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For Faith and Country: religiosity and public sector employment in Russia

Abstract

This study attempts to assess the link between religiosity and the government career preference in Russia. I use two large-scale surveys (HSE's RLMS and European Social Survey) to demonstrate a strong link between employment in government and declared religiosity. Based on ESS data the link is 6 times stronger for Russia than for other European states. I also use primary data from a student survey from a Russian university (N=804) to show that religiosity is positively linked with declared government career preference among students. The link between religiosity and government career preference is partially mediated by public service motivation (PSM). Religious people also tend to trust the government more than non-religious people. These findings indicate that religion is an important factor in choosing a career in government and that its importance in Russia has been growing. The underlying mechanism of this link requires further investigation.

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. (Romans 13:1, NIV)

Russia has been witnessing an increase in religiosity (Evans and Northmore-Ball, 2012, Evans and Mankowska, 2011). According to Marsh (2011) the Orthodox Church in Russia “stands next to the state as its own equal” and is claiming to be the source of the new national identity (Agadjanian, 2001, Gerlach, 2015). Certain public spheres are experiencing “desecularization” (Lisovskaya and Karpov, 2010). At the same time, there is a growing preference among young people to choose a career in government (VTsIOM, 2012, Nezhina and Barabashev, 2017). In this context, it is particularly interesting to examine the role of religion in choosing to work for the government.

Public employees have been consistently shown to be more spiritual than non-public employees on American samples (Bruce, 2000, Houston and Cartwright, 2007, Houston et al., 2008, Freeman and Houston, 2010). Perceiving one’s career as “a calling” rather than a job has been actively studied (Dik and Duffy, 2009, Elangovan et al., 2010, Duffy et al., 2012, Steger et al., 2010). Public service as a calling is a theme linked to the wide Public Service Motivation literature (Houston and Cartwright, 2007, Vandenabeele, 2008). In Russia, studies on PSM have only recently started emerging (Jaekel and Borshchevskiy, 2017, Jaekel, 2017, Nezhina and Barabashev, 2017).

The Russian case is of interest here in two respects: 1) the religion is different; 2) the state is different. First, most studies so far have studied the Western world, i.e. mainly Protestant and Catholic Christianity. Second, the Western State is not the Russian State. The link between the two is worth examining.

Hypotheses

The core hypothesis: **H1**: Religiosity is positively related to government career preference^{1,2};
H2: Work Values (PSM) mediate the relationship between religiosity and government career preference; **H3**: Religious people tend to trust the government more than non-religious people.

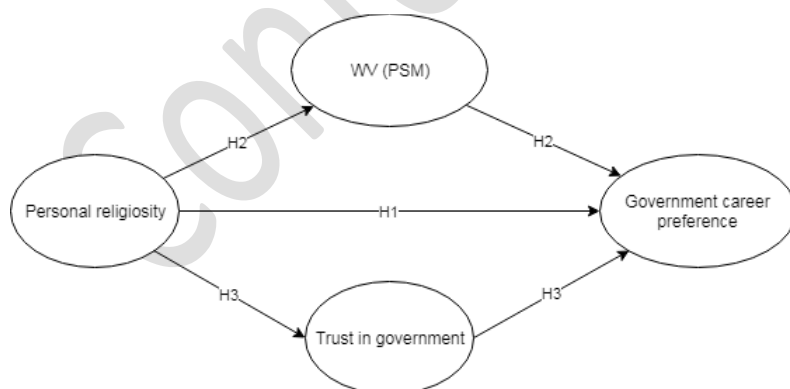


Figure 1. Link between religiosity and government career preference/employment. Hypotheses.

¹ Our findings from a student survey support this hypothesis (for survey methodology see GANS-MORSE, J., KALGIN, A., KLIMENKO, A. & YAKOVLEV, A. 2017. Motivations for Public Service in Corrupt States: Evidence from Post-Soviet Russia. *Series: Public and social policy*. National Research University Higher School of Economics.).

² Preliminary analysis of European Social Survey Round 7 data shows that higher religiosity is observed among people working at government organizations in both Russia and Europe. However, in the Russian case the link is much more salient, inviting the question of the influence of the Church-State relationship. Items used so far do not allow for personal/institutional separation.

PSM, religiosity and the public sector career: Preliminary findings³

Our survey at a Russian university utilized a questionnaire with 16-item PSM scale and 3 questions on religiosity (for methodology, see (Gans-Morse et al., 2017)).

To our knowledge, this is the first time the full PSM scale has been used in Russian.

The questions on religiosity included:

- 1) Do you belong to a religion or religious denomination? (Yes/No)
- 2) To which religious denomination do you belong? (list of major world religions)
- 3) How often do you attend religious ceremonies?⁴

Results on religiosity are of high interest:

- 1) PSM index is highly correlated with the choice of public sector career, however, this is due only to a strong effect of Attraction to public service (APS) section of the index. Other sub-indices are not predicting public sector career choice (Table 1);
- 2) The department of public administration scores the highest in terms of the share of students belonging to a religion (**Ошибка! Источник ссылки не найден.**);
- 3) Measures of religiosity demonstrate high correlation with the PSM index, and particularly with its two components: Commitment to public values (CPV) and Self-Sacrifice (SS), (Table 2);
- 4) Measures of religiosity are significantly correlated with the desire to choose a public sector career (Table 1).

In terms of the percentage of religious students, PA is the leading department among those surveyed with 56% religious students (lowest – 36% for dept of mathematics).

Table 1. PSM, religiosity and public career preference index
Dependent variable – Dichotomous career preference index

Attraction to public service (APS)	,191**
Commitment to public values (CPV)	,001
Compassion (COM)	-,004
Self-Sacrifice (SS)	-,089
Frequency of religious services	,122*
Student of PA department	,319***
N	803
R2	,238

Standardized Beta coefficients reported

* $p < 0,05$, ** $p < 0,01$, *** $p < 0,001$

Control variables: age; gender; class year; GPA; EGE average score; region; city size.

³ We thank the Northwestern University Equality Globalization and Development Studies program for financial support and Evgeniia Mikriukova for research assistance. The methodology of the survey is explicated in the working paper:

⁴ Frequency of attendance of religions services has been often used as a proxy measure of religiosity HILL, P. C. & PARGAMENT, K. I. 2003. Advances. in the conceptualization and measurement of religion and spirituality - Implications for physical and mental health research. *American Psychologist*, 58, 64-74. Due to the limitations of space we chose this single measure as the most commonly used and simple.

Table 2. PSM and religiosity

<u>Dependent variable – frequency of religious services</u>	
Attraction to public service (APS)	-,096
Commitment to public values (CPV)	,146*
Compassion (COM)	-,046
Self-Sacrifice (SS)	,213***
Student of PA department	,148**
<hr/>	
N	803
R2	,107

Standardized Beta coefficients reported

* $p < 0,05$, ** $p < 0,01$, *** $p < 0,001$

Control variables: age; gender; class year; GPA; EGE average score; region; city size.

It is interesting to note that religiosity is at the same time correlated with public sector career preference and with two of the four components of PMS (CPV and SS), but not with APS, which is the only component of PSM that is significantly associated with career choice. This may indicate that the motivation structure of religious students who indicate a preference towards the public sector career may differ from the motivation of non-religious students.

The only study that has examined the link between PSM and religiosity so far appears to be Clerkin et al. (2009). This study focused on PSM as a predictor of volunteering behaviour.

To our knowledge, our study is the first to examine the link between public sector career choice, PSM and religiosity. Certainly so for the post-Soviet countries. Our findings appear of high interest in the context of the changing nature of the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state. The significant role of religiosity in predicting public sector career choice among future civil servants may indicate the rise of a new type of a bureaucrat – one that is motivated by traditional cultural values.

Our findings are also of high interest for those studying public administration education, since we find that religion appears to be a significant factor in choosing public administration as an educational path.

European Social Survey

These results are consistent with data from European Social Survey (ESS). ESS Rounds 3 to 7 (2006-14) included Russia and rounds 4 to 7 included a variable on the type of organization (public or private).

Using ESS Rounds 4-7, based on variable TPORGWK (What type of organisation work/worked for) we construct a binary public-private job variable, where 1 indicates public sector jobs and 0 – private sector jobs (and other)⁵.

Results for Russia and other European countries point in the same direction – greater religiosity is associated with a higher propensity of working in the public sector. However, for Russia results are much more salient: the magnitude of the effect for the frequency of prayer is six

⁵ Public sector includes: Central or local government, Other public sector (such as education and health), A state owned enterprise; Private and Other includes: A private firm, Self-employed, Other

times as large for the Russian sample compared to all-European sample. R^2 is also much higher for the Russian sample.

Table 3. Multivariate regression results. Public sector employment for Russia and Europe 21 regressed on religiosity

	Russia	Europe 21⁶
DV – works for public sector organisation⁷	Std.Beta	Std.Beta
Belonging to particular religion or denomination ⁸	,013	-,008*
How religious are you ⁹	,046**	,021***
How often attend religious services apart from special occasions ¹⁰	-,040**	,032***
How often pray apart from at religious services ¹¹	,132***	,023***
N	7537	162727
R2	,022	,004

European Social Survey. Rounds 4-7. For source see References section. * $p < 0,05$, ** $p < 0,01$, *** $p < 0,001$

Interestingly, the frequency of attendance at religious services and frequency of prayer are pointing in the opposite directions for Russia, whereas for Europe they are concordant. (Frequency of attendance changes its sign when frequency of prayer is added to the regression, whereas without frequency of prayer variable it is significant and positive). This may indicate a curious structure of religiosity in Russia where personal spirituality and observance of the rituals are not concordant. This raises a question about the nature of religiosity in Russia (some have described it as “lukewarm” religiosity (Evans and Mankowska, 2011). Declared belonging to a religion has low significance in both samples.

It is worth noting that the most statistically significant predictor for both samples is the frequency of prayer. For Russia, the effect of this variable is 6 times greater in magnitude than in Europe (.132 and .023, respectively).

⁶ Europe 20 + Israel

⁷ Binary variable; 1 = public; 0 = private/other

⁸ 1 = yes, 0 = no

⁹ 0 = not at all religious; 10 = very religious

¹⁰ 1 = never; 7 = every day

¹¹ 1 = never; 7 = every day

Dynamics of the effect

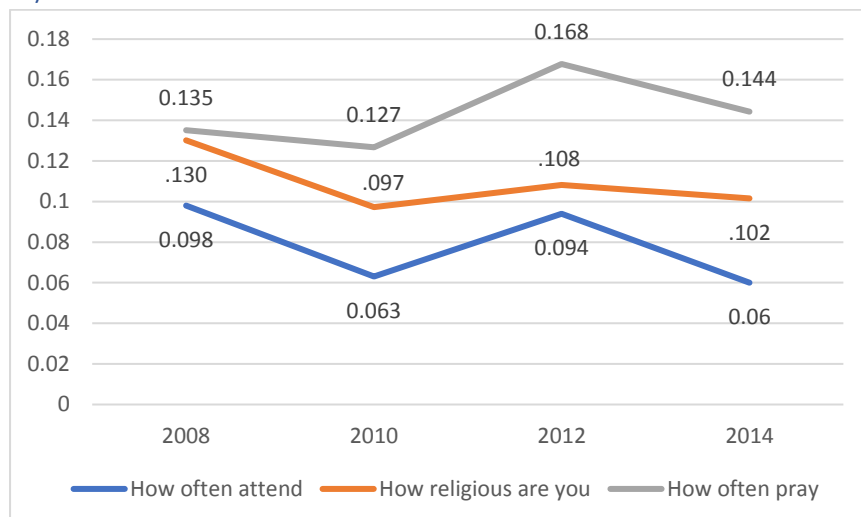


Figure 2. Dynamics of regression coefficient for 3 measures of religiosity in Russia. DV – public sector work

According to ESS the magnitude of the link between three measures of religiosity and public sector employment stayed more or less stable between 2008 and 2014 (Figure 2). For all rounds of ESS the statistical is at $<0,01$ or $<0,001$ level (see Appendix 2). Average total N = 8044.

Analysis of RLMS data (Russia)

Analysis of RLMS¹² data collected by HSE between 1998 and 2017 shows an increase in the magnitude of regression coefficient and fall in p-values. Unfortunately, religion was not included in the survey between 2004 and 2010, however, there is data for 1998-2003 and 2011-2016.

The graph below shows the magnitude of regression coefficient and p-values (Figure 3).

Dependent variable: "Is your enterprise/organisation owned by the government (fully or partially)?"¹³.

Independent variable: "What is your attitude towards religion?"¹⁴.

For the overall dataset standardized B = 0,009, $p= 0,025$, N = 68 889

¹² Source: "Russia Longitudinal Monitoring survey, RLMS-HSE», conducted by National Research University "Higher School of Economics" and OOO "Demoscope" together with Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Institute of Sociology RAS. (RLMS-HSE web sites: <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/rlms-hse>, <http://www.hse.ru/org/hse/rlms>)

¹³ Yes = 1; No = 0

¹⁴ 1 – atheist, 2 – non-believer, 3 – more non-believer than believer, 4 – more believer than non-believer, 5 – believer

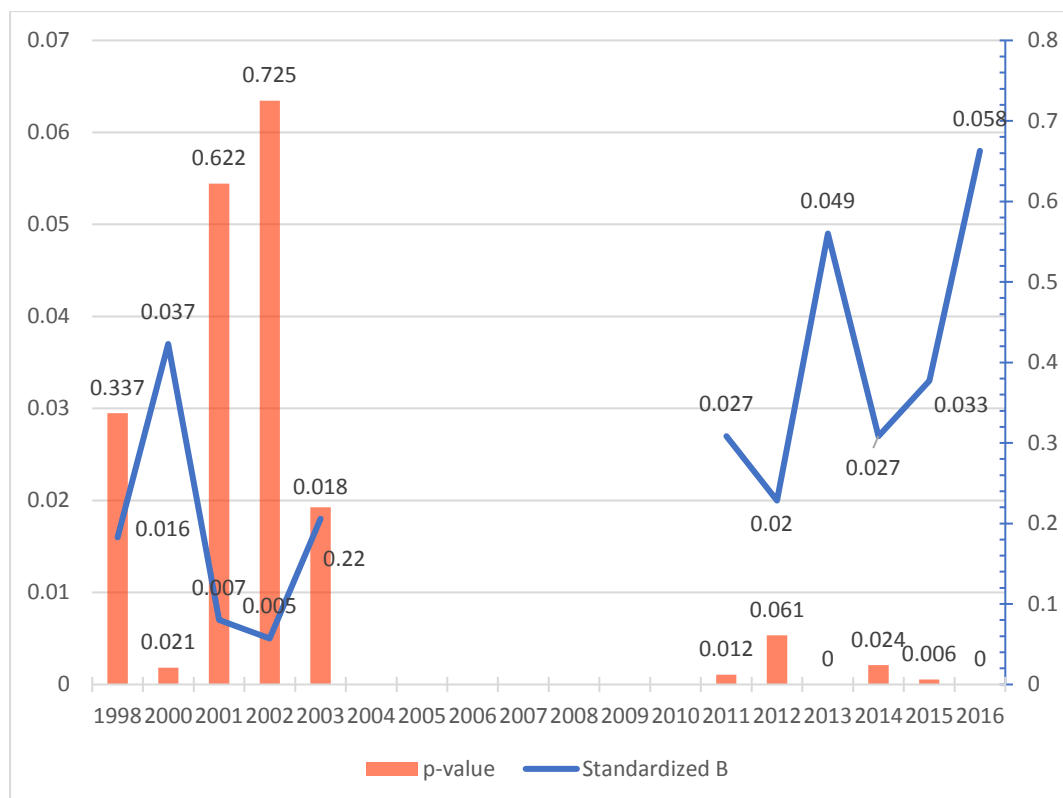


Figure 3. RLMS analysis. Dynamics of the regression coefficient and p-value. IV- attitude to religion. “What is your attitude to religion?”, DV – state-ownership of employer.

The link between religiosity and public-sector employment appears to be gaining strength in recent years. Religious people nowadays are more likely to be public sector employees than this was the case in early 2000-s.

The limitations of RLMS data does not allow for a straight-forward identification of civil servants and do not provide a break-down by various levels of government. The analysis presented above utilizes the items that indicates state ownership of the respondent’s employer. However, this criterion is very broad. 48.6% of respondents in the RLMS dataset indicate complete or partial state-ownership of their organisation (N=4283).

Civil servants may be identified via variable J4.1 (“In which sphere are you employed?”), which offers a category labelled “Organy upravlenia” (9). Using this variable one may hope to identify respondents working in government. The link between this variable and declared religiosity is statistically significant and positive ($B = 0.023$, $p=0.000$, $N_{total}=54001$, $N_{civ.servant}=1453$). However, the link between the measure of church attendance and civil service employment is not significant (there are only 161 valid cases for analysis of this link).

Trust in government

Religion and trust

Religion is correlated with some aspects of trust in government. The data, unfortunately, does not allow for regression of trust in government on the measure of church attendance (there is no overlap in survey waves). It does, however, allow for analysis of the link between declared religiosity and trust in government/other institutions.

Results are below:

Table 4. RLMS analysis. DV = “What is your attitude to religion?”. General population.

	Std.Coefficients		
	General population	Working in government ¹⁵	Employer owned by government
To what extent do you trust...			
The government of Russia	.069***	-.073	.006
the State Duma	-.018	.124	.020
the courts	.024	-.225†	-.024
the army	-.040**	.031	.024
the police	.044**	.191	-.007
the Russian banks	.016	.219†	.025
the foreign banks	-.017	.039	.044
the insurance companies	.010	-.123	.009
medium and small-sized business	-.018	-.229*	-.045
the political parties	.059***	.100	.044
N	10854	181	2539
R2	.015	.021	.004

RLMS. Combined dataset, all waves 1994-2016. † p < .1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

The results show that religious people from the general population trust the government, the police and the political parties significantly more. Meanwhile, they trust the army less than non-religious people.

However, among those employed by the government, this link disappears. There are only 181 valid cases after selecting those employed by “organy upravleniya”. Using the variable indicating state ownership of the employer, one gets 2539 valid cases. Among them there is also no link between religiosity and trust.

This may indicate that 1) somehow the link between religiosity and trust is different for people in the general population and those working in government; 2) those working in government answer the survey differently (possibly, less honestly or with greater social desirability bias). To test for the second hypothesis, it would be productive to conduct an IAT experiment¹⁶.

Government employment and trust

To test the second leg of Hypothesis 3 (the link between trust in government and public sector employment) I regress the measures of trust on government employment measure (J.4.1 category 9) and state-ownership measure (J23).

The results show that government employment (measured in this way) is not associated with greater trust for the government, whereas state-ownership is strongly and positively linked with trust in government and state institutions.

¹⁵ Selected using variable J4.1 “In what sphere are you employed?”. Category 9 “Organy upravleniya”.

¹⁶ <https://www.psychtoolkit.org/experiment-library/iat.html>

Table 5. The link between trust in government and government employment/state-ownership of employer.

	Std.coefficients	
	DV - Working in government ¹⁷	DV - Employer owned by government
To what extent do you trust....		
The government of Russia	.014	.049**
the State Duma	.014	.016
the courts	.059***	.041**
the army	-.032*	.003
the police	.015	.071***
the Russian banks	-.026†	.015
the foreign banks	.023	-.047***
the insurance companies	-.016	.023
medium and small-sized business	.018	-.138***
the political parties	-.013	.055***
N	9400	10592
R2	0.029	0.004

RLMS. Combined dataset, all waves 1994-2016. † $p < .1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

These results provide conditional support for Hypothesis 3. People in state-owned organisations do seem to trust the government more. However, this variable is extremely broad, as discussed previously. Civil servants (as measured by J.4.1 category 9) do not seem to exhibit higher trust for the government.

Further research with some more precisely defined variables is required to investigate this link.

Limitations

These findings are based on surveys that rely on declared religiosity and declared government employment/career preference. The observed link may be due to the fact that it may currently be socially desirable in Russia to declare religiosity as well as a propensity to work in government. The state and the Church are in a close symbiotic relationship and people who feel the need to conform to the mainstream ideology may identify as religious and government-oriented. The growing link may, therefore, indicate a strengthening willingness of people to conform to the religious and statist sentiment (or a growing societal pressure for it). This concern is particularly strong considering that in RLMS data no significant link was found between frequency of church-going and government ownership of the employer. More detailed analysis is needed.

Conclusion

It has been shown that several independent sources point to the existing strong link between declared religiosity and government employment. This link has been observed both among adults already employed and students preparing to seek employment. The link between religiosity and public sector employment in Russia is stronger than in Europe. The underlying mechanism requires further

¹⁷ Selected using variable J4.1 "In what sphere are you employed?". Category 9 "Organy upravleniya".

investigation. However, public service motivation provides one possible explanation. Religious people score higher on two elements of the PSM index: Self-Sacrifice and Commitment to Public Values. Religion may be linked with individuals' motivation structure and increase pro-social motivations. Religious people also tend to trust the government more than non-religious people. Higher trust in government is associated with working in a state-owned organisation, but not with being a civil servant (as measured in RLMS). However, the limitations of the currently available data do not allow for stricter separation between socially desirable answers and genuinely held beliefs. Identification of civil servants in currently existing datasets is also problematic.

Conference paper

Appendix 1. RLMS analysis

Table 6. RLMS analysis. Regression. IV- attitude to religion¹⁸, DV - state-ownership of job*

RLMS Wave	Year	Std.Beta
5-7	1994 -1997	N/a
8	1998	,016
9	2000	,037*
10	2001	,007
11	2002	,005
12	2003	,018
13-19	2004 -2010	N/a
20	2011	,027*
21	2012	,020†
22	2013	,049***
23	2014	,027*
24	2015	,033**
25	2016	,058***
Total	Total	,009*

† p<.1, * p < 0,05, ** p < 0,01, *** p < 0,001

Total N = 68 889

Appendix 2 European social Survey Waves 4-7¹⁹

Regression results. DV – public sector employment binary.

ESS Round	Year	How often attend		How religious are you		How often pray	
		Std.Beta	N	Std.Beta	N	Std.Beta	N
4	2008	,098***	2001	,130***	2057	,135***	1914
5	2010	,063**	2108	,097***	2145	,127***	2039
6	2012	,094***	1991	,108***	1990	,168***	1909
7	2014	,060**	2007	,102***	2021	,144***	1950
Total			8107		8213		7812

* p < 0,05, ** p < 0,01, *** p < 0,001

¹⁸ J72.18. Каково Ваше отношение к религии? (What is your attitude towards religion?)

¹⁹ For references – see Reference section at the end of the document.

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4. ESS Round 4: European Social Survey Round 4 Data (2008). Data file edition 4.4. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC.

RLMS

5. Source: "Russia Longitudinal Monitoring survey, RLMS-HSE», conducted by National Research University "Higher School of Economics" and OOO "Demoscope" together with Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Institute of Sociology RAS. (RLMS-HSE web sites: <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/rlms-hse>, <http://www.hse.ru/org/hse/rlms>)

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