



Patterns of religiosity and modernization in Georgia - rural urban dimensions

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ABSTRACT

The general objective of the presented research is to determine and show trends in secularism through the rural – urban prism. In this paper we have examined secularization at two levels: 1) individual religious beliefs and practice and 2) separation between church and civic domain, such as politics. For decades, sociologists have believed that due to the rational, liberal nature of the city the degree of religiosity and consequently the rate of secularism would fall. Although in Georgian context study has shown the extent of religiosity in the city areas is significantly higher than religiosity in the rural residents. For measure of religiosity has been used The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS) - a differentiated model by Huber, which is constituted by five core dimensions: public practice, private practice, religious experience, ideology and the intellectual dimensions. The findings of the research has shown that there is a significant difference in all dimensions of religiosity between rural and urban residents (except private practice) and the level of these sub-dimensions in urban residents is higher. However, The findings of the research show that Tbilisi (the capital) even though comparatively higher rate of religiosity (the first level of secularization) is considerably more secular in terms of the relationship between politics and religion (the second level of secularization).

Keywords: Religiosity, Modernization, Secularization, Politics, Rural, Urban.

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to examine if religious “revival” somehow implies threat to modernity. What is the specifics of religiosity in modern Georgia? We would like to understand the nature of religious revival in relation to modernity and secularization theories (we will examine secularization on individual and public levels). Since urbanization has been one of the core constituent of modernization [1] we will try to assess religiosity through rural - urban prisme, what kind of differences occur between rural and urban citizens in: overall religiosity, attitudes toward secular and religious interference, also some correlated demographic features as well.

By the end of the last century dramatic religious growth had occurred throughout the former Soviet Union countries [2,3] and Georgia was not an excep-

tion. After the collapse of the Soviet regime, intense national - religious discourses appeared on Georgian political arena. The struggle for independence and the transition period from the communist rule to liberal democracy “was steered by national idea and return to the God’s province, as embodied by Georgian Orthodox Church” [4]. Eventually, social power of the religious institution and authorities sharply increased. On the one hand, the religious institution was the only social actor who could ideologically unify disintegrated (socially as well as politically) citizens, and, on the other hand, the ideological vacuum created by the transition was tried to be partially filled up with traditional religion [4].

After almost three decades Georgian Orthodox Church still maintenances strong social influence, for instance, trust in religious institutions is much higher than trust in any political or civic institution

[5]. The process of resurrection of public religion has emerged multitude of studies. Religion has been researched from different disciplines and perspectives (psychology, sociology, political and history studies). Most of them relate relationship between state/nation and religion [6-10]. Some studies focus on religion and education [11], everyday life [12], Trust in Religious Institutions [5], correlation studies of religiosity [13], secular religion [4] and so on.

2. Modernity, religion and secularization:

After the religious revival throughout the world, starting up from the 1990-ies, brought about the necessity to rethink certain theory in social sciences. Namely, secularization theory (see e.g. McLeod) has predicted that secularization and modernization go hand in hand, advocates of secularization theories were arguing that religious beliefs as well behaviors would take the peripheral place in modern society; For Giddens “most of the situations of modern social life are manifestly incompatible with religion as a pervasive influence upon day-to-day life. Religious cosmology is supplanted by reflexively organised knowledge, governed by empirical observation and logical thought, and focused upon material technology and socially applied codes. Religion and tradition has been always closely linked, and the latter is even more thoroughly undermined than the former by the reflexivity of modern social life, which stands in direct opposition to it” [14]. “For nearly three centuries, social scientists and assorted western intellectuals have been promising the end of religion” [15], however, there is no clear evidence regarding deprivation of religion (in some cases we are the witnesses of uprising of religiosity: for instance, post Soviet countries, Islamic states, Latin America or the USA), and this way, legitimate question occurs: is the formation of modern nations directly linked to the parallel and mutually dependent processes of secularization and modernization? [6].

In the debate on usefulness of secularization thesis, Stark states that secularization theory is “useless as a hotel elevator that only goes down”. Stark emphasizes that perhaps religion one day will have been expelled from social space but not because of modernity [15]. To the question whether and how secularization is taking place, Peter Berger [16] says:

I think what I and most other sociologists of religion wrote in the 1960s about secularization was a mistake. Our underlying argument was that secularization and modernity go hand in hand. With

more modernization comes more secularization. It wasn't a crazy theory. There was some evidence for it. But I think it's basically wrong. Most of the world today is certainly not secular. It's very religious.

As it seems secularization theory was simply an illusion of Enlightenment. The “illusion” of secularization has been reinforced by exaggerated perceptions of past religiousness as well [15].

Furthermore, secularization as a notion can mean a number of different things, which can cause additional ambiguities. For instance, MacLeod [17; 18] distinguishes secularization at three levels: the first level involves individual belief and practice, which means to what extent has there been a decline in the proportion of the population having a religious view of the world, belonging to religious organizations or engaging in religious rites? The second level stresses the role of religion in public institutions - the extent of separation between church and state, or church and civic domain (e.g., education system), and the third cultural level, which is less clearly defined and relatively neglected [17]. Similarly, modernity in classical sociological theories has not been defined univocally. For instance Weber stresses on rationality as a main feature of modernity, for Durkheim it is stratification, Simmel emphasizes urbanization, city life and economy. In addition, all this classic theorists, even if only implicitly, saw modernity as Western project: “Many of the movements that developed in non-Western societies articulated strong anti-Western or even anti modern themes, yet all were distinctively modern” [19]. The notion of multiple modernities suggests an alternative project of modernization. In this framework religious movements (even fundamentalistic) are considered in the boundaries of modernity [20].

According to classical theories, urbanization strongly predicts decrease in religiosity (the first level of secularization). Rural residents tend to be more conservative and orthodox in their beliefs [21]. But, on the other hand, Religious Market Theory [22] suggests that religiosity (including participation) increases with market density, the more competition there is, the more religious people there are. In urban areas religious pluralism and diversity is higher, hence theory predicts higher religious adherence in cities [23].

2.1. Operationalization of religiosity

For comprehensive analysis of religiosity Stefan Huber suggests a differentiated model of religiosity

- The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS), constituted by five core dimensions: public practice, private practice, religious experience, ideology and the intellectual dimensions [24,25]. The model integrates theoretical concepts of religion from sociological, psychological and theological perspectives. From a sociological perspective CRS's five core dimensions derives from Charles Y. Glock's [26] multidimensional model of religion. From a psychological perspective, Huber's model of religiosity (centrality of religion) is theoretically connected with W. Allport's [27] ideas of religiosity. The core-dimensions, from psychological approach, "can be seen as channels or modes in which personal religious constructs are shaped and activated" [25]. The five core dimensions could be described as follows:

- Public practice - ritualistic action, public participation in religious rituals: church attendance, taking part in religious services, etc.
- Private practice - religious activities and rituals in private space, such as prayer or meditation.
- Religious experience - perception of transcendent reality, feeling contact with something divine.
- Ideology - beliefs regarding the existence of a transcendent reality.
- Intellectual - knowledge, concerning religion.

3. Methodology

This paper is based on the data obtained through large-scaled nationally representative population survey that was conducted in autumn of 2017 in frame of the research project "Patterns of religiosity and modernization in Georgia" funded by Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia.

All regions of the country are covered with the exception of areas not controlled by Georgian authorities since 1990s (Abkhazia and former South-Ossetia autonomies) and some surrounding territories currently occupied by Russian troops. The total population in these excluded areas is about 5%. From the sampling frames also were excluded some remote villages in mountain area where less than 10 person are living and comprising 0.3% of recent Georgian population (0.4% of total number of households residing in Georgia).

Applying a multistage stratified random sampling procedure based on Georgian population census of 2014 about 2000 households around whole Georgia were randomly chosen. Only one respon-

dent has been interviewed in each household and interviewed by face-to-face using a standardized questionnaire related to religious issues.

The survey's questionnaire contained several instruments from the measurement of Centrality of Religiosity (CRS) by Huber [24,25]. Seven instruments derived from the model were included in the questionnaire:

- ✓ Centrality of Religiosity - 7 items
- ✓ Religious and spiritual self-concept - 2 items
- ✓ Interreligious Perception - 6 items
- ✓ Religious Fundamentalism - 6 items
- ✓ Religious Pluralism - 3 items
- ✓ Religious Reflexivity - 3 items
- ✓ Atheism - 3 items

Questionnaires also included some items based on measurement of modernization from European Value Surveys, namely those referring to the separation of religion and politics, measured on a five point scale, from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree":

"How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following..."

Item 1. "Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office"

Item 2. "Religious leaders should not influence how people vote in elections"

Item 3. "It would be better for... (your country) if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office"

Item 4. "Religious leaders should not influence government decisions"

Statistical analysis of abovementioned religiosity's measures of combined with detailed socio-demographic characteristics of respondents widely presented in our questionnaire gave us possibility to analyse different aspects of religiosity in Georgia and nature of its differentiations among urban and rural population.

4. Findings

4.1. Religiosity (secularization first level)

The score of religiosity (CRS's score) ranges between 1.0 and 5.0 (In the calculation of the CRS score, the item sum score is divided through the number of scored scale items). For the categorization of the groups of the "highly-religious" "religious" and "non-religious" Huber proposes the following thresholds: 1.0 to 2.0 - not-religious; 2.1 to 3.9 - religious; 4.0 to 5.0 - highly-religious [25] (Table1).

Table 1. *Percentile Rank of CRS (Capital, Urban and Rural)*

Settlement type		Capital	Other Urban	Rural
N		558	558	704
CRS Score		<i>Percentile Rank</i>		
not - religious	1.00	0		0
	1.20	0		1
	1.40	1		1
	1.60	1	0	1
	1.80	1	0	2
	2.00	3	1	3
religious	2.20	4	3	6
	2.40	7	5	9
	2.60	10	11	15
	2.80	14	17	23
	3.00	20	25	31
	3.20	25	33	40
	3.40	34	43	51
	3.60	46	53	61
highly religious	3.80	56	66	71
	4.00	69	74	80
	4.20	79	84	86
	4.40	87	92	92
	4.60	93	96	97
	4.80	98	97	99
5.00	100	100	100	
mean		3.71	3.60	3.46
SD		.73	0.68	0.73

According to abovementioned scale in Tbilisi 31% of respondents might be considered to be highly religious, in other urban areas of Georgia the share of highly religious people is a bit lower - 26%. However, only 20% of rural inhabitants belong to the category of highly religious.

These findings are further confirming by more specified statistical analysis presented below.

Statistical analysis shows that the average reli-

giosity (the mean score of CRS) of people in urban areas was 3.65 and in rural areas - 3.46, which is in line with conclusion above. In further analysis we have tested statistical significance of the difference in religiosity between urban and rural population of Georgia. The data on t-test presented in the Table 2 shows that the level of religiosity of urban residents is significantly higher than that of rural residents $t(1818)=5.47, p<.001$.

Table 2. *The Centrality of Religiosity Scale. Urban Rural*

	Location	Mean	df	t rate	P value
CRS	Urban	3.65	1818	5.47	.000
	Rural	3.46			

Furthermore, we applying to statistical methods examined whether capital city, Tbilisi, is distinctive from the other sub-samples of respondents from the point of view its population’s level of religiosity. Table 3 shows that level of religiosity residents of Tbilisi (M=3.71, SD= 0.73) is significantly higher than in rural (M=3.46, SD= 0.73) area and even that of urban (M=3.60, SD= 0.68) area of Georgia: $F(2, 1817) = 17.94, p < .001$.

In the Table 4 we present the corresponding statistics for distinctive dimensions of religiosity constituting the Huber’s scale, which also shows that mean scores of CRS’s dimensions in urban settlements are significantly higher than in rural:

Public practice - Urban respondents manifest significantly higher mean scores of taking part in religious services than do their counterparts residing in rural areas: $t(1434)=4.50, p < .001$

Similar results are found for **Ideological** dimen-

sion: urban residents are more likely to believe that god or something divine exists than rural citizens: $t(1531)=3.04, p=.002$

Statistical analysis shows that the mean score of **Intellectual** dimension (How often person thinks about religious issues) in urban areas are significantly higher than in rural settlements: $t(1908)=5.37, p < .001$

Mean score of **Experiential** dimension (as measured by feelings that God or something divine intervenes in respondents’ life) is higher in urban areas as well, and the difference is statistically significant: $t(1446)=4.73, p < .001$

Private practice tends to be an exception from this point of view: statistically significant difference between urban and rural residents has not been found for frequency of prayer. Though level of this dimension in Tbilisi is significantly higher than in rural or in other urban settlements: $F(2, 1901)=6.07, p=.002$.

Table 3. ANOVA Comparisons of CRS. Capital, Urban, Rural

Group	n	Mean	SD	Tukey’s HSD Comparisons	
				Tbilisi	Urban
Tbilisi	558	3.71	0.73		
Urban	558	3.60	0.68	.041	
Rural	704	3.46	0.73	< .001	.002

Table 4. CRS dimensions. Rural - Urban

Dimensions of CRS	Location	Mean	df	t rate	P value
Public practice	Urban	3.15	1434	4.50	.000
	Rural	2.89			
Private practice	Urban	3.84	1462	.084	3.97
	Rural	3.78			
	Urban	3.56			
Experience	Urban	3.56	1446	4.73	.000
	Rural	3.33			
Ideology	Urban	4.13	1531	3.04	.002
	Rural	4.02			
Intellect	Urban	3.48	1908	5.37	.000
	Rural	3.23			

Statistical analysis shows that impact of religious socialization on religiosity is significant. Religiosity is significantly higher in those cases where religion has been part of respondents' upbringing $t(1679)=12.6, p<.001$.

4.2 Separation of religion and politics. (Second level of secularization)

Four statements have been examined to understand separation between religion and politics. Statistical analysis shows that the capital tends to be more secular: level of secularization (at public level) in Tbilisi is significantly higher (see Table 5, 6, 7 and 8-higher scores indicate disagreement with statements.) than other areas.

Tables 5 and 7 shows that respondents from Tbilisi less agree with following statements: 5) *Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office* and 7) *It would be better for Georgia if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office*; Therefore they tend to be more secular.

Findings presented in tables N6 and N8 shows that citizens from Tbilisi are more agree with following statements: 6) *Religious leaders should not influence how people vote in elections* and 8) *Religious leaders should not influence government decisions*. Thus respondents from Tbilisi are more secular and as post hoc test shows the difference is statistically significant.

Table 5. *Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office*

Group	n	Mean	SD	Tukey's HSD Comparisons	
				Tbilisi	Urban
Tbilisi	568	2.79	1.29		
Urban	558	2.44	1.29	< .001	
Rural	705	2.20	1.23	< .001	.002

Table 6. *Religious leaders should not influence how people vote in elections*

Group	n	Mean	SD	Tukey's HSD Comparisons	
				Tbilisi	Urban
Tbilisi	590	1.89	0.99		
Urban	574	2.28	1.26	< .001	
Rural	713	2.12	1.21	.001	.046

Table 7. *It would be better for Georgia if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office*

Group	n	Mean	SD	Tukey's HSD Comparisons	
				Tbilisi	Urban
Tbilisi	583	2.80	1.20		
Urban	554	2.42	1.21	< .001	
Rural	718	2.06	1.07	< .001	< .001

Table 8. *Religious leaders should not influence government decisions*

Group	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Tukey's HSD Comparisons	
				Tbilisi	Urban
Tbilisi	578	2.15	0.99		
Urban	561	2.39	1.25	.002	
Rural	717	2.45	1.29	< .001	.649

5. Conclusions and discussion

The revival of religion in the modern world has questioned the classical theories of the secularization, which made scholars from different disciplines to rethink the existing relationship between religion and modernity, as well as secularization as the centrality of the notion in the modern world. In this study of Georgian context, we tried to show trends in secularism through in the rural – urban prism. Classical theories (see Durkheim, Simmel) considered that due to the rational, liberal nature of the city the degree of religiosity and consequently the rate of secularism would fall. Although study has shown the extent of religiosity (CRS) in the city areas is statistically significantly higher than religiosity in the rural residents. However, city areas are considerably more secular in terms of the relationship between politics and religion.

The high extent of religious beliefs in the urban areas are tried to be explained by religious market theory [22]. Urban areas are expected to be more religiously pluralistic, although the theory in the Georgian context does not have explanation value due to the monopolistic position of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Process of religious socialization, as well as, the tendency of spatial development of religious institutions carries greater explanation value. The study has shown that the influence of religion in upbringing in urban areas is even sharper than in the rural areas of the country, which may have an impact on higher religiosity in urban area. As for the influence of religious institutions, the Georgian Orthodox church started gaining social power from the capital in the late 90's and spread its influence later in the periphery. Still rural areas remain having less developed religion institutions (churches, priests) and therefore less access to religious services and theological teaching. Interestingly, there is no significant dif-

ference between rural and urban areas on the *Private practice* dimension, where the role and influence of the religious institution is logical to be the least.

Finally, in terms of the separation of religion and politics, the capital is the most secular in the country, which may indicate that the tendency of two levels of secularization (private and public) are mutually independent dimensions.

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