
STATISTICAL ANALYSIS ON THE IMPACT OF RELIGION OVER POPULATION'S LIFE SATISFACTION

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Abstract

The article intends to test (using quantitative techniques) a few elements of religious behavior incurred on the occasion of the main religious holidays. The statistic information available is based on a statistic survey representative for the level of the non-institutionalized adult population in Romania. The field research took place in November 2010 and was based on face-to-face interviews in the homes of the respondents.

Key words: *religion, quantitative methods, main religious holidays*

The academic study of religion does not point exclusively to theological (metaphysical) approaches, but also uses an interdisciplinary perspective, combining elements of anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, history with religion and economics, thus addressing the most various issues of religious phenomenon and its implications on economic and politic aspects. We mention in this respect a series of studies which refer to the analysis of the relation between religion and political parties (Stan 2007), between ethnicity and elective politics (Birbir 2007), the implications of ethnical representation in national parliaments on the political stability of a region (Cox 1997), the impact of ethnical fractioning on political stability (Alesina 2003), the economic implications of taking into consideration ethnical and religious factors in a person's decision to marry (Bisin 2000) etc. An important aspect in the research of religious phenomenon is the causality analysis which exists in the practice of religious phenomenon, business ethics and a country's economic development (Mangeloja 2005). The quantitative research of religious phenomena is equally pointed to the analysis of its implication of the satisfaction level of persons or groups of persons (Dehejia 2007, Putnam 2000, Iannaccone and Berman 2000, Lelkes 2006, etc).

Structure and methodology

The results obtained are based on processing a data base constructed after a survey applied on a sample representative for the national level. The sample is formed of 1003 persons. The implementation of the survey was realized by the National Institute of Statistics (through the National Centre of Preparation in Statistics). We present the distribution of the sample as well as of the Romanian population by urban and rural environments.

Comparisons between the structure of the sample used in our research and elements published in official statistics

Table 1

Residence environment	Percentage (%)	
	Sample	Annual Statistic Report for Romania - 2009
Urban	59.8	55.0
Rural	40.2	45.0

The sample was placed in 142 settlements out of 41 counties and the 6 districts of Bucharest. It was thus ensured – through EMZOT – a balanced distribution at national level and consequently a good representativeness. It is thus assessed to what degree there are differences between the various categories of people as against to the significance of the main religious holidays. In the questionnaire we introduced a question in order to assess the significance of the main religious holidays. The assessment of the opinions regarding this subject is made on a measurement scale of six values defined as follows: 1 – never, 2 – rarely, 3 – sometimes, 4 – often, 5 – always and 0 – not applicable. Within the study we considered ten important meanings of the main religious holidays. They are grouped in the following categories:

- 1) Religious activities (religious and spiritual mediation, confession, attending religious services, charity and other good deeds);
- 2) Social activities (festive meals, parties with close people, extended family reunions);
- 3) Commercial and relaxation activities (renewing wardrobe, additional expenses, excellent periods for rest and relaxation).

Processing each of the ten data series is accomplished in the following situations:

- At the level of the entire population;
- At the level of the people who declared they fast and of the ones who don't;

- At the level of the people who declare they practice religion and of the ones who don't;

Table 2 presents the distribution of the responses for the ten variables at the level of the sample population.

The distribution of the responses regarding the significance of the main religious holidays

Table 2

	1	2	3	4	5	0	Mean
Religious activities							3.27
Religious and spiritual mediation	10.5	16.6	23.0	15.7	31.2	2.8	3.42
Confession	20.2	18.2	18.0	10.7	17.3	15.5	2.84
Attending religious services	5.9	21.1	22.3	17.5	30.3	3.0	3.47
Charity and other good deeds	5.1	17.0	36.1	21.1	16.9	3.8	3.29
Social activities							3.26
Festive meals	8.0	19.8	28.6	19.7	20.1	3.7	3.25
Parties with close people	7.5	18.3	27.0	22.7	20.4	4.1	3.31
Extended family reunions	8.1	20.6	26.8	20.8	18.8	4.9	3.23
Commercial and relaxation activities							2.89
Renewing wardrobe	23.2	42.4	16.8	5.8	5.3	6.7	2.23
Additional expenses	11.0	22.0	25.9	16.1	20.7	4.3	3.14
Excellent periods for rest and relaxation	8.8	17.2	26.2	23.3	19.6	5.0	3.29

The results above highlight the special meaning of religious holidays for social activities as well as religious activities. Within religious activities, attending religious services and religious and spiritual meditation stand out for the period of the holidays. We must point out that around the time of the main holidays only a small part of the population renews their wardrobe. On the other hand, this period is a great opportunity for rest and relaxation.

Separately, we assess the meaning of the main religious holidays for the persons who fasted or not. Of the total persons interviewed, 52.7% said they fasted (for the entire period or a section of it). For this category, we assess to what degree they practice certain categories of fast. The results highlight an important category of people which practice church fasting.

Assessing the types of fast for the fasting category of respondents

Table 3

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Always	Not applicable
Classic fasting (not black. Without meat/ alcohol/milk, etc)	10.7	14.7	22.0	23.2	19.2	10.3
Black fasting (non-alcoholic beverages)	55.1	17.8	8.6	8.4		10.0
On Wednesdays and Fridays	4.9	12.1	21.1	29.8	21.7	10.3
Easter fasting	0.4				76.4	23.2
Christmas fasting	0.4				76.1	23.5
Other fasts	15.7	14.7	22.3	7.8	19.1	20.3

In order to establish whether there are differences between the people who fast and those who don't in understanding the significance of the main religious holidays, we test ANOVA. We compare the means for each of the ten variables registered at the level of the people who fast and who don't. The means for the two categories, the value of F statistic and the test decision are presented below.

ANOVA in order to establish whether there are differences between the people who fast and those who don't

Table 4

	Mean at the level of the fasting category	Mean at the level of the non-fasting category	F statistic	Test decision
Religious activities				
Religious and spiritual mediation	3.75	2.79	99.6	There are significant differences
Confession	3.47	2.09	209.4	There are significant differences
Attending religious services	3.89	2.77	167.8	There are significant differences
Charity and other good deeds	3.35	2.99	19.1	There are significant differences
Social activities				
Festive meals	3.22	3.24	0.2	There are no significant differences
Parties with close people	3.29	3.38	1.0	There are no significant differences
Extended family reunions	3.22	3.20	0.02	There are no significant differences
Commercial and relaxation activities				
Renewing wardrobe				
Additional expenses	3.06	3.15	0.6	There are no significant differences
Excellent periods for rest and relaxation	3.39	3.31	0.7	There are no significant differences

The results show the following:

- For the variables in the "religious activities" section, there are significant differences between the two categories of respondents;

- The differences between the two groups of people are significant only if we consider three out of the four variables included in the “social activities” section defined for understanding the significance of the religious holidays.

- Relative to the two variables included in the section of “commercial and relaxing activities” there are no significant differences between the two groups of respondents.

Within the study, we inserted a question intended to evaluate in what measure the interviewed persons are religiously active or not (religious practice consists of attending church services, living according to the principles of the church, financial donations, etc). The distribution of the answers to this question is presented in the table below. The results show an important weight of the people who live by their religion.

The distribution of respondents based on their practicing religion

Table 5

Answer	Yes	No
Weight (%)	55.1	44.9

We analyzed the significance of the main religious holidays on the two new groups of respondents: those who practice religion (55.1%) and those who don't practice religion (44.9%). For each characteristic, we compute the average level of appreciations and the value of computed F statistic in order to verify if the two means are equal.

**ANOVA in order to establish whether there are significant differences
between the people who practice religion and those who don't in
understanding the main religious holidays**

Table 6

	The mean for the practicing category	The mean for the non- practicing category	F statistic	Test decision
Religious activities				
Religious and spiritual mediation	3.88	2.25	166.9	There are significant differences
Confession	3.36	2.64	128.2	There are significant differences
Attending religious services	4.08	2.94	341.6	There are significant differences
Charity and other good deeds	3.44	3.27	40.9	There are significant differences
Social activities				
Festive meals	3.17	3.27	1.3	There are no significant differences
Parties with close people	3.19	3.45	8.7	There are significant differences
Extended family reunions	3.20	3.19	0.08	There are no significant differences
Commercial and relaxation activities				
Renewing wardrobe	2.06	2.37	15.5	There are significant differences
Additional expenses	3.06	3.12	0.4	There are no significant differences
Excellent periods for rest and relaxation	3.33	3.36	0.1	There are no significant differences

The results allow us to make some comments:

1. For the variables in the “religious activities” section we notice significant difference between practicing and non-practicing categories in the sense of the definition given in the questionnaire

2. For two of the four variables in the “social activities” section there are significant differences between the two groups. Generally, the people who don't practice religion give a greater importance to parties with close persons and to renewing their wardrobe in the period of the main religious holidays. On the other hand, the practice of festive meals and family reunions are just as seldom in both categories.

3. Relative to the two variables included in the “commercial and relaxation” section, there are no significant differences between the two groups of respondents.

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Conclusions

The results show significant differences between the persons who fast and who don't relative to characteristics regarding religious activities in understanding the main religious holidays. Significant differences between the two groups of persons are not shown when taking into consideration social, commercial and relaxing activities.

Significant differences are also noticed between the people who practice religion and those who don't relative to certain variables used in order to assess the significance of the main religious holidays. Between the two categories there are significant differences relative to: religious and spiritual meditation, confession, attending religious services, charity and other good deeds, spending time with close friends and renewing wardrobe.

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