



THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE FORMATION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Annotation. *The article explores the formation of religious belief in adolescents' worldview, the role of social networks, and the scientific-theoretical and methodological issues related to this process. It analyzes the theoretical and practical aspects of the problem, as well as the research conducted by Uzbek scholars in this field. Furthermore, the article discusses the concept of information-psychological security, its essence and significance, and examines the importance of establishing effective cooperation between the family, community, and educational institutions in protecting young people from harmful information.*

Keywords: *society, personality, youth, globalization, information, information-psychological security, spiritual threat, spiritual emptiness, virtual world, virtual culture, dependency, defense mechanism.*

Introduction. In today's era of globalization and digital transformation, social networks have become an integral part of human life. In particular, the growing interest in the internet and social media among adolescents is directly influencing their worldview, beliefs, and system of personal values. Adolescence is one of the most crucial stages in an individual's psychological development; during this period, a person forms their self-concept, searches for their place in society, and develops moral views and a system of beliefs.

In recent years, the amount of religious content circulating on social media has noticeably increased. Alongside sources that promote healthy belief systems, there are also incorrect, one-sided, or deceptive religious propaganda materials. These can significantly affect adolescents' psychological state, religious orientation, and worldview. For this reason, analyzing the role of social networks in the formation of religious beliefs in adolescents from a psychological perspective has become an important scientific task.

Religious content is widely disseminated on social platforms. Along with educational and spiritually beneficial materials, there are also false religious propaganda, extremist ideas, and manipulative content. Therefore, studying the impact of social media on the formation of religious beliefs among adolescents has become a scientific necessity. In recent years, psychological research has increasingly focused on the psychological factors that influence the formation of adolescents' religious consciousness, as well as their level of information literacy and critical thinking. These qualities enable adolescents to correctly interpret religious information, distinguish false ideas, and develop in a positive belief-oriented direction.



This article provides a theoretical analysis of the psychological role of social networks in the formation of religious beliefs among adolescents. Its relevance lies in the fact that it reveals the psychological mechanisms through which religious information influences adolescents, whose emotional sensitivity, social identification, and critical thinking are still developing during this period of psychological change. The aim is to theoretically examine the psychological factors affecting the formation of religious beliefs in adolescents through social networks and to identify both the positive and negative aspects of this process. Through this, it becomes possible to develop psychological directions and pedagogical recommendations that support the formation of a healthy religious belief system among adolescents.

Literature review. Among Uzbek scholars, the works of R. Kh. Alimov, U. T. Khayitmatov, A. F. Khakimov, O. Kh. Azamatov, and U. A. Otajanov address issues related to information systems, religious literacy, and the development of information culture among youth. They emphasize that in the digital age, the religious beliefs of adolescents are shaped not only by religious education or family upbringing, but are also closely connected with the flow of virtual information.

In his speeches, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh. M. Mirziyoyev, has placed special emphasis on protecting young people from false religious ideas and strengthening their spiritual immunity. Therefore, scientific literature increasingly explores approaches aimed at improving adolescents' religious literacy, developing information-filtering skills, and enhancing critical thinking.

Professor R. Kh. Alimov is one of the authors of the textbook *"Information Systems"* (2013), in which the role of information in social life, as well as the principles of its proper management and analysis, are thoroughly discussed. The scholar interprets information not only as a technological process, but also as a psychological resource that shapes social consciousness. According to him, modern youth, especially adolescents, must possess information culture in the processes of selecting, processing, and evaluating information. This is because the ability to correctly interpret and filter information directly influences the stability of their belief systems.

The scientific works of Professor U. T. Khayitmatov are primarily devoted to issues of information security and information education. In his research, he provides an in-depth analysis of the changes occurring in young people's consciousness under the influence of digital technologies. Khayitmatov emphasizes that developing "information immunity" in adolescents is a key condition for protecting them from manipulative, false, and extremist religious content. In his approach, information immunity is not only a form of technical protection, but also a psychological defense mechanism—namely, an individual's ability to think critically and evaluate information.

In his research, A. F. Khakimov examines the issue of information-psychological influence and reveals the mechanisms through which information flows affect the human psyche, particularly the psychology of adolescents. According to him, information is not



merely a means of transmission, but a psychological stimulator capable of altering an individual's emotional state, value system, and belief orientations. Discussing the psychological impact of religious information, Khakimov also highlights adolescents' emotional sensitivity and their tendency to imitate others.

O. Kh. Azamatov is known as a scholar who has studied the socio-psychological aspects of information and communication systems. He describes the information environment as a "social reflector system" that directly influences human consciousness. According to Azamatov, the internet and social networks have become the most important platforms for youth socialization today. Therefore, the psychological analysis of religious information in this environment is essential for understanding the process of belief formation among adolescents. His research provides an in-depth discussion of concepts such as information ethics, interpersonal communication in virtual spaces, and informational manipulation.

U. A. Otajanov has conducted research on developing information literacy and religious culture among youth and adolescents. According to him, when adolescents receive religious content, their belief-related values are shaped through the "social context." That is, they are strongly influenced by online opinion leaders, peer groups, family values, and prevailing social trends. Otajanov emphasizes the need to coordinate the activities of teachers, psychologists, and imams active on social networks, and to implement a media-psychology approach when working with young people.

Analysis and results. Adolescence is a complex stage in which an individual develops psychologically, morally, and in terms of beliefs. During this period, an adolescent's worldview, value system, and religious perceptions are rapidly changing, unstable, and highly sensitive to external influences. In recent years, religious content disseminated through social networks has had the greatest impact on this process. Therefore, in the analysis, it is necessary to study adolescents' belief systems forming in the information environment through psychological, social, and emotional factors.

1. Analysis of Psychological Factors in Adolescents' Formation of Religious Beliefs. Psychological analysis shows that adolescents perceive religious content primarily on an emotional level. In this process, psychological motives such as imitation, the need for affirmation, and the desire to gain social status play a leading role. False religious information exploits these very needs: adolescents follow certain ideas to feel like a "truth-knower," "spiritually strong," or "distinct from society." Therefore, if psychological defense mechanisms are weak during the formation of religious beliefs, adolescents are more susceptible to manipulative influence.

2. Analysis of the Social Media Environment Theoretical analyses indicate that for adolescents, social networks (Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, YouTube) have become not only a means of communication but also a space for expressing religious, spiritual, and social identity. Monitoring results show that religiously themed posts and videos increasingly serve as the main source shaping adolescents' perceptions, emotions, and values.



3. The Role of Family and School. In the formation of adolescents' religious beliefs, the family environment, teachers, and psychologists are more stable influencing factors compared to social networks. However, research shows that in many families, religious education is not systematic. As a result, adolescents seek answers to their questions online. Psychologically, this situation is referred to as an "information gap."

4. Results Based on Personal-Psychological Characteristics Analysis reveals that adolescents' susceptibility to false religious information is directly related to certain personal characteristics:

- **Low self-confidence** – limited ability to think independently;
- **Emotional instability** – being easily influenced by feelings;
- **Need for social status** – desire to connect oneself with a "sacred purpose";
- **Weak critical thinking** – tendency to approach any religious content positively.

These factors lead adolescents to accept religious information without filtering, making them more prone to belief manipulation.

Conclusion. Based on scientific research, theoretical analysis, and practical observations, it can be emphasized that adolescents' susceptibility to false religious information is one of the most pressing psychological issues of the modern era. In the context of the rapid development of information technologies, the vast opportunities of social networks, and the limitless flow of information, adolescents are exposed to religious content from various sources, some of which are questionable in terms of authenticity. Research findings indicate that adolescents' vulnerability to false religious information is closely linked to their psychological defenses, critical thinking, emotional stability, and need for social identification. In particular, factors such as low self-confidence, the desire for social status, difficulty in maintaining one's place in society, and lack of sincere communication with parents or teachers increase adolescents' interest in incorrect religious orientations.

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