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RELIGIOUS GIVING IN ROMANIA

INTRODUCTION

Religious giving is a topic which was studied almost exclusively in the North-American sociological space. We found a lot of research of American social scientists regarding charitable giving to secular and religious non-profit organizations. But we found fewer articles on this topic in Europe and in Romania in particular. That is why we chose to focus on the practice of religious giving in Romania.

It is very curious that such a complex phenomenon was studied relatively less until recently in our country. There are many articles of Romanian scholars regarding religious participation, belief in God, belief in After Life, the linkages between the church and the state, the religious market, the ethnic minorities' religious participation but searching the internet we didn't find any article on religious giving. The only article on this topic we know about it is the contribution of one of the two authors of this paper. Olah (2016) studied religious giving using the social data from a local research in the city of Oradea, Romania.

We could ask what would be the motivation of those who offer money to the church. This is a very provocative question for the social scientists. The first explanation that we have in our mind is connected to beliefs about the After Life. Money offered to the church would be a good investment when one would like a place in Heaven. But maybe people offer money to

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the church for a better life on the earth. They believe that this money would be an investment which would attract luck, better health for them and their families and also professional success. But the image of one who gives money to the church could be important in the eyes of the community as well.

The aim of our paper is the building of an explanatory model of religious giving in Romania. In our analysis we will explore a data base corresponding to a Romanian national sample from 2011. In this research Romanians were questioned regarding their religious behavior and between the many questions there was one regarding religious giving. This was the starting point for our analysis.

1. RELIGIOUS MARKET AND RELIGIOSITY IN ROMANIA

Romania is a country with a Greek-Orthodox affiliation for the most part of the population. In the 2011 national census 86% of Romanians declared themselves as Orthodox. The rest of 14% of our national religious market are shared by the Roman-Catholics, Greek-Catholics, Protestants and Neo-Protestants. There are also small percentages of Muslims and Jewish people. The Herfindahl-Hirschman index (HHI) of the Romanian religious market is around 0.7462 indicating a high degree of concentration and it could be considered less competitive (Ungureanu, 2014). We would like to mention that this index has values between 0 and 1 where 0 indicates a free market and 1 a market with a very weak competition.

Under the rule of the Romanian Communist Party after the Second World War all religious denominations were affected. Quite a few churches and monasteries were closed and the religious practice decreased significantly. But the Orthodox Romanian Church had a special situation because it found a *modus vivendi* with the communist power which assured it the survival without many losses (Voicu, 2007).

In the first decade after the fall of Communism Romania had the highest increase of religious practice in Europe, the variation between 1993 and 1999 being 15%. In this period the religious practice increased from 30% (almost similar to other communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe) to 45% (Voicu, 2007).

The place of Romania is not between the European champions of religious practice in the public space. But if we look on the other dimension, that of religious practice in the private space Romania has one of the highest places in Europe. In 2000, 76% of Romanians used to pray one time a week.

Values close to that of Romania had only been recorded in Malta, Poland and Ireland (Voicu, 2007).

2. EXAMINING THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE ON RELIGIOUS GIVING

There are a lot of research papers focused on religious giving but these are circumscribed to the North-American social science space. One of the most quoted authors in the economic literature of religion, Laurence Iannaconne formulated the model of strictness, which considers that strictness (the prohibition of alcohol and smoking, dressing with distinctive clothes) makes churches stronger by eliminating the free-riders, those who lack commitment and stimulates participation among those who remain (Iannconne, 1994).

In a similar way, using structural equation models, Finke, Bahr and Scheitle consider that exclusive congregations generate higher levels of financial contributions through belief, requirements and networks of monitoring. When combined with the size of the congregation, income and denomination affiliation the theoretical model fits the data quite well and explains a high level of the variance (Finke, Bahr & Scheitle, 2006).

In a book published in 1996, Dean Hoge considered that high family income, the high level of church commitment, the evangelical theology, the planning of annual contribution and the small size of the congregation influence positively the absolute contribution.

In another book on the same topic, Sharon Miller discovered that those who speak on contributions behind the feeling of responsibility and obligation to their church contribute less than those who offer the love for God behind obedience and scripture, or to meet the needs of others (Miller, 1999).

In a research paper published in 2007, Jared Peifer tested hypotheses derived from the religious meaning of the giver, a rational choice perspective and the sense of solidarity one feels. He found that high levels of religiosity have a strong impact of giving, rational choice hypotheses produce mixed results and the solidarity impact is confirmed.

In an article published in 2007, James and Sharpe tested the U-shaped income-giving profile, where those in the lower and higher income brackets give higher percentages of income to charity. Examining the data from 16,442 American households the authors found clear evidence of a U-shaped relationship. The author found the explanation that the highly committed, lower income households are wealthier than other members of their income

classification, in part reflecting the presence of lower-income, higher-asset, retirement-aged households (James and Sharpe, 2007).

In another article from 2008, Francesca Borgonovi examined to what extent religious context influences giving. Using a sample of counties in the United States of America and a multi-level analysis model Borgonovi found that religious pluralism is directly and positively associated with religious volunteering, while the association is not statistically significant for giving.

In a research paper from 2013, Corcoran applied the principles from social exchange theory to religious behavior arguing that the same mechanisms that reduce uncertainty in social exchanges also reduce uncertainty in religious exchanges resulting higher levels of religious commitment. Corcoran found a positive relationship between certainty and religious giving and showed that evangelical Protestants have higher levels of contribution compared to most religious affiliations.

In a draft paper from 2016, Olah used a logistic regression model analyzing the data from an urban sample in a North Western Romanian city. He found that the only predictor which is significant with religious giving is the income, but there is a reversed U-shape between income and religious giving. There is a big difference between the Romanian situation and the American results. Those from the middle deciles of income seem to contribute more than those from lower and higher deciles (Olah, 2016).

In this study we investigated the practice of religious giving at a higher scale, using a larger sample form all regions of Romania. We considered that religious practices such as church attendance and variables regarding religious beliefs would have a significant linear relationship with religious giving in Romania. Also, we looked at the relationship between religious giving and several demographic variables.

3. Method

In this study we hypothesized that religious giving is adequately explained by demographic variables, most important of which are age, background, and income level. Also, we hypothesized that religious giving would be linearly linked to religious practices and beliefs, most important of which are church attendance and importance of God in people's lives. Finally, we considered that the Herfindahl-Hirschman index calculated for the religious marketplace would play a significant role in religious giving.

Our data is derived from the Soros Foundation Romania (http://www. fundatia.ro/baze-de-date/religie-şi-comportament-religios, 2016).

In our study we were only interested in analyzing Cristian confessions, thus we excluded participants from the database that were non Cristian and also followers of Cristian confessions that were poorly represented (less than 20 participants). Also we excluded participants who had missing values for the dependent variable (religious giving).

Overall we used a total of 2088 participants with a mean age of 47.98 years, and a standard deviation of 17.93 (the minimum value was 18 years and a maximum 93 years). The age means and standard deviations by gender are presented in table 1 and detailed demographic data regarding our final sample are offered in Tables 2 through 7.

Table 1

Distribution of participants by gender

Gender	N	percent	mean	s.d.
1. Male	969	46.41%	47.02	17.39
2. Female	1119	53.59%	48.82	18.35

The variables of interest in our study were: (1) importance of God, (2) religious attendance, (3) belief in hell, (4) income level, (5) gender, (6) age, (7) educational level, (8) marital status, (9) number of children, (10) background, (11) religious confession, and (12) HH index. The exact manner in which the participants were asked to respond to items regarding each of these variables is presented in Appendix.1.

Table 2

Description of participants by religious confession

Religious confession	n	percent
1. Orthodox	884	42.34%
2. Neoprotestant	355	17.00%
3. Roman-catholic	314	15.04%
4. Greek-catholic	272	13.03%
5. Protestant	263	12.60%

Table 3

Description of participants by level of education

Level of education	n	percent
1. low	435	21.06%
2. medium	1232	59.63%
3. superior	399	19.31%

Table 4

Description of participants by marital status

Marital status	n	percent
1. married	1240	60.34%
2. unmarried	815	39.66%

Table 5

Description of participants by region

Region	n	percent
1. Ardeal	734	35.15%
2. Banat Crisana MM	555	26.58%
3. Bucuresti	75	3.59%
4. Dobrogea	48	2.30%
5. Moldova	309	14.80%
6. Muntenia	235	11.25%
7. Oltenia	132	6.32%

Table 6

Description of participants by religious attendance

Religious attendance	n	percent
1. more than once a week	421	21.79%
2. once a week	666	34.47%
3. at least once a month	373	19.31%
4. at holydays	472	24.43%

Description of participants by background

Background	n	percent
1. Rural	910	43.58%
2. Urban	1178	56.42%

4. RESULTS

Based on our hypotheses we constructed a regression model in which we included all our predictor variables for religious giving. This model (Model 1) was statistically significantly better than the null model (table 8), however several regression coefficients for the predictor variables were not (table 9).

Model fit indices for Model 1

chi-square	df	p
223.16	18	<0.0001

Our results reveal that for the Romanian population a series of variables, such as belief in hell, income level, gender, number of children and religious confession are not important predictors of religious giving. For us the biggest surprise perhaps is the fact that income does not significantly predict whether a person will practice religious giving. Based on the previous findings of the North-American researchers and the findings of Olah (2016) we expected some sort of relationship between these variables, however none was found. It would seem that for all levels of income the proportion between those who give money to the church and those who do not is the approximately the same.

Also, it was found that in the case of the major Christian confessions there is no difference in the practice of religious giving. The proportion between those who participate and those who do not is statistically similar for all of them. This was somewhat a surprise since some confessions require a monthly payment or some sort of fee in order to be considered a member of that confession and others do not. It may be possible however that in the case of those who do not require fees of participation some sort of payment to be done by means of charity actions or on major holydays or events such as marriages and funerals.

Regression coefficients for all the predictor variables in the model

	Coef.	**S.E.**	**Wald Z**	**p**
1. Intercept	–0.3954	0.5734	–0.69	0.4904
2. Importance of God	1.0152	0.1783	5.7	<0.0001
3. Religious attendance: once a week	–0.3795	0.2623	–1.45	0.1479
4. Religious attendance: at least once a month	–0.6137	0.2901	–2.12	0.0344
5. Religious attendance: at holydays	–0.6982	0.2853	–2.45	0.0144
6. Belief in hell	0.3735	0.234	1.6	0.1104
7. Income level	0.0437	0.0474	0.92	0.3565
8. Gender of respondent	–0.0545	0.1606	–0.34	0.7345
9. Age of respondent	0.0338	0.0056	6.06	<0.0001
10. Medium educational level	0.7516	0.2331	3.22	0.0013
11. Superior educational level	0.8166	0.2933	2.78	0.0054
12. Marital status	0.4441	0.1735	2.56	0.0105
13. Number of children	0.0709	0.0734	0.97	0.3342
14. Background	–0.4632	0.1692	–2.74	0.0062
15. Religious confession: Neoprotestant	–0.2666	0.2995	–0.89	0.3735
16. Religious confession: Roman-catholic	–0.3854	0.2606	–1.48	0.1392
17. Religious confession: Greek-catholic	–0.0531	0.3053	–0.17	0.862
18. Religious confession: Protestant	–0.1444	0.3015	–0.48	0.632
19. HHI index	–1.7717	0.3725	–4.76	<0.0001
Notes: The reference level for Religious attendance was: more than once a week				
The reference level for Educational level was: Low educational level				
The reference level for Religious confession was: Orthodox				

Our next step was to construct a new model (Model 2) in which we retained only the statistically significant predictor variables from Model 1. This new model is also statistically significant compared to the null model, which indicates a good model fit (table 10), and all of the retained predictor variables have statistically significant regression coefficients (table 11).

Model fit indices for Model 2

chi-square	df	p
257.61	9	<0.0001
McFadden's pseudo R^2		0.16
Nagelkerke pseudo R^2		0.224

Based on the pseudo R^2 of the model we can conclude that the predictor variables account for between 16% and 22.4% of religious giving in the case of the Romanian population. The most important predictor was the HH index which has a negative relationship with the dependent variable followed by the importance of God, which has a positive relationship with the criterion variable.

Regression coefficients for Model 2

	Coef.	S.E.	Wald Z	p
1. Intercept	–0.0016	0.3349	0	0.9962
2. Importance of God	1.0196	0.1506	6.77	<0.0001
3. Religious attendance: at least once a month	–0.5411	0.1803	–3	0.0027
4. Religious attendance: at holydays	–0.5585	0.1734	-3.22	0.0013
5. Age of respondent	0.0324	0.0046	6.97	<0.0001
6. Medium educational level	0.6242	0.2129	2.93	0.0034
7. Superior educational level	0.6823	0.255	2.68	0.0075
8. Marital status	0.5321	0.1462	3.64	0.0003
9. Background	–0.423	0.1508	–2.81	5.00E-03
10. HHI index	–1.7402	0.2659	–6.54	<0.0001
Notes: The reference level for Religious attendance was: more than once a week				
The reference level for Educational level was: Low educational level				
The reference level for Religious confession was: Orthodox				

In our final step of the analysis of the predictor variables we looked at the odds ratios in order to estimate the increase or the decrease in the chance of religious giving (table 12). Our results suggest that if people responded that God has an increased importance in their life (compared to those who

responded that God had only some importance in their life) the chance that they would participate in religious giving was increased by 177%.

Table 12

Odds ratios for the coefficients in Model 2

	Change factor	Chances of change	Direction of chance
(Intercept)	0.998412		
1. Importance of God	2.7721573	177%	increase
2. Religious attendance: at least once a month	0.5821072	41.8%	decrease
3. Religious attendance: at holydays	0.5720796	42.8%	decrease
4. Age of respondent	1.0329475	3.2%	increase
5. Medium educational level	1.8666767	86.6%	increase
6. Superior educational level	1.9784642	97.8%	increase
7. Marital status	1.7025162	70.2%	increase
8. Background	0.6550717	34.5%	decrease
9. HHI index	0.1754902	82.5%	decrease
Notes: The reference level for Religious attendance was: more than once a week			
The reference level for Educational level was: Low educational level			
The reference level for Religious confession was: Orthodox			

A religious attendance of at least once a month compared to that of more than once a week decreased the chance of participation to religious giving by 41.8% and an attendance of only at holydays decreased the chance of participation to religious giving by 42.8%.

Each additional year of age increased the probability of religious giving by 3.2%. In the case of educational level, it was revealed that the chance of participation to religious giving increased by 86.6% if the educational level was medium compared to that of low level and it increased by 97.8% if the educational level was high compared to that of low level. The marital status of the person was associated with an increase in the chance of religious giving, being married increased this chance by 70.2%. Background was also associated with the chance of participating in religious giving in the sense that being from an urban background decreased these chances by 34.5% (compared to the rural background).

Finally, the HHI index corresponding to the 'religious market' of the various regions in Romania was also associated with the chance of participating in the practice of religious giving. Thus for each increase of a unit of the HHI index there is an 82.5% chance of decrease in the participation to religious giving. This indicates that the more a region is dominated by a certain religious confession the less people will participate in religious giving.

CONCLUSIONS

What is very surprising in our logistic regression model is the lack of correlation between income and religious giving. Another surprise is the lack of significant association between religious confession and religious giving. The results are very different than those found by the North-American scholars proving that Romania (Eastern Europe) and North-America are very different social soils. The most important predictors of religious giving in Romania seem to be 'The Importance of God', the 'Herfindahl-Hirschman Index' and the 'Educational level'. The social portrait of the religious giver in Romania could be summarized as superior or medium educated, attending the religious service weekly, married, from a rural background and for whom God is very important. If the medium American religious giver seems to be from the lower level income deciles the Romanian case looks different. Our case indicates that Romanians from the middle deciles are the most important religious donors. The high level of correlation between the HH index and religious giving could be interpreted in the sense that a high degree of religious market concentration is associated with a lower level of religious giving and a free religious market is associated with a higher level of religious giving. This is a very interesting conclusion and we believe that this HHI index could be successfully tested on different other markets. But the most important result is that market counts even regarding religiosity. The fact that Transylvania and Banat-Crisana regions are the champions of religious giving in Romania could be associated with the fact that in these regions there is a higher ethnic and religious diversity and pluralism in comparison with other regions from Eastern and Southern Romania.

The major limitation of our study is the fact that it is transversal (not longitudinal) and that the data corresponds to the year 2011. Unfortunately it was the only data base where a question regarded religious giving was present. Another limitation is that we do not have qualitative data for a deeper understanding of this very complex phenomenon of religious giving.

Perhaps the most surprising and interesting finding is the high level of correlation between the HHI and religious giving. This finding reinforces the idea that religious markets based analyses are not only limited to North America where there is a separation between Church and State but even in Romania where the historical alliance between the Greek Orthodox Church and the State is very important in the social landscape and where Churches benefit from important finance resources from the State.

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APPENDIX 1

Response modalities for items that measure the variables in the study

Variables	Responses	
1. Importance of God	categorical variable	two categories
2. Religious attendance	ordinal variable	four levels
3. Belief in hell	categorical variable	two categories
4. Income level	ordinal variable	ten point scale
5. Gender	categorical variable	two categories
6. Age	numerical variable	–
7. Educational level	ordinal variable	three categories
8. Marital status	categorical variable	two categories
9. Number of children	numerical variable	–
10. Background	categorical variable	two categories
11. Religious confession	categorical variable	five categories
12. HHI Index	numerical variable	–

RELIGIOUS GIVING IN ROMANIA

Summary

The paper analyzes the practice of religious giving in Romania. In the first part the authors examine the recent scientific literature regarding the predictors of religious giving. Secondly, they quantitatively explore a data base of religious behavior corresponding to a Romanian national sample from 2011 using the R statistical software. Interpretation of the obtained results and conclusions are presented in the last part of the study.

DATKI NA KOŚCIÓŁ W RUMUNII

Streszczenie

Artykuł analizuje praktykę datków kościelnych w Rumunii. W pierwszej części autorzy analizują nową literaturę naukową dotyczącą predyktorów datków na kościół. Następnie, ilościowo badają bazę danych zachowań religijnych odpowiadających rumuńskiej próbie krajowej od 2011 roku przy użyciu oprogramowania statystycznego R. Interpretacja uzyskanych wyników i wnioski zostały przedstawione w ostatniej części opracowania.

ЦЕРКОВНЫЕ ПОЖЕРТВОВАНИЯ В РУМЫНИИ

Резюме

В статье содержится анализ практики церковных пожертвований в Румынии. В первой части авторы проводят анализ новой научной литературы, касающейся предикторов церковных пожертвований. Затем производится количественный анализ базы данных религиозного поведения, которые соответствуют национальному румынскому эксперименту за 2011 год. Данный анализ проводится при помощи статистического программного обеспечения R. Истолкование полученных результатов и выводы представлены в заключительной части исследования.