them and they spend less time engaged in shared activities than the members of a Muslim community do.

A characteristic feature of Buddhism is its special relationship to emotions. It is precisely emotions which give rise to human suffering that stem from man's urge to achieve sensual pleasures. Negative emotions are clearly linked with suffering, but positive ones as well and the urge to experience them repeatedly also lead to suffering because, in the process, attractions, passions and attachments arise. For example, in relations between individuals commonly referred to in the West as "romantic", Buddhists see, first and foremost, aspects of attraction or being blended by affect, binding the individual to the object of his sensual desires. This, from their point of view, leads to dependency and unpredictable but inevitable suffering, because it is impossible to guarantee that the other individual involved will behave precisely as his or her partner wishes. Buddhism recommends various meditation exercises to help the individual distance himself from emotions, manage them, cope with them, introduce harmony into the sphere of the sensual and achieve the "six perfections", which eventually lead to *nirvana* – compassion, morality, patience, courage, concentration and wisdom (Torchinov 2000; Rokotova 2010).

3rd FM – attention, justice, appreciation of value, value of self

The individual believer's appreciation of his own value is bound up with his position within the religious world order, confirmed by his brothers in faith and religious hierarchies. Prayer as an inner dialogue with a divinity (Frankl 2000) is practiced together with constant attention to own thoughts, emotions and actions, evaluating the latter in the light of the postulates of his religious doctrine, further the development of an individual's self-discipline and the inner world of the believer. Self-control motivation is also strengthened by expecting "the last judgment". The believer would constantly appear to be asking himself: "Am I advancing on the spiritual path?" It can be said that with regard to the 3rd FM, religious practices in Islam and Buddhism differ. First of all we would note that the idea of the individual as a subject of their own life with their own creative power is less well developed in Islam than in other religions. Islamic society gives priority to the interests of the community rather than to those of the individual. «A Muslim consolidates his own faith not so much through painful processes of self-reflection and overcoming his doubts, but through collective worship» (Magomedov 2015, 84). Collective prayers offered up together with fellow believers are of

special importance – according to the medieval theologian al-Bukhari, the reward for performing *namaz* with fellow believers is 27 times greater than performing it alone (Omarov 2010). In Buddhism, on the contrary, we find radical individualism: release from attachment to any person or object constitutes the basis for the practice of the disciple striving to achieve enlightenment.

In the religious practice of Buddhism prayer plays a significantly smaller role than in Islam. Adherents of Tibetan Buddhism, for example, turn in their prayers to lamas, Buddhas and divinities. Prayers are often combined with meditation or the reciting of mantras. The practice of meditation constitutes the basis for the practice of Buddhism and its main elements are concentration of attention, introspection, freeing the psyche from emotion, contemplation and also attainment of the essential foundations of human existence and a world order free of desires and emotions. In Buddhist communities group meditation is sometimes practiced, but most of the time the responsibility for sessions of meditation rests with the believer himself. From the point of view of existential analysis, meditation is a form of self-distancing. Empirical data exist testifying to the beneficial influence of meditation on the psyche and there also exist psycho-therapeutic approaches based on mindfulness meditation (Khoury et al. 2013; Kato 2016).

4th FM – structural context, field of activity, value in the future, meaning of life

In accordance with the religious world outlook, the visible world is only part of another spiritual world and the individual's main aim is to find harmony with that higher world (James 2012). For that reason the question as to the meaning of human existence is central to religion. According to Islam the meaning of life is in the greatest possible revelation to the faithful of the divine plan to be found within man himself and within the world, which will ensure that man enters Paradise after the death of his physical body, while according to Buddhism it is the attainment of the state of *nirvana* by the believer. Thanks to the idea that death is the transition to a different mode of being, another prospect opens up before the individual both with regard to his personal life project and also with regard to the field of his activity aimed at achieving his mission of saving his own soul and enhancing the world around him. Specific values, which religion sets out for the believer, determine how he behaves in his everyday life and in his activity focused on his own spiritual development.

According to the concepts of Islam, the task of spiritual development for the individual lies in the unfolding of all his virtues and thereby drawing nearer to Allah. Virtues involve the conscientious performance of religious obligations:

praying five times a day (*namaz*), charitable alms-giving (*zakāt*), making a pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), prayers at the mosque, ritual fasting during the month of Ramadan, reading sacred texts and aspiring to greater knowledge (not only about the religious world order, but also – in the broader sense – to the acquisition of scientific and philosophical knowledge) and participation in the life of the community (Omarov 2010). In Buddhism the spiritual vector of man's development is bound up with what Buddha referred to as the “noble eightfold path” (the Middle Way), which involves the totality of norms and rules, which it is essential to observe in order to uphold cosmic order, and the stipulations regarding activity leading to deliverance from suffering, the attainment of enlightenment and release from *samsara* (Torchinov 2000).

From our point of view, in the context of the 4th FM, Islam and Buddhism are not set apart from other religions.

The main branches of Islam and Buddhism in Russia

In Islam there are two main groups – Shiites and Sunnis. Sunnis recognize that the decisive role in the Muslim community is the resolution of religious and social problems. Their religious faith is based not just on the holy text of the *Koran* (as the Word of God recorded by the hand of the Prophet) but also on the *Sunnah* – legends about the life of the Prophet himself and his own utterances about what Allah sent down to him. *Shiites*, in their turn, believe that the supreme authority in the Muslim community (or state) is divine in nature and should be handed down to the Prophet's direct descendants – to the closest relatives of the Prophet Mohammed. In their faith the Shiites base their ideas on the *Koran* and a limited range of the *Sunnah* legends.

Approximately 10% of the population of Russia is made up of followers of Islam: it is the second largest religious group in the country after Christianity. The overwhelming majority (approximately 95%) of Muslims in Russia are Sunnis (Silantiev 2008).

The main traditions in Buddhism include Theravada (or Hinayana), Mahayana, Vajrayana and Tibetan Buddhism (Lamaism). *Theravada* teaches believers to follow the path of Buddha in order to attain *nirvana*. It is considered that only a monk can attain enlightenment and that on man's spiritual path nobody can help him: everything depends on his own efforts. In the Theravada tradition there is no pantheon of saints and no concepts of Paradise and Hell and no cultic sculptures are used. In *Mahayana* Buddhism it is believed that *nirvana* can be attained not only by a monk

		Muslims, N=181	Buddhists, N=131
Age	younger than 20	15 (8%)	29 (22%)
	from 21 to 30	61 (34%)	38 (29%)
	from 31 to 40	26 (14%)	35 (27%)
	from 41 to 50	13 (7%)	14 (11%)
	older than 50	66 (37%)	15 (11%)
Gender	Male	74 (41%)	64 (49%)
	Female	107 (59%)	67 (51%)
Place of residence	Small town (less than 1 million inhabitants)	74 (41%)	81 (62%)
	Large town (more than 1 million inhabitants)	107 (59%)	50 (38%)
Data collection method	On-line	118 (65%)	88 (67%)
	Face-to-face	63 (35%)	43 (33%)

Table 2: Data concerning the sample.

but also by a devout layman. The *Mahayana* tradition includes the concept of the Bodhisattva – a divine being who has attained enlightenment and can lead laymen along the path of salvation; there exists a large pantheon of saints, to whom men can pray and ask for help. This tradition includes the idea of Paradise and Hell and is also accompanied by sculptural representations of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. According to the *Vajrayana* tradition, *nirvana* is only accessible for a select few. Tantras (sacred texts) are only studied by a narrow circle of the initiated, a good deal of attention is focused on Yoga exercises and the recitation of mantras. *Tibetan Buddhism* incorporates the main tenets of the other three Buddhist traditions. The lamas, or spiritual teachers, who pass through the circle of reincarnations, are accorded special respect. Spiritual and secular power are transmitted thanks to the rebirth of one and the same individual, which eventually led up to the coming together of both branches of power and the single ruler of Tibet – the Dalai Lama (Ulanov 2009).

Within the territory of Russia, Buddhism is the main religion in the Republics of Kalmykia, Buryatia and Tuva (Tibetan Buddhism). Buddhist communities are also to be found in Moscow, Saint Petersburg and other cities (*Hinayana*, *Mahayana*). Buddhism is a religion practised by 1% of Russia's population.

Hypotheses

The main hypothesis underlying our research was that *there is a positive connection between religiosity and existential fulfilment of Muslims and Buddhists*.

Earlier we pointed out that in the practice of Islam and Buddhism – as we see it – there is a difference in the importance accorded to the content of the 2nd and the 3rd fundamental

existential motivations. This allowed us to formulate a hypothesis to the effect that *there exist statistically significant differences in the indicators of realization of the 2nd and the 3rd FM among Muslims and Buddhists: the indicator of realization of the 2nd FM is higher for Muslims than for Buddhists, and the indicator of realization of the 3rd FM is higher for Buddhists than for Muslims*.

A third hypotheses is based on data we previously obtained regarding average levels at which FMs were realized among respondents in the overall population in Russia (Shumskiy et al. 2016). We assume *statistically significant differences in the indicators for existential fulfilment among Muslims and Buddhists, as compared with respondents from the general population*.

Research Methods

Sample and procedure

The initial sample of believers consisted of 323 individuals: 181 Muslims and 142 Buddhists. The respondents were invited to take part in an anonymous investigation into religiosity and psychological well-being. The criterion for being included in the sample was a positive answer to the question about religious faith: “Do you believe that God exists?” for Muslims and “Do you believe in the truth of the Buddha's teaching?” for Buddhists. The difference in the wording of the questions is due to the peculiarities in world outlook of Muslims and Buddhists, discussed above.

In the group of Muslims all the respondents are ethnic Tatars and Sunnis. The majority of the Muslim respondents resides in the Republic of Tatarstan (in its capital, Kazan, or in the small town of Buinsk), while the remainder lives in other regions of Russia. In the group of Buddhists ap-

Questions for assessing religiosity among individuals practising Islam	Questions for assessing religiosity among individuals practising Buddhism
1. How often do you pray?	1. How often do you pray and recite mantras?
2. How often do you attend your mosque and meetings of your community?	2. How often do you visit your datsan and meetings of your community?
3. How often do you read sacred texts (the Koran or the Sunna)?	3. How often do you read sacred texts (the Tripitaka, sutras or others)?
4. How often do you celebrate religious festivals?	4. How often do you celebrate religious festivals?
	5. How often do you practise meditation?

Table 3: Questions used to assess levels of religiosity for individuals practising Islam and Buddhism.

proximately half of the respondents are ethnic Kalmyks and live in the Kalmyk Republic (capital Elista), while the remainder lives in other regions of Russia. Some respondents (N=11) were excluded from the initial sample, because some of them had not indicated to which tradition of Buddhism they adhered and some had indicated that they were adherents of Zen Buddhism, which can be considered as a philosophical school rather than a religious doctrine (Suzuki 1991; Watts 1999). This meant that the sample of Buddhists (N=131) consisted of representatives of the *Hinayana* and *Mahayana* traditions and Tibetan Buddhism.

Detailed data relating to the sample is provided in Table 2. The survey of the respondents was carried out in two ways: on line – using social networks – and face-to-face in the relevant regions of Russia (Republic of Tatarstan, Kalmyk Republic, Moscow and the Moscow Region). All the respondents, who are not ethnic Russians, have spoken Russian since childhood and speak it like a native.

Instruments

Test of existential motivations (TEM). A new and original Russian-language version of the TEM was used (Shumskiy et al. 2016, 2017), based on a structural model of modern existential analysis (Table 1). The survey comprises 36 questions, assessed over a range of 1 to 4, and there are four scales reflecting the extent to which each of the FMs is realized (with 9 items in each scale). The total score in each of the 4 scales constitutes the overall indicator of the individual's existential fulfilment.

The survey form for assessing religiosity levels includes questions, which are usually employed in research to measure 'objective' – or 'external' – religiosity (Connors et al. 1996; Koenig & Büsing 2010; Hill 2003). Questions were put to the respondents about the frequency with which they performed religious practices using the scale from 1 to 5: 1 – "never", 2 – "seldom", 3 – "sometimes", 4 – "often" and 5 – "regularly". As can be seen from Table 3, there are certain specific features to be noted as regards those practising Islam and Buddhism,

which stem from the nature of the religious practices performed by adherents of the specific religion concerned.

A

Religious practices of Muslims	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
Praying	.835
Attending their mosque and community meetings	.744
Reading sacred texts	.778
Participation in religious festivals	.801

B

Religious practices of Buddhists	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
Praying	.544
Visiting the datsan and community meetings	.581
Reading sacred texts	.652
Participation in religious festivals	.164
Meditation	.453

Table 4: Results for internal consistency analysis of the religiosity scale: religious practices for adherents of Islam (A) and Buddhism (B).

Results

Indicator for objective religiosity

Internal consistency analysis (Table 4) revealed that the religious practices of Muslims demonstrated a high link with the general indicator forming the scale with Cronbach's Alpha=0.906. In relation to religious practices of Buddhists, on the other hand, there was a low correlation regarding one item – participation in religious festivals – with the general indicator and for that reason that particular item was excluded from further calculations of the indicator for objective religiosity of adherents of Buddhism. The remain-

ning four items made up the scale for Buddhists' objective religiosity with the indicator Cronbach's Alpha=0,774.

Thus, the indicator for objective religiosity (OR), both for adherents of Islam and also for Buddhists, includes four items, but the content of the various items is specific for the religion in question. From our point of view, a difference of this kind still complies with the short theoretical analysis of the religious practices of Islam and Buddhism outlined above. For subsequent statistical analysis the OR indicator was standardized within each group.

Interrelation of religiosity and existential fulfilment

Table 5 presents the correlations for the TEM scores with the ages of the respondents, the towns where they reside and the objective religiosity indicator. All the TEM scales and the general existential fulfilment indicator demonstrated significant positive correlations with religiosity. The ages of the respondents and their places of residence also pointed to a significant link with the realization of the 3rd FM.

	1 FM	2 FM	3 FM	4 FM	General Ex. Ful.
Age	-.09	-.10	-.16**	-.07	-.13*
Town of residence (0-large, 1-small)	-.02	-.00	-.18**	-.05	-.07
Gender (0-female, 1-male)	.01	-.10	-.10	.05	-.04
Religiosity Scale (OR)	.21**	.15*	.12*	.25**	.21**

Note: ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 5: Spearman's correlations (two-tailed) of TEM scores with age, towns of residence, gender and religiosity scale (N=312).

In order to define more precisely and differentiate the link between TEM indicators and religiosity, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used. In the first step the contribution to existential fulfilment of the method of data collection (face-to-face or on-line) and demographic factors (age, town of residence and gender of respondents) was investigated. In the second step adherence to a particular religion was added to the regression model and the indicator of objective religiosity has been added at the third step.

The results of the regression analysis show, that the method for data collection and the gender of the respondents do not have significant association with existential fulfilment indicators. Adherence to a specific religion emerged as significant for the 2nd FM: in the case of Muslims, the indicator for realization of the 2nd FM was significantly higher

	Dependent variables				
	Gen. Ex.Ful	1FM	2FM	3FM	4FM
Step 1. ΔR^2	.013	.005	.021	.062***	.005
β , data collection method (0-online, 1-face-to-face)	-.06	-.02	-.07	-.07	-.05
β , age	-.11	-.06	-.10	-.18**	-.04
β , town of residence (0-large, 1-small)	-.01	.00	.07	-.12	-.02
β , gender (0-female, 1-male)	-.03	.04	-.11	-.07	.05
Step 2. ΔR^2	.005	.006	.024*	.005***	.005
β , data collection method	-.02	.02	.01	-.10	-.01
β , age	-.12	-.07	-.12	-.17**	-.06
β , town of residence	-.01	.00	.07	-.12	-.02
β , gender	-.01	.05	-.08	-.09	.06
β , religion (0-Buddhists, 1-Muslims)	.08	.09	.18**	-.08	.08
Step 3. ΔR^2	.079***	.063***	.043***	.052***	.083***
β , data collection method	.07	.10	.07	-.03	.08
β , age	-.22***	-.16**	-.20**	-.26***	-.16**
β , town of residence	-.04	-.02	.06	-.14*	-.04
β , gender	-.04	.03	-.10	-.11	.04
β , religion	.06	.07	.17**	-.10	.06
β , objective religiosity (OR)	.33***	.29***	.24***	.26***	.33***

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 6: Hierarchical multiple regression of TEM scores involving method of data collection, age, town of residence, gender and religiosity.

than in the case of Buddhists. When the objective religiosity factor was added to the regression model at the third stage, the age of the respondents becomes significant for the indicators of realization of all FMs and, when it comes to realization of the 3rd FM, the town where respondents reside becomes significant as well. In its turn, the contribution of objective religiosity is significant for the indicators of realization of all the four fundamental existential motivations and for existential fulfilment as a whole.

Contribution of specific religious practices to existential fulfilment in the group of Buddhists

In the group of respondents adhering to Islam, the indicator for the frequency with which they carried out concrete religious practices had multicollinearity (tolerance<0.4, VIF>2.5) (Tabachnick & Fidell 2013), which makes it impossible to differentiate between the contributions of

	Dependent variables				
	Gen.Ex.Ful.	1FM	2FM	3FM	4FM
β , Meditation	.31**	.25*	.28**	.41***	.29**
β , Visiting the datsan and community meetings	.18	.13	.09	.26**	.20*
β , Praying and reciting mantras	.27**	.17	.13	.32***	.26**
β , Reading sacred texts	.23*	.14	.18	.34***	.14

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 7: Regression coefficients (β -coefficients) reflecting the link between specific religious practices and indicators of existential fulfilment in the group of Buddhist respondents (demographic factors controlled).

	Muslims (N=181)	Buddhists (N=131)	General population sample	Muslims / Buddhists	Buddhists / General population sample	Muslims / General population sample
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	Cohen's d	Cohen's d	Cohen's d
1FM	28,55 (4,54)	27,96 (4,13)	24,54 (5,06)	.12	.69***	.81***
2FM	28,03 (4,35)	26,78 (4,84)	24,53 (5,11)	.27*	.44***	.71***
3FM	29,36 (4,02)	29,99 (3,84)	28,03 (4,45)	-.10	.45***	.31***
4FM	29,43 (4,42)	29,25 (4,55)	25,58 (5,67)	.14	.66***	.71***
Gen. Ex. Ful.	115,38 (15,04)	113,97 (14,89)	102,76 (17,21)	.13	.66***	.75***

Note: *** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$

Table 8: Comparison of the mean values of TEM scores between Muslims, Buddhists and general Russian population sample.

specific practices to existential fulfilment. When it comes to the group of respondents adhering to Buddhism, the multicollinearity of these indicators is absent. Table 7 presents the results of regression analysis, which illustrate the contribution of specific religious practices to the degree to which the 4 FMs are realized in the group of Buddhist respondents, when demographic factors were controlled.

From the table above it can be seen that the level of realization for the 1st and the 2nd FM is significantly linked only with the practice of meditation, while the level of realization of the 4th FM is significantly linked with the practice of meditation, prayer and recitation of mantras and also with attendance at the datsan and at meetings of the religious community. All religious practices of Buddhism are significantly linked with the level of fulfilment of the 3rd FM. *The practice of meditation has the most significant links with indicators for the realization of all fundamental motivations and with the general indicator for existential fulfilment.*

Indicators of existential fulfilment among Muslims and Buddhists and in the sample drawn from the general population of Russia

Table 8 and Fig. 1 illustrate the results from comparison of TEM indicators in the groups of believers with data collected from a neutral Russian sample from the general population (in this sample the question of religious beliefs was not asked) (Shumskiy et al. 2016).

The neutral Russian sample has significantly lower indicators on all TEM scales. The largest differences between the religious respondents and the neutral sample are to be seen with regard to the 1st and the 4th FM. The smallest differences between the Muslim group and neutral sample are to be seen with regard to the 3rd FM and the smallest differences between the neutral sample and the Buddhist group are to be seen with regard to the 2nd and 3rd FMs.

Discussion

We can say that the main hypothesis underlying this research was confirmed: *there exists a statistically significant link between existential fulfilment and religiosity, under-*

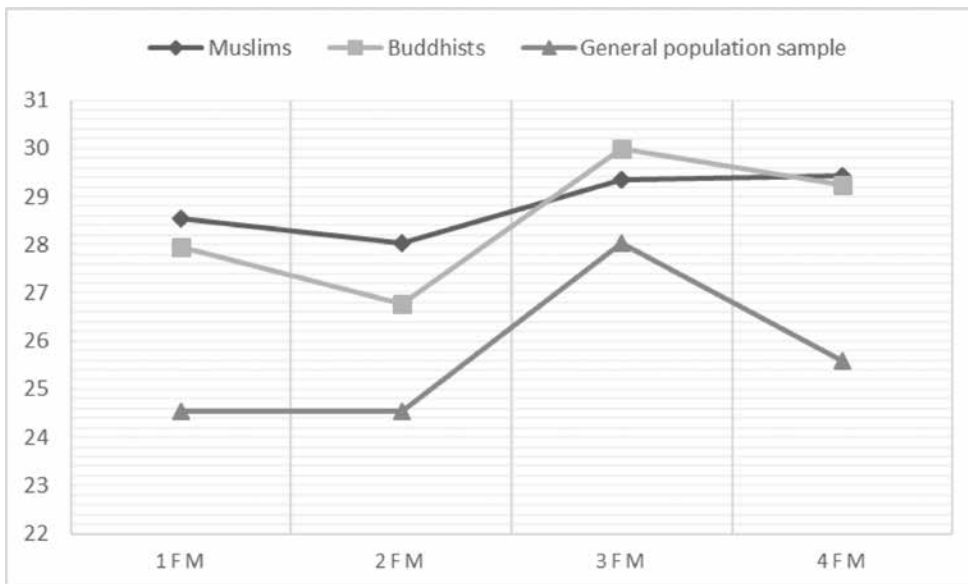


Fig. 1: Mean values of the four FMs for Muslims, Buddhists and neutral Russian samples.

stood as frequency of the performance of religious practices. Religiosity is a significant predictor of existential fulfilment, independent of the gender, age, place of residence of respondents and the method used for data collection.

This serves to underline the role of active participation on the part of the believer: the more regularly Muslims and Buddhists perform practices as instructed by their religion, the higher the level at which the four fundamental existential motivations are realized and the higher the general indicator for existential fulfilment. Similar results were obtained by D. Mochon and his co-authors in their investigation of psychological well-being: only a high level of religiosity brings about a significant rise in life satisfaction, while believers with a moderate or low level of religiosity exhibit a lower level of psychological well-being than atheists or agnostics (Mochon, Norton & Ariely 2011).

In our research the age of the religious respondents had a weak negative relationship with their existential fulfilment. Unfortunately, we are unable to reach a confident interpretation of that result. In our previous research project using a sample from the general population, for which the religiosity factor was not taken into account, we found a slight positive link between age and existential fulfilment for respondents aged between 16 and 40 (Shumskiy, Osin & Ukolova 2017). We can say that the relatively small size of the sample, which was inadequately balanced as regards age (among the Muslim respondents older believers predominated), does not enable us to draw a well-founded conclusion about a link between existential fulfilment and the age of the respondents. It can be assumed that the results obtained had been influenced by differences between cohorts: the sample included both respondents, whose world outlook and religiosity

had been formed during the period of the Soviet Union, and also respondents who had been born and had grown up in post-Soviet Russia. In view of this, more thorough research is required into the link between existential fulfilment and the age of believers.

We identified a slight link between realization of the 3rd FM and the town where respondents resided. It is typical for modern Russia that living in a large town is regarded as more prestigious, because the standard of living in such towns is, as a rule, higher and the municipal authorities and social protection services there function better. In addition, large towns provided better opportunities for self-realization, which also contributes to a rise in value of self.

The second hypothesis in our research was partially confirmed. It was demonstrated that *the level of realization for the 2nd FM in Muslims was significantly higher than in the case of Buddhists*. This result is, in our opinion, in line with the differences in world outlook examined above and the special features of religious practices for the religions under consideration. The teaching of the Buddha speaks of the illusory nature of human emotions and spontaneous manifestations of vitality are not regarded as positive. In the culture of Islam there is not such a categorical attitude to emotionality and the close integration of the believer into the life of the community provides a basis for his experience of a very wide spectrum of emotions. The other part of the second hypothesis – the assumption that the indicator for realization of the Third FM is significantly higher for Buddhists than for Muslims – was not confirmed.

The results of our research show that certain religious practices make different contributions to the indicators for existential fulfilment of the Buddhists. The smallest

contribution is that of attendance at the datsan and meetings of the religious community. The most significant predictor of existential fulfilment for the Buddhists was the high frequency of meditation. The religious practices of Islam, on the other hand, are closely bound up with the impact on indicators of existential fulfilment. In our opinion, this result closely coincides with the main ideas in the world outlook of Islam and Buddhism examined above and also with the substance of religious practices in those religions.

Meditation, which is the main foundation for religious practices in Buddhism, is based on self-distancing. According to the ideas inherent in existential analysis, self-distancing provides the basis for the emergence of the individual as a person and for the realization of the 3rd FM (Längle 2009). Starting out from this premise we could expect that the level of realization for the 3rd FM in the case of Buddhists would be statistically higher than for Muslims. The results obtained do not, however, bear out this assumption.

This could be linked with the fact that an important part of the Buddhist world outlook is the doctrine of “*anātman*” or “non-self”, according to which there is no unchanging, permanent self, soul or essence in living beings. Confidence in the existence of some kind of permanent “self”, any separation and individualization, lead to the fact that a person starts aspiring to experience positive emotions and, as a result of that, to engage in wrong, immoral actions, which, in their turn, increase his suffering. On the other hand, what will further his enlightenment and attainment of *nirvana* is his understanding of the illusory nature of the constant “self” (Androsova 2011). It can be assumed that the “*anātman*” doctrine works against, or neutralizes, any rise in self-value and realization of the 3rd FM that is furthered by the practice of meditation.

The third hypothesis in this research was confirmed: *there exist statistically significant differences between the existential fulfilment of Muslims and Buddhists and that of respondents from the general population*. Indicators for realization of all the four FM for Muslims and Buddhists are significantly higher than similar indicators for the Russian sample from the general population.

Several pieces of research into psychological well-being state that a source of a positive attitude to life for religious people is to be found in social support, which they receive from their religious community. Participation in the life of that community enhances their sense of connectedness, optimism and their positive emotions (Levin 2013; Ritter, Preston & Hernandez 2014). According to our data, participation in the life of their religious community makes the smallest contribution to Buddhists’ existential fulfil-

ment. Moreover, the level at which the 2nd FM, bound up with feelings and emotions, is realized, is statistically far lower in the case of Buddhists than in the case of Muslims. Yet the general indicator of existential fulfilment, including the indicator for the realization of the 2nd FM, is significantly higher for Buddhists than for the sample from the general population. Consequently, we can say that participation in the life of the community is not decisive for the existential fulfilment of religious people.

In the final analysis, our research, like many other investigations of the link between religiosity and life satisfaction, is called upon to answer the following key question: “Which are the significant functions for psychological well-being that religion can provide for the modern individual?” The results of our research show that the most important contribution religion can make to existential fulfilment is bound up with the content of the 1st and the 4th FMs: *religion, independent of doctrinal distinctions, furthers the emergence in believers of fundamental trust in the world and the experience of the presence of ultimate support in their existence (1st FM), and also the conviction that life has meaning and that man’s existence in the world has an ultimate purpose (4th FM)*.

Limitations and conclusions

The limitations of this research lay in its cross-sectional nature and in the non-representative nature of the sample, which was not sufficiently balanced as regards its demographic characteristics. Nor had we taken into consideration a number of objective factors influencing life satisfaction, such as material income, rewarding work, family situation and so on. Representatives of the main religion practised in Russia – Orthodox Christianity – had not taken part in the survey either. This meant that the research could have been regarded as a pilot project and the results obtained as factors leading to its continuation and the extension of its empirical findings in the field of the correlation between religiosity and existential fulfilment. The main conclusion of our research is to identify a positive link between religiosity and existential fulfilment. Comparison of existential fulfilment indicators for Muslims and Buddhists with indicators for a neutral Russian sample from the general population demonstrated that the level of realization for all fundamental existential motivations was significantly higher for believers. The concept of “existential fulfilment”, operationalized as the level of realization of the four fundamental existential motivations, identified by A. Längle, also made it possible to take a differentiated view of the significance of religion

for the psychological well-being of the modern individual. The key contribution from religiosity consists in the fact that it enables a person to find support in a transcendental world and meaning for his own existence.

We note that higher existential fulfilment rates in the religious sample, as compared to the non-religious one, could be linked with the general spiritual state of society in Russia at the present time: the universal cultural assumptions and meanings which dominated in the Soviet period no longer exist and have not been replaced by others of a similar significance. For this reason religion, which offers a clear world outlook and meaning of life, makes it likely that individuals experience a high level of existential fulfilment.

In short, the results duly obtained relate first and foremost to the Russia of today. At the same time, we suggest that they could also point to useful empirical hypotheses for testing them out in other countries and using representatives of other religions.

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