

Adolescents and Religion

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Adolescents and Religion:

A Study amongst Gozitan 15- and 16- year olds

Miriam Curmi and Maria Schembri, B.Ed (Hons) Thesis, May 2001

A number of studies have been published recently relating to the perception of religion by Gozitan youth, mainly as dissertations required for the completion of a degree. These include studies by Brian Meylaq , and another by Sandra Spiteri . The study by Anthony E.Azzopardi also deals with these issues.

This study consists of an analysis of a questionnaire sent to several hundred Gozitan students in their last years of secondary schooling, before they left the Island and became influenced by ideas in a wider context.

A total of 428 questionnaires were distributed to students attending the Lyceum, the Gozo Seminary, Secondary and Trade Schools. A response rate of 93% was achieved. It is of interest however that over 100 students were not available on the day the questionnaire was distributed - that is nearly 19 per cent of the student population. One might argue that these students could have a different point of view from the regular attenders. The male:female distribution was fairly balanced.

One question related to their perception of life in general. Around 54% of the boys described their lives as "good on the whole" or "great", compared to 29% of the girls. The reason for this discrepancy is not obvious. Worrying also is the small but significant proportion of students (around 6 % both boys and girls) who described their life as bad most of the time.

Most of the other questions relate to their perception of God and the church. While the majority responded in the expected positive way, a considerable proportion had no set views on the matter, or were distinctly antagonistic to the conservative accepted values of Gozitan society. For instance, more than 7% did not agree that "Life makes sense only because God exists". This negative attitude is even more marked in the answer to the suggestion that "Suffering makes sense only if you believe in God", to which 36 % of the boys and 28% of the girls responded in the negative.

Many of the adolescents believe that they felt close to God, believed in Christ and practised the Catholic religion, and were of the opinion that confession offered a strong support to their lives, and that a true Christian needed the church. A significant number exceeding one-third of the sample did not have strong views on these matters.

Compared to studies carried out on the main Island, Gozitan adolescents' religious values "are seen to be stronger and more deep-rooted than the Maltese ones" (See also Anthony Abela 1994). The authors also conclude that "the religious values embraced by Gozitan adolescents [now] are very close to the same values cherished by the Maltese counterparts in the early 90's.

" Such studies are of interest because they hold a mirror to Gozitan society, and serve as a benchmark with which future studies can be compared.

[Editorial note: students who have written recent theses relating to the Gozitan scene are encouraged to contact the editor with a summary of their thesis.]

Ir-religjozita ta' l-Adoloxxenti, Rizultat ta' Studju li sar fost l-Istudenti tal-Forms 4 u 5.

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