

Labor and entrepreneurship in the context of religious values systems

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Abstract: The system of religious values is a guideline for believers in building their life priorities, including economic ones. It varies according to the religious belief. Labour and entrepreneurship as a manifestation of certain personal traits of an individual and his economic behavior are considered through the prism of the system of values of Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam. The peculiarities in the systems of religious values concerning individual attitudes to work and entrepreneurship are revealed. Some statistical confirmation of differences existed between important social and economic indicators in countries adhered to diverse religious beliefs was found out. The difference between Christian, Islamic, and Buddhist countries is visualized.

Keywords: religion, values, labor, entrepreneurship.

JEL codes: Z12, J24, L26

1. Introduction

Religion is an integral part of society's existence and development. Religion is most often understood as a set of spiritual and moral values of an individual that influence his own behavior. It is also linked to the cultural values of a particular individual belonging to a certain nation or region. It is now recognized that an individual's religious views influence various aspects of his life, especially economic ones.

The religious values system is a reference point in building the believer's life priorities and forming his consciousness as a person. Because religion as mentioned by L. Chyzhevskya et al. (2020) is "vital in building civil society to meet its spiritual needs". In our opinion, there are as many systems of religious values as there are theological directions. Of course, each religion in its basis is a union of people with a special spiritual and practical connection, arises in a common belief in the highest cultural, moral and spiritual values, which are the meaning of life for them. And also, they believe in supernatural forces influencing the destiny of people, the Universe. There are more than 40 religions in the world, and therefore, religious values systems.

This research will focus on the economic aspects of human life, such as labor and entrepreneurship. Namely, they have been viewed through the prism of the value systems of Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam as the most common religions in the world for many years.

Labour and entrepreneurship will be considered separately from each other. Individually, these two notions or phenomena are the manifestation of certain personal traits of an individual, his desires and motivations. As we know, not all people can be

entrepreneurs, but everyone can work. Thus, two directions will be considered in the context of the chosen research:

- a religious values system of the individual's attitude to labor;
- a religious values system of the individual's attitude towards entrepreneurship.

Therefore, the main ability of an individual is the ability to work consciously. This consciousness contains many things. As early as in the primitive system, a human being understood that he could get food and other necessary livelihoods only by making certain efforts, labor. Also, later, labor began to be recognized as a means of self-realization. And here, we should remember the introverted and extraverted labor by L. von Mizes (2005). He identified three classes of labor as introverted, namely: 1) Labor for labor; 2) Labour as a service to God; 3) Labour as a means of avoiding "greater evil". And only one, the 4th grade, was singled out as extravert: 4) Labour for income.

As Mizes (2005) noted, the first three classes describe labor as "hard work not to achieve a goal at the end of a journey, but for the sake of the journey itself."

The difference between motivation to labor and entrepreneurship lies in the level of initiative and responsibility. After all, an employee is responsible for the results of his work. He performs what he was offered within his competence. And the entrepreneur is responsible for the entire enterprise, for the results of the employees' work, for the consequences of his initiative and risk.

Entrepreneurship in modern society is considered an activity that is respected. As is known, entrepreneurship is an expression of economic interests, and its primary purpose is to make a profit. But on the other hand, entrepreneurship is also an opportunity for a person to express himself, his abilities, his creativity.

The entrepreneur is an autonomous, independent person. At the same time, to achieve his goal, the entrepreneur is guided by certain ethical norms and values.

As Ahmad Fahim Didar (2019) notes, entrepreneurship (particularly successful) is based on a so-called triangle of values. It consists of personal (honesty, passion etc), professional (healthy competition, self-determined work environments etc) and social values (creating products or services that benefit society etc).

This triangle of entrepreneurship values so as Mizes's statements on labor are closely intertwined with religious values systems.

2 Methodology and Data

Values systems of the researched religions have differences based on the postulates of sacred books and their interpretations, as well as on sermons and prophecies of the founders and leaders of a particular religion—such otherness influence on the individual attitude to labor and entrepreneurship.

The above-mentioned statement of Mizes on labor is somewhat intertwined with Schumacher's (1973) description of the labor function in the Buddhist economy. It is a triune statement:

- 1) to enable a person to use and develop their abilities;
- 2) to allow the individual to overcome self-centeredness by uniting with others in a common cause;

3) to develop the goods and services necessary for the formation of existence.

1. Although, from the Buddhist point of view, the benefits of income (earnings) are out of the question. Everything is directed at the person, for the sake of the person.

2. In the Muslim or Islamic economy, labor is also treated with respect. As is known, the life of a Muslim believer is based on observing the prescriptions of the Holy Quran.

3. So, as Abdul Mayid et al. (2014) say about labor, it is considered the best if you earn your living. And also, Allah blesses the one who sells with kindness, buys with kindness, and makes decisions with kindness. The great Prophet Muhammad

believed that labor is an effort to bring man closer to God, as an activity of man for the sake of Allah, and also, of course, for livelihood.

Christian ethics of the Middle Ages defined labor as either punishment and atonement for original sin for the sake of necessary care of material well-being, or as an entirely reasonable and essential occupation of man for the education of self-discipline, diligence, etc. Moreover, it is in this period, as T. Abolina (2012) notes, different professions are recognized, the dignity of masters, professionals, as well as their social status and social responsibility are affirmed. But, based on the fact that the Lord created man in His image and invited him to work on earth (see Genesis 2: 5-6.15), for an individual honest and faithful work is a blessing, allows him to realize the Lord's plan of the world and the human being.

This triangle of values is closely intertwined with religious values systems. After all, the entrepreneur as a person is guided by specific spiritual and moral values, and also has certain high goals. They, in their turn, influence his professionalism as well, as love for his work and aspiration for perfection in it, ability to successfully compete with others. And the above-mentioned social values correspond to the basic golden rule of morality: "As you want people to do towards you, so do you towards them." The latter applies to the behavior of any person, regardless of their role in society, especially those who are guided by the values of Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, as well as other religions.

In Christianity, the entrepreneur in his activities is guided by the Ten Commandments of God, as well as the Holy Scriptures and the Bible. All these sources do not have explicit references to entrepreneurship, but there is a lot of evidence that this activity is evaluated positively. After all, Christianity is not an opponent of income generation and business as such, but as R. Olexenko (2015) mentioned, "calls against the abuse of wealth, trade, forgetting the higher goals of life, except for earthly goods."

Islam differs from Christianity in less flexibility, because Muslim believers are mostly oriented towards the dogmas of the Koran, where there are many strict prohibitions against certain activities or labor. In particular, as L. Khaylova (2007) notes, apart from deception, fraud, bribery, alcohol production and sale, gambling business, usury falls under the strict ban. The latter, according to modern researchers, has no labor elements. Usury is also condemned as a process - a loan of money with growth to profit from the needs and suffering of others, and as a result - an empty accumulation of capital, property, does not bring income, not used for selfish purposes.

Therefore, Muslims at the state level have a ban on usury. At the same time, in Christianity, there is only moral condemnation of such actions. Therefore, this is reflected in the banking business, as well as the peculiarities of capitalist relations in Muslim countries.

Entrepreneurs who are adherents of Buddhism in their activities are guided by the principles of the so-called Middle Way (the Noble Eightfold Path) and the Four Noble Truths. The study by S. Ulanov (2016) provides examples of successful entrepreneurship based on Buddhist principles. In particular, the experience of Japanese companies that have applied the principles of Buddhist ethics and philosophy - "ideologist" of Sony Corporation Shigeru Kobayashi and its founder Akio Morita, founder of a large multinational corporation "Andin International Diamond Corporation" Michael Roach, founder of Apple Steve Jobs and others.

All of them, to varying degrees, were guided by the "noble Eightfold Path" - "right understanding, right determination, right speech, right actions, right livelihoods, right effort, right awareness, right concentration"(see Sanjutta Nicai 56.11).

Thus, the religious values system that an individual adheres to in relation to labor and entrepreneurship has specific differences depending on the religious belief.

At the next step of our research, we tried to find some statistical confirmation of differences existed between important social and economic indicators in countries adhered to diverse religious beliefs. We supposed that to have the right to claim that religious diversity caused some notable differences, we should consider countries in which one religion dominates. As a result, for the ratio of dominant religion adherents in the total population, the threshold meaning slightly less than 2/3, more specifically, 64%, was

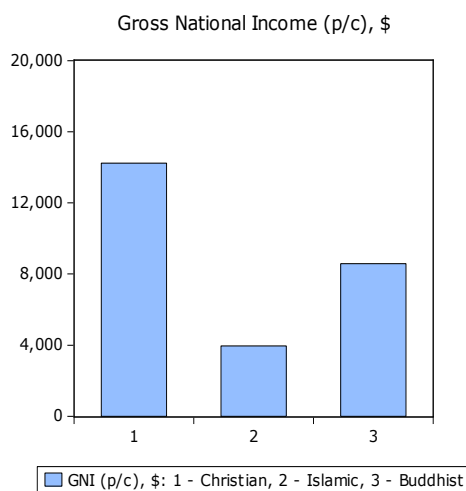
chosen. This way, we determined three groups of countries where Christianity (10 countries), Islam (10 countries), and Buddhism (7 countries) prevailed. The primary sources for the above-mentioned determinations were data from Worldbank, Pew Research Center, World Religion Database, papers of Z. Kubaščíková et al. (2019) (particular links are in the references), and other trustworthy sources for 2018.

Let us provide some clarifications on the data used on social and economic indicators. Thus, the indices of human development and capital were chosen to determine the quality of work and entrepreneurship. Because of changes in the calculation methodologies, in particular for the Human Development Index, as well as considerable difficulties in collecting data on the adherents of a specific religion in different years, we were forced to be limited only to data for years 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018. Concerning the Human Capital Index and the Global Entrepreneurship Index, the former had only begun to be calculated in 2018, while data for the latter were not available for previous years. This fact has led to the presentation of social and economic indicators for the year 2018.

3 Results and Discussion

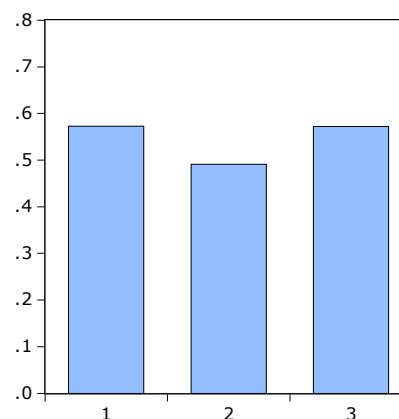
According to the next graphs, we can trace more or less substantial differences between the three groups of countries. Let's begin with gross national income per capita data (fig. 1). The mean for ten most Christian countries (\$14244) is 3,59 times higher than for Islam countries (\$3964) and 1,66 times higher than for Buddhist countries (\$8586). And this even though most Christian countries include Democratic Republic Congo (\$490) and Ethiopia (\$790). Still, the differences in median GNP per capita are less impressive: \$7630, \$3465, and \$970 appropriately, with Buddhist countries trailing behind in this case. The diversities noted can be explained by strong Islamic Shariat condemnations for some forms of labor and entrepreneurship and by a balanced attitude of Buddhism to every kind of activity.

Graf 1 Gross national income per capita



Graf 2 Human Capital Index

Human Capital Index



Legend: GNI (p/c), \$: 1 - Christian, 2 - Islamic, 3 - Buddhist

Legend: HCI: 1 - Christian, 2 - Islamic, 3 - Buddhist

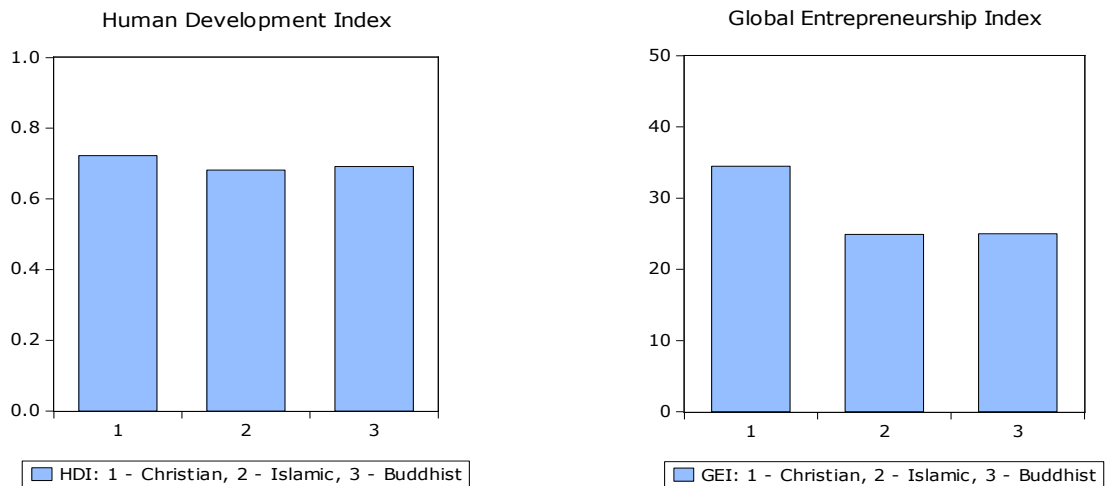
Sources: for Graf 1 Worldbank Retrieved from: <https://data.worldbank.org/>
for Graf 2 Human Capital Project. Retrieved

from: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/30498/33324RU.pdf?Sequence=13&isallowed=y>

Regarding the Human Capital and Human Development indexes, the differences between the three groups of countries are far less significant (fig. 2, 3). HCI mean data are precisely equal for Christian and Buddhist countries and slightly lower for Islamic ones; even more monotonous are HDI indicators. In Islamic countries, Shariat restricts women's activities in economic life while the other two groups of states do not have such restrictions. So it can be the reason of low indexes values for that group.

Graf 3 Human Development Index

Graf 4 Global Entrepreneurship Index



Sources: for Graf 3 United Nations Development Programme [Human Development Reports](http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2019-readers-guide). Retrieved from: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2019-readers-guide>

for Graf 4 2018 Global Entrepreneurship Index rankings. Retrieved from: <https://thegedi.org/tool/>

Finally, the mean data for the Global Entrepreneurial Index reveal the apparent advantage for Christian countries: 34,5 against 24,9 and 25 for other groups. Interestingly, the median indicators demonstrate a completely different pattern – in this case, data for Christian and Islamic countries are very close, appropriately 26,4, and 25,3 versus 19,9 for Buddhist ones.

Conclusions

Thus, the study showed that each individual, in his attitude towards labor and entrepreneurship, is guided by the awareness that his activities are aimed not only at meeting his physical and material needs but also at realizing his abilities, creativity, caring for himself and his relatives and thus benefiting society. This consciousness of himself and his role in society depends on the set of religious values, which he follows. The systems of values of Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism as the most widespread have many significant differences. They reflect on the attitude towards both labor and entrepreneurship and influence the development of the countries where they are most prevalent. In Buddhism, labor must be conscious and contribute first and foremost to the spiritual growth of the individual. The same role is played by entrepreneurship. In Christianity, labor should contribute to self-education and self-discipline, in addition to obtaining means of livelihood, as well as being a means of helping God's work. As for entrepreneurship, it is supported by Christianity, but with fear of abuse of the wealth received, focusing on earthly goods. In Islam, if done with kindness, labor is a noble cause, and brings man closer to Allah and helps to secure his livelihood. However, Shariat law imposes restrictions and prohibitions both on labor itself and on entrepreneurship in certain activities. This fact also affects the social and economic indicators of the country where the system of values of a particular religion is most. In particular, the economic and social indicators of Christian countries are mostly higher compared to Buddhist and Muslim countries. The latter group of countries, on the contrary, demonstrates relatively lower indicators.

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