

Religiosity and Modernity in Iran

Taghi Azadarmki ¹

Abstract

In this article, religiosity status of people and different social groups in the city of Tehran based on Clark and Stark's analytic and theoretical models have been considered. With regard to these two viewpoints, the main aim of this research is to study and identify faith, affection, rituals, conceptual and consequential of people's religiosity. The main question is that whether results of present research confirm the previous results based on the fact that younger and educated people are less religious than elders and illiterate people or not? With regard to theoretical arguments and research findings, this kind of realization of religiosity in Iran particularly in Tehran is the result of single dimension and polarity approach toward religiosity. In case of using multi-dimensional approach in comparison with religiosity, some different results and responses are obtained and discussed in this research.

¹- Professor in Sociology, The University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran, tazad@ut.ac.ir

Key Words

Modernity, Religiosity, Belief, Secularism, and Ritual.

Introduction

The main target of this research is to compare people's religiosity with respect to different ages and sexes and study the influence of social classes and academic qualifications of people according to five different aspects of religiosity. The first point confirms that young and educated people are less religious in comparison with the elderly. This kind of polarity of modernity and conventionalism piety and disbelief is the result of a single aspect. Multi-dimensional approaches towards religiosity would keep us away from many polarity judgments and lead us to maintain different results with respect to the state of religiosity among the people of Tehran. Description of religiosity status of people based on different groups: age, sex, academic and social classes have been also taken into consideration with respect to theoretical models of Inglehart and Gelark and Stark. Furthermore the main basics of modernity depend on rationality and logic while religion tends towards Spiritual Values and beliefs which are more related to traditions. In order to maintain a logical conclusion about the above discussion, I shall try to discuss the two sociologists' perspectives of religion and culture such as Ronald Inglehart and Peter Berger. Also by taking into consideration some results of experimental researches which were carried out on Tehran, I discuss the importance of religiosity among the people of Tehran by trying to emphasize

the extent of religiosity related to certain concepts and to identify the interrelation and system of people's religiosity.

Literature review

The outcome of some frequent studies focused on religion and modernity all over the world led to two processes and ranges. A positive process related to the influence of modernity on secularism development and negative process based on modernity interrelation with religiosity. In the following discussion, both points of view are explained below:

1. The first point emphasizes secularism development through the modernity and post modernity and some materialistic views and beliefs of people concentrated on the development of industrial and advanced societies. This is because the decline of religious norms and beliefs in societies is about to be common. The main emphasis of these studies is based on the social and geographical environment that controls mankind. However, Ingelhart's theory has decreased the role of almighty God: the role of a great clock maker who created the world and then left it. In general, with respect to the studies carried out some issues have been suggested for the decline of religious norms in modern society: (1) Feeling more secure with life more controlled by mankind that led to the decline of religious norms; (2) Many social-religious standards have lost their social functions in society; (3) Other important factor that leads to religious standards is the issue of cognitive consistency. Religious rituals would be presented differently among people. This difference in consistency and incapability of people in feeling internal consistency with social and religious norms provides ground for weakening religions and the standards related to it in social setting. Based on this view,

secularism process of societies is the ideological product of intellectualism. According to secular advocates, modernity has been introduced as unavoidable enemy of religion. Thus, the more modern a society is the less religious it becomes. Throughout this point of view, an intercultural study has been carried out. Therefore, mentioning this point that modernity will lead to secularism and is more theoretical and conceptual view.

2. Another contradictory view, related to national and international studies not only confirms the presence of religious tendency among people but also shows the religious intensity, which is based on age, sex and social class groups, varies.

(1) Recent Gallop survey (2003) shows that 60% of U.S citizens have considered religion as a very important issue in their life and nearly 2/3 of them are members of church or religious institutions, and more than 40% mentioned that they have gone to church the week before. The results of this survey also show considerable difference of religious tendency among men, women, youngsters and adults. In fact, women and adults considered that religion is very important in their life more than men and youngsters.

(2) Some studies that were carried out on religion in Britain also confirmed the above statistics. The majority of adult populations in Britain are members of certain religious institutions. Only 5% of those who were interviewed showed that they have no religious tendencies. It also showed that aged people are usually more religious compared to younger population. This is also recognized among rich people more than the poor.

(3) The obtained results by Inglehart and his associates at international level show that although youngsters tend to have less belief in God in comparison with adults 90% of them believe in the high sacredness of God. In addition to this, as results of the same studies it shows that almost in all societies, youngsters are more tending towards violation of religious norms such as homosexuality among adults.

(4) Results of recent study carried out at a national level in Iran shows that 36% of the people are deep believers and 21% are just believers. 10% people are hesitant believers and 9.5% can hardly believe in God. The same research confirm the formation of new concepts such as privacy and individuality of religion among youngsters. This led to the wide spread of practicing religious activities privately and neglecting collective ritual ceremonies.

(5) Results of other research work partly the Iranian society in a way that shows the intensity of religious tendencies in lower classes. Few studies will highlight the relation of social and economic base with people's religiosity. This would contradict the statistics made in Britain regarding the relation between social classes and religiosity of people which portrays that religion is more implemented in higher classes.

The first conclusion is rather historical than modern. Other studies are more related to the contemporary world. By realizing the new conditions of Iran with respect to the world, we notice increase in religious studies, and the powerful role of religion that grows simultaneously with modernity; therefore, the outlook of people such as Inglehart and Gelak and Stark remained as our main reference.

General revision of theoretical basis

Changes took place in contemporary Iran from structural point of view that makes us face some kinds of changes in the conceptual standards and values. The development of rationality and logic, which is considered the basic of modern philosophy, has weakened certain foundations and gave a new setting to individuals. Difference in life and cognitive sciences have underestimated religious beliefs for they needed core evidences for every concept, and this has weakened religious institutions in their traditional form. For this main reason, many people believe that this matter gradually leads to diminish the social and political role of religion, which leads to the privatization of religious matters and enforces the process of secularization on the social basis.

A contemporary point of view that previously governed social studies considered that modernity leads to secularism and this gradually takes us to a new way of thinking, without affecting religion and people's beliefs. Since we are dealing with social studies we may notice that many experts in the fields of sociology and cultures have different views. Consequently, many researches show that the importance of religion and the cognitive style of people in modern society is not less important than before.

From conceptual point of view, Inglehart and Berger have emphasized the reconsideration of religion and post materialistic values. Inglehart explained that as man's need to feel secured and safe and in his opinion this would only be achieved by believing in spiritual values. He says: "Rise of

post materialism is very extensive but is only one concept of a more extensive cultural evolution that has given a modern form and look for political perspective, religious tendency, roles based sex and sexual norms in advanced industrial society. These evolutions and changes are in relation with a common need. The need for safety and security that in the past religion and absolute cultural norms have secured them in a traditional way”.

Peter Berger in a similar argument provided and opposite concept to religion decline, that is “secularism decline”. Through his discussion, he emphasized that what’s declining is not the religious beliefs but secular concepts in ideological and social life. He explains: “This thought that we are living in a secular world is incorrect. Today’s world has a few exceptions, is so prejudice, that is, has always been in some parts more than other parts”. With regard to the conceptual frame work and approach resulted from Inghart and Berger views, social and economic developments of contemporary age caused more people to concentrate than on religion and spiritual concepts. In other words, religion and culture contradict the current ideas and have found a new vital way in modern society.

Identification of this social evolution and its consequences is the main concern in Iran today. For this reason, studying and examining religiosity in society (particularly in the city of Tehran) is important from experiment and conceptual point of view. The aim of this research is to find a logical and documents reasons and answers that explain religiosity in the city of Tehran.

Conceptual dimensions of Religiosity

Various studies, which were carried out in Iran and worldwide show that religiosity is not single dimensional phenomenon. That means you cannot only see it from a ritual point of view. For example Clark and Stark have studied religiosity from five different dimensions of beliefs: conceptual, ritual, emotional experimental and consequential. Other research studies were also based of Clark and Stark models and examined the correlation among five religious required dimensions, emphasize that these scales are congruent with the sealing models of Gootman. Other methods presented by Clark and Stark to define the dimension of religiosity includes four concepts: religion affections, which consist of spiritual beliefs and faith and fear. This aspect consists of basis knowledge about religious principles and holly books, and it is expected that followers of each religion should be fully aware of them. Since these principles are considered as the fundamental of faith, they are repeated frequently in ritual ceremony and religious meetings and almost all followers memorize them.

Research Findings

This research used a mixed method to respond to the research questions and the data obtained from research have gone through were measured. Statistical analysis in this research focused on all women and men above 14 years old participated in the city of Tehran. Samples based on Kookran formula with confidence level of 95% from 412 people and divided in proportions of 22 districts of the city of Tehran.

Characteristics of interviewed people

Initially the participants were briefly discussed particulars of sample's individuals and then the researcher explained results

obtained on topic of religiosity of respondents: Among respondents 68% were males and 32% were females. As the sample was taken from the city of Tehran, dispersion of respondents from age and education points of view led us to divide the sample population into age and academic groups. Respondents were divided into four groups: Adolescents, youngsters, middle age, and adults. 46% of respondents were in the age of 14-18 (adolescents), 42.2% in the age of 19-29 (youth), 25% in age of 30-34 (middle age), and 16.8% in age of 45 and above. The sample from academic and educative levels: 14% of respondents held secondary education, 34.3% high school diploma, 26.2% university education and 13.3% were illiterate. From social class point of view most respondents came from high and lower middle class. 2.9% of respondents came from high class, 32.4% came from middle class and 16.5% come from working class and 5.8% came from lower class.

Religiosity of respondents

As noted earlier, the goal of this research is to study the religiosity of people using Gelak and Stark analytical models. We refer to results obtained in five dimensions of religiosity:

1. Emotional aspect

Two main indexes of emotional aspect is the importance of religion in people's life and whether they think that there is better life in the other world or not? Religious customs are formed with family relations, traditions, social setting and also personal belief. The important question focused on the importance of God in individual's life against his or her

attendance in a church and shows variety in accepting and rejecting traditional Christian or Jewish standards. Studying relation of importance of religion in people's life with gender variables and also with social class shows no significant relationship between above independent variables with respect of religion in individual's life. The results of this study shows that there is a significant relationship between education level of individual and importance of religion in a person's life and between age grouping and religions importance in their life.

In order to consider respondent's religious spiritual aspect, a survey was administered. In response to the question: "Do you think that you will have a better life in the other world or not?" 55.3% replied that it depends on their living style in this world, 27.5% said that their life in the other world would be much better and only 11% said that they do not think they will have a better life in another world.

So, to study the relationship between the respondents' attitude towards eternity and it's relation with real life such as education, age, sex and social class of respondents, there is a relationship between respondent's attitude towards eternity with education and age grouping, but there is no significant relationship between the above attitude with sex and social class of the respondent. Of course, ages between 14-18 years old show highest percent which is (60.7%) and the ages of 45 more show the lowest percent, which is 44.6%.

Responding to this question, which says: "In your opinion, is your material life considered as a preface for eternal life or life in this world is the main concern?" 48% of the respondents considered that material life is a preface for eternal life and

34.7% said that living in this world is the main thing. The statistical result based on significant test shows that attitudes of respondents compared with the priority of material life over eternal life or vice versa have no significant relationship with research independent variables. In other words, regardless of sex and age, education and social class majority of respondents (48.9%) believe that material life is a preface for eternal life. By studying respondent's religious spiritual aspect, it shows that it is relatively intense, 66.8% of respondents considered religion in their life very vital and major only 12.9% considered it as minor.

2. Religious creed

In some research works (Kalyton and associates) which is a study regarding religiosity based on analysis of factor, researchers have considered religiosity as a type of ideology and belief and in fact they have considered conceptual limitations. Current research outcome in the city of Tehran discusses that in many cases when concepts of religion was under mined respondents expressed their attitude about the above matters. Attitudes of respondents were studied and more than 70% said that Muslims are not authorized to drink alcohol, homosexuality, and sexual intercourse without marriage, prostitution and theft. Believing in life after death is the basic of religion and studying its relation with the age of respondents' shows that there is no significant relationship between attitude and the belief of life after death.

Statistical results have shown that there has been a significant relationship between the social class and the respondent attitude and belief regarding life after death. 89.4% of respondents from higher middle class has said

that they believe in life after death. 83.3% of the respondents from higher class, 86.1% from lower class, 85.1% from working class and 83.3% from lower class.

3. Ritual Aspect

In many research studies and theories about religiosity, ritual ceremonies (collective or individual) have been introduced as one of the most important religious performances studying the relation between groups according to religious rituals related to respondents' gender shows that there is no significant relationship between gender and performance. 38.4% of respondents visit Behesht Zahra cement once a week or once a month. While regarding the pilgrimage to Imam Reza once or twice a year. About 75.7 % rarely attend Friday prayers and some have never even attended it.

4. Conceptual aspect of religiosity (Theology)

Based on Stark and Clark definition and model, the theology consists of basic knowledge with regard to the belief in each religion and its follower. This aspect of religiosity has undergone questions and answers of some illegal issues in Islam. In the following Table, we may see some responses to this kind of knowledge: 83.3% consider drinking, 84% homosexuality 80.4% sexual intercourse without marriage 89.4% prostitution 72.8% killing and 76% theft as something forbidden to be done as Muslims and the lowest rate went to smoking (only 19.2% consider it as something should not be done). Results of statistical studies show no significant relationship between religious knowledge of respondents and their gender. But studying it in relation of gender variables,

women more than men condemn drinking alcohol in Islam. This kind of relationship was considered in some cases.

5. Consequential dimensions

Based on Clark and Stark's definition of religiosity, the message aspect or religious effects include consequences of belief, action, experience, and theology in daily life of a crusader and their relation with others. In many cases not observing religiosity standards in daily life has been considered as secular showing weakness and religiosity of individual.

By studying religiosity consequences, it shows that majority of respondents believe that it is better to implement all political, commercial, sexual affairs and family relations, recreation, art, judiciary and punishment, foreign policy and relationship and rights of Muslims through Islamic codes and standards.

Although considerable numbers of respondents (43.2%) believe that clergies and religious leaders have most influence in the country, only 3.1 % of them cannot solve problems of society and 37.7% believe that the influence of religious leaders in politics should be at its minimum or should be restricted more. 24.8% of respondents have said indifferently that no person or group can solve the profound problems of society. With regard to the point where we mentioned that affairs can be done through Islamic regulations, most respondents in the ages between 14 and 18 and 19 and 29 believe that political, commercial family relations, and sexual affair, punishment, foreign relations and rights of non-Muslims should be determined through Islamic regulations. With regard to recreation and art the age group of 14-18 more than other

ages consider that it is better that the above matters should be solved according to Islamic regulations.

There is a significant relationship between studies and religiosity dimensions. Respondents' with higher education more than respondents with secondary studies and diploma believe that it is better that all the above mentioned affairs and activities should be determined through Islamic laws.

Conclusion

By studying religiosity with multi-dimensional approaches, this possibility has been provided considering different dimensions of religiosity or lack or presence of a special index does not necessarily mean that no attention shall be given to religiosity or secularism of people. Results obtained shows that weakness in some religiosity indexes such as requirements to perform religious titles or neglecting the consequential dimension of religion and its role and position in public domain and daily life does not mean secularism of people. In affective dimension of religion and its role and position in public domain and daily life do not mean secularism.

In affective dimension of religiosity, the results show that the working class in comparison with other classes is more religious and has strong religiosity in concepts. However, in other religiosity dimensions including faith, ritual aspects, consequential dimensions and conceptual outlook, the middle class inclining its higher and lower subgroups have stronger religiosity than others. These results are not correlation with results obtained in other countries. Other research show that

religiosity among higher class is stronger than other social classes.

References

- Azadarmaki, Taghi and Ahmad Giyasvand, 1381/2002. "*The analysis of youth religious ceremonies in Iran*" Pajooheshenahnameh Daneshkadeh Adabiyat va Olume Ensani (*The Journal of Literature and Human Sciences*), The University of ShahidBeheshti, Vo 35.
- Berger, Peter L. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in The Sociology of Knowledge*. HarmondsWorthMiddleles: Penguin.
- Berger, Peter L. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of Sociological Theory of Religion*. Cardenci Ney: Douelday.
- Berger, Peter L. 1973. *The Social Reality of Religion*. Harmons Worth: Penguin.
- Berger, Peter L (2001). *Ofoule Secularism (Declining of Secularism.*, translated by AfshareAmiri, Tehran: Panjegan.
- Berger, Peter L. 1377 (1998). "*barkhalafe jaryane: neghde nazarieh secular shodan (Against of the main stream: the critique of theory of secularization)*", tran by sayyeh Hossan Serajzadeh. Kiyam Journa., N 44. Giddens, Anthony. (1997). Jameshenasi (Sociology). Translated by Manouchehre Sabouri. Ninth edi, Tehran: Nay Publisher.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1990. *Cultural Shift in Advanced Industiral Society.*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Mansoor Moaddel and Taghi Azadarmaki. 2003. "*The Worldviews of Islamic Publics: The Cases of Egypt, Iran, and Jordan.*" *International Studies in Sociology and Social Anthropology* .Brill. pp, 91-69.
- Nikpay, Amir. (2001).*Neghahi be barkhi az tahavvolate dini irane moaser (a view on some religious changes in contemporary Iran)*. Seminare Barresi masaele ejtemai Iran (the Conference on Iranian Social Problems), 26 and 27 Khordad.
- Serajzadeh, SeyyedHossan. (2004).*Chaleshaye din vamonenite (The Main Chaleshes of Religion and Modernity.*, Tehran: Tarheno Publisher.
- Shaniz, Lari. (2001). "*mafhome secular shodan dar pajoheshhaye tajrobi*" (The Meaning of Secularization in experimental surveys), *Majelleh Daneshkadeh adabiyat va olume ensani (The Journal of Literature and Human Sciences)*. The University of Tarbiyate Moallem.N 30-31.
- Vezairete Ershard va Farhange Eslami. (1995).*Paymayesh negareshha va arzeshaye iraninan (The Survey on Iranian Values and Attitudes)*. Second Vawe, Winther.