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University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Sciences

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CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

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THE EFFECTS OF SOCIETAL FACTORS ON RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN STUDENTS OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL FACULTIES IN SKOPJE AND TETOVO (R. NORTH MACEDONIA)

Abstract

This paper has the goal of finding out whether there is a causal link between, and if yes, the degree of influence of the socio-economic status, family type, ethnicity, gender and the confessional belonging on religious tolerance in students of the Philosophical Faculties in Skopje and Tetovo. In accordance with the subject of this paper, the basic goal of this paper is to pinpoint the societal factors that affect religious tolerance in the student population. This research has the following goals: to pinpoint the most influential societal factors that influence religious tolerance in the students of the Philosophical Faculties in Skopje and Tetovo; to underline religious tolerance as a socially desirable behavior in the student population in the midst of the muticonfessional and multiethnic reality of the country; whether or not, and if so in what way, does the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Archbishopric of Ohrid and the Islamic Faith Community are promoters of religious tolerance in the student population; to pinpoint the confessional characteristics of religious tolerance in the student population (the characteristics of Christian and Muslim tolerance). From a methodological point of view this research is geared towards an estimation of the influence of societal factors (socio-economic status, family type, ethnicity, gender and the kind of confessional belonging) over classical religious tolerance in the students of

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Skopje and Tetovo. This paper will try to find the causal links between these factors and religious tolerance in students. The research method is combined i.e. the paper consists of both a qualitative and a quantitative approach.

Keywords: religious tolerance; students; societal factors; muticonfessional reality

Introduction

Religiosity as an indicator of the acceptance of religion is important in multi-confessional societies, especially in the context of globalization that has driven strong integration processes within religious communities. Exactly this actuality of religion and religious affiliation were the impetus for this research of the factors that affect the religious tolerance of the students of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University "St. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje and to the students of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Tetovo. This research will give us the opportunity to shed light on the dynamic component of religiosity in our area. Although this research is limited to students from two faculties, in the future it can serve as a basis for larger research that could cover all students in R. Macedonia.

Students with their characteristics face a multitude of factors that affect them. Religion offers and provides answers to many of the problems that young people face. This reality makes the relationship religion - students with its specifics to be relevant today. Family, education, globalization, religious communities, social conditions, youth problems, many unanswered questions and dilemmas affect the formation and profiling of students' religiosity.³

Most modern sociologists of religion bring religiosity in relation to values as a generic term where values are defined as relatively stable, general and hierarchically organized characteristics of individuals (dispositions) and groups (elements of social consciousness) formed by the intertwining of the same, social and individual stakeholders. Due to the prescribed desire, they direct the behaviour of their bearers towards certain goals.⁴ The alternating spread of secularism and religiosity in a short period of time marked the contemporary historical scene. The strengthening of one phenomenon seemed to be an impulse to revive the other. According to many theorists, the last century was at the same time the most secularized and the most religious. The process of social, economic and cultural modernization, which many assumed would accelerate the end of religion, led to its revitalization.⁵ The post-socialist period is characterized by an increase in religiosity not only among the older but also among the younger generations. Belonging to a certain ethnic group and religion are the basic cohesive factors in our area.

3 Леонард Свидлер и Пол Мојзес, *Изучување на религијата во ерата на глобалниот дијалог*, Темплум, Скопје, 2005.

4 Pantić Dragomir, *Промене религиозности грађана Србији*, Институт друштвених наука, Београд, 1993, р. 179.

5 Кубурић Зорица и Стојковић Ненад, *Религијски селф у трансформацији*, Институт друштвених наука, Београд, 2004, рр. 321-342.

The problem of research on the impact of social factors on religious tolerance can be broken down into the following sub-questions: is the practice of religious tolerance among students present in modern Macedonian society; whether the principle of religious tolerance is respected or neglected by students; whether it is to strengthen or weaken it; does it have a perspective and does it lead to the ideas of ecumenism and neo-ecumenism in the Macedonian multireligious society; which social factors have the greatest intensity of influence on the observance of the principle of religious tolerance among the student population in R. Macedonia.

The practical goal of this research is to determine the main social factors that positively or negatively influence the attitudes about religious tolerance among students in Skopje and Tetovo and to take them into account when preparing legal frameworks, projects and media campaigns for practical implementation of religious tolerance in R. Macedonia. By precisely defining the factors that negatively affect religious tolerance, they will be detected and marginalized by social activity. Thus, preventing possible conflicts as a result of religious intolerance. The analysis of the results of this research will be able to answer the question of the factors that affect religious tolerance, and to make an insight into the degree of religious tolerance of the population in question (the students of the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje and Tetovo). These results will be used in the future to build a long-term strategy that will stimulate the positive aspects of religion and its social role as a promoter of morality, social order and stability. The system of moral norms and values will create a barrier that will reduce these deviant behaviours among student youth. A well-studied religiosity and the factors that influence it will help us to better understand the religiously motivated extremism and intolerance. It will be the basis for a long-term strategy that aims to prevent these socially undesirable phenomena, especially in one multi confessional society such as R. Macedonia.

Methodological setting of the research

The research aims to determine whether there is a causal relationship and the degree of influence of socio-economic status, family type, ethnicity, gender and type of confessional affiliation on religious tolerance among students at the Faculties of Philosophy in Skopje and Tetovo. According to the subject of this research, the main purpose of the research is to determine the social factors that affect religious tolerance in the student population. The unit of analysis of this research is the student youth from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University "St. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje and from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University in Tetovo, which are the object of this research. The research aims to determine the impact of socio-economic status, family type, ethnicity, gender and type of confessional affiliation on religious tolerance among young people

in the city of Skopje and Tetovo. Hence the need to define in more detail the basic concepts of research.

Religious tolerance is a phrase composed of two phenomena: religion and tolerance. The practice of deliberately allowing or permitting something that someone forbids is called tolerance. A certain subject can speak about tolerance, when he is in a position to allow or not allow. Similarly, tolerance is defined as an attitude of support, encouragement, maintenance and preservation towards those whose opinions, attitudes, views, racial-ethnic backgrounds and practices differ from their own. Tolerance can symbolize nothing more than patience and a degree of self-control as well as consent given by members of the dominant religion for other religions to exist even when they are perceived as inferior, sinful or dangerous.⁶ If we start from the conclusion that tolerance is such a model of behaviour in which the validity of another principle is allowed, then we can cite the following theses in relation to the above topic. Tolerance is patience and permissible deviation from the usual regulation. Sociologically interpreted, it is patience, submission and respect for other people's beliefs. Religious tolerance is the admission of other religious principles that are not our own but should be respected in the spirit of religious rights and freedoms. In short, tolerance is a permissible deviation from one's own religious beliefs.⁷

The Religious Tolerance Survey was conducted on a stratified sample of the available population which was divided into several strata based on relevant variables. Then an election framework is defined for each stratum and a separate sub-sample is formed from each election framework by randomization. The complete stratified copy was obtained by association. From the basic set of units of the available subject population of students studying at the Faculty of Philosophy at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and at the Faculty of Philosophy at the State University in Tetovo, a selected sample representing 0.25% of the total number of units. Of the respondents in the survey, Macedonians are 74 or 41.57%, Albanians are 97 or 54.49%, Turks are 3 or 1.68%, Serbs are 3 or 1.68%, and Bosnia's are 1 or 0.56%. The total number of respondents in the research is 178 (100%). The research was conducted in 2020.

Research results

The survey asked 37 questions. For the purposes of this paper, I will present the views of students regarding 14 questions, which are the most characteristic in relation to the subject of research.

6 Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West?*, Princeton University Press, 2003.

7 Марија Ташева, Религиската толеранција низ историјата: Пред и после појавата на христијанството, *Социолошка ревија*, Бр. IX-X, 2010, pp. 29-48.

Table 1. Does Religion Improve Ethnic Relations?

Ethnicity	YES	NO	I do not know	Did not offer an answer	Total
Macedonian	11,80% (21)	15,17% (27)	13,48% (24)	1,12% (2)	41,57% (74)
Albanian	35,96% (64)	2,25% (4)	15,73% (28)	0,56% (1)	54,49% (97)
Turkey	1,12% (2)	/	0,56% (1)	/	1,69% (3)
Serbian	1,69% (3)	/	/	/	1,69% (3)
Bosniak	/	/	0,56% (1)	/	0,56% (1)
Total	50,56% (90)	17,42% (31)	30,34% (54)	1,69% (3)	100% (178)

Although almost one third of the respondents do not have an opinion on this issue, we can still see that most of them give a positive function to religion in relaxing interethnic relations in post-conflict Macedonian modern society. Among the students from the Faculty of Philosophy in Tetovo, this attitude is of higher intensity. It is a message to the Islamic Faith Community (IFC), to use its influence on the believers and to work much more actively on the implementation of religious dialogue and cooperation in the country.

Table 2. Discussions about religious issues can be a great basis for getting to know each other better

Ethnicity	I do not agree at all	I do not agree	I do not know	I agree	I completely agree	They did not offer an answer	Total
Macedonian	2,25%(4)	2,81%(5)	7,87%(14)	20,22%(36)	7,87%(14)	0,56%(1)	41,57%(74)
Albanian	0,56%(1)	3,93%(7)	9,55%(17)	31,46%(56)	8,99%(16)	/	54,49%(97)
Turkey	/	/	/	1,69% (3)	/	/	1,69% (3)
Serbian	/	/	/	1,69% (3)	/	/	1,69% (3)
Bosniak	0,56%(1)	/	/	/	/	/	0,56% (1)
Total	3,37%(6)	6,74%(12)	17,42%(31)	55,06%(98)	16,85%(30)	0,56%(1)	100% (178)

Unfortunately, from the actions of the IFC so far, we can conclude the exact opposite. This especially refers to the statements and messages of the former head of the IFC, Reis-UL-Ulema Sulejman Rexhepi, which lead to religious and

ethnic exclusivity. These are messages based on the ideology of religious nationalism. It is interesting that there is a relatively high percentage of students from the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje who believe that religion does not play any role in improving ethnic relations in the country. In-depth research should be done that will show which other factors (political, economic, cultural) have a significant impact on improving ethnic relations in the Republic of Macedonia.

The percentage of positive attitude on this issue is extremely high. Students from the Faculties of Philosophy in both Skopje and Tetovo have a common opinion and agree that they want to discuss religious issues with those who are not members of their religion. This proves the fact that they are not sufficiently religiously educated either by the educational institutions or by the most important religious institutions in the country. It is also a fact that they do not know each other well enough. All of these gaps could be filled with discussions of issues related to the role of religion in peace and conflict. They believe that religion could be an important factor in building peace.

Table 3. Respect for other faiths is an expression of respect for one's faith

Ethnicity	I do not agree at all	I do not agree	I do not know	I agree	I completely agree	They did not offer an answer	Total
Macedonian	1,69%(3)	3,37%(6)	2,81%(5)	20,79%(37)	12,36%(22)	0,56%(1)	41,57%(74)
Albanian	2,25%(4)	2,25%(4)	7,30%(13)	33,15%(59)	9,55%(17)	/	54,49%(97)
Turkey	/	/	/	0,56%(1)	1,12%(2)	/	1,69% (3)
Serbian	/	/	0,56%(1)	0,56%(1)	0,56%(1)	/	1,69% (3)
Bosniak	/	/	/	/	0,56%(1)	/	0,56% (1)
Total	3,93%(7)	5,62%(10)	10,67%(19)	55,06%(98)	24,16%(43)	0,56%(1)	100% (178)

Here the students have already shown great sense and readiness for religious tolerance. Both Macedonian and Albanian students with a high percentage of answers stated that the implementation of religious tolerance in R. Macedonia is very important. This should be a sign for both the religious and the political elite in the country that much more needs to be done to implement these principles. Unfortunately, according to the practical activities of the two largest religious institutions in the country (Macedonian Orthodox Church - Ohrid Archbishopric and the Islamic Religious Community), religious tolerance has the characteristics of declarative, dosed and is practiced only in certain socio-political constellations.

Table 4. Multiculturalism has led more to segregation than to the integration of Macedonian society

Ethnicity	I do not agree at all	I do not agree	I do not know	I agree	I completely agree	They did not offer an answer	Total
Macedonian	3,37%(6)	5,62%(10)	10,11%(18)	15,17%(27)	6,18%(11)	1,12%(2)	41,57%(74)
Albanian	2,81%(5)	5,06%(9)	30,90%(55)	11,24%(20)	3,37%(6)	1,12%(2)	54,49%(97)
Turkey	/	0,56%(1)	1,12%(2)	/	/	/	1,69% (3)
Serbian	/	/	0,56%(1)	0,56%(1)	0,56%(1)	/	1,69% (3)
Bosniak	/	/	/	0,56%(1)	/	/	0,56% (1)
Total	6,18%(11)	11,24%(20)	42,70%(76)	27,53%(49)	10,11%(18)	2,25%(4)	100% (178)

Although most of the respondents do not have an opinion on this issue, the percentage of those who answered positively to this question is high enough for us to be able to draw certain conclusions. It is obvious that the concept of multiculturalism has not shown the expected results. R. Macedonia is still in a post-conflict period and the situation regarding inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations has not improved at all, even though 20 years have passed since the 2001 conflict. On the contrary, in certain segments it is even worse.

Table 5. All citizens of a country should belong to one religion

Ethnicity	I do not agree at all	I do not agree	I do not know	I agree	I completely agree	They did not offer an answer	Total
Macedonian	15,73%(28)	16,85%(30)	5,06%(9)	1,69%(3)	2,25%(4)	/	41,57%(74)
Albanian	21,91%(39)	17,98%(32)	10,67%(19)	2,81%(5)	0,56%(1)	0,56%(1)	54,49%(97)
Turkey	/	0,56%(1)	0,56%(1)	0,56%(1)	/	/	1,69% (3)
Serbian	/	1,69%(3)	/	/	/	/	1,69% (3)
Bosniak	0,56%(1)	/	/	/	/	/	0,56% (1)
Total	38,20%(68)	37,08%(66)	16,29%(29)	5,06%(9)	2,81%(5)	0,56%(1)	100% (178)

Macedonian society is completely segregated along the most important axes of its functioning. Unlike before, educational institutions are completely ethnically segregated (in primary, secondary and higher education). For exam-

ple, in the high schools in Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo and Struga, the students are completely ethnically segregated even though they previously studied together. Also in the western part of R. Macedonia in cities and villages with mixed ethnic composition, Macedonians and Albanians are spatially segregated. Therefore, the concept of multiculturalism needs to be replaced by interculturalism, which is a much more dynamic concept.

The percentage of those respondents who do not agree with the view that all citizens in a country should belong to one religion is extremely high. In my opinion, this is due to at least two factors. First of all, previous research has shown that in R. Macedonia and the Balkans, there is an overlap of religious and ethnic identity, as two most powerful mechanisms of personal identification. Almost without exception, everyone who is ethnic Macedonian, Serb or Greek is a member of Orthodox Christianity. Almost every Croat is a member of Catholic Christianity. Almost every ethnic Albanian in R. Macedonia or Kosovo is a member of Islam. Exceptions are Macedonian Muslims, Gorani and some other smaller ethno-religious groups. Secondly, in R. Macedonia and the wider region there is no process of conversion from one religion to another. There is almost no case when a member of Orthodoxy converts to Islam, or a member of Islam converts to Orthodoxy. This is mostly due to the fact that he will be declared a traitor by his own religious and ethnic group.

Table 6. Do you want to be congratulated on religious holidays, members of other religious groups?

Ethnicity	YES	NO	I do not know	Did not offer an answer	Total
Macedonian	32,58%(58)	2,81%(5)	5,62%(10)	0,56%(1)	41,57%(74)
Albanian	44,38%(79)	2,25%(4)	7,87%(14)	/	54,49%(97)
Turkey	1,69%(3)	/	/	/	1,69% (3)
Serbian	1,12%(2)	/	0,56%(1)	/	1,69% (3)
Bosniak	0,56%(1)	/	/	/	0,56% (1)
Total	80,34%(143)	5,06%(9)	14,04%(25)	0,56%(1)	100% (178)

It is obvious that in mixed ethnic communities, especially in some parts of Skopje and western Macedonia, young people socialize with each other and gladly invite ethnically others, when they celebrate birthdays college graduation, employment, etc. In ethnically mixed villages, it is customary for villagers to invite religiously others to their wedding celebrations. This is due to the centuries-old tradition in Macedonia, especially in religiously mixed environments, for Ortho-

dox Christians to visit their neighbours during Ramadan Bajram and Eid al-Adha. Members of Islam also go to their Orthodox friends and neighbours to celebrate Easter and Christmas. Ordinary citizens have a high degree of religious tolerance.

Table 7. Do you contribute to the improvement of the inter-religious relations of your faculty?

Ethnicity	YES	NO	Only in exceptional situations	Did not offer an answer	Total
Macedonian	11,80%(21)	16,29%(29)	12,92%(23)	0,56%(1)	41,57%(74)
Albanian	7,87%(14)	20,22%(36)	26,40%(47)	/	54,49%(97)
Turkey	1,69%(3)	/	/	/	1,69% (3)
Serbian	1,12%(2)	/	0,56%(1)	/	1,69% (3)
Bosniak	0,56%(1)	/	/	/	0,56% (1)
Total	23,03%(41)	36,52%(65)	39,89%(71)	0,56%(1)	100% (178)

Most of the surveyed students are honest in the answers that they do not contribute enough in improving the inter-religious relations of their faculties. Only Albanian students, to a greater extent, do so only in exceptional situations. This is primarily due to the fact that higher education in R. Macedonia is ethnically segregated.

Table 8. Would you marry someone of another faith if you fell in love with him / her?

Ethnicity	YES	NO	I do not know, maybe	Did not offer an answer	Total
Macedonian	16,85%(30)	12,92%(23)	11,24%(20)	0,56%(1)	41,57%(74)
Albanian	10,67%(19)	40,45%(72)	3,37%(6)	/	54,49%(97)
Turkey	0,56%(1)	0,56%(1)	0,56%(1)	/	1,69% (3)
Serbian	0,56%(1)	0,56%(1)	0,56%(1)	/	1,69% (3)
Bosniak	/	/	0,56%(1)	/	0,56% (1)
Total	28,65%(51)	54,49%(97)	16,29%(29)	0,56%(1)	100% (178)

The number of Albanian students studying at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje is decreasing, and the number of Macedonian students at the University of Tetovo is minor. So it is difficult to talk about inter-religious relations in environments where the presence of religious others is diminishing. Unlike the Faculties, their place of residence has the characteristics of a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic environment. It is gratifying that most of the students practically apply the principles of religious tolerance, as well as the principles of religious dialogue and cooperation. It is obvious that Albanian students are more tolerant than Macedonian ones, but this is probably due to the fact that Tetovo has much more pronounced characteristics of a multi-ethnic city than Skopje has.

The answers to this question are a bit surprising. Namely, marriage together with education are the most conservative institutions in the society, through which the religious and ethnic affiliation of an individual is protected. Due to that, the percentage of mixed marriages in the country is extremely low. The already low percentage has fallen even less since the 2001 conflict. Apparently, students still believe that through love this condition can be overcome. This is more obvious for Macedonian students than for Albanian students. This is due to the fact that the Albanian ethnic group, according to its characteristics, is more closed than the Macedonian one.

Table 9. Do you want to work in an environment of religious and ethnic diversity?

Ethnicity	YES	NO	I do not know	Did not offer an answer	Total
Macedonian	27,53%(49)	5,06%(9)	8,99%(16)	/	41,57%(74)
Albanian	37,08%(66)	7,87%(14)	8,99%(16)	0,56%(1)	54,49%(97)
Turkey	1,69%(3)	/	/	/	1,69% (3)
Serbian	1,69%(3)	/	/	/	1,69% (3)
Bosniak	0,56%(1)	/	/	/	0,56% (1)
Total	68,54%(122)	12,92%(23)	17,98%(32)	0,56%(1)	100% (178)

Almost all students do not mind working in a multi-ethnic and multireligious environment. This is due to at least two factors. First, under the Ohrid Framework Agreement, a large number of ethnic Albanians were employed in all public enterprises. Students are aware of that reality and have nothing against it. Second and most importantly, discrimination against students on religious and ethnic grounds has been reduced. As academic citizens and future driving forces of Macedonian society, with their competencies they should be able to build a soci-

ety for all. In such a society, all citizens, regardless of their ethnic, racial, religious, political and cultural affiliation, will have equal opportunities and access to the labour market, educational, social, health and cultural institutions.

Table 10. Do you justify the intolerant and offensive chants of the Komiti and Ballisti fan groups?

Ethnicity	YES	NO	I do not know	Did not offer an answer	Total
Macedonian	4,49%(8)	26,40%(47)	10,11%(18)	0,56%(1)	41,57%(74)
Albanian	3,93%(7)	37,64%(67)	11,80%(21)	1,12%(2)	54,49%(97)
Turkey	/	1,69%(3)	/	/	1,69% (3)
Serbian	/	1,12%(2)	0,56%(1)	/	1,69% (3)
Bosniak	/	0,56%(1)	/	/	0,56% (1)
Total	8,43%(15)	67,42%(120)	22,47%(40)	1,69%(3)	100% (178)

Table 11. How do you define yourself?

Ethnicity	As a religiously tolerant person	As a religiously tolerant person, only in exceptional situations	As a religiously intolerant person	They did not offer an answer	Total
Macedonian	30,90%(55)	8,99%(16)	/	1,69%(3)	41,57%(74)
Albanian	43,82%(78)	9,55%(17)	/	1,12%(2)	54,49%(97)
Turkey	1,69%(3)	/	/	/	1,69% (3)
Serbian	1,69%(3)	/	/	/	1,69% (3)
Bosniak	0,56%(1)	/	/	/	0,56% (1)
Total	78,65%(140)	18,54%(33)	/	2,81%(5)	100% (178)

The behavior of the fan groups is one of the biggest problems. This especially refers to the fan groups of Vardar, Shkendija, Shkupi and Teteks. Disappointing is the fact that twenty years after the conflict in 2001, the state is not able to organize a football match between Vardar and Shkendija, which will be attended by their fan groups. Of course, the fact that the students do not justify chanting at the Committees and the Ballists on ethnic and religious grounds is gratifying.

It can be seen that they are already formed as mature individuals, unlike the students who make up most of these fan groups.

The percentage of respondents who declared themselves as tolerant is extremely high. It is gratifying that no student has declared himself a totally intolerant person. This exceeded my expectations in a positive way, although it was evident from the answers given to the previous questions. We will now see which factors influence them the most to form themselves as tolerant individuals ready for mutual communication, dialogue and cooperation.

Instead of Conclusion

According to the total number of respondents, education, family upbringing, religious affiliation, level of communication between people and the level of general knowledge are factors that have a high level of influence on religious tolerance. Ethnicity and social status are factors that have a medium level of influence, while political affiliation is a factor that has a low level of influence on religious tolerance. According to all respondents, family upbringing is the factor that has the most pronounced high impact on religious tolerance. Ethnic affiliation has the most pronounced intermediate level of influence, while political affiliation has the lowest pronounced level of influence on religious tolerance.

Table 12. Factors Affecting Religious Tolerance⁸

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	They did not offer an answer	Total
Education	6	3	7	9	26	13	11	18	16	56	13	178
Family upbringing	2	/	1	/	6	10	8	16	19	106	10	178
Religious affiliation	7	5	2	7	19	9	14	18	21	62	14	178
National affiliation	6	9	6	10	32	13	20	20	19	28	15	178
Social status	14	5	16	10	27	17	19	26	15	14	14	178
Level of communication between people	5	/	5	8	19	11	21	30	26	40	13	178
General knowledge level	1	7	2	3	15	15	14	28	24	57	13	178
Political determination	57	11	19	11	24	8	10	10	6	7	15	178

From the attached research and the answers given by all respondents we can conclude that the family has a major role in religious tolerance as the primary agent of socialization. This indicates that their parents do not have religious and ethnic stereotypes that burden their children in their upbringing. Most likely the members of the older generation (their grandparents) are even less burdened by the presence and practical action of religiously and ethnically others. These data follow up on some previous research, which showed that in the Socialist Federal

⁸ Total respondents: 178; 1-3 - low level of influence of the factor; 4-7 - average level of influence of the factor, 8-10 - high level of influence of the factor.

Republic of Yugoslavia there was a higher intensity of religious and ethnic tolerance than we have today. The intensity of religious and ethnic tolerance diminished after the break-up of the Second Yugoslavia and the establishment of the former Yugoslav Republics as independent states. This was followed by bloody conflicts, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo.

Educational institutions, as a secondary agent of socialization, have proven to be a very important factor for religious tolerance among students at the Faculties of Philosophy in Skopje and Tetovo. This means that we have good curricula in primary, secondary and higher education. Also, in the textbooks at all three levels of education there are no contents that incriminate students with religious and ethnic discrimination and intolerance. Teachers and professors have a big role in this. Through the process of upbringing, they transmit to students the moral norms and values related to non-discrimination, solidarity, altruism, love, etc.

Religious affiliation appears as a positive factor that influences the formation of tolerant personalities in students. This once again demonstrates the positive function of religion, whether students believe in God or not. The ethical function of religion through which religious norms and values are transmitted is especially important. Christianity and Islam as part of the Abrahamic religions have far more similarities than differences. They are founded on the same foundation, and that is the Old Testament. Properly interpreted, they bring them closer together than alienate members of the Orthodox Christian and Islamic faiths. Also Christianity and Islam, at their core, are religions of love.

The level of communication between people of different religions and ethnicities is also a positive factor that leads to religious tolerance. Conducting dialogue is the best method of understanding between people with different views, on any issue. Through the dialogue, the similarities are perceived and the differences are accepted as part of the multicultural colour of R. Macedonia. This builds trust between the parties, recognizes the needs of everyone, develops alternatives and ways of resolving conflicts, and brings together different religious, ethnic, social and political views. This enables a predisposition for joint decision-making in finding the best solutions for peace, cooperation, dialogue and understanding between the people in the country.

The level of general knowledge is the last important factor for increasing the intensity of religious tolerance among the surveyed students. The level of general culture is very significant. Students are aware that they should have general knowledge of all social phenomena, except the scientific field they study during their studies. Within that, the knowledge of all religions, which through their religious communities and religious groups are present in the country, is very important to be formed as true academic citizens of their country.

According to the respondents of Macedonian ethnicity (74 in total), family upbringing, the level of communication between people and the level of general knowledge are factors that have a high level of influence on religious tolerance.

Education, religion and ethnic affiliation, as well as social status are factors that have a medium level of influence. Political determination is a factor that has a low level of influence on religious tolerance.

Table 13. Factors Affecting Religious Tolerance⁹

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	They did not offer an answer	Total
Education	6	1	5	7	12	5	5	9	8	12	4	74
Family upbringing	2	/	1	/	4	8	5	6	9	36	3	74
Religious affiliation	7	3	2	6	9	8	9	8	8	11	3	74
National affiliation	4	6	4	7	12	7	11	4	7	8	4	74
Social status	4	2	6	4	12	9	11	9	8	6	3	74
Level of communication between people	3	/	1	3	9	4	9	15	8	18	4	74
General knowledge level	/	5	1	2	7	5	8	13	9	20	4	74
Political determination	19	6	7	6	11	5	5	5	3	3	4	74

According to the respondents of Albanian ethnicity (97 in total), education, family upbringing, religious affiliation, ethnic affiliation, level of communication between people and the level of general knowledge are factors that have a high level of influence on religious tolerance. Social status is a factor that has a medium level of influence, while political affiliation is a factor that has a low level of influence on religious tolerance.

Table 14. Factors Affecting Religious Tolerance¹⁰

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	They did not offer an answer	Total
Education	/	2	2	2	12	6	6	9	7	42	9	97
Family upbringing	/	/	/	/	2	2	3	5	9	71	7	97
Religious affiliation	/	1	/	1	8	2	4	9	13	49	10	97
National affiliation	1	3	2	3	17	5	8	16	12	19	11	97
Social status	10	3	8	5	13	8	7	16	7	8	12	97
Level of communication between people	1	/	4	5	7	6	11	14	18	22	9	97
General knowledge level	1	1	1	/	7	10	4	15	14	35	9	97
Political determination	34	5	11	4	12	3	5	5	3	4	11	97

9 1-3- low level of factor influence; 4-7- average level of influence of the factor; 8-10- high level of factor influence.

10 1-3 - low level of factor influence; 4-7- average level of influence of the factor; 8-10 - high level of factor influence.

We can conclude that Albanian students have more factors that affect their religious tolerance than Macedonian students. Family upbringing, the level of their mutual communication and the level of general culture are common to both surveyed populations. Among Albanian students, this is followed by the factors that detect the influence of educational institutions and their religious affiliation. With the latter, they may want to emphasize that Islam is a peaceful religion, which through the suras and verses in the Qur'an emphasizes its tolerance of other religions with which it is in contact. Prerequisite for all this is the fact that in R. Macedonia has no visible and exposed elements of religious extremism and terrorism. What should certainly be emphasized is that among both Macedonian and Albanian students, their political affiliation has no statistically significant impact on their religious tolerance. This needs further investigation. However, the initial impression is that the students believe that the political elites in the country, not only do not help, but on the contrary hinder in the practical implementation of the principles of ethnic and religious tolerance. Some of them still play ethno-national and religious exclusivity to win over their voters. This is especially true of right-wing political parties.

According to the students from the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje and the students from the Faculty of Philosophy in Tetovo, in order to achieve a higher intensity of mutual religious tolerance, dialogue and cooperation, it is necessary to implement and strengthen the following social activities.

The Macedonian Orthodox Church - Ohrid Archbishopric and the Islamic Faith Community, as the most important religious institutions in the country, should show much greater feeling, will and willingness to raise the level of mutual cooperation. They still notice elements of religious exclusivity. This will contribute a lot, given their strong influence on all segments of modern Macedonian society.

The high religious dignitaries and religious persons, through their sermons to constantly point out to their believers the inevitability of coexistence between all citizens in the country. If the faith of the religious other is respected, then it will result in mutual respect and coexistence.

In educational institutions at all levels to introduce more content that deals with the phenomenon of religion. In this way, students will be introduced to the teachings of the largest and most important universal religions in the world. By getting to know the religion of the religious other, conditions will be created for religious dialogue and cooperation in our country. In that way, conditions will be created for the transition from the principles of religious tolerance to the principles of ecumenism and interculturalism.

Both the Macedonian and the Albanian family basically transmit the traditions of the Macedonian multi-ethnic culture. It gives children a good basis to form themselves as individuals without discrimination and stereotypes towards the religious and ethnic other (Lacorne, 2019). But under the influence of the neg-

ative aspects of globalization, and related to the fact that parents do not have enough time for their children, elements of religious discrimination and Islamophobia can penetrate within the family upbringing.

The level of communication between young people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds should be raised to a much higher level. The biggest problem that affects the reduction of their mutual communication is the ethnic segregation along all axes of the modern Macedonian society. Segregated education at all three levels leads to less and less knowledge of the Macedonian language by Albanian students. This automatically reduces the possibilities for mutual communication, because in such circumstances they have to communicate in English. Political elites should try to desegregate Macedonian education. Macedonia is one of the few countries in Europe and the world that has segregation in education, which has long been an outdated concept in modern countries.

In the end, according to the results of the conducted research, we can draw a general conclusion that the students from the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje and the students from the Faculty of Philosophy in Tetovo, showed an enviable level of religious tolerance towards the religious other. If we analyse the results according to the questions in order, we can conclude the following. Students demonstrate elementary religiosity by believing in God. There is a small number of Macedonian students who are atheists, while Albanian students do not have such a case. A very small percentage of Macedonian respondents read the Bible, which confirms the fact that most Macedonians are traditional believers. In contrast, most of the Albanian students surveyed read the Qur'an, which coincides with the fact that Albanians have a much higher percentage of convinced and theologically educated believers than Macedonians. Albanian students believe that religion has a positive effect on improving ethnic relations in the country. Macedonian students have a divided opinion on this. The students believe that the Macedonian society is multi-confessional, and therefore all religions in the country should be respected. They believe that each religion has its own theological truths that it nurtures, and from the point of view of their own religion they do not interpret them as wrong. According to the views expressed, students show interest in learning about the basic theological principles of other religions. They also express a willingness to discuss religious matters, which is a good basis for getting to know each other. Although they believe that associating with members of their religion strengthens their religious and ethnic identity, they agree that respecting religious other is an expression of respect for their own faith. By that they mean that if they do not respect the religion of the other, then at least they respect his faith in God. The opinion of both Macedonian and Albanian students is undivided that multiculturalism, as a rather static concept, did not give the expected results. Macedonian society is still plagued by latent and open inter-ethnic and inter-confessional conflicts. They believe that in R. Macedonia conflicts do not have typical religious characteristics, but that religious

feelings are abused, which is unacceptable to them. They have religious and ethnic trust in others, and it happens that they have closer relations with some of their colleagues or neighbours. They do not mind the presence of people of other faiths in their religious temples. Many Macedonian and Albanian students visit their non-religious neighbours and friends during the major Christian and Islamic holidays. It is part of the long centuries-old Macedonian tradition.

Both do not contribute much to improving the inter-religious and interethnic relations of their Faculties, but on the other hand they are in solidarity and fit in their groups students who are religiously and ethnically different. Most students associate with colleagues of other religious backgrounds. In principle, they would not marry a person who is a member of another religion, but among Macedonian students there is a certain percentage of respondents who think that love can break and overcome these stereotypes. What is gratifying being that most students express a willingness to live in a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic environment. This is especially characteristic of students from Skopje. When it comes to work organizations, then almost everyone wants to work in an environment with ethnic and religious diversity. Almost all respondents do not mind having lectures and exercises with professors and associates from another ethnic and religious group. It is a message to the political elites to work on the re-segregation of the Universities in the Republic of Macedonia. Students do not approve of conflicts and physical violence between children of different ethnicities and religions. In this context, they have a negative attitude towards the behaviour of the largest football fan groups in the country. The fact that 78.65% of the respondents defined themselves as religiously tolerant persons speaks for itself. We will not be wrong if we say that R. Macedonia has a perspective to develop a society in which all citizens will have equal opportunities and equal access to the labor market, as well as to the economic, social, cultural and political resources in the country.

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