

The Religious Component of Happiness- A Cross-Country Analysis

Virag Havasi

University of Miskolc, Institute of Applied Social Sciences 3525 Miskolc, Egyetemváros

ABSTRACT: Our study assessed the extent to which various religion-related factors (believing, belonging and religious activity), demographic variables and satisfaction with family life explain happiness and whether the association differs between different countries and among believers of different religions.

Using data from the ISSP conducted in 2018, regression analyses of 15 countries from different continents, with different dominant religions and different level of religiosity revealed that factors influencing the sense of happiness of the members of a given society differs from country to country. The factors related to religion have significant influence on happiness only in Asian countries- however different factors in different countries. It also changed which demographic variables had significant effect on the level of happiness. However, in the countries where they did have an influence, they followed the same patterns. The most important explaining factor of happiness was satisfaction with family life everywhere. Differences in the happiness level of believers of different religions within country have been found, but did not form simple patterns. In less religious countries, there were no differences at all in happiness levels according to religious affiliation.

Because the role of religion in a given society and the relationship between various denominations are different, the impact of certain elements of religiosity on happiness is also different in different countries. There is no such thing as a general religious effect on happiness.

KEYWORDS: happiness, religiosity, religions, cross-country analysis

INTRODUCTION

The components of happiness, including the role of religiosity, are theoretically elaborated and empirically widely researched but still contain many open questions. The relevant research materials have weaknesses, which are explained in this study. Among the research gaps we would like to examine in more details how attitudinal religiosity and practiced religiosity affect the believers' sense of happiness among believers of the same religion living in different countries and believers of different religions living in the same country.

Previous research established that the quality of intimate relationships and participation in voluntary organizations are determinants of happiness. Mahoney et al. (2003) have suggested that family relationships are sanctified for believers, as a consequence religious individuals may have more and stronger social bonds in the family sphere. (Ross et al. 1990) We therefore investigated whether religious individuals have better family relationships and thus family life and whether the satisfaction with family relations is a mediating link between religiosity and happiness. We also investigated whether religious people active in their communities are happier, i.e., whether being active in religious communities contributes to happiness.

In cross-country analyses based on WVS (World Values Surveys) and ISSP usually certain calculations are performed on the entire sample, where country characteristics (e.g. GDP/capita, region, etc.) are included as variables. We instead choose different types of countries for detailed analysis and carried out the selected test methods separately in each of them.

According to our assumption, factors that influence the sense of happiness of the members of a given society differs from country to country. The relationship between religion and happiness changes depending on the cultural context, and the question is why and through what mechanisms religiosity influences the quality of life.

For the analyses we have used the data of the 2018 survey of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP).

1. Theoretical framework

Numerous studies have identified the connection between religiosity and quality of life/happiness. In 2001, Koenig and Larson analysed 100 studies, 80% of which found a positive relationship between religious belief, religious practices, and life satisfaction. Most of the research they analysed was conducted in the USA and/or used specific samples (e.g. university students, members of certain religious or civil communities). International comparative studies on the topic are typically based on ISSP or WVS (World Values Surveys) data. From these, we can learn, for example, that the relationship between religiosity and quality of life is weaker

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in less religious countries. (Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2010) Eichhorn (2011) found the same: personal religiosity was associated with higher levels of life-satisfaction in societies where religiosity was higher on average as well. According to his explanation societal conformity mechanisms appear to be conducive to greater happiness levels and not intrinsic importance of individual religiosity. Regarding the role of religion in the quality of life, Diener (1984) found that although most research established a positive connection between the two areas, a significant part of them is lost after including control variables and filtering out other effects. Pargament et al. (1998) claimed, that there is no general religious effect on the quality of life, as religious coping has positive and negative forms. An example of the latter is the punitive religious appraisal, which is based on the idea that God punishes the individual for the sins they have committed. (Pargament et al, 1998) The believer, therefore, accepts the negative life situation instead of trying to change it. It is also possible that the believers punish and torment themselves for their sins or worry about whether they are living a life pleasing to God.

How can religions contribute to the mental health and happiness of believers?

Religiosity has two dimensions, Okulicz-Kozaryn (2010) call them social and individual religiosity, and Allport classifies them external and internal religiosity. Regarding the quality of life, the positive effect of external/social religiosity is the feeling of belonging, while internal/individual religiosity can contribute to mental well-being through feelings and thoughts mediated by faith. Religious acts overlap these two areas since, on the one hand, they originate from belief, they follow the prescriptions of the given religion, and on the other hand, some of them are activities carried out in public or community, so they are part of social religiosity.

Believing

Religious teachings offer a coherent interpretation of the world and give meaning to an individual's life, easing uncertainty and increasing the ability to cope.

Religions describe an orderly and just world where everything will turn out well in the afterlife or another life, even if things are not going well now. (Bradshaw et al, 2010) If an individual feels less stress about the future, it contributes to their overall well-being. (Ellison et al, 2011)

A person's self-esteem increases if he thinks of himself as someone who is loved by God and if he feels that he is a good, moral and righteous person.

According to the attachment theory, God is a support and companion in difficult times. (Pargament et al, 1998) Believers can turn to him when they need guidance or comfort; they receive hope, a sense of security, love, and peace from him. (Ellison et al, 2011, Bradshaw et al, 2010)

Social psychologists consider that the feeling of connection with the divine has a stress-buffering effect, making it easier to cope with difficult life situations. (Scot et al, 2012) Religious interpretation (meaning-making) helps to manage both the believer's own suffering and that of those around them. (Park, 2005) When, for example, difficulties are viewed as the purification of karma for a Buddhist believer or as a test of faith or just punishment for a Christian believer, it alleviates the feeling of suffering. Of course, it also happens that the occurrence of seriously adverse life events considered unjust leads to a loss of faith. (Havasi, 2023)

Belonging to a religious community provides cultural and structural benefits. (Kate et al, 2017)

The common framework of interpretation, the feeling of belonging has a binding power. Religious narratives, rites, and symbols strengthen identity and also the feeling of belonging. (McMillan - Chavis 1986)

Religious individuals are embedded in a community that includes like-minded people who share the same feeling, and common values well as norms confirmed during ceremonies. Religious communities (as long as they really function as a community and do not manifest themselves in the form of an empty Sunday church presence) are permeated by a sense of intimacy. Group members feel that they count on each other, and can rely on each other. (Kate et al, 2017)

The structural benefits of belonging to a religious congregation are social spillover effects. Mahoney and his co-authors say that family relationships are sanctified for believers, as religions place special importance on marriage and parent-child relationships. (Mahoney et al. 2003) A consequence may be that religious individuals have more social bonds in the family sphere, which is associated with a greater degree of social support, a stronger sense of control and less loneliness. (Ross et al. 1990)

According to the research results, about 10% of the differences in happiness are explained by participation in voluntary organizations and the presence or absence of intimate relationships. In Western societies, partner relationships and marriage are more important, while friendship is the determining factor affecting life satisfaction in Eastern countries. (Veenhoven-1996, Csíkszentmihályi -1997) One of the positive effects of performing *religious activities* is that the believer may feel connected to the divine power. On the one hand, this can have the above-mentioned stress reduction effect, and on the other hand, it can lead to a particular, elevated state of mind and mood. Some people experience and define this state of mind as happiness. (Havasi, 2023)

When reading religious literature, people can relate to and identify with the characters in the stories. This can be especially important if they face similar challenges as the characters in the texts. In this case, identification and religious role-taking help them face and deal with problems. (Bradshaw et al, 2010) Those involved get ideas on how to behave, think, and solve their problems while feeling less alone with their problems. (Ellison and Levin 1998)

Religious texts and teachings help to avoid risky behaviours. (Ellison - Levin 1998) There are religions that prohibit alcohol consumption or gambling. But even if the given religion does not explicitly prohibit these passions, it often happens that conversion

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helps to overcome the addiction and helps to "direct" the individual to the right path. When practiced by believers, virtues promoted by religions, such as compassion, forgiveness, and helping others can increase feelings of happiness and even improve physical health. (Koenig et al, 2012)

Among religious activities, praying can have a double effect on the feeling of satisfaction with life. As people tend to pray more often when they have problems, prayers can lead to the individual focusing more on the problem. So, in this case, the prayer will have the effect of decreasing happiness. (Masters and Spielmans 2007) When praying is a religious obligation and the prayer has a fixed content, the positive effects of the prayer will be more substantial: the strengthening of the relationship with the deity, the feelings of gratitude and reverence, the calming effect of the meditative prayers. (Havasi, 2023)

The question arises as to whether different religions have different capacities to "make their followers happier" since they differ in the content of their teachings and how they organize their members' lives.

Comparing the *happiness of members of different religions*, according to research results in the USA, Protestants are happier than members of other denominations, religions or non-religious people. (Stark- Maier 2008) Based on this result, it could be assumed that either the members of the predominant religious group of the country are happier than the average or that the Protestant religion and its institutions promote their members' "happiness" more. In contrast, Kate-Koster-van der Waa's research in the Netherlands found Catholics to be happier than average and Muslims to be unhappier. Islam is now a religious minority, while in the past Catholicism was in minority for a long time. The authors preliminarily thought that Muslims are exposed to significant stigma and hostile treatment in today's Western societies, which may have a negative impact on their happiness. At the same time, religion can provide them with comfort and support in a hostile environment. During the analysis of the results, the negative relationship between Muslim religiosity and happiness disappeared after controlling the data with demographic background variables. This means that Muslims have lower level of happiness in the Netherlands because of their lower social status, not because of factors related to their religion. (Kate et al, 2017)

Adinga and his fellow researchers conducted a happiness study among university students in Malaysia. According to their results, Buddhist students - who are the majority in their society - were characterized by lower spiritual involvement, lower level of happiness and life satisfaction than either Christian or Muslim students. (Adinga et al. 2012) This result is another refutation of the idea that belonging to the majority can increase feelings of satisfaction. Moreover, it raises the possibility that Buddhism does less to help its followers achieve happiness (at least in Malaysia) than the other religions examined. It may also happen that the faith of the majority of students who identify themselves as Buddhists is not as intense as that of those belonging to minority religions. (Havasi, 2023)

There several research gaps which our article aims to address, namely the comparison of different religions' capacity of helping their believers to be happy;

Based on the cited literature we formulate the next questions and hypotheses:

Question 1: Do different religions have a different capacity to "make their followers happier," and if there are differences in this area, does this effect exist in all types of societies where the given religion is present?

Hypothesis 1: We assume that there is a difference between religions at the level of happiness of their members depending on whether the given religion is in the minority and, if so, whether it operates in a hostile religious environment. Consequently, for example, in a highly religious society that frowns upon non-believers or members of a pariah religion, the members of these groups will be unhappier than the average. In other cases (i.e. in societies tolerant of religious minorities) it is not relevant to the level of happiness to which religion the believer belongs.

Question 2: Is it true that religious individuals have better family relationships and thus family life, or at least their subjective satisfaction with them is better?

Hypothesis 2: We assume that more religious people, regardless of their religion or religious denomination, have better subjective satisfaction with their family life.

Question 3: Which, out of the factors of believing, belonging and the practice of various religious activities has a positive impact on the quality of life? Are the emerging patterns different when compared between countries?

Hypothesis 3: We assume that since the history of religions, their relationship with each other, and the role of religion in society are different in each country, the impact (or lack of impact) of certain elements of religiosity on the quality of life will be different in different countries.

2. Data and Measures

We have used the third and fourth replication of the religious module of the ISSP, which is a continuous programme of cross-national collaboration with around 50 member countries from all over the world.

Our dependent variable, happiness, was measured with a commonly used scale: the respondents were asked to indicate how happy or unhappy they were (ranging from 1= „very happy" to 4= „not happy at all").

Two aspects of family life were used to measure social ties in the family domain: steady relationship and family relationship satisfaction. Steady relationship was included as a categorical variable (married and living with legal spouse: 1=yes, 2=no),

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satisfaction with relationship of family members was measured with a seven-point scale (ranging from 1=completely satisfied to 7= completely dissatisfied).

Regarding belief, for the analyses we used a question which asked the extent to which the respondents describe themselves as religious or non-religious (ranging from 1=extremely religious to 7= extremely non-religious).

For measuring the level of embeddedness of the respondents, we used the question: „How often do you take part in the activities or organizations of a church or place of worship other than attending services?“ (ranging from 1=never to 9=several times a week)

Religious activity was measured by the frequency of praying (ranging from 1=never to 11=several times a day) and visiting holy places (ranging from 1=never to 5=several times a month); whether the respondents read or listened of any holy scripture during the last 12 months (1=yes, 2=no); whether they have shrine or altar in their home for religious purposes (1=yes, 2=no).

In order to control for the influence of financial situation of the respondents we included in the analysis country specific personal income measures. (In some countries this was a continuous variable, in others it was divided into 11-26 categories). Gender (1=male, 2=female), Age (in years), Education (years of full-time schooling) were also included as controls.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Countries involved in the analysis

In the first step, for all countries participating in the ISSP, we examined the percentage of currently non-religious people and the denominational distribution of the respondents. When selecting the countries included in the analysis, we tried to choose strongly, moderately and weakly religious countries. Our aim was furthermore that within each category there would be represented all the world religions, if possible. India was not involved in these waves of ISSP, so Hinduism is left out of the analysis. In the case of Christianity, we treated Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox religious denominations as separate categories. Due to the different characteristics of social development, we also selected countries with a Catholic majority from Eastern- Central, Western and Southern European countries. We also involved the USA in our analysis to have country from overseas.

We considered a country strongly religious if the proportion of those who do not belong to a religious affiliation or denomination was 13% or less, and weakly religious if this proportion was 45% or above.

The selected countries and their main religious characteristics can be seen in Table 1, which shows that we have not found any country with an Islamic or Orthodox majority that is not strongly religious. Asian countries participating in the ISSP are characterized by being either very religious or very non-religious.

Table. 1. Religious characteristics of the countries involved in the analysis

Strongly religious	Moderately religious	Weakly religious	Biggest religion or religious denomination
Taiwan	-	-	other eastern religion
Thailand	-	Japan South-Korea	buddhist buddhist and protestant
Turkey	-	-	muslim
Russia	-	-	orthodox
Croatia	Hungary	Czechia	catholic
-	Spain	France	catholic
-	USA Sweden Finland	-	protestant
Israel	-	-	jewish

Source: author's calculation based on ISSP, 2020

We chose three strongly religious countries from Asia: Islamic Turkey, predominantly Buddhist Thailand, where there is also a significant Islamic minority, and Taiwan, where the majority is of "another Asian religion", i.e. neither Hindu nor Buddhist. In the latter place, the second largest religion is Buddhist. We chose two Asian countries with weak religiosity for the detailed analysis: South Korea and Japan. Both places have a high percentage of non-religious people, and Buddhism is the most popular religion in them, but South Korea has a significant Christian population, both Catholic and Protestant. (It is interesting that South Korean Christian missions operate all over Europe.)

All countries with a Protestant majority were found to be moderately religious. In the Eastern-Central region the countries are characterised by catholic majority. We could not find strongly religious catholic country from the Western (and Southern) part of Europe.

The main religion of highly religious Israel is Judaism, but there is a significant Muslim minority.

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3.2. Differences in happiness in different countries and among believers belonging to different religions and religious denominations

First of all, we review the level of happiness of the analysed countries. Table 2. contains the country averages of the responses to the ISSP's question about the feeling of happiness, the value of which can fall between 1 and 4, where 1 represents the best state and 4 the worst. In addition to this one-dimensional, subjective indicator, the values of a more complex, objective happiness indicator were also included, based on the data of the World Happiness Report (and also the country ranking from the same source). We can see that the situation of certain countries differs significantly when using the two indicators (Finland, Croatia, France), while in other cases the results are similar. Among the analysed countries, Hungary, Russia, Turkey and South Korea proved to be the most unhappy - according to both indicators.

In the table we indicated the proportion of the very and extremely religious people in the given countries, as we assumed that they take their religiosity seriously and are sure of their faith. We put the countries in order accordingly, starting with the most religious country - not only in this, but also in the following tables. Based on these findings we have to modify our original categorising of the analysed countries: US seems strongly while Thailand moderately religious.

Table 2. Happiness and religiosity of the countries involved in the analysis

	ISSP happiness mean (sd)	World Happiness Report country ranking score	proportion of extremely or very religious people (%)
Turkey	2,2 (0,622)	74. 5,483	55
Croatia	1,89 (0,688)	82. 5,321	29,8
USA	1,61 (0,626)	18 6,886	26,6
Taiwan	1,91 (0,635)	26. 6,441	22,6
Israel	1,82 (0,699)	11. 7,19	19,4
Russia	2,04 (0,592)	59. 5,81	17
South- Korea	2,04 (0,679)	57. 5,875	15,5
Thailand	1,93 (0,595)	46. 6,042	8,7
Spain	1,89 (0,593)	36. 6,31	8,3
Japan	1,95 (0,569)	54. 5,915	8,1
Finland	1,94 (0,647)	1. 7,632	7,7
Hungary	2,22 (0,729)	69. 5,62	7,5
Czechia	1,98 (0,604)	21. 6,711	4,2
France	2,04 (0,625)	23. 6,489	4
Sweden	1,89 (0,622)	9. 7,314	3,6

Source: author's calculation based on ISSP, 2020 and World Happiness Report, 2018¹

¹ https://photius.com/rankings/happiness_index_country_rankings_2018.html

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In Table 2, we can also see that are happy and less happy societies among more religious and less religious countries. We found a weak correlation between religiosity and happiness in four countries: Taiwan ($r=0,112$, sig ,000), South Korea ($r=0,164$ sig ,000), Turkey ($r=0,165$ sig ,036), USA ($r=0,165$ sig ,000).

We calculated the average level of happiness of the followers of each religions and religious denominations on the entire ISSP sample. Based on this, Islamic, Orthodox and Buddhist believers seemed more unhappy (2.28 2.29 2.01 respectively, while the mean of the whole database was 1.97).

After that, we calculated the percentage of unhappy people in each country and also within their different religious communities and among the non-religious people. Table 3. shows the percentage of unhappy people among all respondents in the given country, and within those religions in where this result differed significantly from the average.

We assumed that there is no difference between religions in the level of happiness of their members if there is a tolerant environment towards religious minorities, but in a hostile environment the minority group's level of happiness is lower.

Table 3. Rate of unhappy people in the analysed countries in average, and among the happier and less happy religious groups

	rate of unhappiness in the country sample	the less happy religious group and the proportion of unhappy people in it	the happier religious group and the proportion of unhappy people in it
Turkey	30,1 %	63,2% non-religious (minority)	-
Croatia	11,2 %	-	4,2% catholic (majority)
USA	5,3%	19% other Christian (minority)	-
Taiwan	15,4%	-	-
Israel	12,6%	-	-
Russia	14,9%	33,3% orthodox (majority)	8,3% muslim (minority)
South-Korea	19,5%	-	13,9 % catholic (minority)16,6% protestant (minority)
Thailand	12,4 %	24,6% muslim (minority)	-
Spain	11,5%	-	-
Japan	13,9%	19,8% catholic (minority)	-
Finland	14,3%	-	-
Hungary	30,9%	-	-
Czechia	11,3%	-	-
France	16,9%	-	-
Sweden	11,3%	-	-

sig , 000

Source: author's calculation based on ISSP, 2020

In four of the examined countries, members of minority religious groups are less happy, and in three countries they are happier than the average. In the case of Muslim believers, we found a country where they are happier as a minority (In Israel 13,5% of the jews and 8,3% of the Muslims are unhappy-so the difference exists, however it is smaller- sig .066) and one where they are more unhappy as a minority (Thailand). In Turkey, the non-religious stratum proved to be more unhappy - presumably as a result of the changes brought about by Erdogan's political turn. It is interesting that both Christian communities in South Korea are happier than the average, but in Japan, which is also a traditionally Buddhist country, they are less happy.

The differences in the level of happiness of the believers of different religions did not depend on whether the particular religion was a minority or a majority, and we did not find any religion that is generally characterized by its believers being happier. What seems clear is that in less religious countries, we do not find differences in happiness levels according to religious affiliation.

Hypothesis 1 is therefore overturned. Instead, we can state that in some countries there are differences in the general level of happiness of the members of certain religions, but it is not possible to establish general patterns in the nature of these differences.

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3.3. The role of certain factors related to religion and religiosity in effecting the level of happiness

Religious activity

First, we will review which religious activities are performed by believers in each country and with what frequency. We specifically narrow our analysis to the extremely and very religious groups, assuming that they are sure of their faith and take their religion seriously.

The results are presented by country in Table 4 in a way that in the case of certain activities (prayer and visiting holy places) the data refer to the proportion of those who never practice the given activity, while in the case of reading/listening religious texts and having shrine/altar in the respondent's home the proportion of those who perform the given activity is shown in the table. (There is no data in the table if only a few persons in the sample of the given country declared themselves to be extremely religious.)

We highlighted the data where extremely or very religious people are significantly more passive in the given religious activity compared to other countries.

Having examined religious activity, we can state that the Hungarian, Japanese and Czech believers are the least, while the Western European and Croatian believers are the most zealous. What generally characterises Asian respondents - with the exception of the Turks – is that fewer people read/listen religious texts. No pattern could be identified in visiting holy places and having shrine/altar at home, except that generally these are the least frequent of religious activities among highly religious people.

Table 4. Religious activity among the very and extremely religious people in the analysed countries

	never pray		never visit holy places		read/listen scriptures		have shrine/altar	
	extremely religious	very religious	extremely religious	very religious	extremely religious	very religious	extremely religious	very religious
Turkey	4,5	2,1	48,9	36,9	88,3	81,7	48,9	36,9
Croatia	0	0	100	97,5	78,4	55,2	100	97,5
USA	2,8	0,8	47,2	58	86,3	89,5	47,2	58
Taiwan	4,6	4,5	87	83	69	47	87	83
Israel	0	0,2	20,7	8,5	67	90,2	100	98
Russia	4,9	11,3	87,8	87,7	68,3	61,3	87,8	87,7
South Korea	6,2	5,3	47,8	58,4	63,3	64,9	47,8	58,4
Thailand	8,6	3,3	65,7	82	68,6	50	65,7	82
Spain	0	4,5	64,7	80	83,3	62,4	64,7	80
Japan	9,3	3,6	67,4	72,7	34	27,3	67,4	72,7
Finland	0	0	61	44,4	88,5	87,3	61	44,4
Hungary	-	2,9	-	69,1	-	76	-	69,1
Czech	-	10	-	52	-	62	-	52
France	-	0	-	91	-	83,8	-	91
Sweden	0	0	53,3	41,7	93,3	87,5	53,3	41,7

Source: author's calculation based on ISSP, 2020

The connections between religious activities and happiness were investigated with regression analysis, which results will be presented later in this article.

Belonging

We analysed two dimensions of belonging: embeddedness in a religious community and the quality of family relationships.

Between the strength of religiosity and satisfaction with relationship with family members there were slight, but significant correlations in two-thirds (but certainly not in all) of the analysed countries. If we examined each religion separately, we also found this correlation for Swedish Protestants and Thai Buddhists. (We did not find it however in the Japanese, Hungarian and Finnish samples.)

In hypothesis 2 we assumed that more religious people, regardless of their religion or religious denomination have better subjective satisfaction with their family relationships. Our results suggest that the second hypothesis may be true, but the question requires a deeper investigation with more indicators.

We measured embeddedness in a religious community with the frequency the believer takes part in church activities (other than attending services). In most places the very or extremely religious people do this just a few times a year. Western and Israeli believers are more active in this field while Buddhist and Muslim believers as well as the Czech Christians are the least active.

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Table 5. Church activities other than attending services in the analysed countries

	Never participate in church activities (other than attending services)	
	extremely religious	very religious
Turkey	34,8	43
Croatia	24,4	24,4
USA	22	19
Taiwan	53	62
Israel	23,3	14,2
Russia	17,6	36,3
South Korea	19,7	21,1
Thailand	36	43
Spain	6,7	6,3
Japan	40	18,8
Finland	20	6,3
Hungary	-	23
Czech	-	40
France	25	8
Sweden	33	38

Source: author's calculation based on ISSP, 2020

We examined the connection of happiness and embeddedness in a religious community (and many other factors) with regression analysis on which we turn our attention to now.

Role of factors related to religion and demographic variables in explaining happiness

We did a regression analysis for each country, during which we used steady partnership, satisfaction with family life, strength of religiosity, and frequency of performing different religious activities as dependent variables. Control variables were gender, age, occupation and income.

The results are given in Table 6. Among the examined factors, happiness was strongly influenced everywhere by satisfaction with family life and, in most cases, the existence of a steady relationship, although to a lesser extent. Factors related to religion proved to be a significant influence in some Asian countries: the strength of religiosity in South Korea and Turkey; the frequency of prayer in Japan and South Korea (in such a way that those who pray less are happier); church activity in Japan, Thailand and in the USA (as the only western country). Visiting holy places proved to be decisive in Thailand.

In the case of control variables, age had a significant effect on the level of happiness in half of the examined countries (younger people are happier), education in three countries (higher education is associated with a higher level of happiness) and gender in two countries (women are happier).

The factors studied explained 19-41% of the differences in happiness levels.

Overall, *in accordance with our third hypothesis, it is striking that different factors had roles to a different extent in influencing happiness in the certain analysed countries. We consider it an important result that influencing role demographic variables on happiness differs from country to country - it is true however that, where they did have an impact, they all pointed in the same direction.*

Religiosity and related factors generally did not play a role, and where it did, it was to a small extent.

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Table 6. Results of regression analysis for happiness (standardised coefficients shown)

	ISL	JP	KR	TW	TH	TR	RUS	HR	HU	CZ	FR	ES	SE	USA
independent steady partnership	,136* **	,080 **	,092 *	,038	-,006	-,045	,106* *	,012	,091	,098* *	,165* **	,152 **	,213* *	,197 **
satisfaction with family life	,462* **	,59* **	,379 **	,402* **	,516* **	,487* **	,495* **	,492* **	,527* **	,411* **	,373* **	,339 **	,418* **	,33* **
religiosity	,047	,038	,151 **	-,083	-,009	,111* *	-,007	,073	,006	,066	,033	,055	-,001	,059
pray	,038	,09* *	,129 *	-,003	-,051	-,026	-,045	-,029	,049	,038	,004	,08* *	-,002	,019
church activity	-,024	- ,076 *	- ,078	-,08	- ,113* *	-,043	-,056	-,024	,066	,007	-,074	,006	-,038	- ,102* *
read/listen religious texts	,01	,02	,006	-,015	,035	,031	-,031	,006	,092	,008	,003	,004	-,019	- ,054
visit holy places	-,068	,059	,035	-,086	,082* *	,013	,012	-,005	,027	,008	-,011	,033	-,032	,076
shrine/altar	,01	,043	,095 *	-,015	-,032	-,054	-,017	-,072	,077	-,015	-,053	- ,005	-,012	,003
controll education	-,02	- ,035	- ,012	- ,163*	- ,102* *	,02	-,027	-,03	-,048	-,016	- ,107* *	- ,007	-,025	- ,005
age	,177* **	- ,003	- ,026	,054	,002	,057	,166* *	,202* **	,151* **	,164* **	,027	,195 **	,055* **	- ,011
gender	,014	- ,08*	- ,067	- ,134*	-,033	,004	-,013	,004	,07	-,045	-,018	,022	- ,054*	- ,041
income	-,051	- ,022	- ,049	-,086	n.m	-,062	,017	-,044	-,055	-,059	n.m	- ,089	n.m	- ,062
R2	0,314	0,38 6	0,20 1	0,228	0,336	0,288	,311	0,337	0,414	0,241	0,218	0,19	0,271	0,23 7

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

Source: author's calculation based on ISSP, 2020

The Religious Component of Happiness- A Cross-Country Analysis

4. CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of this study was to understand better the connections between religiosity and happiness. We were interested to know whether different religions have a different capacity to "make their followers happier," and if there are differences in this area, does this effect exist in all types of societies where the given religion is present. We also wanted to know whether it is true that religious individuals have better family life and as a consequence they are happier than others. Finally, we were curious about whether the same patterns exist in different types of societies describing the connections between happiness and believing, belonging to a religious community and the practice of various religious activities.

For the analysis, we chose countries from three continents (Asia, Europe, America), with different dominant religions, striving to include strongly, moderately and weakly religious countries in those analysed. To capture the historical-geographical differences within Europe, we chose countries from East-Central, Western, Northern and South Europe as well.

The majority of research found relationship between religiosity and happiness, but in many cases it disappears with the inclusion of control variables, and it is not clear that if there is such a relationship, through what mechanisms it works. Our analysis revealed that factors related to religion (belief, different religious activities, belonging to a community) proved to be a significant influence in just a few Asian countries, but in most of the examined countries they had no effect at all. The explanation of these results is that the role of religion in the given society, the history of religions in that place and the relationship between the various religions are different in each country, so the impact (or lack of impact) of certain elements of religiosity on the quality of life will be also different. There is no such thing as a general religious effect on happiness.

In relation to the connection between demographic variables and happiness, conflicting research results were obtained in terms of age and gender (Diener, 1984, Frey-Sutzer, 2002, Inglehart, 1997), while in the case of education level and income, a positive correlation was identified in less affluent societies. (Veenhoven, 1996) In our analysis it was differed from country to country which demographic variables had significant effect on the level of happiness. Where certain variables did have an impact, however, it pointed in the same direction (younger people were happier, higher education was associated with a higher level of happiness and women were happier). Everywhere the most important explaining factor of happiness was satisfaction with family life.

We have not come across many studies that compare the happiness levels of people belonging to different religions, and their results are not unanimous. In our analysis we found differences in the happiness level of believers of different religions within the same country in some societies, but these cannot be explained by one or two simple, general rules. Proportionally, there are more unhappy people among Turkish non-believers, Thai Muslims, Japanese Catholics, and Russian Orthodox believers and more happy people are there among Croatian Catholics, Russian Muslims, Korean Catholics and Korean protestants. So, we did not find Buddhists to be more unhappy than non-Buddhists, as Adinga et al. (2012) did. In the case of Muslim believers, we found a country where as a minority they are happier than other religions' believers and we also found place where they are more unhappy.

We found indications of a relationship between satisfaction with family life and religiosity, but this issue requires a more thorough analysis. Another, perhaps even more important, possible direction of further research stems from the fact that research investigating the relationship between religion and happiness usually uses the measurement of general satisfaction with life on a 4-5-10 point scale, or simply ask how happy the individual feels. There are exceptions though, such as Poloma and Pendleton (1990), who examined not only the connection between general well-being/ happiness and religiosity, but also the connection of these with emotional well-being and existential satisfaction with religious life.

In happiness research, the concepts of hedonic and eudaimonic happiness, as well as the experience of flow, have now been identified. Hedonic happiness comes from the Greek word "hedoné", which means "pleasure", and nowadays the concept includes the preferences and pleasures of the mind in addition to that of the body. (Ryan -Deci 2001) Eudaimonic happiness refers to the state when self-awareness deepens, our abilities develop, a sense of meaningfulness and expediency of life appears, and we make efforts for perfection. (Szondy- Martos 2014) The expression "flow" refers to the perfect experience, which means a search for happiness through commitment and active involvement. (Szondy- Martos 2014) Peterson et al. (2005) developed the so called "Orientations to Happiness Scale", an 18-item questionnaire that is suitable for measuring the three faces of happiness (hedonic, eudaimonic, flow). As a future research question, we formulate how religiosity affects the three faces of happiness. The relevant hypothesis could be that the level of happiness of religious individuals is lower on the hedonic scale and higher on the eudaimonic scale than non-religious or less religious individuals, due to the functions that religion plays in people's lives.

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