

Progress report

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Theoretical Framework

By now what has been done concerning bibliographic search is a review of religiosity measurement approaches in quantitative empirical surveys¹. The next step should include reviewing literature on values, attitudes, and approaches to studying how religion / religiosity shapes values and attitudes.

Briefly, if we take quantitative religiosity measurement, we can find two main approaches to religious variable construction.

First is the multidimensional approach where religiosity is considered a multidimensional phenomenon and several dimensions (although not always orthogonal) are extracted to evaluate this phenomenon using either logical or statistical basis. Classical texts of this approach were published around 1960th-1970th. Ch. Glock proposed 5 religiosity dimensions: experiential, ritualistic, ideological, intellectual, consequential². G. Allport proposed two expressions of religiosity: intrinsic and extrinsic³. J. Faulkner and G. de Jong⁴, Ch. Glock and R. Stark⁵ developed methods for empirical evaluation of theoretically derived dimensions. Discussion continued towards finding out the number of dimensions necessary and sufficient for religiosity phenomenon evaluation. But consensus has not been reached on that topic as empirical evidence was contradictory. One of contemporary multidimensional religiosity measures is the Fetzer Institute Multidimensional Measure used in the General Social Survey in USA.

Second is the hierarchical approach where religiosity is considered a two-level phenomenon. This approach emerged from the first one and, as it seems, was the result of inability to find consensus on the dimensions number needed for complete religiosity phenomenon evaluation within multidimensional approach. It is best developed in social psychology and the most cited text seems to be the “Measures of Religiosity” by P.C. Hill and R.W. Hood⁶. The levels of religiosity are: *dispositional* – that is general religiosity, showing how religious a person is, and *functional* which refers to specific ways religiosity is expressed.

What we find in major international comparative surveys (World Value Survey, European Values Study, European Social Survey, International Social Survey Program) is the hierarchical approach to religiosity measurement, which usually includes two measures for general religiosity: self-ascribed religiosity and the respondent’s denomination, and two measures for functional religiosity: religious beliefs and practices (each of them may consist of several indicators).

An important question which remains unanswered is which of those religiosity variables should be used as a predictor in empirical models? Most often only general religiosity measures are used (importance of God, self-ascribed religiosity, etc.) which produces an oversimplified picture. But taking into account all the diversity of religiosity measures

¹ The review is published online as a working paper: Prutskova E. (2010) Religiosity: operationalization and quantitative measurement methods. “Sociology of Religion” Project Working Paper.

URL:<http://socrel.pstgu.ru/papers>

² Glock Ch.Y. On the Study of Religious Commitment // Religious Education, Research Supplement, Vol. 42 (Jul.-Aug., 1962), pp. 98-110.

³ Allport G.W. Religion and Prejudice // The Nature of Prejudice, Cambridge, Addison-Wesley, 1954, pp. 444-459.

⁴ Faulkner J.E., de Jong G.F. Religiosity in 5-D: An Empirical Analysis // Social Forces, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Dec., 1966), pp. 246-254.

⁵ Glock Ch.Y., Stark R. American Piety: The Nature of Religious Commitment. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968.

⁶ Hill P.C., Hood R.W. Jr. Measures of Religiosity. Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1999.

available, the way they are, is not possible – they should first be transformed into a convenient model. One of the ways of such transformation is the “core-periphery” approach with variations in the number of groups derived from general sample and with diversity of methods. But such studies, known to us, are either limited by one denomination and national sample within one country, or (and) use highly correlated, redundant measures as input data.

Analysis

We started developing our own religiosity typology on the basis of religious beliefs, practices, and self evaluation of respondents’ religiosity and denomination using cluster analysis method. All input variables were recoded into a unified format, where possible. Mostly it is a “present (1) / absent (0)” format. By now we’ve not yet been able to find a stable solution, but we are working on that. The data sets that we use are: WVS (until 4th wave, as in 5th wave most of the belief variables are missing), EVS, and ISSP.

Concerning data analysis, what has been done is a comparison of 2008 ISSP and EVS data on religiosity. Further, we present the main results of this analysis.

One of our first steps in constructing main variables for our hypotheses testing is to find out what kind of religiosity data we are working with. We have a unique opportunity of comparing religiosity questions from two comparative surveys: EVS – European Values Study⁷, and ISSP – International Social Survey Program⁸. For social scientists, engaged in comparative studies, data sets of these research projects are one of the main sources of information for analysis on religiosity. It is therefore important to know the extent to which one can compare the data obtained in these projects, with different question wordings.

Considering the operationalization of the concept of "religion", we conclude that to a large extent it is identical, differing only slightly on the indicators level. These studies enable us to capture the effects of specific wording of religiosity questions, because:

1. Questions on religiosity, asked in the framework of these studies are largely identical in meaning, but differ in wording.
2. These studies were conducted in almost the same time period (2008).
3. Lists of countries, in which these two studies were conducted, largely overlap.
4. The logic of sampling is similar: in both studies the national samples are stratified, adults (18 +, for some countries, 16 +). Weighting procedure that provides adjustment to the demographic structure in each country is used for percentage calculation.

In order to analyse ISSP and EVS variables for comparability, we will select those countries and those questions (corresponding to our core variables) which are present in both surveys. We will compare frequencies (within each country) for those variables that can logically be compared. Statistical technique that we use is z-test.

The list of countries where both surveys were conducted is the following: Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany West, Germany East, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, Great Britain, Northern Ireland.

Analysis of this kind has been carried out before, but was limited to questions of general religiosity. One of the recent publications on the subject is P. Bréchon article “The measuring of confessional membership and non-membership in major European surveys”

⁷ URL: <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/> (30.12.2010). Data available at: European Values Study: GESIS. URL: <http://www.gesis.org/en/services/data/survey-data/european-values-study/> (30.12.2010).

⁸ URL: <http://www.issp.org/> (30.12.2010). Data available at: ISSP: GESIS. URL: <http://www.gesis.org/en/services/data/survey-data/issp/> (30.12.2010).

(2009)⁹, in which data on religious denomination, obtained in European Values Study (1999), International Social Survey Program (1999), and European Social Survey (2003) was compared. One of his conclusions was that the question on denomination with filter in European Values Study gives slightly smaller percentage of confessional membership in many European countries than the formulation without filter used in International Social Survey Program.

Comparability of questions

In EVS and ISSP religiosity can be measured at two levels – general and specific. The general level of religiosity includes identification of respondents with a specific denomination. Specific manifestations of religiosity include two dimensions: belief (belief in God, life after death, reincarnation, heaven, hell, etc.) and practices (attending religious services and prayer).

Denomination

For most countries the differences are not significant. Even in those cases when the difference is statistically significant, it is not large – less than 10%. The only exceptions are: Russia, Ukraine, and Spain. The situation in each of the countries is somewhat different.

In Spain increased percentage of Catholics in ISSP (17% more than in EVS) is almost completely compensated by a lower percentage, compared to EVS, of the representatives of other denominations. If we consider in detail what these other denominations are, we find that 92% of these people name themselves simply Christians. In this case, it is unclear whether these responses are caused simply by the fact that their Catholic identity is taken for granted (“Christian” means “Catholic”) or is it a deliberate contrast to Catholicism (this may be an indicator of the believers, not belonging to the Church). As a result, the percentage of religious people (belonging to a denomination) in Spain is practically the same in EVS (74%) and ISSP (76%).

In Russia and Ukraine the filter question “Do you belong to a religious denomination? (yes/no)” in EVS provides a significant reduction in estimates of the share belonging to Orthodox Christian denomination (17% less than in ISSP in Russia and 28% less than in ISSP in Ukraine).

In Russia increased percentage of Orthodox Christians in ISSP, compared to EVS, is almost completely compensated by a lower percentage of those, who do not consider themselves belonging to any religious denomination. As for Ukraine, the situation partly resembles Russia, and partly – Spain. The difference is in one half compensated by decrease in the proportion of non-religious population, and in the second half – by reduced share of belonging to other denominations. If we consider what other denominations are mentioned in EVS, the picture still remains unclear – 6% of them are Jehovah’s witnesses, and the remaining 94% are absent in codicator (remain as simply “other” religions).

Russia and Ukraine are the only two post-communist countries in our analysis where Orthodox Christianity is the main traditional country’s religion. Religiosity here is an important part of cultural and national identity (“we are Orthodox Christian because we are Russian”). (This idea can further be illustrated by other Russian survey data collected by FOM – Public Opinion Foundation, Levada Center, and the Institute of Socio-Political Research RAS). It is rather a passive, or context religiosity. This is the reason why a respondent who has only cultural identification religiosity would say that he/she is Orthodox if asked whether

⁹ Bréchon P. The measuring of confessional membership and non-membership in major European surveys (La mesure de l'appartenance et de la non-appartenance confessionnelle dans les grandes enquêtes européennes). // Social Compass, Vol. 56, No 2, (Jun., 2009), pp. 163-178.

he/she belongs to a religious denomination, but would tend to claim no religious affiliation if asked a more specific question, emphasizing active religiosity. The English version of EVS question is: “Do you belong to a religious denomination?” but in Russian version another wording is used which is closer in meaning to: “Do you profess a religion?”¹⁰ which means a rather stronger religious affiliation because it has connotations of not only following a religion but also of openly affirming and defending one’s religious views and beliefs.

Religious Beliefs

Belief in God

The proportion of those who believe in God is to a large extent not comparable between the two studies under consideration. Not only the differences are statistically significant for most countries, but also have a substantial character. The proportion of those who believe in God, obtained with the dichotomous questions (EVS), is significantly higher than the corresponding figure, generated from a four-point scale, where two grounds were combined: belief in God in the present and the past (ISSP).

Percentage differences in some countries are compensated by the negative answer, and in other countries – by absence of response. We think that this effect is due to the fact that there is a large group of respondents who are not confident in their answers. In situations when they need to think over and analyze additional features of their beliefs, such as in this case – the chronological component, they would tend to doubt their belief and give a negative answer, or find it difficult to answer the question. Additional chronological component in ISSP question wording makes resulting percentage of believers incomparable.

Belief in life after death

Data on belief in life after death is rather comparable between the two considered studies. Although for many countries the differences are statistically significant, only in five countries out of twenty four the difference in percentage has exceeded 10%. Significant differences in most cases are compensated not by the opposite answer (yes / no) but by the option “hard to answer”.

Dichotomous formulation of options (in EVS) gives a slightly smaller percentage of those who believe in life after death, than the four-point scale (in ISSP).

Belief in heaven

As for belief in heaven, the majority of the countries’ percentage differences are not very large (although large sample sizes allow us to speak about their statistical significance). The most notable differences relate mainly to lack of response, rather than substantial options – in only four countries out of twenty four percentage difference between EVS and ISSP on “yes” or “no” options exceeds 10%.

Belief in hell

Belief in hell is a less stable indicator than belief in life after death or heaven. In nine countries percentage difference on substantial responses on this question (yes / no) exceeds 10%. Dichotomous formulation of options (in EVS), as in the case of belief in life after death, gives a slightly smaller percentage of believers than the four-point scale (in ISSP).

¹⁰ “Исповедуете ли вы какую-либо религию?”

At first glance, the situation seems opposite to what we observed analyzing belief in God (where dichotomous formulation of options gave a higher percentage of believers). But here the situation is different in terms of interpretation. In the case of belief in God, the scale, consisting of four points, specified additional grounds (now and in the past), and in the case of belief in life after death, hell, heaven, and reincarnation the four-point scale, used in the ISSP, specifies only the degree of confidence in response. This situation corresponds to a different hypothesis: unconfident respondents would increasingly choose a negative answer, if given only two options (yes / no). When they are given an opportunity to reflect their doubt in their response (“yes, definitely” / “yes, probably” / “no, probably” / “no, definitely”), a positive answer would rather be more frequent.

Belief in reincarnation

The difference on belief in reincarnation mainly concerns the negative answer and “no answer” option. Percentage of believers is rather comparable between the two considered studies. The only exception is Turkey, where, according to EVS, 27% believe in reincarnation, and 68% - do not believe, while according to the ISSP situation is reversed - 89% believe the 9% - do not believe. There can be two possible explanations for significant discrepancies in the data between the ISSP and EVS in Turkey.

First, as the main religion of the respondents – Islam, denies the possibility of reincarnation, it could be a bug related to the fact that the ISSP questionnaire scale was given in reverse order. Unfortunately, we couldn’t verify this hypothesis, because the questionnaire in Turkish language, available for downloading, is not the actual instrument that was used in the survey. It only represents translation of English questionnaire into Turkish language. Response options in this available questionnaire are given only once for the unit consisting of seven questions assessed on this scale (and their order matches the order of the English version of the scale).

A second possible, and most probable, explanation is that this is the influence of the question wording. Let us turn to the wording of the question on belief in reincarnation in the two studies. In the Turkish EVS questionnaire this question was: “Do you believe that after death one returns to this world as a human or animal, turning to another?”¹¹ In ISSP “reincarnation” has been translated into Turkish as “resurrection/revival after death”¹², that could be understood by respondents not as a reincarnation, but as a synonym for “life after death”. Thus, most likely, that the wording of the question led to such a large discrepancy in the results of the two studies.

Religious Practices

Frequency of prayer

As for the percentage difference on the frequency of prayer, we find most noticeable differences in two countries: Russia and Turkey. In addition, in Northern Ireland there is a difference (13%) in the answer option “every day”, which is compensated by the answer options from “once a week” to “a few times a year”. Also, there is a significant difference in

¹¹ «Öldükten sonra, BU DÜNYAYA tekrar, insan veya hayvan, başka bir canlı olarak dönüldüğüne inanır mısınız?». EVS 2008 – Turkey Field Questionnaire, p.12.

URL:<http://info1.gesis.org/dbksearch13/download.asp?id=18331> (дата обращения: 30.12.2010).

¹² «Şimdi sayacaklarima inanir misiniz? ... Ölümünden sonra hayat ... Ölümünden sonra dirilme». Turkey ISSP-2008 – Religion III Questionnaire, p.4. URL:http://info1.gesis.org/dbksearch/file.asp?file=ZA4950_q_tr.pdf (дата обращения: 30.12.2010).

Slovenia on the answer option “never” in EVS data (14% higher than the corresponding figure in ISSP), which is compensated at the expense of most other options.

In Russian version of ISSP questionnaire the question about frequency of prayer is missing, although it is present in the English version of the questionnaire and the data, including Russia. The Russian case data in the data set for each respondent in 100% coincides with answers given to the question about frequency of attending religious services. Thus, we have to conclude that this question was not asked in Russia in ISSP project.

In EVS Turkish questionnaire the categories order is reversed and the specification “outside of religious services” was omitted.

Attending religious services

Despite the maximum possible extent of categories merging, the question on frequency of religious services attendance was incomparable in the two studies. We see a significant difference in frequency distributions of answers to this question in more than half of the countries. Moreover, in many cases it is not just differences in neighboring categories of response, but rather a much deeper difference. We couldn't find any regularities in these discrepancies that could be a result of the question wordings influence.

We see quite chaotic, multidirectional divergence that forces us to conclude the instability of this indicator. Probably, frequency of attending religious services, estimated in public opinion surveys by respondent self-evaluation is not a reliable way of measuring this characteristic.

As for the differences across countries, Turkey is again a very noticeable contrast to other countries. In ISSP, compared to EVS, the frequency distribution is clearly shifted to higher attendance rates. This is the case because in EVS Turkish questionnaire the categories order is reversed.

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