



Political and Religion Attitudes in Greece: Behavioral Discourses

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Abstract The research presented in this paper attempts to explore the relationship between religious and political attitudes. More specifically we investigate how religious behavior, in terms of belief intensity and practice frequency, is related to specific patterns of political behavior such as ideology, understanding democracy and his set of moral values. The analysis is based on the use of multivariable methods and more specifically Hierarchical Cluster Analysis and Multiple Correspondence Analysis in two steps. The findings are based on a survey implemented in 2019 on a sample of 506 respondents in the wider area of Thessaloniki, Greece. The aim of the research is to highlight the role of people’s religious practice intensity in shaping their political views by displaying the profiles resulting from the analysis and linking individual religious and political characteristics as measured with various variables. The final output of the analysis is a map where all variable categories are visualized, bringing forward models of political behavior as associated together with other factors such as religion, moral values and democratic attitudes.

Keywords: political behavior, religion, democracy, multivariate methods, data analysis

1 Introduction

In this research we present the analysis results of a survey, which was implemented in April 2019 to 506 respondents in Thessaloniki, focusing on their religious profile as well as their political attitudes, their moral profile and the way they comprehend democracy. The aim of the analysis is to investigate and highlight the role of religious practice in shaping political behavior. In the political behavior analysis field, religion

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and more specifically church practice has emerged as one of the main pillars that form the political attitudes of voters. Religious habits seem to have a decisive influence on electoral choices, as derives from Lazarsfeld's research at Columbia University in 1944 [3], followed by the work of Butler and Stokes in 1969 [1] and the research of Michelat and Simon in France [6]. More specifically in the comparative study of Rose in 1974 [9], it turns out that the more religious voters appear to be more conservative by choosing to place themselves on the right side of the ideological "left-right" axis, while the non-religious voters opt for the left political parties. The research and analysis of Michelat and Simon [6] brings to the surface two opposing cultural models: on the one hand we have the deeply religious voters, who belong to the middle and upper classes, residing in the cities or in the countryside, while on the other hand we have the non-religious left voters with working class characteristics. The first framework is articulated around religion and those who belong to it identifying themselves as religious people, is inspired by a conservative value system, put before the value of the individual, the family, the ancestral heritage and tradition. The second cultural context is articulated around class rivalries and socio-economic realities; those who belong to this context identify themselves as "us workers towards others". They believe in the values of collective action, vote for left-wing parties, participate actively in unions and defend the interests of the working class. To measure the influence of religious practice on political behavior, applied research uses measurement scales about the intensity of religious beliefs and the frequency of church service practice as an indicator of the level of one's religious integration.

To measure religious intensity level, variables are used such as how often they go to the service, how much do they believe in the existence of God, of afterlife, in the dogmas of the church and so on. Since the 90's there is a rapid decline in the frequency with which the population attends church service or self-identifies strongly in terms of religiousness. Nevertheless, the strong correlation between electoral preference and religious practice remains strong [5]. The most significant change for non-religious people is that the left is losing its universal influence as many of these voters expand also to the center. Strongly religious people continue to support the right more and, in some cases, strengthen the far right. In this paper, apart from attempting to explore and verify the existing literature over the effect of religion on political behavior, focusing on the Greek case, the approach exploits methods used to achieve the visualization of all existing relationships between different sets of variables. To link together numerous variables and their categories to construct a model of religious and political behavior, multiple applications of Hierarchical Cluster analysis (HCA) are being made followed by Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) for the emerging clusters. In this way, a semantic map is constructed [7], which visualizes discourses of political and religious behavior and the inner antagonisms between the behavioral profiles.

2 Methodology

For the implementation of the research a poll was conducted on a random sample of 506 people in the greater area of Thessaloniki in Greece, during April 2019. A questionnaire was used as a research tool which was distributed with an on-site approach of the random respondents. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: a) the first section included seven questions for demographic data of the respondent such as gender, age, educational level, marital status, household income, occupation and social class to which the respondent considers belonging; b) the second part contained seven questions, ordinal variables, related to the religious practice and beliefs of the respondent: i) how often does one go to church? ii) how often does one pray? iii) how close does one feel to God, Virgin Mary (or to another seven religious concepts) during church service? iv) how strongly does one have seven different feelings during church service? v) does one believe or not in the saints, miracles, prophecies (and another six religious concepts)? Two more questions investigating their profile in terms of what is taught in the Christian dogma were included vi) one asking if one can progress only by being an ethical person and vii) another one asking if they agree on the pain/righteousness scheme, that is if one suffers in this life will be rewarded later or in the afterlife; c) questions concerning the political profile of the respondent are developed in the third part of the questionnaire: i) one's self-positioning on the ideological left-right axis, ii) a set of nine ordinal variables requiring one's agreement or disagreement level on sentences that reflect the dimensions of liberalism-authoritarianism and left-right iii) this last section also includes two different sets of pictures, used as symbolic representation for the "democratic self" and the "moral self" [4]. The first set of twelve pictures represent various conceptualizations of democracy, and one is asked to select three pictures that represent democracy. The second set of pictures represent moral values in life, and one is asked to choose three pictures that represent one's set of personal values. Variables are ordinal, using a five-point Likert scale, apart from the question regarding whether one believes or not in prophecies magic etc. and the two last questions with the pictures, where we are using a binary scale of yes-no or zero-one where zero is for a non selected picture and one is for a selected picture.

Data analysis was implemented with the use of M.A.D software (Méthodes d'Analyse des Données), developed by Professor Dimitris Karapistolis (more about M.A.D software at www.pylimad.gr). Firstly, Hierarchical Cluster Analysis (HCA) using chi-square distance and Ward's linkage, assigns subjects into distinct groups based on their response patterns. This first step produces a cluster membership variable, assigning each subject into a group. In addition to this, the behavior typology of each group is examined, seeing the connection of each variable level to each cluster using two proportion z test (significance level set at 0.05) between respondents belonging to cluster i and those who do not belong in cluster i for a variable level. The number of clusters is determined by using the empirical criterion of the change in the ratio of between-cluster inertia to total inertia, when moving from a partition with r clusters to a partition with $r - 1$ clusters [8]. In the second step of the analysis, the cluster membership variable is analyzed together with the existing variables using

MCA on the Burt table [2]. All associations among the variable categories are given on a set of orthogonal axes, with the least possible loss of the original information of the original Burt table. Next, we apply HCA for the coordinates of variable categories on the total number of dimensions of the reduced space resulting from the MCA. In this way we cluster the variable, as previously we clustered the subjects. By clustering the variable response categories, we detect the various discourses of behavior, where each cluster of categories stands as a behavioral profile linked with a set of responses and characteristics. To produce the final output, the semantic map, we created a table including the output variables of the questionnaire, including demographics and variables for political behavior. Using the same two-step procedure using HCA and MCA for this final table, the semantic map is constructed, positioning the variable categories on a bi plot created by the two first dimensions of MCA.

3 Results

In the first step of the analysis, we apply HCA for each set of variables in each question. In the question: “How close do you feel during the service 1-To God, 2-To the Virgin, 3-To Christ, 4-To some Saint, Angel, 5-To the other churchgoers, 6-To Paradise, 7-To Hell, 8-To the divine service, 9-To his preaching priest”, we get four clusters (Figure 1).

Cluster	Responses related to the cluster	%
e19837	“not at all” in everything	7,9%
e19882	“enough” in 1,2,3 / “little” or “not at all” in 5,6,9	55,1%
e19883	“a little” in 1,2,3 / “not at all” in 4,5,6,8,9	19,5%
e19884	“absolutely” in everything and “enough” in 5,6,9	17,5%

Fig. 1 Four clusters on how close the respondents feel during church service.

For the question: “How strongly you feel after the end of the service 1-The Grace of God in me, 2-Power of the soul, 3-Forgiveness for those who have hurt me, 4-Forgiveness for my sins, 5-Peace, 6-Relief it is over”, we get six clusters (Figure 2).

Cluster	Responses related to the cluster	%
e21902	in everything “absolutely”	9,0%
e21904	“absolutely” peace, strength of soul / “not at all” forgiveness, relief	23,4%
e21905	in all “absolutely” / “not at all” relief	11,8%
e21906	“quite” relief / in all others “a little”	16,8%
e21907	in everything “not at all”	5,9%
e21908	in all “enough”	33,0%

Fig. 2 Six clusters on how the respondents feel at the end of church service.

Five clusters (Figure 3) for the question: “Do you believe in 1-Bad (magic influence) 2-Magic? 3- Destiny? 4-Miracles? 5-Prophecies of the Saints? 6- Do you have pictures of holy figures in your house? 7-in your workplace? 8-Do you have a family Saint?”.

Cluster	Responses related to the cluster	%
e22877	yes to miracles and images	23,8%
e22872	yes to miracles, prophecies and pictures	12,0%
e22874	not at all	8,4%
e22875	yes in bad influence, magic, miracles, prophecies and pictures	17,4%
e22879	yes to all	37,8%

Fig. 3 Five clusters on the beliefs of the respondents on various aspects of the Christian faith.

Six clusters are detected (Figure 4) for the question: “How do you feel when you come face to face with a religious image 1-Peace, 2-Awe, 3-The presence of God, 4-Emotion, 5-The need to pray, 6-Contact with the person in the picture”.

Cluster	Responses related to the cluster	%
e23856	in everything “not at all”	5,1%
e23887	in all other “moderately” (a little in awe, emotion / enough in prayer)	16,9%
e23890	“not at all” in prayer and person in the picture / in everything else “a little”	9,8%
e23892	in everything “absolutely”	15,3%
e23893	“not at all” in awe / in everything else “a little”	12,4%
e23894	in everything “enough”	40,4%

Fig. 4 Six clusters on how the respondents feel when facing a religious image.

We proceed with the clustering of the replies on political views and we get seven clusters of political profiles (Figure 5).

Cluster	Responses related to the cluster	%
e29881	“strongly agrees” with drachma, individualism, anti-immigrant, anti-EU, welfare state, not leader	7,8%
e29885	“agrees” with welfare state agrees, “disagrees” with all the rest	8,2%
e29886	“agrees” with strong leader, tax cuts	27,6%
e29887	“disagrees” with the right to violence, “agrees” with all the rest	8,9%
e29889	“agrees” with drachma, individualism, anti-immigrants, welfare state, not leader (difference with 881, here simply “agrees” and not interested in EU)	14,0%
e29890	“agrees” with drachma, “disagrees” with all the rest	11,4%
e29891	“agrees” with tax cuts, drachma, anti-immigrant, anti-EU, individualism, strong leader	22,0%

Fig. 5 Seven clusters according to the political views- profile of the respondents.

For the symbolic representation of the democratic self, when choosing three pictures that represent democracy for the respondent, we find eight clusters (Figure 6), and eight clusters for the symbolic representation of the moral self for the respondents, as show in Figure 7.

Cluster	Responses related to the cluster	%
e31892	direct democracy, money, revolution, riot	5,4%
e31893	parliament, money	2,4%
e31914	direct democracy	11,6%
e31916	parliament, council, church	10,9%
e31918	protest, revolution	10,7%
e31920	e-gov	14,2%
e31921	protest, council, revolution	13,3%
e31924	protest, ancient Greece, parliament, volunteering, church	31,5%

Fig. 6 Eight clusters on how the respondents understand democracy.

Cluster	Responses related to the cluster	%
e30970	Christ, intimacy, volunteering, family	24,9%
e30953	fun, intimacy, meditation, win, rebellion	2,2%
e30958	Christ, family, army	13,7%
e30960	meditation, win	7,6%
e30961	fun, career, intimacy, money	7,4%
e30972	career, win, fun, career	17,2%
e30966	career, peace, family	9,4%
e30968	Christ, peace, family	17,6%

Fig. 7 Eight clusters on the different sets of moral values of the respondents.

In the second step of the analysis, we jointly process the cluster membership variables. MCA produces the coefficients of each variable category which are now positioned in a two-dimensional map as seen in Figure 9. HCA is then applied again to the coefficients of the items, which bring forward three main clusters, modeling political and religious behavior. In Figure 8, Cluster 77 is connected to centre and moderate religious behaviour, cluster 78 reflects the voters of the right, with strong religious habits and beliefs, individualistic attitudes and more authoritarian and nationalistic political views, whereas cluster 79 represents the leftists, non-religious voters, closer to revolutionary political views and collective goods. Examining the antagonisms on the behavioral map (Figure 9), the first horizontal axis which explains 22.8% of the total inertia, is created by the antithesis between right political ideology - strong religious behavior and left political ideology-no religious behavior (cluster 78 opposite to cluster 79). The second axis (vertical) accounts for 7% of the inertia, and is explained as the opposition between the center (moderate religious behavior) against the left and right (cluster 77 opposite to both clusters 78 and 79).

Variables	77	78	79
Ethical person	Enough, a little	Absolutely	Not at all
Pain / Righteousness:	A little / moderately	Enough / Very / Absolutely	Not at all
Ideology	Centre	Right	Left
Praying		I pray often	I pray sometimes / I never pray
Church service		I go to church often	I rarely go to church
Political attitudes	{pro-drachma, individualism, anti-immigrant, anti-EU, welfare state, not leader [strongly agrees]} { (strong leader, tax cuts (agrees))} {tax cuts, pro- drachma, against immigrants, against EU, person first, strong leader}	{in all others agrees / disagrees on the right to violence} {agrees with drachma, individualism, against immigrants, welfare state, not leader (difference with 881, here simply agrees and there is no EU)} {better with drachma, everything else disagrees}	{welfare state agrees, all the rest disagrees}
Democratic self	{parliament, money} {direct democracy} {e-gov}	{parliament, council, church} {protest, ancient Greece, parliament, volunteering, church}	{direct democracy, money, revolution, riot} {protest, council, revolution}
Moral self	{Meditation, win} {Fun, Career, intimacy, Money} {Career, peace, family} {Christ, Peace, family}	{Christ, Family, Army} {Christ, intimacy, volunteering, family}	{fun, intimacy, meditation, win, rebellion} {Career, win, Fun, Career}

Fig. 8 Three main behavioral discourses linking all variable categories together.

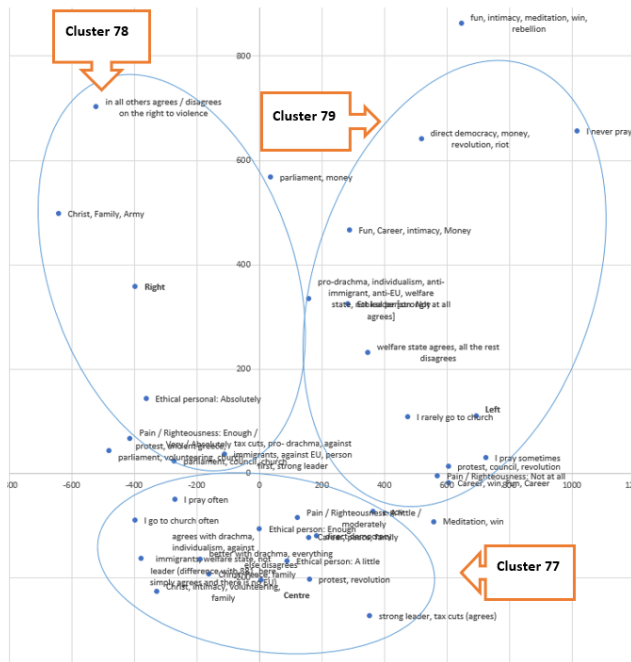


Fig. 9 The semantic map visualizing the behavioral profiles of voters, and the inner antagonisms.

4 Discussion

The analysis uncovers the strong existing relationship between religious habits and political views, for the Greek case. The semantic map indicates two main antagonistic cultural discourses, including both religious, political and moral characteristics: The first discourse (cluster 77) is described as moderately religious practice and beliefs, connected to the ideological center. These voters have political attitudes that belong to the space between the center-left and the center-right. They understand democracy as a connection to money, direct democracy and electronic democracy. Their moral set of values is naturalistic and individualistic. The next behavioral discourse (cluster 78) describes the voters of right ideology, with strong religious beliefs and frequent religious practice. They appear as very ethical and believe in the concept of pain and righteousness. Regarding their political attitudes these more religious voters are against violence, have more authoritarian and nationalistic positions. They view democracy as parliamentary, representative, ancient Greece but also as church, while their moral set of values appear clearly naturalistic, Christian and nationalistic.

Cluster 79 reflects the exact opposite discourse compared to 78. These voters belong to the left ideology and are non-religious. They do not adopt the ideas of the ethical person, or the scheme of pain and righteousness as mentioned in the Christian dogma. In terms of political attitudes, they are pro-welfare state. These non-religious and left voters understand democracy as direct with the need for revolution, protest and riot and support collective goods. Interpreting further the antagonisms as visualized on the semantic map, the main competition exists between the “right political ideology - strong religious behavior individualism” discourse and the “left political ideology-no religious behavior collectivism” discourse. A secondary opposition is found between the “center ideology- moderate religious behavior” discourse against the left and right extreme positions.

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