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**POLISH AND GERMAN MEDIA MESSAGES ON THE CONDUCT OF RELIGIOUS
ASSOCIATIONS IN THE FACE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.
CHARACTERISTICS, DETERMINANTS, SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES**

The main purpose of this dissertation is to analyze media messages in Poland and Germany regarding the conduct of religious associations in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic during the second and third waves of the pandemic and in the time of the loosening of restrictions.

The starting point of the paper was the assumption that religiosity and religious institutions are now regularly, especially in Poland, the subject of media coverage. The conduct of religious institutions in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic was the subject of discussions and disputes which could alter their image among audiences. It was assumed that public debates and media coverage could also affect the transformation of religiosity and the social meaning of religion. The dissertation consists of five chapters, preceded by an introduction and ending with a conclusion.

Chapter I reviews the Polish, German, and international literature on the subject. Four major theoretical paradigms are described and predictions are formulated about the transformation of religion and religiosity, concerning a range of momentous social phenomena and processes.

Chapter II deals with the problematic relationship between religion and social communication. In addition, it justifies the relevance of research on social communication which is rarely undertaken in the field of sociology of religion, and offers an explication of the processes of transformation taking place in the media sphere.

Chapter III characterizes the research method used, framing analysis, and the author's modification of this approach.

An extensive empirical chapter IV contains the presentation and analysis of research results of the main study concerning 590 media texts (422 Polish and 168 German) published in the period 01.10.2020 - 31.09.2021, and of an additional study based on 25 Polish articles on other topics related to the conduct of religious associations.

Chapter V comprises a review of Polish and German and international examines possible links between religious transformation and media actions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Main conclusions, in brief, are as follows. Twelve Polish and 10 German media frames were reconstructed and assigned to three overarching categories of so-called metaframes. In both,

Polish and German discourse, two biased metaframes, left and right, and a moderate middle metaframe were reconstructed.

The left metaframe was distinguished in both countries by its demand for equal treatment of religious and secular institutions, and its disapproval of the exceptional treatment of churches, which were allowed to continue their activities with some restrictions despite the significant epidemiological threat. The right metaframe, on the other hand, emphasized the special role of religion and traditional practices involving the actual presence of the faithful in the temple.

The greatest Polish-German differences related to middle metaframes. Polish discourse was much more polarized than the German one. The middle metaframe constituted in the Polish discourse only a buffer zone between biased interpretive patterns, whereas the German middle metaframe presented constructive suggestions on how to reconcile religious needs with health concerns. An additional study confirmed the presence of all three metaframes in discourse unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results of this dissertation's research will be able to inform future analyses of the relations between transformations of religiosity and mass media communication, e.g. through analysis of interviews with media audiences or social media comments.

The applied and modified research methodology can appear to be useful in other areas of sociological research and communication research.

Key words: sociology of religion, media discourse, COVID-19 pandemic, framing analysis, transitions of religiosity

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