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STRENGTH AND POSITIVITY OF RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION AS PREDICTORS OF THE ATTITUDE TOWARD ECONOMIC INVOLVEMENT AMONG ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND SUNNI MUSLIMS IN RUSSIA

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This study presents the results of empirical research on the relationship between strength and positivity of religious identification and attitudes towards economic behaviour in a group of Orthodox Christians and Sunni Muslims in Russia (N=820). In order to measure strength and positivity of religious identification, we constructed scales based on the theory of social identity. Attitudes toward models of economic behaviour were measured using methodology to measure economic attitudes based on the scenario approach. The results revealed that attitudes towards three models of economic behaviour form a single factor of economic involvement. In addition, generalized economic involvement was confirmed by a simultaneous CFA in both religious groups. In our study we found that strength and positivity of religious identification are differently associated with the attitudes toward economic involvement. Thus, it was concluded that the strength of religious identification is not conducive to attitudes reflecting economic involvement. Positivity of religious identification was found to have a positive effect on economic involvement attitudes. However, further analysis demonstrated that the relationship between positivity of religious identification and economic involvement had interfaith specifics: positivity of religious identification was positively related to the models of economic involvement only in the group of Christians, while in the group of Muslims, this relationship is insignificant. The results are discussed in terms of features of religious identification in these two groups.

JEL Classification: Z

Keywords: religious identification, strength of religious identification, positivity of religious identification, economic attitudes, models of economic behaviour, economic involvement, Orthodox Christians, Sunni Muslims.

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Introduction

Although research on the role of religion in human behaviour originated more than a century ago [Weber, 1978], the defining nature of religion in our lives still remains a controversial issue [Iannaccone, 1998].

However, religion as a socially sustained system of beliefs, values, norms, symbols, and practices [Cohen, 2002] continues to play an important role in the lives of people in most societies [Iannaccone, 1998; Parboteeah et al., 2003]. The present study examines the differences in the relationship between strength and positivity of religious identification, and models of economic behaviour. The relevance of the study is determined by several factors. First, the role of religious identification, which also functions as the factor of ethnic differentiation and integration, has increased in recent years. Second, the present study does not focus on macroeconomic and social problems but rather on social and economic attitudes and models of peoples' behaviour, which are often imbued with culture and eventually determine the socioeconomic development of a country.

The novelty of the study is the identification of the role of strength and positivity of religious identification on attitudes toward economic involvement.

Previous empirical research indicates that there is a stable relationship between religious affiliation and economic attitudes [Dana, 2009; Parboteeah et al. 2003; Hayward & Kemmelmeier, 2011]. Several studies suggest that religion has a regulatory effect on individual economic behaviour [Barro & McCleary, 2003; Benjamin et al. 2009; Putnam, 1993; Dana, 2009]. What is the nature of that effect? Answering this question, some studies indicate that religion is positively correlated with attitudes that favour the free market and its institutions. The results of a study conducted on a sample of representatives of six religious groups (Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists) reveal that religious people tend to have more trust towards others and the state, and are more likely to believe that market outcomes are fair. On the other hand religious people are less tolerant and less sympathetic to women's rights. Religiosity correlates with a higher emphasis on thrift, strong feelings of individual responsibility and a stronger belief that market outcomes are fair [Guiso, Sapienza & Zingales, 2003]. At the same time, other studies demonstrate that religion is seen as a source of conflicts which hinder effective management in different cultures [Parboteeah et al., 2009].

The question of exactly which psychological characteristics form the basis for the differences between religious and non-religious people and to what extent they may be manifested in the socioeconomic sphere were partly clarified in a study by Schwartz [1995],

where it was established that religiosity is negatively associated with the values of Achievement, Stimulation, and Self-Direction. This finding suggests that the opposition of self-enhancing, materialistic aspect of Achievement values to the Self-transcending anti-materialism of religious teachings may constitute a more important link between these values and religiosity.

A number of studies explain the positive relationship between religiosity and individual achievements by referring to the influence of religious norms [Ellison, 1991; Freeman, 1986]. In this context it should be emphasized that the majority of studies which examine the role of religious identification focus on major religions (such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism) without taking into account the divisions within these religions, each having different religious norms. Based on the results of a series of cross-denominational studies, Parboteeah, Paik and Cullen [2009] suggest that people belonging to all forms of Christianity share the same attitude to work. However, it was found that there are differences in values in relation to work in representatives of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Orthodoxy.

These empirical research results indicate that the analysis of the relationship between religious identification, and economic attitudes and perceptions requires a consideration of the features of beliefs of a particular religion. In Orthodoxy, this relationship has an antinomic character; from an Orthodox perspective, any economic activity may be both good and bad depending on "the motivation behind it, the purpose of the activity" [Koval', 1994:66]. Unlike Protestantism, Orthodoxy does not have a specifically developed and theologically sound economic ethics. Providing greater freedom and mobility, the Christian doctrine of morality requires greater responsibility and places greater emphasis on personal faith than on universal obedience. On the contrary, all aspects of Muslim life are governed by Islamic law (Sharia). This results in a specificity of Islamic identification—Islam is "not only a religion but a secular social system" [Kudrashova, 2012:158]. Institutionalizing virtually all spheres of human life and society, "Islam becomes a way of life" [Albakova, 2009:37]. As social identification is defined as an awareness of belonging to a group, the adoption of the values, attitudes, and norms important for the members of this group (in this case, religious) is the outcome of identification. This applies to the representatives of all divisions of Islam.

The notion of religious identification

Our study views religious identification as a multidimensional construct [Allport, 1950; Glock, 1962] and, as a part of social identification, it includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioural components [Glock, 1962; Elçi et al., 2011] These components are relatively independent [Ashmore, et al., 2009] and each of them has a corresponding impact on the formation of

attitudes and patterns of individual behaviour inasmuch as religious identification does not form by itself but in conjunction with other components of social identification [Ammerman, 2003]. Since the behavioural component is less universal for representatives of the two religions being investigated, it was excluded from our analysis. In the present study, we focus on two componentsstrength and positivity of religious identification. We have excluded the behavioural component of religious identification since we study two different religions and seek a universal construct. Subjective religiosity is a universal construct for Christianity and Islam, which adequately reflects affiliation to a religious group. It seems plausible to study the affective component of religiosity—positivity of religious identification—since previous research demonstrated that it leads to positive outcomes of identification [Amiot & Sansfaçon, 2011; Tajfel, 1978].

This study analyses the relationship between the strength and positivity of religious identification and models of economic behaviour in a group of Orthodox Christians and Sunni Muslims.

The model of economic behaviour and economic involvement

Researchers emphasize different aspects of economic behaviour, and thus it is conceptualized in many different ways. Some define economic behaviour as specific behaviour in the economic sphere of one's life [Lea et al., 1993; Lea, 1999]. Others view it as any behaviour that relates to money, time or effort [Webley et al., 2001]. However, neither definition includes all possible types of economic behaviour. Nowadays, there are several directions in economic behaviour research. [Kirchler & Holzl, 2006]. Researchers study such aspects of economic behaviour as consumer behaviour, financial behaviour (including investment behaviour), entrepreneurship, job market behaviour. The variety of theoretical approaches to personality in psychology results in a variety of models of economic behaviour. In the present study, we define attitudes towards economic behaviour as economic involvement. Although economic involvement does not relate to specific types of economic behaviour, it reflects the level of economic activity. We study attitudes towards economic behaviour using a scenario approach [Smith et al., 2002], which helped develop models of economic behaviour (scenarios for economic involvement were designed by the members of Scientific-Educational Laboratory of Socio-Psychological Research at HSE in 2010). Individuals with high economic involvement will score highly for economic independence in decision making, economic activity and orientation toward long-term planning in economic behaviour. We tested this theoretical assumption using CFA. It is important to note that models of economic behaviour reflect attitudes towards behaviour and not behaviour itself.

We use the term "models of economic behaviour" further in text.

Strength of religious identification and models of economic behaviour

Based on the results of past studies, we formulate the following hypothesis. Despite significant differences in the postulates of faith, representatives of different religions share the same basic moral principles of social and economic ethics and prioritize spiritual values over material ones. Therefore, we hypothesize that (H1) the strength of religious identification is negatively related to attitudes of economic involvement (economic activity, independence, and long-term perspectives in economic behaviour) (see Fig.1).

Positivity of religious identification and models of economic behaviour

One of the outcomes of positive religious identification, and of an affective component of social identity, is psychological well-being [Ashmore, Deaux etc., 2009]. Psychological well-being, in turn, is positively related to phenomena which reflect the active orientation of an individual, allowing them to restructure individual life goals and improve their quality of life (e.g. autonomy, self-actualization, dispositional and learned optimism [Csikszentmihalyi, 1999]). Each of these phenomena reflects the active orientation of an individual. Therefore, we hypothesize that (H2) positivity of religious identification is positively related to attitudes of economic involvement (economic activity, independence, and long-term perspectives in economic behaviour) (see Fig.1)

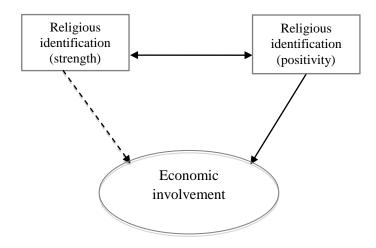


Fig. 1. The model of the relationship between strength and positivity of religious identification and economic involvement

Note: The dotted line indicates a negative relationship; the solid line indicates a positive relationship.

Method

Participants

The study presents the results of a survey conducted in Russia (Moscow, Kazan', Penza, Vladikavkaz, Nazran', Grozny, Stavropol'). The sample included 820 people: 392 men and 428 women aged 15–70 (Me = 34). The sample consisted of representatives of two denominations: Orthodox Christians (N = 559) and Sunni Muslims (N = 261).

Social demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Religious groups	Ethnic groups	N	Gender		Age	
			Male	Female	Mean (SD)	Range
Orthodox Christians	Russians N=486 Ossetians N=53 Ukrainians N=6 Armenians N=6 Chuvashs N=3 Evens N=5	559	269	290	36.3 (13.8)	15-70
Sunni Muslims	Russians N=34 Ingushs N=107 Chechens N=77 Ossetians N=3 Tatars N=40	261	123	138	31.5 (12.8)	17-60

Table 1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

Regarding education, 1.7% respondents had incomplete secondary education (4.8% of Christians, 1.1% of Muslims); 29.5% of respondents had complete secondary or specialised secondary education (51,3% of Christians, 29.9% of Muslims); 48.4% of respondents had higher education, i.e. bachelor's, or master's degree (38% of Christians, 43.3% of Muslims). 76.5% respondents had a job (77.1% of Christians, 75.1% of Muslims).

Measures

Independent variables: Religious identification

The construct was operationalized as the subjective perception of the level of religiosity. Respondents were asked to rate the strength of their religious identification by answering the question "How would you rate your level of religiosity?" on a 7-point scale from the European Social Survey (ESS, 2010). We constructed a question to measure the degree of positivity of religious identification.: Respondents were asked "What feelings do you associate your religion with?" (7-point scale, with 1 as "very negative" and 7 as "very positive").

Dependent variables: Models of economic behaviour

To identify the models of economic behaviour, specifically "economic involvement", we used a methodology of economic behaviour scenarios allowing the identification of economic attitudes. This methodology is based on the scenario approach and was developed in the Scientific-Educational Laboratory of Socio-Psychological Research at HSE in 2010. It was validated on a sample of 424 respondents in two cities in Russia [Cennosti kul'tury ..., 2011]. The respondents were given a description of a scenario and were then asked to evaluate the situation using scales assessing their willingness to act in the same way as in the situation (the behavioural component of the attitude) and emotional preference of this behaviour (the affective component of the attitude). Each indicator of economic behaviour has a bipolar dimension.

We included several scenarios of economic behaviour in order to measure the level of economic involvement. These scenarios are economic paternalism / independence; focus on long-term / short-term perspective in economic behaviour; economic activity / passivity.

The respondents were asked to evaluate the behaviour of two heroes of the situation on a 7point scale indicating

(a) the behaviour of the hero he/she likes the most and to what extent (the "Emotional preference" scale) (-3—I like Alexander's behaviour more; 0—I don't know; 3—I like Vasily's behaviour more);

(b) whether the respondent is willing to do the same as one of the characters (the "Willingness" scale) (-3—I would do the same as Alexander; 0—I don't know; 3—I would do the same as Vasily»).

The situations were designed so that the behaviour of one hero reflects one pole of the dimension of economic behaviour, and the behaviour of the second hero reflects the opposite pole of this dimension, i.e. Alexander's and Vasily's behaviours are opposite.

The personal data set included questions on respondent age, sex, education, place of study/work, employment status and nationality. We used education and employment status as control variables.

Procedure

A questionnaire in Russian was individually completed by respondents in the presence of the interviewer. The average time for filling in the questionnaire was about 25 minutes.

Data analysis

We compared means using Student's T-test. We also performed CFA in order to test the factorial structure of the model. To identify relationships between the variables, we used multi-group structural equation modelling (MGSEM), using the maximum likelihood estimation method. The data was analysed using SPSS 22 statistical and AMOS (Version 22).

Results

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for the measures. The mean score for the Sunni Muslims on the positivity of religious identification measure is close to the scale upper limit and the standard deviation is relatively low, suggesting a ceiling effect. In total, 53.6 % of the participants had the maximum score of 7 on this measure and 93.8% had scores of 5 or above. On all other measures, the mean score is around the scale midpoint and the range of scores is similar to the possible range, indicating substantial variability in the responses to those measures. Not surprisingly, due to the lack of variability in the responses to this measure, positivity of religious identification was not associated with economic involvement.

Variables	Orthodox Christians		Sunni Muslims		t-test	Cohen's d	
	Μ	SD	Μ	SD			
Independent							
variables							
Strength of their religious identification	3.79	1.22	5.05	1.37	-13.15***	.97	
Positivity of religious	5.11	1.24	6.19	.91	-12.17***	.99	
identification	0.11	1.21	0.17	., 1	12.1 /	.,,,	
Dependent variables							
Economic independence	3.56	1.41	3.95	1.30	-3.77***	.28	
Long-term	3.53	1.42	3.58	1.29	41	.03	
perspectives in economic behaviour							
Economic activity	3.63	1.40	3.69	1.34	65	.04	
*** — $p \le 0,001$							

Table 2 – Means and standard deviation

We found significant differences in the attitude toward the economic independence of the representatives of the two religious groups. The economic independence is significantly higher in the group of Muslims than in the group of Christians. Cohen's d coefficients are relatively low. This means that the differences between the representatives of the two religious groups in attitudes toward economic involvement might depend on the sample sizes.

Next section consists of two parts: the first part presents the results of CFA of variables measuring models of economic behaviour, the second section contains the results of SEM.

We assumed that economic involvement forms a single factor that includes three scenarios (economic independence, long-term perspectives in economic behaviour, economic activity), and each of them includes scales of emotional preference, willingness. Therefore we tested the model using CFA on the combined sample (N=820). The model is presented in Figure 2.

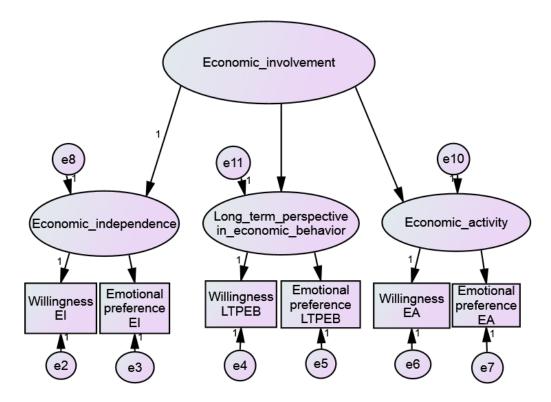


Figure 2.The model of economic behaviour with the general economic involvement factor

Characteristics of the model are the following: CMIN/DF = 3.22; CFI = .99, RMSEA = .05, PCLOSE = .40. The model characteristics fit to our data well enough to confirm the existence of one factor of economic involvement. Then we tested the received scales for scalar invariance in a multi-group simultaneous CFA with two religious samples. The characteristics of the model are: CMIN/DF = 1.65; CFI = .99, RMSEA = .03, PCLOSE = .91). Full scalar invariance was obtained (Δ CFI = .001). Table 3 shows the standardized regression weights of the

variables included in the economic involvement factor for the combined sample and for both religious samples.

Table 3 - Standardized factor loadings for the Models of economic behaviour (economic involvement factor)

Factor	Models of economic behaviour	Combined sample	Christian Orthodox	Sunni Muslims
Economic	Economic independence	.74***	.78***	.60***
involvement	Long-term perspective in economic behaviour	.62***	.72***	.39***
	Economic activity	.73***	.71***	.83***

*** — $p \le 0,001$.

The models of economic behaviour which form the factor of economic involvement have significant regression coefficients, which confirms the overall and interfaith validity of the creation of the unified economic involvement factor.

The results of CFA demonstrated that the concept of economic involvement reflects the willingness to be economically independent (independent actions aimed at improving welfare) economic activity, desire and willingness to build long-term prospects for economic behaviour.

Prior to conducting MGSEM on the groups of Orthodox Christians and Sunni Muslims, we compared means for religions identification in these two groups. T-test showed that strength and positivity of religious identification were significantly higher (p < 0.001) in the Muslims (5.11 and 6.19, respectively) than in the Christians (3.79 and 5.05).

At the next stage of our analysis, we tested the hypothesis using SEM in AMOS on the unified sample and on two samples split by religious affiliation of the respondents (using simultaneous MGSEM). These are presented in Figure 3.

To test H1 (the relationship between strength and positivity of religious identification and models of economic behaviour that reflect economic involvement attitudes) we used SEM. Figure 3 presents the model of the relationship between strength and positivity of religious identification and economic involvement in the representatives of Christianity and Islam.

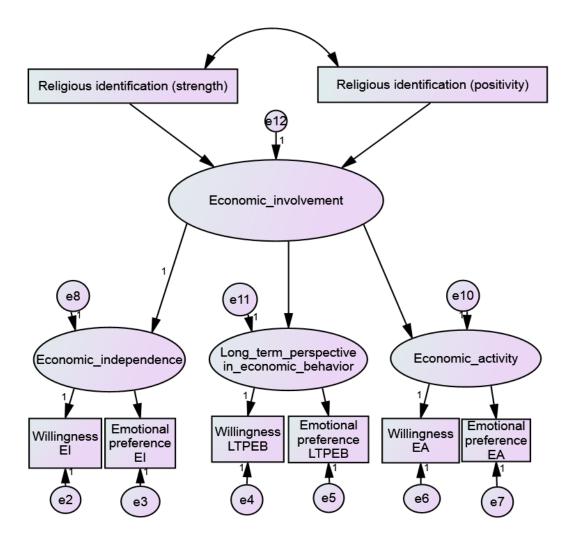


Figure 3. The model of the relationship between strength and positivity of religious identification and economic involvement

The characteristics of the for the unified sample models are: CMIN/DF=1.83; CFI = .99; RMSEA =.05; PCLOSE =,94; multi-group (Christian Orthodox + Sunni Muslims): CMIN/DF=1.30; CFI = .99; RMSEA =.02; PCLOSE =1,000. The regression weights in the unified and two samples split by religious affiliation are presented in Table 4. Table 4. The relationship between strength and positivity of religious identification and economic involvement

The relationship between strength and positivity of religious identification and economic involvement	Combined sample	Christian Orthodox	Sunni Muslims
Religious identification (strength)→ Economic involvement	11*	11*	18*
Religious identification (positivity)→Economic involvement	.13**	.12*	.04
Religious identification (strength)↔ Religious identification (positivity)	.46***	.47***	.56***
*— $p \le 0.05$; **— $p \le 0.01$; ***— $p \le 0.001$.			

The results indicated that strength of religious identification is negatively associated with economic involvement attitudes. Thus, H1 has been supported. We found the same result in the MGSEM on the Orthodox and Sunni samples.

Positivity of religious identification was positively associated with economic involvement models. Thus H2 was supported. However, in the MGSEM, this result was found only in the group of Christians.

In order to avoid multicollinearity between the strength and positivity of religious identification, which were found to be significantly correlated, we calculated variance inflation factor coefficient (VIF). The results showed that VIF is lower than 10, thus we concluded that multicollinearity was not the case. The tolerance indicator was also within acceptable limits (>0,3), which excludes the presence of the direct effect between strength and positivity of religious identification. Therefore we concluded that there was no multicollinearity between these two variables.

When controlling for education (B=-.06, p>0.05) and employment status (B=-.04, p>0.05), the relationship between the strength and positivity of religious identification, and economic involvement remain significant.

Discussion

This paper studies the relationship between the characteristics of religious identification and models of economic behaviour in a groups of Orthodox Christians and Sunni Muslims. The results were consistent with previous research and support the idea that religion is associated with attitudes toward economic behaviour [Dana, 2009; Parboteeah et al., 2009; Hayward, 2011].

We found statistically significant interfaith differences in religious identification: strength of religious identification was significantly higher in the Muslim group. Muslims are characterized by close relationship between ethnic and religious identification, since maintaining religious identification is a means to preserve the culture and boundaries of their own ethnic group. Positivity of religious identification was also significantly higher in the Muslim group indicating consistent and more pronounced religiosity.

The presence of positive identification among representatives of Christianity and Islam point to the identification being voluntary, which has a high value for a person in general, since only it leads to positive consequences of identification, while the awareness of forced identification is unfavourable [Amiot & Sansfaçon, 2011].

Our study supported the hypothesis that strength of religious identification is negatively associated with economic involvement. The value-motivational sphere of religious people is characterized by reduced values of Achievements, Stimulation [Schwartz & Huismans, 1995], while the given motivational constructs underlie economically active behaviour. For deeply religious Orthodox Christians and Sunni Muslims, the desire to take action in the economic sphere to increase material well-being, the willingness to build long-term prospects in economic behaviour, and an interest in economics are nonessential. This confirms our assumption that lack of materialism in religious teachings shared by members of the group will determine behaviours via social interaction. This hypothesis was supported both on the combined sample of Orthodox and Muslim people (SEM), and on the samples split by the religious affiliation of respondents (MGSEM). The hypothesis that positivity of religious identification is positively related to attitudes of economic involvement was also supported. It was revealed that positivity of religious identification promotes economic involvement attitudes. This is explained by the fact that the affective component of religious identification, i.e. actively participating achieves positive selfesteem [Tajfel, 1978], and promotes psychological well-being [Ashmore et al., 2004]. Psychological well-being is closely linked to the active orientation of a person (such as autonomy and self-actualization) [Csikszentmihalyi, 1999]. Thus, via psychological well-being, a positive religious identification promotes activity attitudes, in particular, in economic behaviour. This result was significant only in the group of Orthodox Christians, while for the Sunni Muslims positivity of religious identification did not have any effect on economic involvement. MGSEM showed that in the group of Muslims this relationship is also positive but not significant. Positive relationship between positivity of religious identification and economic

involvement in the group of Christians can be explained by the fact that this group largely prioritizes individual values of self-direction of thought and action, and greater openness to change compared to Muslims [Efremova & Lepshokova, 2013]. Therefore, members of this group have greater autonomy and greater opportunity for individual choice including economic involvement. People of different religions have different religious norms that promote specific orientations [Parboteeah et al., 2009], for example, in Islam it is considered that participation and quest for economic activity is a religious duty [Yosef, 2000]. This statement explains the higher rates of economic independence in the group of Muslims than in the group of Christians. The lack of association between positivity of religious identification and economic involvement is not entirely surprising given the lack of variance in the responses to the positivity of religious identification measure. Indeed, the majority of responses were at or very close to the scale upper limit, suggesting a ceiling effect. This is probably due to the specificity of Muslim identity, i.e. the fact that Muslims are either believers (abidance by all religious rules) or not [Triandis, 1992].

Religious norms and rules affected by culture serve as behavioural guidelines. More importantly Islamic economic ethics is reflected in the sacred texts and in the system of doctrinal statements on economic relations. In Islam, laws defining and regulating market relations were formulated quite early [Susokolov, 2006].

When studying attitudes toward economic involvement in Muslims, it is important to closely look at the behavioural component of identity. It might help to identify more specifically how Islamic religious norms impact attitudes to economic involvement.

In our study we found that the strength and positivity of religious identification (being independent) are associated differently with the attitudes toward economic involvement.

Findings

1. The results of CFA and MGCFA in the groups of Orthodox and Muslim economic involvement turned out to be a single factor which includes three models of economic behaviour (economic independence, long-term perspectives in economic behaviour, economic activity).

2. SEM results show that strength and positivity of religious identification are related to economic involvement in a different way.

2.1 Strength of religious identification was not conducive to attitudes reflecting economic involvement. This result was obtained using MGSEM.

2.2 Positive religious identification was found to have a positive effect on economic involvement attitudes.

3. Comparative analysis demonstrated that the interrelation between positivity of religious identification and economic involvement have interfaith specifics: positivity of religious identification was positively associated with economic involvement only in the group of Orthodox Christians, while in the group of Sunni Muslims, this association was not significant due to celling effect.

Limitations

1. Although both Orthodox Christians and Sunni Muslims were represented by members of different ethnic groups, the sample was collected only in Russia. The same relationships should be tested in other ethnic / national groups.

2. There was a lack of consideration of moderating factors (social and political) which also impact economic attitudes and views.

3. Self-reports generally make it possible to test only the cognitive component of attitude or behaviour, while motivational and affective components are ignored. In our study, we took a closer look on cognitive and affective components of attitudes, but not the behaviour itself.

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