

## **ROMAN CATHOLIC FAITH OF OLDER PEOPLE AS A SOURCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose of the study** is to create a theoretical model based on empirical findings which explains how Roman Catholic faith helps older people to remain psychologically resilient.

**Methodology.** It is an explanatory case study which collects data from seven older practicing Roman Catholics. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were applied, transcribed and analysed using content analysis.

**Findings.** An empirical model is formed, which presents most interrelated aspects of religious faith and psychological resilience in the sample of older people. Based on the findings of the content analysis, a theoretical model is developed to explain the psychological resilience of older people in the context of their religious faith. The model shows that religious faith is a living phenomenon in the lives of older people.

**Research limitations / implications** are the low number of participants. The results could not be not described and generalized for a larger population of the older people. It is expedient to conduct studies that reveal if these models are appropriate for larger sample of older people who are Roman Catholics or practicing other religions.

**Practical implications.** The results are applicable to psychological, social and pastoral work with older people. The findings of the study can be applied and integrated into older people's counseling, psychotherapy, and develop psychosocial and spiritual interventions.

**Originality.** The study investigates the psychological resilience of older people in the context of religious faith. Based on the findings, a methodical model was created and a theoretical model was developed. There is a lack of similar studies of religious faith which form and explain the results by the empirical and theoretical models.

**Keywords:** spiritual well being, qualitative measures.

**Research type:** research paper.

**JEL classification:** D91, N34, Z12.

### **Introduction**

The study investigates the psychological resilience of older people in the context of religious faith. There is a lack of similar studies of religious faith which form and explain the results by the empirical and theoretical models. It remains unclear how religious faith helps older people remain psychologically resilient. Purpose of the study is to create a theoretical model based on empirical findings which explains how Roman Catholic faith helps older people to remain psychologically resilient. Based on the findings, a methodical model was created and a theoretical model was developed. The model shows that religious faith is a living phenomenon in the lives of older people. It was used an explanatory case study which collects data from seven older practicing Roman Catholics. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were applied, transcribed and analysed using

content analysis. Nevertheless, there are some research limitations due the low number of participants. The results could not be not described and generalized for a larger population of the older people. It is expedient to conduct studies that reveal if these models are appropriate for larger sample of older people who are Roman Catholics or practicing other religions. The results are applicable to psychological, social and pastoral work with older people. The findings of the study can be applied and integrated into older people's counseling, psychotherapy, and develop psychosocial and spiritual interventions. It is important to pay more attention to religious faith of older people as a factor, which helps adapt to the surrounding environment and use it as the source of psychological resilience.

### **1. Theroretical part – Older people's religious faith and related psychological well-being**

Older people are considered one of the most vulnerable groups in society because they face various psychological challenges: deaths of the loved ones, mourning, confrontation with their own death, loneliness, existential anxiety, the risk of depression and suicide. Due to the fear of ageing and negative attitudes in modern society, late age is usually associated with negative images (Danusevičienė & Povilaikaitė, 2004). Nevertheless, the group of older persons has a unique biological age, specifically experienced by historical events and unique life experiences (Danusevičienė & Povilaikaitė, 2004). Religious faith is significant for the individuals in later age. According to the results of a sociologists' study, a visit to Holy Mass or other religious events include one of the most significant social activities of older people, in which 4 out of 5 people participate (Mikulionienė, Rapolienė, & Valavičienė, 2018). People of this age are more involved in religious life than other age groups, so they can meet their psychological, social and existential needs. Religious institutions often provide services to them and maintain religious traditions that promote values which foster aging and well-being (McFadden, 1995). Practiced religiosity provides the necessary insight to make meaning in the later life and gives individuals a sense of significance and belonging to certain groups (Coleman, 2010). The role of these people in society and in their own lives should be expanded, enriched, and made more meaningful (Lavretsky, 2010). Therefore, it is relevant to focus on religious faith and its related psychological resilience in the context of older persons who are most practicing a religion group in our society.

The object of this article is the Roman Catholic faith of the elderly and its significance for their psychological resilience. Religious faith is defined as a personal position in a religious context (Wyatt, 2004), derived from existential need and comprised of components: spirituality, religiosity, and faith. These concepts are different, overlapping, and integrated into a religious faith that emphasizes the essential aspects of these concepts. Religious faith comes from an existential need that unites the spirituality, religion, and faith of a person. The concept of spirituality is fundamental

because it is formed by personal experience of the present, relationship, life, transcendence; meaning and purpose in life experiences and their integration. Meanwhile, religiosity is a natural or formal manifestation of spirituality, which manifests itself as a cultural and / or personal phenomenon through specific qualities of behavior, social and doctrinal institution or confession, reflecting common values, the system of beliefs and practices. As it involves the inner experience, feelings and motivation of the person, it can become a personal religion. A person's faith that comes from spirituality and has a tendency to develop is expressed through religiosity. Religiosity can become personal through faith. Concurrently, faith is a process demonstrating how a person orientates and makes sense of himself, relationships, life and transcendence according to his values.

C. G. Jung argues that religiosity, as one of the most universal forms of spirituality, is very personal and important (Jung, 1998). W. James is the first psychologist who emphasizes personal religious experience and associates religion with an inner perspective, the psychology of religious feelings rather than a religious institution. He defines the essence of religion as *"the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine"* (James, 1982, p. 42). Nevertheless, there is a lack of internal personal perspective in the current research of religious faith, because there is a predominantly functional approach to religious faith with regard to its external aspects, e. g. religious engagement or rituals. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of research works on religiosity, spirituality, and faith, examines interactions or influences, and include a sample of students or younger people (up to 60) (Mockus, 2006; Kucavičiūtė, Pileckaitė-Markovienė, & Skruibis, 2013; Diržytė, Patapas, & Limantaitė, 2003). The unbalanced attitude towards religiosity is key attitude prevailing in the research, since it focuses on external religious influences rather than on the most important function of religion in old age (Coleman, 2010). Therefore, it is significant to investigate religious faith in Lithuanian historical and cultural context from the older Roman Catholics' perspective.

Psychological resilience is a basic system of human adaptation that is relevant to everyone (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000), particularly to older people facing bereavement and unfavourable situations. As a result, psychological resilience does not decrease with increasing age, but remains relevant and helps older people overcome whatever life throws their way. In this article, psychological resilience is described as a dynamic process that involves positive human functioning in the face of challenges (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000); the ability to use available resources to deal with life's challenges (Pooley & Cohen, 2010). It is based on resistance to unfavourable situations and positive adaptation as a response at an advanced age. Psychological determinants of resilience, which include the individual, family and community levels, play a major role in achieving and maintaining it. In this research, psychological resilience covers the individual level

that helps investigate the psychological resilience of older persons in the context of religious faith. Reviewing the research it is evident that spirituality and religiosity (religious coping), as aspects of religious faith, are strong internal determinants of psychological resilience, as has been proven by the research findings (Helmreich, et al., 2017). The effect of spirituality and religiosity on the physical and mental health of older people is recognized (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001; Musick, Traphagan, Koenig, & Larson, 2000; Oman & Lukoff, 2018; Pargament, Koenig, Tarakeshwar, & Hahn, 2004) and pertain spirituality and religion to a coping strategy (Shaw, Gullifer, & Wood, 2016). They may become religious, facing physical and psychological difficulties (Payman, George, & Ryburn, 2008). The research demonstrates that subjective self-assessment as a believer is related and predicts psychological well-being in an adult sample (Liniauskaitė, Kairys, Urbanavičiūtė, Bagdonas, & Pakalniškienė, 2014). According to the results of this study, the psychological well-being of believers is better than that of non-believers. This suggests that if they have better psychological well-being, they could be probably more psychologically resilient. Nevertheless, it remains unclear how religious faith helps older people remain psychologically resilient. It is therefore important to pay attention to religious faith of older people as a factor, which helps adapt to the surrounding environment and use it as the source of psychological resilience. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to create a theoretical model based on empirical findings which explains how Roman Catholic faith helps older people to remain psychologically resilient. It was used an explanatory case study which collects data from seven older practicing Roman Catholics. The data were analysed using content analysis. The current scientific psychological literature did not find case studies that would provide an exhaustive and detailed analysis of the phenomenon of religious faith in the group of older people and, based on the results of the study, would form empirical or theoretical models that analyze psychological resilience in the context of religious faith.

## **2. Methodology**

The qualitative approach is chosen to explore open questions related to human experience and focused on the meaning exploration (Silverman, 2011). An explanatory case study method was used because it "*goes beyond narrative or description*" (Bromley, 1986, p. 32). These case studies are designed not only to investigate and describe phenomena, but also to explain the relationships and form models or theories which give insights into psychological processes (Willig, 2013).

The participants of the study were selected by non-probabilistic purposive sampling by age (60-90 years old), religion (Roman Catholics), good mental health (i.e. able to speak clearly and reflect on their experiences). Seven older people were interviewed: five women and two men. The age of the participants ranged from 63 to 88 years. Two participants live in the city, five – in the

countryside. All research participants are unemployed old-age pensioners and have children. Participants were selected and invited to participate in the study independently or through third parties who had contact with the investigator or participants. Interviews were carried out at the participants' home, the yard or the premises of their religious community and lasted for about 2-2.5 hours.

The questions provided during qualitative semi-structured interviews were based on *Faith development interview* (Streib & Keller, 2015). The authors allowed to translate the questions into Lithuanian and use for the research purposes. The names of the investigation participants were changed to popular names of older people, and all the information that identifies participants was changed or not published at all. In order to ensure the quality of this qualitative research, these criteria were applied: researcher's perspective, the selection of the research participants, quotation of authentic materials from the interview, consistent presentation of the research, the fulfillment of set goals and verification of the results reliability (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999). The results of the study were discussed with two independent researchers.

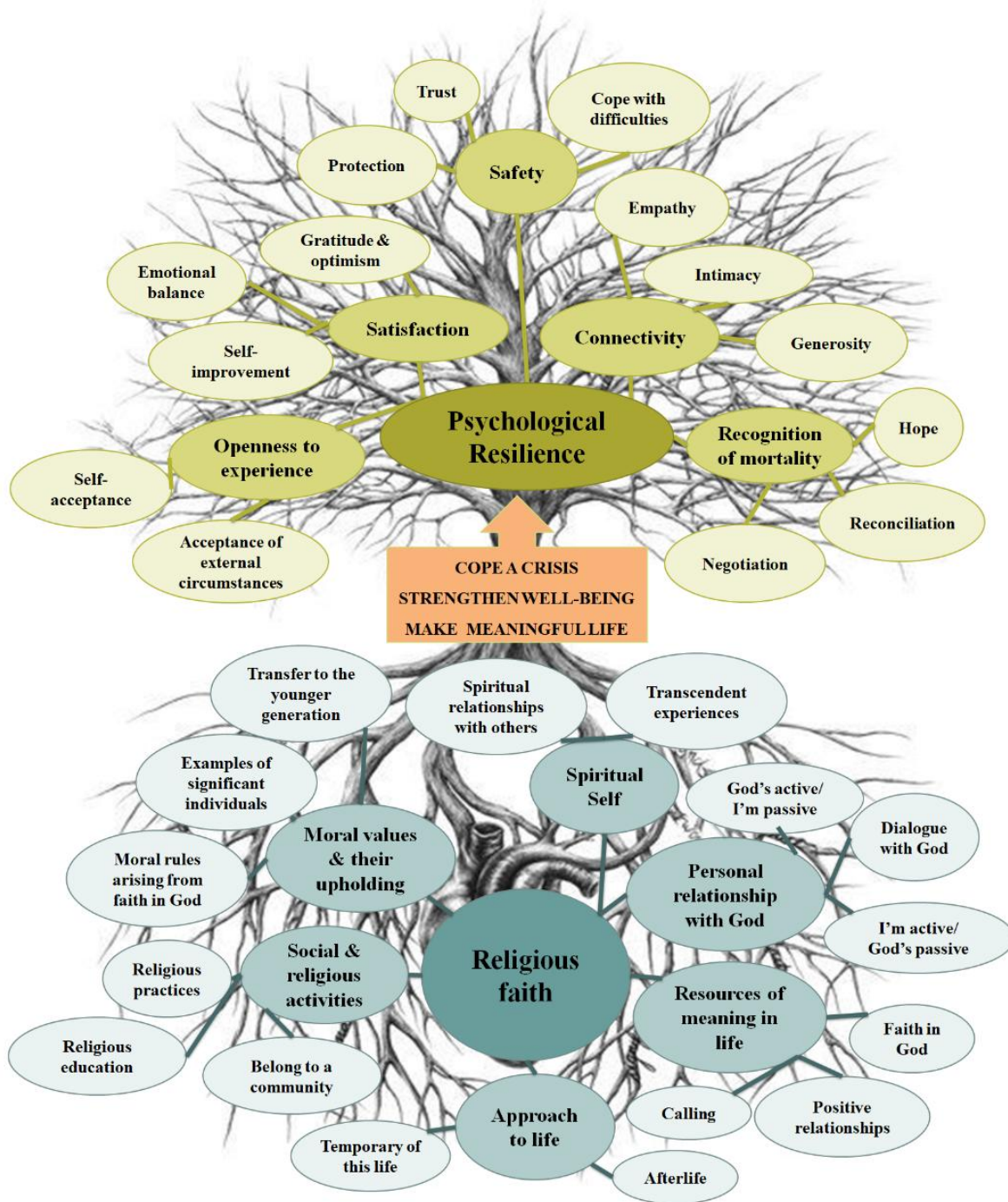
The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using content analysis. The analysis was conducted inductively: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Szadejko & Vellani, 2017). This analysis was performed using the MAXQDA 2018 program<sup>1</sup>. Open coding is an analytical process in which the codes that emerge from the text itself were isolated and gradually integrated into more general concepts, themes, and subthemes. During axial coding, various topics and concepts were formed and various connections were established between them. Content analysis provides an opportunity to give the same interview unit multiple codes in order to reconstruct them and to explain the relationships between topics and concepts in the broader way. MAXQDA program helps to create empirical models by depicting the frequency of overlapping themes and subthemes using a function *Code Theory Model* (VERBI GmbH, 2018). In such a way an empirical model of religious faith and psychological resilience was formed; it presents the most interrelated themes and subthemes in the sample of the research participants (Figure 1), i. e. the width of the lines reflects the frequency of overlaps. Based on the findings of the content analysis, a theoretical model was developed to explain the psychological resilience of older people in the context of their religious faith (Figure 2).

### **3. Research findings**

A theoretical model of religious faith and psychological resilience was created based on empirical findings (Figure 1). This model looks like a tree.

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<sup>1</sup>MAXQDA, software for qualitative data analysis, 1989-2014, VERBI Software - Consult - Sozialforschung GmbH, Berlin, Germany.



Source: created by author.

**Figure 1. Theoretical model of religious faith and psychological resilience**

This model reveals the aspects of religious faith and resources of psychological resilience. The religious faith of the older people, who are practicing Roman Catholics, is characterized by the following aspects: the experience of the spiritual self, personal relationship with God, social and religious activities, moral values and their upholding, the approach to life and resources of the meaning of life. There are roots and partly invisible pieces of the older people. It is established that religious faith provides the resources of psychological resilience: safety, satisfaction, connectivity,

openness to experience and recognition of mortality. There are branches and visible pieces of older people. It forms the psychological resilience of the older persons. This model demonstrate that religious faith forms the psychological resilience of the older persons in three ways: to cope with the crisis, to strengthen well-being and to make life more meaningful. In such ways a person's psychological resilience is reinforced by religious faith.

Firstly, religious faith helps to overcome crises or difficulties along the way. Using it in crisis situations, in the face of an external event, enhances the sense of security, hope and strength. In this case, the person uses external motivation to accept these circumstances. For example, analysis of the results of the study showed that older people use prayer as a way to overcome and as a way to solve problems. The woman talks about the difficult post-war times and the meaning of prayer: *“It was necessary to start life, how difficult it was for those people. I believe that difficulty was borne by our parents then, but [...] we didn’t even have a dress or a shoe. We were in deep poverty. But we survived. (Pause) In the evenings many families prayed”* [Stefa]. This faith supported and helped to overcome my son's difficulties through prayer: *“You know, my son started drinking. [...] I prayed day and night. I asked God to grant me peace in old age. He has not been drinking for almost four years.”* [Birutė]. Another research participant prayed in order to protect her granddaughter: *“My granddaughter did not have a job, she went to Vilnius. [...] She sent her CV to different institutions but it was in vain. She had no practice and employers didn’t want to give her a job. She was deeply upset and even wanted to commit suicide. Well, I prayed much [...] You [God] can do everything. With God everything is possible“* [Martha]. This method strengthened hope when I was sick: *“I trust Him [God] very much. I think God helped me because I trust Him. I am 84 years old suffering from an oncological disease related to tick-borne encephalitis. I didn’t think I’ll survive. [...] I think: God helped me. He helped me not to die. I trust Him in everything. I really want to be near God. I want to attend church. God reads my heart and my desires. I asked God to help me since I trust Him deeply“* [Martha]. The analysis of the study reveals that during prayer the elderly use an active image of God, i.e., God as deciding, helping and knowing. His personal relationship with God and his active image provide security and hardship skills in a variety of difficult situations: *“When I am stuck I always ask God to help me. I really need His guidance. I believe that God hears my prayers. [...] I am so convinced that it really helps a lot if you sincerely trust God. He really helps”* [Martha]. The man admits that he uses a strategy of crisis religious faith to address the pressing issues of life: *“I always ask God’s assistance ... (very quietly) when I need help, advice, when relationship with brothers is problematic -[...] During such a short period of life I faced various difficulties but God comforted me”* [Peter]. It can be admitted that this application of an older person’s religious faith is driven by the following resources of psychological resilience: security and external motivation.

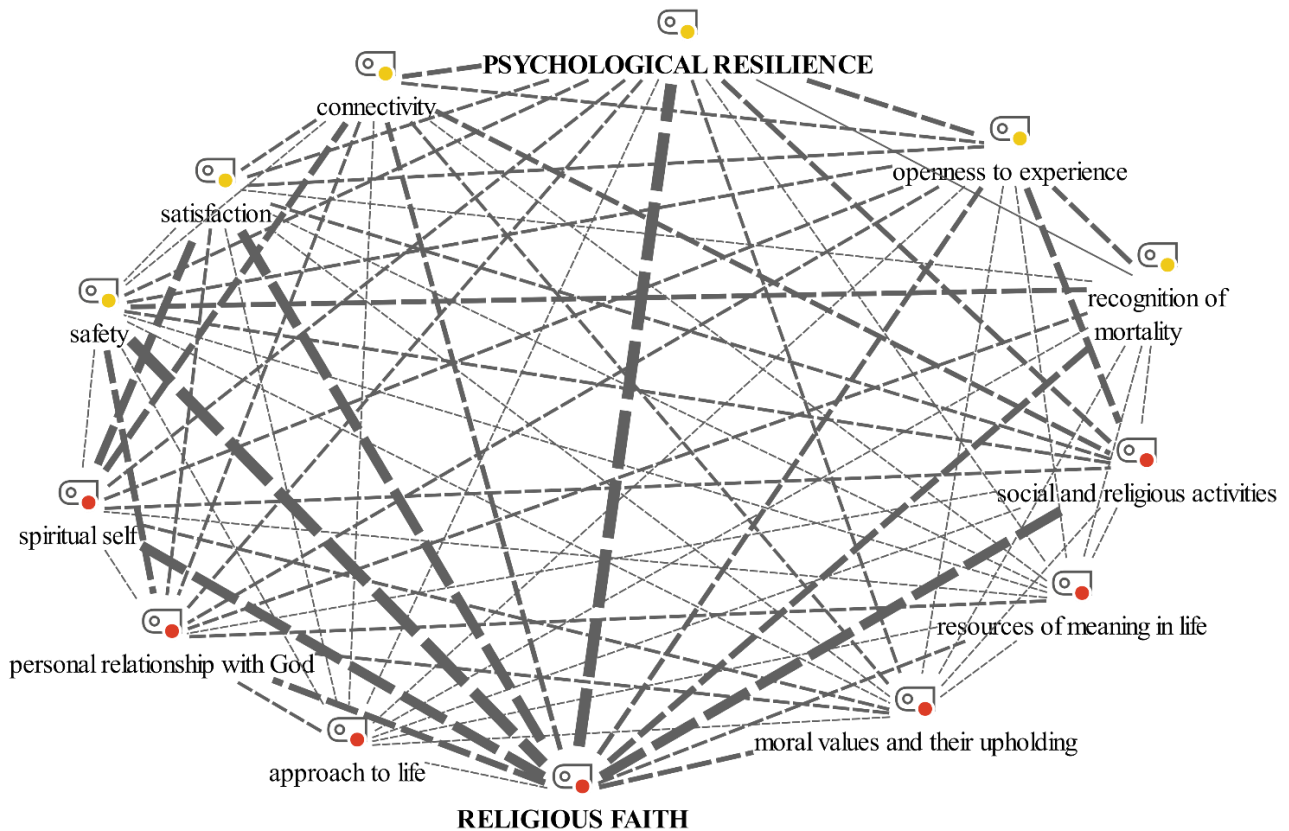
Secondly, life-giving religious faith is influenced by a person's intrinsic motivation and self-acceptance. It helps to shape attitudes toward life and a person's role in life. Of particular importance to this faith are the moral values of the study participants and their personal relationship with God. This way of exercising faith gives seniors satisfaction, community and a positive relationship with death: *"I believe in eternal life. [...] This life is the gate. We go out through the gate to the eternal life"* [Martha]; *"[Heaven is] House. [...] It's just that. There are all my close people and my home"* [Ona]. The meaning of life for older people stems from their faith in God: *"A person without religious beliefs is like a plane without a steering wheel"* [Ona]; *"God created man and it makes sense"* [Birutė]. Faith helps fulfill one's vocation, which is a gift from God and the meaning of life: *"Life is a gift from God and it is necessary to enjoy it, so it can't be meaningless. Nevertheless, God created and gave everyone a task."* [Martha]. By transcending this life, he gives the goal of fulfilling his human vocation: *"To live meaningfully and attain eternity"* [Stefa].

Thirdly, well-being-enhancing religious faith is a way, influenced by self-acceptance, without experiencing significant difficulties in life, applied to strengthen a person's perceived well-being (physical, psychological and spiritual), providing satisfaction and togetherness. For example, through religious practices, a person experiences inner harmony and joy. Older people use a welfare-enhancing religious faith during prayer for better physical and psychological well-being: *"I like to meditate. Meditation has a number of positive effects on my mind and body. It gives me a sense of calm, peace and balance. -It's-true. [...] Everything, even thoughts vanish"* [Anele]; emotional balance and inner harmony: *"Meditation gives this peaceful feeling. I can't even explain it. It works in the evenings and while praying. [...] I can experience that delicious peace and quiet within"* [Anele]. The man uses this method to get involved in the activities of the monastery, which makes him happy, it also gives him a sense of necessity and community: *"It is a joy. God probably supports me too, since I am still healthy, I can still help other people. I'm happy. I agree with S. Anna, "Peter". "Peter" (laughs) Says, "How could we live without you?"* [Peter]. In order to meet her needs for communion and cognition, the research participant applies this religious belief in a prayer group: *"[Prayer groups] could be considered as communication with people. It is also spiritual development."* [Stefa]. A welfare-enhancing religious faith is based on the cultivation of moral values: *"If we share joy, love and peace with others [...] we are young souls. Your age doesn't matter then. Joy, happiness, luck make you feel young in heart and live your life to the fullest"* [Martha]. This helps to transcend oneself through nature and work, it also gives joy and harmony to the world: *"These flowers which grow in my garden, make me feel very happy. I am in harmony with the world"* [Stefa]. The research participant shares a changed self-experience. She is currently experiencing inner harmony in solitude: *"I like being alone [...] When I was younger, I*



liked communicating with , community members. Is there a different way in that church. Now I need a stick when I walk. [...] I like calm and peaceful atmosphere” [Birutė]. This religious faith of an older person can be determined by the following resources of psychological asthma: satisfaction, commonality and self-acceptance.

The theoretical model based on an empirical model of religious faith and psychological resilience of older people which shows the relationships of religious faith with aspects of psychological resilience in the sample of the older participants (Figure 2).



Source: created by author.

**Figure 2. Empirical model of religious faith and psychological resilience**

The empirical model shows the relationships of religious faith with aspects of psychological resilience in the sample of the older participants (Figure 2). Analysis of the results demonstrated that religious faith in the sample of study participants, which most often coincides with psychological resilience and its resources: safety and satisfaction. It is identified the strongest connections of the spiritual Self experience with satisfaction and connectivity. In addition, it is revealed that a personal relationship with God coincides with psychological resilience, safety, satisfaction, connectivity, openness to experience, recognition of mortality, and resources for the meaning of life. Attitudes toward life and resources for the meaning of life are most related to the personal relationship with God. The fostering of moral values in the sample of research participants most closely coincides

with the spiritual Self, the personal relationship with God, psychological resilience, and connectivity. Meanwhile, social and religious activities are related to openness to experience, psychological resilience, connectivity, satisfaction, safety, and the spiritual Self. Looking at the empirical model of religious faith and psychological resilience, all resources of psychological resilience are integrated into this model, which reveals the interrelationships between religious faith and psychological resilience.

#### **4. Discussion**

*“Life has always seemed to me like a plant that lives on its rhizome. Its true life is invisible, hidden in the rhizome. The part that appears above ground lasts only a single summer. Then it withers away—an ephemeral apparition. [...] Yet I have never lost a sense of something that lives and endures underneath the eternal flux. What we see is the blossom, which passes. The rhizome remains.”* (Jung, 2010, p. 19)

Religious faith is a living phenomenon in the lives of older people, as it is crucial to their daily lives (Oliveira & Menezes, 2018) and in dealing with challenges they face in old age (Suchomelová, 2016). Older people's religious faith is expressed in three ways: being oneself and growing in faith; keeping away from the world and being involved in religious activities; being with others in accordance with religious orders (Oliveira & Menezes, 2018). A theoretical model of religious faith in a psychological context was developed on the basis of the empirical model. It reveals that religious faith provides the following resources of psychological resilience: safety, connectivity, satisfaction, openness to experience and recognition of mortality. Religious faith helps the older people to improve their psychological resilience in three ways: coping with the crisis, giving the meaning to their life and enhancing well-being.

Firstly, religious faith helps to cope with the crisis – the way in which religious faith is related to a person's acceptance of external circumstances and applied to overcome difficulties in a crisis situation. It provides security, coping skills and confidence in difficult situations. Furthermore, it brings strength and hope in the old age phase as older people use their faith as a tool to overcome difficult situations (Oliveira & Menezes, 2018). Research with repressed Lithuanians showed that their faith in God, spiritual values, and meaning of suffering helped them endure the severity of trauma (Gailienè, 2008). Secondly, religious faith gives the meaning to life. The religious faith of these people is not only a doctrine, but it also gives the meaning to their existence and helps integrate experiences into their lives (Oliveira & Menezes, 2018). V. E. Frankl (2010) notes that meaning of life can be experienced through the acceptance of suffering. Religious faith can help us

to accept the inevitable difficulties and at the same time make our lives meaningful through suffering. However, the faith could be influenced also by a person's self-acceptance, shapes an attitude to life and one's role in it. Dorothy's example shows that she uses prayer not to solve crisis situations in life, but prayer itself is the way to be happy because it is influenced by self-acceptance: *"I pray because I am happy, not because I am unhappy. I do not turn to God in misfortune, whether in sorrow or despair - to be comforted, to receive something from Him. And encouraged by the fact that I prayed to thank Him, I continued to pray"*(Day, 1952, p. 132-133)<sup>2</sup>. Although material needs are often met in these times of society, individuals face an existential vacuum and the lack of meaning (Frankl, 2010). The faith of the participants helps to discover and realize the meaning of life through their calling, i.e., to follow God's truths and to seek life after death. This confirms the words of V. E. Frankl: *"Only existence that transcends itself can realize itself"* (Frankl, 2010, p. 249). Therefore, religious faith can help to discover or deepen the meaning of life through joyful or painful experiences. Thirdly, religious faith to strengthen well-being – the way that is influenced by a person's self-acceptance without experiencing significant difficulties in life, provides satisfaction and communion and is used to enhance physical, psychological and spiritual well-being. In an older person's life, religious faith transcends religious practice, positively manifesting itself not only to the individual but also to those around him (Oliveira & Menezes, 2018).

The empirical model demonstrates that security, based on a person's acceptance of external circumstances, overcoming difficulties, trust, and reconciliation, is significant to older individuals in their relationship with God and in prayer. To a certain degree, individuals give up control of their lives expecting that their faith will be sufficient to help them manage the difficulties they may face (Shaw, Gullifer, & Wood, 2016). Older age is the time of changes and awareness because religious faith provides an opportunity for self-education. Relation to God and the example of dedicated people promote self-improvement and self-realization, while religious education stimulates self-education and deepens religious faith. Older people believe that old age is the time of spiritual growth that provides an opportunity to overcome bereavement and health problems (Shaw, Gullifer, & Wood, 2016). Older people have indicated that their religious experiences directly affect their lifestyles (Oliveira & Menezes, 2018). Satisfaction based on self-acceptance, connectivity and intimacy comes from experiencing the spiritual Self, personal relationship with God, and other social and religious activities. Through faith, they experience the joy of life, inner harmony and emotional equilibrium, revitalize the inner human condition and renew a positive attitude towards the environment. Religious faith can give older people personal stability and higher self-esteem (Shaw, Gullifer, & Wood, 2016). The empirical model shows that connectivity, based on a person's

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<sup>2</sup> cit. Trimakas, 1998, p. 169.

self-acceptance and satisfaction, is significant in their social and religious activities, experiencing a spiritual Self, fostering moral values, and a personal relationship with God. Older people' religious faith consists of interpersonal relationships in everyday life, which they see as a way to be in the world, care for others, and be around them (Oliveira & Menezes, 2018). The relation to death associated with acceptance of external circumstances is significant for the safety of individuals, overcoming difficulties, hope, and reconciliation, and manifests through prayer and in a personal relationship with God. Religious individuals are more likely to accept death and feel less anxious about death (Navickas & Vaičiulienė, 2010). Personal relationship with God and moral values reveal their relationship to death and its inevitability. Religious faith can help express love and support needs and the feelings (anger, sadness or doubt) associated with bereavement (Suchomelová, 2016). Based on empirical findings, openness to experiences related to safety, connectivity and satisfaction is manifested in social and religious activities and in a personal relationship with God. Self-acceptance describes the natural interest that comes from the person's own experience (e. g., spiritual self-experience in solitude or nature) through work, poetry, and worship in the church. Self-acceptance can be influenced by the intrinsic motivation for changes in the older person themselves discovering the meaning and purpose of life (Oliveira & Menezes, 2018). Motivation determines the process of faith internalization, as integrated faith is associated with intrinsically perceived causality, personal worth, and desire for self-directed activity, and enhances mental health and resilience (Ryan, Rigby, & King, 1993)

This study expanded the scientific knowledge by building models of the psychological resilience of older people in the context of religious faith. The theoretical model demonstrates that religious faith provides older people with resources for psychological resilience and thereby strengthens their inner integrity. The applicability of religious faith and the ways of using it complement E. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, of how older people can overcome the crisis of old age and achieve integration through religious faith. At this stage, older people review and reflect on their lives, taking a positive or negative view of it. Those individuals who have a positive attitude towards their lives are happier and more satisfied with their lives than those who have a negative attitude (Shaw, Gullifer, & Wood, 2016). Religious faith allows a person experiencing despair to overcome difficulties, discover the meaning and have a positive attitude to their present lives. It is important to consider the development of his faith and to encourage his further development in the face of impeding internal barriers. For individuals who are satisfied with their lives, religious faith fully enhances their well-being. This qualitative study provides the theoretical and empirical models which could be proven in further research and encourages exploration of older people's religious faith in other cultures or religions. This is significant for

older people because their faith influences decision-making and the improvement of health and well-being (Oliveira & Menezes, 2018).

The research results are applicable to psychological, social and pastoral work with older people and are useful to professionals such as psychologists, psychotherapists, pastors and health care professionals, as they provide insight into the religious faith of older people. The findings of the study can be applied and integrated into older people's counseling, psychotherapy, and develop psychosocial and spiritual interventions to help older people adapt better, recognize and meet their needs, and become psychologically resistant to life's challenges. For psychologists and psychotherapists working with these individuals, it makes sense to pay attention to the ways in which clients use religious faith: to cope with a crisis, to enhance their well-being or to give meaning to life. Religious faith can be used as one of the strongest resources to overcome a potential crisis in a person's life without other external resources. In this way, the practitioner, who awares the resources of religious faith and psychological resilience, will be able to help older people integrate their life experiences, discover inner resources, strengthen their identities, and develop critical and responsible religious faith. The in-depth conceptualization of religious faith revealed in the work helps to explain older people's experiences in practice and to provide a basis for further research or psychological interventions.

## 5. Conclusions

A theoretical model based on empirical model and findings explains that older people experience their Roman Catholic faith as a source of psychological resilience.

The theoretical model of religious faith and psychological resilience model shows that religious faith is a living phenomenon in the lives of older people. This model looks like a tree. It involves different aspects of religious faith (Roman Catholic) that are roots and partly invisible pieces of the older people. The model integrates the aspects of religious faith with their resources of psychological resilience which are branches and visible pieces of older people. Religious faith forms the inner psychological resilience of the older persons.

In the theoretical model religious faith enhances inner psychological resilience in three ways: to cope with a crisis, strengthen well-being and give meaning to life.

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