



ANALYSIS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PERCEIVING RELIGIOUS INFORMATION

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This article presents a theoretical analysis of the socio-psychological mechanisms through which religious information influences personality psychology. It examines the role of cognitive, emotional, and social factors in the perception of religious information. Particular attention is given to the importance of religious identity, critical thinking, media literacy, and psychological resilience in the process of perceiving and evaluating religious information.

Keywords: religious information, socio-psychological influence, personality psychology, religious identity, media literacy, critical thinking, information security.

The perception of religious information is a complex psychological process influenced by cognitive, emotional, motivational, and social factors. In the digital age, where religious content is disseminated through social media, online news platforms, video-sharing services, and instant messaging applications, understanding how individuals perceive and interpret such information has become increasingly important. Among different social groups, young people are particularly susceptible to the influence of religious information because they are actively developing their personal identity, worldview, and value system.

From the perspective of cognitive psychology, the perception of religious information involves several stages, including attention, comprehension, interpretation, evaluation, and memory retention. Individuals do not process information objectively; rather, they interpret it through their existing beliefs, experiences, cultural background, and cognitive schemas. Consequently, identical religious messages may produce different psychological responses depending on the recipient's previous knowledge, religious orientation, educational level, and critical thinking ability.



One of the primary psychological factors influencing the perception of religious information is religious identity. Individuals with a well-developed religious identity are more likely to evaluate religious content according to their established beliefs and doctrinal understanding. Conversely, young people who are in the process of identity formation may demonstrate greater openness to diverse religious perspectives, making them more vulnerable to persuasive or manipulative messages. Social Identity Theory suggests that people naturally seek information supporting their group membership and existing beliefs while rejecting information perceived as contradictory. Another significant determinant is critical thinking. Critical thinking enables individuals to evaluate the credibility, logic, and reliability of religious information before accepting it as truthful. Young people possessing higher levels of analytical thinking are generally less influenced by emotionally manipulative messages and more capable of distinguishing authentic religious knowledge from misinformation or ideological propaganda. Conversely, insufficient critical thinking skills increase the likelihood of accepting unverified religious information encountered in digital environments. Media literacy also plays an essential role in shaping psychological responses to religious information. Media-literate individuals possess the ability to identify reliable information sources, recognize persuasive communication strategies, and detect misinformation or manipulated content. In the contemporary digital environment, where religious information is rapidly disseminated without adequate verification, media literacy serves as an important protective factor contributing to psychological information security. Emotional factors substantially influence how religious information is perceived. Religious messages often evoke emotions such as hope, fear, compassion, guilt, or spiritual inspiration. Psychological studies demonstrate that emotionally charged information is processed more rapidly and remembered more effectively than emotionally neutral information. While positive religious messages may strengthen psychological well-being and social solidarity, fear-based or manipulative narratives can increase anxiety, cognitive rigidity, and emotional dependence on specific



ideological sources. The social environment constitutes another important factor affecting the perception of religious information. Family values, peer influence, educational institutions, religious communities, and online social networks significantly shape individuals' interpretations of religious content. According to Social Learning Theory, individuals acquire attitudes and behavioral patterns through observation and interaction with significant others. Consequently, exposure to constructive social environments promotes balanced and critical interpretation of religious information, whereas exposure to ideologically homogeneous environments may reinforce cognitive bias and selective information processing. The credibility of the information source is another psychological determinant influencing information acceptance. Individuals generally demonstrate greater trust toward information received from respected religious scholars, educational institutions, official organizations, or personally trusted community members. Conversely, anonymous social media accounts or unofficial online platforms often present a higher risk of disseminating misleading or manipulative religious content. Source credibility therefore directly affects the persuasive power of religious communication. Psychological resilience also contributes to the way individuals respond to religious information. Resilient individuals demonstrate greater emotional stability, independent judgment, and resistance to manipulative communication. They are less likely to experience psychological pressure resulting from emotionally persuasive religious messages and more capable of making informed decisions based on rational evaluation rather than emotional reactions. Furthermore, cultural and national values influence the interpretation of religious information. Religious beliefs are embedded within broader cultural traditions, social norms, and historical experiences. Therefore, identical religious messages may be interpreted differently across societies depending on cultural context, educational systems, and prevailing social values. Considering these factors collectively, the perception of religious information should be regarded as a multidimensional socio-psychological process rather than a simple cognitive activity. Effective information security policies



should therefore focus not only on regulating information dissemination but also on strengthening media literacy, developing critical thinking skills, promoting psychological resilience, and fostering responsible digital citizenship among young people. Understanding the psychological characteristics of religious information perception provides an important theoretical foundation for developing preventive educational programs, psychological interventions, and public awareness initiatives aimed at protecting young people from manipulative religious communication while encouraging constructive religious knowledge and intercultural understanding.

The theoretical analysis demonstrates that the perception of religious information cannot be explained by a single psychological factor. Instead, it is the result of a dynamic interaction among cognitive, emotional, motivational, and socio-cultural processes. These processes collectively determine how individuals evaluate, internalize, and respond to religious messages encountered in both traditional and digital communication environments.

A comparative analysis of contemporary psychological theories indicates that cognitive factors, particularly critical thinking and information-processing abilities, primarily influence the evaluation of message credibility. Emotional factors determine the intensity of psychological engagement, whereas social factors, including family influence, peer groups, and religious communities, shape long-term attitudes and behavioral tendencies. Therefore, the perception of religious information should be considered an integrative socio-psychological phenomenon rather than an isolated cognitive activity. An important conclusion emerging from the reviewed literature is that media literacy has evolved beyond a purely educational competence and should now be regarded as a psychological protective mechanism. Individuals with advanced media literacy skills are more capable of recognizing persuasive techniques, identifying misinformation, and critically evaluating religious narratives presented through digital media. Consequently, media literacy strengthens psychological resilience and contributes directly to personal information security. Furthermore, the analysis suggests



that religious identity performs a dual psychological function. A well-established religious identity may enhance emotional stability, moral responsibility, and social cohesion. However, when religious identity develops in the absence of critical evaluation and reliable information sources, it may increase susceptibility to ideological manipulation and cognitive bias. This finding emphasizes the necessity of balancing religious education with critical thinking and digital literacy. Another significant theoretical implication concerns the relationship between psychological resilience and information security. Existing studies indicate that emotionally resilient individuals demonstrate greater independence in judgment, higher resistance to manipulative communication, and more adaptive coping strategies when confronted with controversial or emotionally charged religious information. Thus, psychological resilience functions as one of the central protective mechanisms against destructive informational influence.

Based on the foregoing analysis, it can be argued that the socio-psychological impact of religious information depends not merely on the content of the message itself but on the interaction between individual psychological characteristics and the surrounding social environment. Consequently, effective prevention of the negative influence of manipulative religious information requires a multidimensional approach integrating psychological education, media literacy development, critical thinking training, and the promotion of reliable religious knowledge.

In summary, the perception of religious information represents a multidimensional socio-psychological process determined by the interaction of cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural factors. Theoretical analysis confirms that critical thinking, media literacy, psychological resilience, religious identity, and source credibility constitute the principal mechanisms through which religious information affects personality development and psychological well-being. Strengthening these protective psychological resources should therefore become a priority for educational



institutions, psychologists, and policymakers seeking to improve information security among young people.

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