

Article

Investigating Popular Representations of Postmodernism as Beliefs—A Psychological Analysis and Empirical Verification

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Abstract

This article is an attempt to empirically establish a new category of social beliefs defined as postmodern beliefs. They are cognitive categorizations of social and media messages regarding ways of understanding the world which are based on the basic assumptions of postmodernism, quite widely recognised as fundamental. The theoretical model adopted in the article assumes the existence of three beliefs: antifundamentalism, absolutization of freedom and relativization of truth. The hypothesised concept was operationalized as Postmodern Beliefs Questionnaire (PMBQ). Verification studies were carried out on three groups of over 600 people. The verification of the tool was carried out by using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to select the appropriate pool of statements, then data in two subsequent datasets was analysed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to empirically verify the selected set of statements and estimate relevant parameters. The tool constructed allows for investigating the distinguished beliefs at a satisfactory level of reliability and validity. It can be used to measure the extent to which the representations that make up the popular understanding of postmodernism have been recognised and built into the overall belief system about the world of the respondents. The distinguished postmodern beliefs differ in terms of relations with other social beliefs of the respondents, such as anthropocentrism, traditionalism, faith in a just world, as well as the attitude of individuals to material values or their individualistic orientation.



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1. Introduction

The lifestyle of a human being does not occur in a vacuum. It is mainly a result of the internal beliefs held by an individual (Aronson et al. 2012). On their basis, they make decisions and shape their own existence. They find their expression in the image of reality adopted by the human being. The pillars of this image are beliefs about God, the world and humanity (Rosenzweig 1998). The individual living in the social world is immersed in social communication through cultural contexts, system of values, requirements and expectations articulated by parents, school, environment, and media. These indicated external factors shape the beliefs of individuals in a way that corresponds to a specific era in terms of form and content (Aronson et al. 2012; Kenrick et al. 2005). Nowadays, family, school, and religious institutions are still the forms of shaping the beliefs of the young generation, but to a lesser degree than before, while the Internet, social media, and ChatGPT play an increasingly significant role. The young generation shapes their

beliefs to a great extent by drawing knowledge from the Internet and through contact with other people in the virtual world. However, the indicated ways of shaping beliefs do not predetermine their content. It is only the dominant popular cultural trends that are the material for developing their content (Adler et al. 2020). They are what define the era's understanding of the sources and meaning of morality, the scope of freedom and openness in social relations, or artistic avant-garde, but also references to religion expressed in the determination of the religion's object and its principal purpose. As a result, it is the beliefs about God, humanity and the world that combine to produce the image of reality, which is being shaped, as well as form the content of the individual's existential beliefs and the resulting life attitudes and life decisions (Krapiec 2008; Rosenzweig 1998).

In the presented article, we make the basic assumption that the contemporary human being, and thus especially the young generation, which is completely immersed in the current cultural communication, shapes their beliefs based on the cultural trend called the popular postmodern thought pattern (Hassan 1985; Morawski 1990). This trend was included in a model built of three beliefs, the subject of which are the representations that constitute the popular understanding of postmodernism, identified in the course of the philosophical analysis of mainly classical postmodern thought.

These are: antifundamentalism, absolutization of freedom and relativization of truth. The main objective of this study is to create an empirical operationalization of the model of postmodern beliefs, a research tool enabling one to examine the level of distinguished beliefs and determine the role of individual beliefs in understanding the social world, engaging in social/civic activities, as well as in decision-making.

2. Social Beliefs and Their Significance

The basic cognitive category of understanding the world, including oneself, is belief. It is understood as a permanent mental state, reflecting the assessment of some aspect of reality which a given person believes in and also considers to be true (Kenrick et al. 2005; Wojciszke 2011). Therefore, each belief has its own object to which it refers. Individual beliefs form an organised system which constitutes an image of reality. It is subjective, but it is what constitutes the reference point for choosing life activities and making decisions (Aronson et al. 2012).

Their formation is influenced by external factors, such as the processes of upbringing and social influencing, modelling and imitation, which result in taking over beliefs from significant people and groups, as well as internal factors, such as personal experiences and content processing in the human mind at a rational and valuing level (Wojciszke 2011). A person living in the social world is immersed in the social message through cultural contexts, system of values, social requirements and expectations conveyed by parents, school, environment and media. Each era, including the contemporary one, creates a specific social message, shaped by the participants of social life, defining the cultural and conceptual codes appropriate for the era in order to achieve the state and sense of social adaptation. Therefore, it acts through the available means of influencing people in order to shape the required way of understanding the social world (Aronson et al. 2012).

Currently, the described postmodern thought pattern plays an essential role in cultural communication. It fulfils a fundamental function in shaping the image of reality and is the main form in the cultural and media-related transfer of content. It shapes the cultural and civilizational contexts of understanding the social world in Western civilization (Bronk 1998, pp. 36–39).

2.1. Postmodern Belief Model—Object and Categorization

On the basis of the basic definition of beliefs, it can be assumed that postmodern beliefs are understood as judgments about the surrounding social world in contemporary reality. They are general assumptions about how the world “works”. They pertain to the manner in which the human being understands social reality, their place and role in the world. They pertain to moral principles, the nature of the world and humanity, human references to transcendent reality and God. They determine the extent to which a person comprehends freedom, truth, and justice as well as their place in the hierarchy of existence, also among other people (Hassan 1985). Being a cohesive set of judgments, beliefs are of ideological nature, i.e., they not only allow one to understand the social world, but also to shape it (Wojciszke 2011). Their subject is the content that builds a postmodern image of reality. Therefore, it is necessary to indicate first what postmodernism is, and then to define the elements recognised as representations of the postmodern thought pattern (Bronk 1988; Hassan 1985). Entering into the perspective of human meaning-making, we adopt a popular understanding of postmodernism and its representations that constitute the object of beliefs.

Postmodernism is a philosophical movement from the closing years of the 20th century, characterised by scepticism, subjectivism and relativism. Nowadays, the ideological message of postmodernism seems to reflect well the three ideas proclaimed by the American philosopher of religion John D. Caputo. These include the idea of affirming radical pluralism, which cannot be reduced to any higher unity, the idea of metaphysical scepticism, according to which one should move away from universal metaphysical systems guided by the ambition to comprehensively capture and explain all aspects of reality, and the idea of scepticism in relation to thinking based on clearly defined binary oppositions (Caputo 2007, pp. 267–69; Caputo 1987). What follows from this is that the world is not ordered by a principle uniting radical pluralism, so there exists no objective world order. As a result, the postmodern way of thinking denies the objective rationality of the human reason, relativises truth, and emphasises individual freedom and subjective experience (Bronk 1998; Caputo 1992b; Lyotard 1998). We identify these ideas as the source of the representations of the postmodern thought pattern, which constitute the object of postmodern beliefs, highlighted in the subsequent sections of this work.

Unfortunately, the semantic instability of the postmodern thought pattern, its ambiguity, multifaceted and multilayered structure hinder defining its essence (Bronk 1998). Therefore, in the presented description of the postmodern thought pattern, we will focus on issues related to the civilizational and cultural changes caused by it (Lyotard 1997, 1998). It is about changes that shape existentially important beliefs but also pertain to the model of society postulated by the postmodern mindset (Dunn and Castro 2012), being an environment of existential self-fulfilment for the individual. In an organised society, in accordance with the postmodern thought pattern, the individual fulfils themselves according to the image of reality they have shaped for themselves.

The contemporary popular cultural trend referred to as the postmodern thought pattern is distinguished by thinking in terms of antifundamentalism, i.e., the rejection of the natural order of beings, and thus in the social world it absolutizes freedom, promotes individualism and relativises truth (Bronk 1998). All these factors, which could be termed formal categories, profile the very content of beliefs shaping the image of reality in the modern generation and give shape to a society in which the individual attains the value of self-fulfilment in accordance with their beliefs. This generally defined object of beliefs, referred to as the postmodern thought pattern, can be expressed by a more detailed description of each category in the theoretical model created.

2.2. Antifundamentalism and the Significance of Religion

Contemporary antifundamentalism assumes that there is no ontic basis for the search for the final, indisputable foundations of knowledge, truth and good, characteristic of fundamentalism (Bronk 1998). As a philosophical view, it therefore remains in opposition to the fundamentalism of societies in which there was a high degree of agreement on the indisputability of basic cognitive and normative assumptions, which are worth obeying in accordance with the unchanging practices of the past. It is associated with the acceptance of the belief in the fairly universal fallibility of philosophical, scientific and religious cognition, with a consequent unreliability of knowledge acquired by the contemporary human being (Bronk 1988, p. 164). Because of various forms of eliminating the absolute foundations of knowledge, immutable truths and acquired permanent beliefs, many varieties of anti-fundamentalism are identified (Bronk 1988). In this study, we are primarily interested in metaphysical anti-fundamentalism. It is characterised by a philosophical attitude of rejecting the classical assumption about the existence of a permanent, unchanging foundation of reality, which is the basis of true knowledge, and it opposes the understanding of truth as thought being in accord with objective reality. It is distinguished by its criticism of the metaphysical vision of existence, which dominates classical philosophy, as independent of cognition, interpretation, and language, as well as by its criticism of the Absolute as its ultimate reason (Caputo 2006a, pp. 45–48). Therefore, metaphysical anti-fundamentalism also defines one's own perception of religion (Vattimo 2011). However, the clash between metaphysical anti-fundamentalism and fundamentalism is not related to religious fundamentalism associated with the oppressive behaviour of its followers, as presented by Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992). It involves metaphysical fundamentalism, which assumes the existence of a fundamental order in the world, reinforced by natural social harmony, but also the existence of religious and moral laws which are worth obeying in accordance with the unchanging practices of the past (Bronk 1998).

The rejection of the existence of permanent, unquestionable foundations opens the way to the creation of a “free society” without a metaphysical foundation (Rorty 1989). In such a society, knowledge, values, moral laws, attitudes and behaviours are always contextual and subject to criticism. As a result, the individual is dependent on themselves in shaping their own image of reality. They create their own life project for themselves according to this image, which they will be able to implement in the newly shaped antifundamentalist society. In turn, the “new society” accepts the pluralism of views and values, emphasises the need for dialogue and constant reinterpretations, rejects every manifestation of absolutism and exclusion (Dunn and Castro 2012). This view seems to have become a category in shaping the existentially binding beliefs of the modern human being, especially the young generation.

Therefore, there is no place for any manifestations of fundamentalism in the “new society”. Fundamentalism leads to various forms of social exclusion (Adorno 1986); hence it should be rejected, and society should be built not on dogmas that dominate religious systems, but on knowledge collected and processed at the grass roots. Therefore, it is built on scientific theories rather than on a religious comprehension of the world. The antifundamentalism adopted in the postmodern thought pattern therefore changes the approach also to the role of religion in society. Adorno and Horkheimer (Adorno 1986; Horkheimer and Adorno 1994) perceive historical religions as a tool for societies to deal with the fear of incomprehensible nature. They are a historically conditioned form of consciousness that arises in response to suffering and alienation before modern rational reasoning emerged. And although in their explanatory function they capitulated under the pressure of reason, each of them remained as the holder and disseminator of an unchanging

fundamentalist-conceived truth recognised by faith and thus led societies to new forms of enslavement.

Religion has ceased to be treated as an ontic fact (Adorno 1986), which is the result of the relationship between the religious subject—human—a person with the object of religion—the Absolute—a personal God (Zdybicka 2007). Religion understood in a classical way is fundamentalist and oppressive. However, if modified, it can serve as a tool in building a “new society” or an inclusive society. This will happen when religion resigns from its accepted fundamentalist truth and its own dogmas that predetermine it (Habermas and Lenhardt 1973; Habermas 2012). In his concept of the “weak God”, Caputo (2006b) argues for abandoning dogma in religion and treating the Bible as an archive gathering various religious testimonies, theological concepts and images of God (Caputo 2000, p. 198). By giving up the claims to possess the unchanging and objective truth, religion transforms into a naturalised socio-cultural fact (Adorno 1986). As such, historical religions are then a carrier of the memory of suffering and social injustice. Religions remind us of the necessity to build a better, juster world. Through their own teachings on redemption, salvation and hope, religions discover a widespread longing for a world free from violence and injustice (Horkheimer and Adorno 1994). However, to mend an exclusive and unfair world means, in turn, to change the socio-economic structure (Horkheimer 1985). It is in relation to such a world that religion reminds us that the material world in which we live is not yet what it should be. It is this critical function that religion fulfils in the new society when it resigns from the claims to its fundamentalist truth. While advocating metaphysical truth, religion must be rejected as a socially harmful phenomenon which is destructive for the beliefs acquired by the individual.

2.3. Absolutization of Freedom and Individualism

The postmodern thought pattern contains the belief that the new society should be an inclusive one. Individualism should be the principle organising such a society, as it also systematically acts against all manifestations of fundamentalism (Dunn and Castro 2012). In defining the principles of social life, it is vital to balance individual freedom with social equality. True individualism, therefore, does not consist in the individual’s pursuit of selfish self-sufficiency, but in freeing the individual from various forms of domination in society (Horkheimer and Adorno 1994; Honneth 1991). As Horkheimer and Adorno (1994) write, the development of thinking in terms of domination over the world and one’s own libidinal nature led to the emergence of mechanisms making society totalitarian.

By creating their own rational order within a totalizing society, individuals initiated social processes that spun out of their control. As a result, the individuals in such a society lost their sense of identity (Adorno 1986) and transformed into a conformist mass susceptible to manipulation and control by state authorities and mass industry. The submission of individuals to the influence of political systems of power led to the formation of a society composed of one-dimensional individuals who abandoned not only resistance to pervasive domination but eventually their own beliefs (Marcuse 1991).

The conformity of individuals to omnipresent fundamentalist domination renders the organisation of an inclusive society virtually impossible. This will only be possible through the emancipation of the individuals who constitute it and their liberation from social influence. What is essential, then, is not what individuals share, as this often leads to various forms of fundamentalism and forms of exclusion associated therewith, but rather what qualitatively distinguishes them from one another (Honneth 2009). The social world will then be revealed in all its multidimensionality. It will be an antifundamentalist world, one that does not give rise to exclusion. In such a world, everyone will have space to be themselves or to become whoever they wish to be (Honneth 2009). Ultimately, in

an inclusive society, it is one's own subjectively created project that forms the basis for individual self-fulfilment.

These postulates intended to guide neoliberal society out of its crisis of totalisation are not shared by the contemporary American philosopher and theologian Carl A. Raschke (2019, pp. 137–54). It is precisely because modern liberal democracy has caused the theological foundation of politics to be blurred that neoliberal societies have found themselves in deep crisis. Therefore, he proposes a solution to the crisis concerning the achievement of the desired model of society by restoring a theological foundation to the new society. In Raschke's view, proper political theology is capable of restoring deeper legitimacy and political significance to social reform efforts, since such theology reflects on the deeper, transcendental role of politics and power in society. It brings the common good to the forefront and therefore has genuine moral legitimacy to participate in the creation of a new model of society (Raschke 2015).

In contrast, according to the creators of the postmodern thought pattern, social space should constitute a space that accommodates ethical pluralism, a multiplicity of attitudes and behaviours of individuals creating individualised life projects, with the possibility of their implementation by everyone in society (Caputo 1992b). In such a society, the individual realises their own freedom not through dominance, but by respecting the boundaries of tolerance for the ethical pluralism of others' beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. An individual's freedom is therefore primarily a negative freedom. This means that an individual cannot be coerced into certain activities within the social space. Conversely, in an inclusive society, they have the opportunity and freedom to pursue their own goals (Berlin 1991). The freedom of the individual in an inclusive society is thus defined by egalitarianism.

When understood negatively, individual freedom is also freedom from oppression by truth understood in a fundamentalist way. Truth, understood as something external to the individual, compels them to adopt specific views and inclines them towards corresponding attitudes. It inclines the individual to act in accordance with it, often in ways that run contrary to their beliefs and will. In this sense, individual freedom in the "new society" takes precedence over truth understood in a fundamentalist way. Raschke does not support this view of the destructive role of immutable truth in the life of the individual. He maintains that real freedom is always within the limits of truth about oneself, hence religious freedom in society is the criterion for authentic individual freedom in society. It is the freedom of self-aware human beings to understand who they really are in the deepest, ontological sense, an understanding that no restriction of free speech can limit. Individual freedom is therefore based on freedom of conscience and moral responsibility of the individual, which is not absolute or universally applicable, but requires recognition of others and submission to higher, moral imperatives (Raschke 2015, p. 287).

2.4. Relativization of Truth—Destruction of Order and Tolerance

In the classical approach, truth is perceived as something constant, absolute and unchanging (Krapiec 2008), which may lead to limiting the diversity of interpretation and suppressing pluralism (Caputo 2013). In relation to the classical understanding of truth, Caputo claims that "the only truth is that there is no Truth" (Caputo 1992a, p. 184). In postmodern terms, truth is neither absolute nor objective (Adorno 1986). Equally inadequate are those concepts of truth that assume cognitive realism (Habermas and Lenhardt 1973). Truth is a historically and socially conditioned construct. The pursuit of human domination over nature and over one's own nature, based on the knowledge of immutable truth about them, forms the foundation of social domination, as the classical postmodern thinkers maintain (Horkheimer and Adorno 1994). Fundamentalist concepts

of truth, understood as unchanging and absolute, have consistently been harnessed in the process of social subjugation and the oppression of some people by others (Horkheimer and Adorno 1994). It served the dominant ideologies that legitimised the interests of the group holding power, presenting them as interests serving the public good. As a result, such societies became exclusive, failing to recognise their own enslavement. They fell into false consciousness, lost their capacity for critical thinking, fractured the community, stigmatised individuals whose thinking and behaviour diverged from truth regarded as absolute and unchanging, and deprived individuals of an opportunity to realise their own freedom and self-fulfilment (Adorno 1986).

The way to overcome the oppression imposed by the fundamentalist understanding of truth is to place freedom before truth. Building an inclusive society, therefore, requires the rejection of the concept of truth as static and unchanging. In the postmodern thought pattern, truth does not consist in static conformity with reality but is something that manifests itself as an “event” that unexpectedly interrupts and changes the existing paradigms of thinking and interpretation. Caputo treats truth as a process of constantly trying to understand and reinterpret what is given, without assuming the existence of one final answer. Existentially, on the other hand, truth manifests itself through the diversity of historical and cultural life forms. By adopting such a concept of truth, society opens up to diversity and constant changes, avoiding oppressions that force obedience to one dominant version of truth (Caputo 2013). It is therefore appropriate to think of truth in terms of multiplicity and diversity (Welsch 1998). Truth should not be equated with positive philosophical systems that claim the right to a total/complete explanation of reality. It does not belong to these systems, but rather to the subject who takes a critical stance towards them. It is therefore necessary to reject the long-held conviction that a total explanation of reality leads to an objective and immutable truth. It is precisely the process of subordinating the individual to the whole society that is sustained by the belief in the existence of an objective and unchanging truth (Szyszkowska 1998). Truth, however, is neither a property of being nor of cognition. Rather, it is a property of the critical stance adopted by the cognizant subject towards the systemic explanation of reality. Truth is defined by the critical function that the subject performs with respect to various forms of social domination over the individual (Adorno 1986).

An inclusive society presupposes an antifundamentalism view of truth. Thus, a new definition of truth emerges, as a property characterising the ongoing process of critical reflection by a cognizant subject. Truth, so understood, exposes falsehood and supports the emancipation of individuals within society, becoming a tool for criticism and the deconstruction of any totality utterly alien to the antifundamentalist understanding of truth. The task of such a process is to resist fundamentalist and oppressive thinking that perceives immutable truth as a property of existence and cognition (Adorno 1986, p. 60). In Caputo’s view, therefore, truth understood in the classical manner loses its legitimacy, because it becomes a tool of power and oppression, which is why it is necessary to transition to truth understood as an open, pluralistic and incomplete concept (Caputo 2013).

If, however, truth were to be considered a property of certain explanatory theories, cherished beliefs, positions, or specific actions, it would only be attributed to those that have gained social consensus. It is therefore socially constructed and a product of creative activity rather than something discovered in the nature of things (Rorty 1989). In the pursuit of truth, no appeal to authorities or granting of a decisive voice to anyone is necessary. It is achieved through consensus among equals. The point of reference is therefore not seeking objectivity, but subjectivity and relativism. The truth of an individual’s belief is equal to that of any other. The condition for truth is therefore the consent of actual individuals or even of potential participants in a given relation (Fahrenbach 1973). Caputo

does not share this belief because the social consensus could be understood as a common acceptance of truth and imparting a static character thereto, while for him, truth is dynamic, infinite and always open to reinterpretations which prevent truth from being enclosed in the final forms of consensus (Caputo 2013). The dynamic and relative understanding of truth in the postmodern thought pattern cleanses the social space of imposed homogenising systems and creates a multidimensional character of social life. In a climate of cultural, intellectual, and belief pluralism, along with diverse forms of action, each individual has the opportunity to realise their chosen life project freely and equally. And every life project is equally true, insofar as it is feasible, that is, it does not exclude the possibility for others to pursue their own. The individual finds within the society the necessary opportunities for self-fulfilment, without depriving others of the same. In an inclusive society, only an individual who has been freed from domination and oppression can fully be themselves and be fully open to diversity, as well as being appreciative of this diversity (Caputo 1987, 2007). The attitude of absolute tolerance adopted by the individual is therefore intertwined with truth understood in a relativistic and dynamic manner. The attitude of tolerance makes it possible to recognise the beliefs held by minorities in society as equally important and equally true (Bronk 1998), while the socio-political system is not only obliged to safeguard this model of society but also to support it institutionally.

It seems that within the outlined project of a new society, as a kind of existential niche, the modern individual forms their own beliefs and, based on them, realises the value of self-fulfilment. They acquire these beliefs within an ongoing socio-cultural narrative, in which the consensus of the majority appears to be a strong argument for acknowledging such a socio-cultural message. As a result, the individual forms existentially binding beliefs through critical, anti-fundamentalist reflection on God, humanity, and the world. In such a climate, a transition occurred from traditional, objective moral and social norms, based on metaphysical and religious foundations, to a relativising and subjectivist understanding of them and identical stance on values (Raschke 2015). In such a climate, anti-fundamentalist beliefs about a fluid reality, constituted by individual beliefs about man and the world devoid of a permanent nature gain recognition (Bauman 2011; Bauman and Leoncini 2018). In a fluid reality, the mind must constantly adapt, interpret and process changing information, and this requires a constant ability to think critically and openness to the diversity of experiences (Caputo 1987, 2000).

3. Research Objective

The research undertaken in the presented project is an attempt to empirically capture the cultural trend known as the postmodern thought pattern (Hassan 1985; Morawski 1990) from the perspective of the individual's social beliefs (Aronson et al. 2012; Wojciszke 2011). Therefore, the basic objective of the research procedure is to construct an empirical tool allowing one to study a set of postmodern beliefs determining the degree of internalisation of such a way of understanding the world. The empirical nature of the article does not permit a comprehensive and in-depth analysis demonstrating the complexity and ambiguity in the understanding of the postmodern thought pattern. The theoretical part is used to describe the content and formal object of the beliefs under study in the context of human functioning in the postmodern society. The developed research model includes three beliefs identified as antifundamentalism, absolutization of freedom and relativization of truth, treated as formal categories. They may be defined as follows:

Antifundamentalism is a fundamental premise of postmodernism. It points out that in the formation of binding beliefs and judgments, the individual lacks ontic foundations, ultimate and indisputable grounds, as no objective order of reality exists (Caputo 1992b). Therefore, the search for ultimate reasons, linking antifundamentalism with the religious

context, becomes thus a futile effort. The basic (ultimate) reasons for justifying the world in the classical tradition are associated with the subject of religion: God, Transcendence, and the sacred (Krapiec 2008). On the other hand, recognising and justifying social norms on the basis of religion entails treating it as a form of oppressing the human being (Horkheimer and Adorno 1994).

The absolutization of freedom is based on the assumption that every human being has a fundamental right to autonomy and self-determination. Freedom is placed first, ahead of truth, the common good, and the rights of others. It allows one to pursue their own subjective plan based on personal choices, individual expression, and independence from others (Adorno 1986).

The relativization of truth—this belief assumes that truth is neither universal nor absolute. It is not the property of existence, nor the property of cognition, nor the property of language, but the property of the critical attitude held by the subject towards every form of domination over the individual (Adorno 1986). Truth is therefore a dynamic process of constantly making attempts to comprehend and unceasing reinterpretations of what is given. It manifests itself in multitude and diversity, is relativistic in nature and depends on individual subjective interpretations as well as historical conditions and cultural contexts (Caputo 1992b). Its social expression is the relativistic recognition of various cognitive, moral, and religious systems as equivalent. This category creates space in society for greater openness to diversity and tolerance toward all forms of otherness, even to the point of overvaluing them at the expense of one's own judgments.

4. The Process of Creating a Tool/Construction of the Questionnaire

The aim of the conducted empirical research was to develop a tool for categorising beliefs about the worldview that align with the postmodernist perspective of describing reality. Due to the current lack of tools for examining the described reality, an approach of exploratory research was adopted.

According to the theoretical model of test construction (Anastasi and Urbina 1999; Hornowska 2007), the first stage was the conceptualization of postmodernism, and the worldview aligned with the assumptions of postmodernism. Reference was made to areas such as humanity, culture, religion, morality, truth, freedom, subjectivity, objectivity, attitude to God, natural rights, human rights, animal rights, the place of humans in society, evaluation of one's own actions, relativism, and social roles. The initial pool of statements was the result of interdisciplinary discussions between philosophers and psychologists. 77 statements were adopted for analyses.

Next, the statements were analysed in terms of content and language. In subsequent steps, items that were ambiguously worded, formulated very similarly, had the same or very similar meaning or contained general statements about the world such as “to have more means to be able to do more” were excluded. These activities involved the authors of this text, followed by experts including a psychologist, a theologian, and a philosopher. In this way, a pool of 37 statements was obtained and subjected to empirical verification.

To this end, a series of empirical studies was conducted to develop the basic version of the questionnaire, followed by verification of the descriptive and predictive value of the tool being developed. The basis for deciding which statements to include in the tool being developed was the outcome of statistical analyses, which indicated which items from the overall pool most accurately described the specific beliefs and significantly distinguished them from one another (Anastasi and Urbina 1999). A two-step verification of the number of statements was applied. Using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), a decision was made regarding the optimal number of factors that best statistically classified the empirical material, and a set of statements significantly associated with the distinguished factors was

selected. Next, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied twice to verify the model's fit to the data and to confirm its adequacy using a new dataset.

5. Research

5.1. Structure of Postmodern Attitudes—Study 1

5.1.1. Participants

The study involved 180 participants (42.5% women) in early adulthood, aged 19 to 26 years ($M = 21.65$; $SD = 1.67$), who took part in the research on a voluntary basis. The study was conducted in Rzeszów, Poland, with a group of full-time and part-time university students. A group of young adults was selected based on the assumption that, although being adults, they were fully immersed in and functioning within a world described in a postmodern manner.

5.1.2. Procedure

The study was anonymous; the participants were recruited during university classes and completed the questionnaire online. The study was conducted using the Google Forms platform. The research was conducted in Polish. A five-point Likert scale was used in the study, ranging from 1—strongly disagree to 5—strongly agree. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of its anonymity, and advised that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The respondents' email addresses were obtained from the university's email database. The study was approved by the Bioethics Committee of the Institute of Psychology at the University of Szczecin and performed in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (KB 44/2025).

5.1.3. Results

The results obtained through exploratory factor analysis allowed for determining the optimal number of factors and rejecting statements that did not meet the criteria established: those that were not content-wise or statistically related to the identified factors, those that were not related or only weakly related to the factors ($r < 0.40$) (Field 2009; lit), or those that showed high correlations with multiple factors simultaneously. The Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation was used in the analyses (Field 2009). The measure of $KMO = 0.829$ and the Bartlett test of sphericity ($\chi^2(253) = 148.97$; $p < 0.001$) allowed employing factor analysis. The decision regarding the number of factors to be adopted was guided by the Kaiser criterion and Cattell's scree plot (Field 2009; Gorsuch 1983). The Kaiser criterion suggested the adoption of five factors, whereas Cattell's scree plot—the adoption of three or four factors. The four-factor model proved to be of limited usability both in terms of the content-based categorization of statements associated with each factor as well as in terms of internal consistency, as the factors failed to reach an acceptable Cronbach's alpha level. Hence, considering both theoretical assumptions and empirical indicators, a three-factor solution comprising 23 statements was adopted for further analysis. The model explains 48.37% of the intrinsic variability, and the factor loadings of statements range from 0.42 to 0.86. The factors correspond to the identified postmodern beliefs. The number of statements within each factor was comparable: Antifundamentalism included 7 items. Absolutization of freedom—8 items, and Relativization of truth—8 items. This model was further analysed on subsequent datasets.

The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA/APA/NCME 2007) indicate two primary criteria that must be met for a psychological test to be treated as a research tool—reliability and validity. Below, the subsequent stages of the PMBQ development are presented, along with detailed indicators obtained in the process of verifying its reliability and validity.

5.2. Verifying the Structure of Postmodern Beliefs Questionnaire

The aim of this study was to verify the three-factor PMBQ solution. For this purpose, subsequent studies were conducted on two subsequent groups of respondents using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). In the next studies, a six-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1—strongly disagree to 6—strongly agree.

5.2.1. Participants Study 2

258 people (54.7% women) in a wide age range—from 18 to 46—participated in the study ($M = 22.06$; $SD = 4.62$). The participants came from various regions of Poland, mainly from the Subcarpathia, Lublin and Lesser Poland regions. Place of residence: 47.7% of the participants were residents of cities or towns of varying sizes, while the remainder were residents of rural areas.

5.2.2. Participants Study 3

219 people (48.5% women; 13 respondents did not answer) in young adulthood age—from 18 to 30—participated in the study ($M = 21.26$; $SD = 1.82$). The participants came from various regions of Poland, mainly from the Subcarpathia, Lublin and Lesser Poland regions. Place of residence: most participants came from cities or towns of varying sizes (53%), while the remainder were residents of rural areas.

5.2.3. Procedure

Both studies were conducted online with persons who participated in the study as volunteers. In Study 2, the participants were asked to fill in the PMBQ and questionnaires designed to assess external validity of the tool under study. In Study 3, the participants were asked to fill in the PMBQ, and part of the group was asked to fill it in again to assess absolute stability. All participants were informed about the objectives of the study and assured that participation was anonymous and voluntary—they could withdraw at any time. The study was approved by the Bioethics Committee of the Institute of Psychology at the University of Szczecin and performed in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (KB 44/2025).

5.2.4. Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted employing Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) with the use of the AMOS 29 package. The basic model tested was the three-factor solution consisting of 23 statements, on two datasets. The single-factor model from study II was additionally adopted for comparison.

The results of model comparison are presented in Table 1. The CFA results indicate that the single-factor model demonstrated poor fit to the data, whereas the basic model met acceptable or borderline thresholds for good model fit. The unsatisfactory results of the basic model verification led to the testing of a simplified three-factor model, containing a smaller number of statements; Two statements that were characterised by low loads in both studies were excluded (Table 2). Consequently, the model with a lower number of statements demonstrated the best fit to the data. The RMSEA and SRMR measures reached a level indicating a good fit of the model to the data (respectively: $RMSEA_2 = 0.059$ and $RMSEA_3 = 0.056$; $SRMR_2 = 0.076$, $SRMR_3 = 0.074$). The CFI index values also reached an acceptable level, the highest in the compared models (respectively: $CFI_2 = 0.910$, $CFI_3 = 0.932$) (Kline 2011; Marsh et al. 2004). Therefore, the model consisting of 21 statements was adopted as the final one.

Table 1. Statistics of the tested models' fit to the data.

Model	Study	χ^2	df	p	χ^2/df	CFI	RMSEA (LO90:HI90)	SRMR
1-factor (23 items)	2	811.09	187	0.001	4.34	0.663	0.114 (0.106:0.122)	0.134
3-factor (23 items)	2	486.13	223	0.001	2.18	0.870	0.068 (0.060:0.076)	0.090
3-factor (23 items)	3	410.23	224	0.001	1.83	0.905	0.062 (0.052:0.071)	0.088
3-factor (21 items)	2	349.19	183	0.001	1.91	0.910	0.059 (0.050:0.069)	0.076
3-factor (21 items)	3	311.60	183	0.001	1.70	0.931	0.057 (0.046:0.067)	0.074

Table 2. Standardised Regression Weights and Discriminatory Power of Items in Studies II and III, i-t Correlations and Cronbach's α Coefficients of the PMBQ.

Item Number	Item Content	Antifundamentalism		Absolutization of Freedom		Relativization of Truth		r_{i-t}	
		2 Study	3 Study	2 Study	3 Study	2 Study	3 Study	2	3
PM3	Science can solve most of the world's problems, and religion is no longer necessary.	0.81	0.65					0.77	0.66
PM7	God is necessary for the human being to discover the truth about themselves.	−0.64	−0.59					0.61	0.61
PM10	Religion deceives people.	0.84	0.81					0.79	0.75
PM14	The religious worldview is false.	0.88	0.82					0.82	0.76
PM17	Religious beliefs are most often superstitions that no longer fit into the modern world.	0.80	0.79					0.74	0.74
PM19	Science and religion cannot be reconciled—it is better to rely on science.	0.72	0.76					0.69	0.71
PM21	Religion imposes moral principles restricting the freedom of the individual.	0.70	0.77					0.67	0.71
PM2	Everyone should pursue what is important to them.			0.64	0.68			0.51	0.64
PM4	No one has the right to limit the expression of the individual.			0.49	0.47			0.47	0.43
PM6	Caring for one's body is the recipe for achieving one's own happiness.			0.41	0.52			0.36	0.49
PM8	Life should be about allowing each human being to implement their individual ideas.			0.47	0.78			0.39	0.70
PM11	Everyone has their values that they should follow.			0.67	0.79			0.55	0.68
PM13	In life, you have to look after your own business.			0.33	0.65			0.29	0.61
PM15	The human being should follow their subjective assessment of the situation, as their own feelings indicate what is good for them.			0.59	0.60			0.51	0.55
PM20	A human being sets their priorities in life on their own.			0.54	0.68			0.40	0.67
PM1	One should avoid pointing out things to others because it might hurt their feelings.					0.67	0.49	0.54	0.42
PM5	It is important to control people's thoughts, otherwise, they might impose their will on others.					0.53	0.35	0.45	0.29
PM9	Minorities should be cared for more than the majority.					0.59	0.62	0.50	0.58
PM12	Democracy should care more for the excluded than for the majority.					0.63	0.51	0.48	0.47
PM16	In order not to offend others, one should refrain from expressing their own assessments					0.58	0.83	0.51	0.64
PM18	Opinions that may offend others should not be allowed to be expressed.					0.55	0.70	0.46	0.54
PM22	I have no right to morally judge other people's behaviour. Everyone is different.					0.38	0.35	0.34	0.33

Table 2. Cont.

Item Number	Item Content	Antifundamentalism		Absolutization of Freedom		Relativization of Truth		r_{i-t}	
		2 Study	3 Study	2 Study	3 Study	2 Study	3 Study	2	3
PM23	Tolerance means allowing everyone to do what they want.					0.40	0.26	0.36	0.24
	Cronbach's α	0.91	0.90	0.74	0.85	0.75 (8) 0.76 (6)	0.74 (8) 0.76 (6)		

Of the 23 statements adopted for the basic model in both studies, the vast majority showed sufficiently strong links to the factors in the CFA (Table 2). However, two statements had lower loadings in one of the studies: PM13 in the second one, and PM5 in the third one. Two other statements (PM22 and M23) are characterised by insufficiently high factor loadings in both studies; hence the decision to remove them from the final version of the questionnaire was made. The resulting PMBQ consists of 21 statements: Antifundamentalism consists of 7 statements, Relativization of truth—of 6 statements, and Absolutization of freedom—of 8 statements.

At this stage of verifying the psychometric value of the tool being designed, the discriminatory power of the test items adopted for the PMBQ was also checked. Its measure is the correlation coefficient between each item and the total result of the scale excluding that item (r_{i-t} ; Brzeziński 2004). The discriminatory power of individual statements proved largely similar, i.e., high in the vast majority, in both studies. Two statements (PM22 and PM23) demonstrated significantly weaker correlation with the scale in both studies and were therefore excluded from the final version.

The effect of sufficient discriminatory power for items is the internal consistency factor. In the tool being developed, Cronbach's α reached a satisfactory level in both studies already in the basic model (Table 2). However, removing the two statements improved the reliability for the Relativization of truth factor to $\alpha = 0.76$ in both studies. The remaining factors are characterised by reliability at the following level: Antifundamentalism $\alpha = 0.91$ and $\alpha = 0.90$ and Absolutization of freedom $\alpha = 0.74$ and $\alpha = 0.85$ in subsequent studies.

5.2.5. Descriptive Results and Intercorrelations

The basic descriptive characteristics of each belief were also calculated (Table 3). The highest level of beliefs held, above the theoretical average and with the lowest standard deviation, was found for Absolutization of freedom ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.70$). The remaining beliefs are below the theoretical average, so the results obtained indicate a lack of relativization of truth and a fundamentalist attitude. The skewness and kurtosis are rather low.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and Intercorrelations between PMBQ scales in Study 2.

	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	(1)	(2)
Antifundamentalism (1)	2.98	1.17	0.50	−0.04		
Absolutization of freedom (2)	2.45	0.85	0.62	0.83	−0.08	
Relativization of truth (3)	4.50	0.70	−0.72	0.65	0.19 **	0.08

Notes: **— $p < 0.01$.

Intercorrelations between PMBQ scales demonstrate a relationship only between Antifundamentalism and Absolutization of freedom at the level of $r(257) = 0.19$; $p < 0.01$. Therefore, it can be indicated that the PMBQ scales are relatively independent of each other and describe distinct beliefs.

5.2.6. Temporal Consistency

The verification of the temporal consistency was assessed by the test–retest stability. The correlation coefficients were computed between the first and second measurements in the part of the group in Study 3 (only 37 respondents filed the questionnaire two times). The correlation was $r(36) = 0.88$ ($p < 0.01$) for Antifundamentalism, $r(36) = 0.51$ ($p < 0.01$) for Relativization of truth and $r(36) = 0.48$ ($p < 0.01$) for Absolutization of freedom.

5.3. Postmodern Beliefs and Their Correlates

Study 2 also examined external validity by searching for correlations with other variables that should theoretically be related to postmodern beliefs. At the empirical level, correlations were sought between PMBQ results and results obtained using other tools investigating social beliefs. The postmodern thought pattern (Hassan 1985; Morawski 1990) encompasses issues concerning general references to the world, normative orientations, the role of humans in the world, relationships with God, references to the context of the past and tradition, and orientations towards material reality.

Therefore, it can be assumed that beliefs or social orientations in these areas should be associated with the postmodern beliefs under study. The following tools were used for the empirical study of individual theoretical constructs:

Belief in a Just World (BJW) (Dalbert 1999) covers issues relating to general attitudes to the world. It is a socially shared belief that plays a significant role in justifying and maintaining social order. According to this construct, people perceive the world as a place where they receive what they deserve, in such a way that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people (Lerner 1980). The tool applied allows for the examination of two dimensions describing faith in a just world on a general and personal level. Consisting of 13 statements, the scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) was used. Cronbach's α utilised in Polish studies reached the level of $\alpha = 0.92$ for Personal BJW and $\alpha = 0.85$ for General BJW in various groups (Larionov and Mudło-Głagolska 2021).

The Collectivism/Individualism Scale (Daab 1990) treats individualism and collectivism as types of normative orientations, a crucial component of mentality. It examines how the characteristics of individualism and collectivism are valued, and which are of greater importance in understanding the world and one's own place in it (Cybal-Michalska 2017). The study involves selecting one trait from a pair in which one describes individualism and the other collectivism. The scale consists of 10 pairs of traits.

The Anthropocentrism Scale (Fortuna et al. 2021) examines the level of beliefs that treat a human as a central being in the world or even in the universe. It is a one-dimensional scale, which was shortened to a version consisting of four statements in this study. The response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) was used. Its reliability is high, with $\alpha = 0.79$ in the research presented.

The Traditionalism Scale, frequently used in studies of moral traditionalism (Brandt and Reyna 2014), which is treated as an element of the fundamentalist belief system, encompasses beliefs and values oriented towards maintaining the socio-moral status quo. It pertains to metaphysical fundamentalism and reaches beyond religious fundamentalism (Altemeyer and Hunsberger 1992). It consists of two statements. In the research presented, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.61$. The Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) was used.

The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (Huber and Huber 2012) is used to measure the overall level of the centrality of religiosity and the five dimensions of religiosity describing distinct aspects of the human experience of religiosity in their life: Intellect, Ideology, Private Practice, Religious Experience and Public Practice. The reliability of the Polish version of the scale is high (Zarzycka 2007). In the research conducted, Cronbach's α is as follows:

0.87 for Intellect, 0.91 for Ideology, 0.94 for Private Practice, 0.93 for Religious Experience and 0.91 for Public Practice.

The Material Values Scale (Richins and Dawson 1992) examines the importance of owning and accumulating material goods in the context of desirable states. Material values refer to treating the accumulation of goods as a central aspect in life, as a criterion of life success, and as a determinant of happiness and life satisfaction (Górník-Durose 2016). The scale consists of a shortened version of 9 statements and three dimensions: Success, Centrality, Happiness. The Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) was used.

Correlations between PMBQ and other variables allowing the estimation of external validity are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlations between PMBQ and other variables under study.

	Antifundamentalism	Absolutization of Freedom	Relativization of Truth
JWS_General	−0.17 **	0.21 **	0.24 ***
JWS_Personal	0.03	0.22 **	−0.06
Collectivism/Individualism	−0.25 ***	0.01	−0.12 ^
Anthropocentrism	−0.25 ***	0.21 **	0.03
Traditionalism	−0.34 **	−0.05	−0.07
Intellect	−0.51 ***	−0.21 **	0.05
Ideology	−0.71 ***	−0.07	0.08
Religious Experience	−0.65 ***	−0.13 *	0.09
Private Practice	−0.71 ***	−0.10	0.12 ^
Public Practice	−0.73 ***	−0.11 ^	0.18 **
MVS_Success	0.05	0.27 **	−0.10
MVS_Centrality	0.01	0.10	−0.01
MVS_Happiness	0.13 *	0.18 **	0.05

Notes: ^ < 0.08; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. JWS—Belief in a Just World; MVS—Material Values Scale.

Postmodern beliefs correlate with distinct sets of variables. Antifundamentalism negatively correlates with the General Belief in a Just World, Individualism, Anthropocentrism, Traditionalism, as well as with all dimensions of religiosity—and it is with these that correlations are the strongest (from $r(258) = -0.51$ for Intellect to $r(258) = -0.71$ for Ideology and Private Practice, and to $r(258) = -0.73$ for Public Practice). In turn, it positively correlates with material values focused on happiness.

The Absolutization of freedom is positively associated with the Belief in a Just World, both on a general and personal level, Anthropocentrism, and material values that treat the possession of material goods as success and happiness. At the same time, it negatively correlates with aspects of religiosity, significantly with the lack of religious interests and religious experiences, including public practices.

The Relativization of truth, conversely, positively correlates with the General Belief in a Just World ($r(258) = 0.24$), Public Practice ($r(258) = 0.18$), and certain correlations can also be observed at the trend level with Private Practice and Collectivism (negative Individualism).

6. Discussion

The aim of this article was to present and empirically operationalize a new category of beliefs that focus on the elements that constitute the popular understanding of postmodernism. They concern the cultural and media-based reception of messages based on the fundamental assumptions of postmodernism. For empirical verification, it was necessary to define the theoretical foundations of the beliefs, and then, based on the theoretical description, a tool was developed to examine the extent of the distinguished postmodern beliefs of Antifundamentalism, Relativization of truth, and Absolutization of freedom

characterise the contemporary human. The process of creating the tool allowed for devising a questionnaire characterised by sufficient properties in regard to the requirements of both accuracy and reliability (AERA/APA/NCME 2007; Anastasi and Urbina 1999). The study was conducted in three groups of respondents. Subsequent studies confirm the comparability of the results, and thus the stability of the beliefs distinguished. However, temporal consistency regarding the scales of Relativization of truth and Absolutization of freedom does not show high correlations, which is an issue to be verified in further studies.

The most correct model in exploratory analysis turned out to be a simplified model built of three factors and 21 statements. The discriminatory power of the statements is high enough, although two statements in one study reached a low level of discriminatory power. Their factor loads displayed a low value too. They were adopted for the final version of PMBQ because they contributed significant content to the factor and because in other studies their parameters were sufficiently high. However, it is worth verifying their value in subsequent studies. The reliability of the scales is sufficiently high.

The average results for individual beliefs are diverse; for Antifundamentalism and Relativization of truth, they are lower than the theoretical average, while for Absolutization of freedom, they are higher than the theoretical average and definitely the highest among the beliefs under study. Therefore, the results obtained indicate a rather fundamentalism and non-relativization of truth in the thinking of the respondents. At the same time, the respondents are characterised by a fairly high level of Absolutization of freedom. The scales do not correlate with each other, or they correlate at a low level, which indicates the distinctiveness of the beliefs under study.

The beliefs under study correlate with social beliefs and orientations describing similar areas of social functioning, and the relationships shown seem, at least in most of them, theoretically justified.

The scale of Antifundamentalism consists of statements appreciating the importance of science and negatively assessing the role of religion in society. Therefore, it cannot be surprising that anti-fundamentalism strongly negatively correlates with all elements of religiosity, but also negatively correlates with the General Faith in a Just World, Individualism, Anthropocentrism and Traditionalism. In turn, it positively correlates with material values focused on happiness. It could therefore be concluded that Antifundamentalism is in opposition to such beliefs and social orientations that allow one to build an ordered picture of the world. Thus, it captures those aspects of referring to the world which are consistent with the theoretical description of antifundamentalism (cf. Bronk 1988).

The Absolutization of freedom scale is made up of statements about the possibility of implementing individual ideas, one's own priorities in life and the fact that no one has the right to limit the expression of the individual. The statement indicating taking care of the body as a recipe for achieving happiness in life is also important. This item indicates a departure from the classic order of values and emphasises the subjective pursuit of one's own priorities of achieving happiness. It could be said that: "I myself, and even my body is so important that by taking care of it, I achieve happiness". Absolutization of freedom is associated with the appreciation of human uniqueness and values and with the belief that the world is fair both on a general and personal level. It is further positively associated with material values, treating the possession of material goods as success and happiness, and negatively with certain aspects of religiosity, such as the lack of religious interests or religious experiences, describing closing off from a relationship with God both on a cognitive and existential level. Absolutization of freedom enhances the individual perspective, which is focused on materiality, current confirmation (Górnik-Durose 2016), rejecting the transcendental perspective. The sense of well-being of the individual plays a greater role than order and the truth about reality.

The Relativization of truth is expressed in statements regarding the inability to morally assess the behaviour of others, tolerance of otherness, and consequently the resignation from one's own judgments and opinions. It also emphasises the priority of underestimating the group/team interest and attending to the minority. It is described by other beliefs under study to the lowest extent. It positively correlates with the General Faith in a Just World and selected aspects of religiosity. In addition, the appreciation of the collectivist and community-oriented perspective plays an important role. Therefore, it can be assumed that the presented system of dependencies shows the image of Relativization of truth as a belief characterised by faith in the justice of the world around, but on a general level, but not personally. One can say: "in general, the world works well, others get what they deserve, but it is not necessarily true for me" (Dalbert 1999). Further, this belief is associated with engaging in contact with God (maybe it is a matter of arbitrarily understood higher power)—mainly by the community (Public Practice), but also to a lesser extent through a personal relationship (Private Practice). In addition, the image complements, although weakly, the collectivist attitude with the perception of the community's importance (Cybal-Michalska 2017). This belief appreciates the importance of others, perhaps even overestimates them, rejecting one's own personal critical view. Tolerance and appreciation of other people are held higher than the interests of oneself and one's own group; the emotional state of the other person is more important than truth. However, the most ambiguity appears in the characteristics of this belief.

The topic was a very difficult task due to the fact that even the very definition of the essence of postmodern thinking is ambiguous and even assumes a departure from all common and general categories. Hence, it also seemed very difficult to create homogeneous sets of statements describing theoretically distinguished aspects of postmodernism. However, the results obtained allow us to conclude that, as a result of the actions taken, the assumed three-element theoretical model was confirmed at the empirical level and the research objective was achieved.

7. Limitations

The validation works on the construction of the questionnaire also have some limitations. The respondents are largely homogeneous groups of young adults, with an average age of just over 20 years, adopted due to the generational impact; however, it should be verified in further research whether the empirical model will be equally well adapted to the data in the studies of older people. The respondents also came from a specific area of Poland characterised by a traditional approach to the world and from smaller towns. The gender of the respondents, although controlled in the studies, was not analysed either. In subsequent works on the tool, it is worth undertaking the analysis of sociological variables as possible differentiating variables. This research was carried out in Poland using a questionnaire in Polish; hence it is also worth verifying whether the model will also work in other cultural contexts, where the postmodern message has a greater impact. Of course, such research entails carrying out a cultural adaptation of the PMBQ beforehand.

8. Conclusions

Postmodern Beliefs Questionnaire can be a useful source of scientific reflection in the context of learning how the modern human being understands the surrounding world. The beliefs distinguished may be factors explaining the mechanisms of functioning for individuals and social decisions. The tools that allow for diagnosing the place of the human being in the social context are important both in the field of theoretical inquiries and practical activities. And they can serve in a social and individual context. In the social context—in order to better understand the social influences of contemporary times on the

everyday functioning of groups and communities, and in the individual context—to better understand the social and cultural factors affecting people in the contemporary personal and media-related environment.

PMBQ can be used in the psychology of politics in creating more adequate models of social and cultural conditions. It can also be applied in education in the preparation of more effective interactions based on a proper diagnosis of social needs and the assessment of the impact strength of external factors.

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Data Availability Statement: Data supporting reported results can be found in OSF Database, under the link: https://osf.io/vx3bd/?view_only=d615348b6ae64cbbb0b5ccbd6db8069f (accessed on 6 October 2025).

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