

# Religiosity and Unemployment In terms of Rational Choice Theory

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## I. Introduction

A religiosity emerging in the modern city environment does not fit into a segmented differentiation between religion and economy, between the sacred and the profane, or between the rational and the irrational. A variety of religious-economic practices in urban commercial culture requires sociologists of religion to develop a new framework of understanding of the relationship between religion and economy (Lyon 2000; Giggie and Winston 2002). However, the dichotomy of religious and economic behavior which has dominated the sociology of religion since the era of the Enlightenment discourages the sociologists of religion from taking a serious consideration into social problems such as unemployment, divorce, suicide, and so on. Unlike the traditional dichotomy, it seems that a borderless mixture of religious and economic behaviors frequently occurs in various aspects of real society. A post-modern reunification of religion

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and economy does not mean simply the capitalistic myth that the market, as Harvey Cox laments,<sup>1)</sup> is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. The new phenomenon to be interpreted in many ways gives us a much more complex theoretical implication than the secularists lamented over.

This article tries to show how religiosity and economic rationality can coexist in the urban culture through an analysis of the religiosity of job seekers in the metropolitan city of Seoul. As a urban environment ushers in the 'post-secular' era beyond the abovementioned segmented dichotomy of the sacred and the profane,<sup>2)</sup> it is noteworthy to examine patterns in the religious-economic recognition of the job seekers in Seoul, which has religiously and economically the most pluralized market in Korea. A crucial point here is on how and why the job seekers in Seoul economize their religiosity under the post-secular conditions of a religious and economic blending. Major findings of this research show that religious job seekers have a different strategy for utilizing their religion as an economic resource in the labour market. Even non-religious job seekers are always forced to find ways to cope with the religious policy of employers, whether it is neutral or not.

As a rule, Protestant job seekers who participated in this research are more economically motivated, but less flexible toward the religious policy of employers than any of the other respondents. The religious flexibility of Buddhists and Catholics may function as a better job-seeking strategy in the religiously pluralized labor market. In addition, there are no evidences that unemployment causes respondents to change their own religious identity.

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1) Harvey Cox, "Mammon and the Culture of the Market: A Socio-Theological Critique." In *Meaning and Modernity: Religion, Polity, and Self*, edited by Richard Madsen and William M. Sullivan et al., Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univeristy of California Press, 2002, pp. 127-132.

2) Habermas, Jurgen. "Religion in the public sphere." *European Journal of Philosophy* 14(1), 2006, pp.1-25; Deborah Stevenson, Kevin Dunn, Adam Possamai, and Awais Piracha. "Religious Belief across 'Post-secular' Sydney: the multiple trends in (de)secularization." *Australian Geographer* 41(3), 2010, pp. 323-350.

## II. Previous Studies

Like many other metropolitan cities around the world, the city of Seoul also suffers from a relatively higher rate of unemployment, and hence has promoted various kinds of job-seeking programs for controlling the level of unemployment as a potential source of social deviance and disorder. There were many economic or psychological studies concerning the cause and effect of urban unemployment. According to the concept of social deprivation, for example, it is expected that people in fiscal crisis are more likely to be submissive to religious authority.<sup>3)</sup> Most governmental programs for supporting job-seeking activities, ranging from a psychological therapy to vocational education, rely on psychological approaches to the labor market. While economic approaches focus on economic causes and solutions of social unemployment, psychological studies deal with the psychological symptoms and treatments of unemployment.<sup>4)</sup> It is not surprising that the issue of unemployment is not invoked as a subject of religious research because such existing studies in Korea have mainly dealt with the problem of employment in an economic or psychological context. Given that the cost of living in cities is very high in almost all aspects of life, the urban unemployment pushes people to engage in anti-social attitudes or social deviance such as crimes, suicide, psychopathy, and the like.<sup>5)</sup> That means that the issue of unemployment should be understood in more various contexts beyond economic or psychological approaches.

There have been a few studies on the relationship between religious

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3) Adorno, Theodore W (et al.). *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper & Sons. 1950; Glock, C. Y. 1964. "The Role of Deprivation in the Origin and Evolution of Religious Groups." In *Religion and Social Conflict*, edited by Robert Lee and Martin E. Marty. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 24-36; Glock, C. Y. and R. Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension*. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965.

4) 조은경, "실직자들의 심리적 반응: 춘천지역 사례", 『실업과 지역사회』, 한림대학교 출판부, 2000, pp. 213-258.

5) 이재혁, "실업의 사회적 측면: 춘천지역 사례", 『실업과 지역사회』, 한림대학교 출판부, 2000, pp. 259-319.

capital and employment in western societies in the influence of Gary Becker's pioneering insight into a comprehensive applicability of economic approach to all human behavior.<sup>6)</sup> Azzi and Ehrenberg's research is the first systemic analysis of how differences in wage and rates of employment are related to difference in the frequency of church attendance between men and women in a household. They explained economically why women with a lower wage tend to spend more time on church-related activities than men.<sup>7)</sup> In the American context, Marcum and Radosh insisted that different religious teachings on family or procreation create differences in labor market participation between Protestant and Catholic women.<sup>8)</sup> However, other studies found that men raised as Catholics have significantly higher earnings than men raised as Protestants,<sup>9)</sup> or Jewish men have higher earnings than men raised in all of the other religious traditions.<sup>10)</sup> In particular, Chiswick and Huang examined to what extent American Jewish men's earnings are influenced by their religious affiliation, human capital, and degree of religiosity.<sup>11)</sup> David Eversley investigated why a persistent discrepancy of employment between Protestants and Catholics occurs in Northern Ireland.<sup>12)</sup> In Greece, Drydakakis reported that religious minorities such as Pentecostal, evangelical,

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6) Gary Becker, "The Economic Approach to Human Behavior", In *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior*, edited by Gary Becker, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976, p. 8.

7) Corry Azzi and Ronald Ehrenberg. "Household Allocation of Time and Church Attendance." *Journal of Political Economy* 83(1), 1975, pp. 27-56.

8) John P. Marcum and Mary Radosh. "Religious Affiliation, Labor Force Participation and Fertility." *Sociological Analysis* 42(4), 1981, pp. 353-362.

9) Todd P. Steen. "Religion and earnings: Evidence from the NLS Youth Cohort." *International Journal of Social Economics* 23(1), 1996, p. 57.

10) Barry R. Chiswick. "The Earnings and Human Capital of American Jews." *The Journal of Human Resources* 18(3), 1983, pp.313-336; Nigel Tomes. 1985. "Religion and the Earnings Function." *American Economic Review* 75(2), 1985, pp. 245-250.

11) Barry R. Chiswick and Jidong Huang. "The Earnings of American Jewish Men: Human Capital, Denomination, and Religiosity." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47(4), 2008, pp. 694-709.

12) David Eversley. *Religion and Employment in Northern Ireland*. London, UK: Sage. 1989.

and Jehovah's Witnesses experience employment bias compared to Greek Orthodox.<sup>13)</sup> These studies on the relationship between religion and employment commonly emphasize the impact of religion on returns to human capital in the respective cultural contexts. Especially, religiosity in such studies is "treated as a consumption good with individuals deriving current utility from religious practice."<sup>14)</sup>

Despite these new attempts to understand the role of religion in labor market, there has been little attention paid to religion in the Korean labor market. The lack of scholarly interest in this subject is not necessarily due to a lack of research funds, bureaucratic prejudice, or political priority. Perhaps that may be the product of the Enlightenment tradition that supposes religious belief and practice should be understood differently from the logic system of economical rationality. According to this tradition, there is little room to understand the matter of unemployment in terms of religiosity because religion is destined to decline in a religiously pluralized society like metropolitan Seoul. The relativization of religious values entails the reducing influence of religion at both social and individual level. This is exactly what the secularization thesis expected to happen a generation ago. In contrast, this research shows that religious belief and practice still have an important impact on the economic attitudes of job seekers participating in the labor market: how they utilize their religious belief and practice in job-seeking activities, and further to what extent their job-seeking strategies are related to religious affiliation.

Participants in this research are those who registered for the job-seeking program at the Employment Supporting Center in eastern Seoul from January 2012 to July 2012. Among the 395 job seekers that participated in the questionnaire, 84 people are Protestants (21.2%), 69 are Buddhists (17.4%), 41 are Catholics (10.3%), and 201 are non-religious (50.8%). This ratio of research respondents does not seem far away from

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13) Nick Drydakis. "Religious Affiliation and Employment Bias in the Labor Market." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49(3), 2010, pp.477-493.

14) Shoshana Neuman. "Religious Observance within a Human Capital Framework: Theory and Application." *Applied Economics* 18, 1986, p.1193.

a religious distribution of the whole population displayed in the last three national demographic censuses.<sup>15)</sup> In addition, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with twelve of the respondents in July and August 2012.

### III. Religiosity as Economic Resource

In the post-capitalistic environment where religious behaviour is very often inseparable from economic activities, a demarcation of the two becomes vague and even unnecessary in daily life. In particular, the recent Korean labor market involves many more religiously or culturally complicated factors with the increasing inflow of foreign workers. Even job-seeking activities are not seemingly related to the religious tendency of job seekers. However, some of the findings of this research reveal that, rather than a conceptual dichotomy of religion and economy, there exists a monistic relationship between the two. <Table 1> shows the rate of respondents who think their religiosities are useful for seeking a job. More than 70% of Protestant respondents answered yes, while 28% of Buddhists and 44% of Catholics said yes. Korean Protestants are more likely to regard religion as an economic resource than any other religious people. Of course, this does not mean that Korean Protestantism perceived as a socio-economic resource played a role of such ethos that Max Weber described as the spirit of modern capitalism. The matter of what ethos promoted a growth of Korean capitalism requires a much more complex consideration of various social-economic factors than a limited understanding of religiosity as a social-economic resource.

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15) Statistics Korea, Population and House Census, in 1985, 1995, and 2005.

&lt;Table 1&gt; Utility of Religions in job-seeking activity

<b>Question:</b> <i>Do you think your religious affiliation or non-affiliation is useful in job-seeking activities?</i>			
	Yes	No	Other
Protestantism	61	20	3
Buddhism	19	49	1
Catholicism	18	22	1
No Religion	15	161	25
<b>Total</b> (n=395)	113	252	30

This feature is more clearly exemplified by Protestant interviewees as the following examples illustrate:

I have been Protestant for the last thirty years. Prayer is an important energy for my job-seeking activity, and hence it is always part of the content of my prayer. My employment is often listed on the prayers of my cell group members.

— a 43-year old female —

During six months of my job-seeking activity, both my pastor and cell group members prayed for me. I think that such prayers help me not to abandon the job-seeking activity.

—a 39-year old female —

Within the religious community, Korean Protestantism and Catholicism have a much more expansive religious-economic network than Buddhism. For example, the Korean Catholic church continuously places employment ads in the latter part of its weekly bulletin. Korean Protestants are encouraged to use church members' stores or services. This cooperation is interpreted as a way of expressing Christians' brotherhood. <Table 1> shows that Christianity with a relatively exclusive membership is perceived as a more useful resource in the labour market. Economically speaking, this is rational because the exclusive membership of Christianity facilitates the mutual cooperation or dependence between its members, even if it entails a high level of religious commitment. Why?

Assuming that every religious service belongs to the scope of collective goods,<sup>16)</sup> it is economically beneficial to prevent free-riders from

consuming religious services as collective goods. Then, religions based on exclusive membership basically act like a kind of private club “goods” which try to maximize the benefit of members by means of ruling out the access of non-members. The exclusive membership strategy of private club goods is the most effective way to expel free-riders. As the economical and cooperative network within the private club goods market can more significantly contribute to the prevention of free-riding, Christianity becomes a more profitable resource than Buddhism. Given that Korean Protestantism has a stronger fundamentalist tendency than Korean Catholicism, the former may well be a more useful socio-economic resource than the latter.

However, it does not mean that the utility of religion as an economic resource is a direct cause of religious conversion, reaffiliation, or deviation. None of the participants in this research have converted during their unemployment. It should be accepted that religious mobility is caused by many other factors as well as an economic utility of religion, even if many scholars claim that an economic status plays an important role in recruiting members of new religious movements in both eastern and western societies.<sup>17)</sup> Unlike Protestant respondents, 71% of Buddhist respondents in <Table 1> deny the utility of religion as a direct or indirect tool for employment or business. Let us quote from a few interviewees with similar tendency:

I only pray for becoming employed, but finding a job basically depends on my efforts. When I experience trouble that cannot be solved by means of my efforts, I pray more often.  
 --- a 49-year old female Protestant ---

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16) Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986; Rodney Stark and Roger Finke. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000, p. 148.

17) Eileen Barker, "New Religious Movements: Their incidence and significance" In *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response*, London and New York: Routledge, 1999, pp. 20-21; 박승길, 『한국현대사회와 SGI』, 태일사, 2008, p. 314; 노길명, 『한국신흥종교연구』, 경서원, 2003, p. 275.



I have been Catholic since my birth, but don' t like to devote myself to religious activity. I have never consulted with priests or nuns about finding a job. I don' t feel the necessity to do so. --- a 44-year old female Catholic ---

Through my volunteering activities in the temple, I feel comfortable. That helps me to understand others better and to keep in touch with them. I do not expect any other benefits from my faith life. (Buddhist) Temple is where I go to repent, not where I go to desire after (something). --- a 46-year old female Buddhist ---

The abovementioned religious interviewees do not anticipate the economic utility of religion for their job-seeking activities. Despite their different religious identifications, they clearly distinguish between religious activity and job-seeking activity and even reveal an antipathy towards blurring a traditional boundary of the sacred and the profane. This antipathy can be interpreted in two aspects. That is a reflection of religious desire to transcend or deny the materialized self tied up to a social-economic structure. Namely, self-transcendence and self-denial is two sides of the same coin to explain the materialized self in a structuralized daily life. Thus, religious conversion or reaffiliation is not an option to overcome unemployment. When people attempt to understand social conditions surrounding the self, the spectrum of religion does not serve an unrealistic shelter, pain reliever, or psychological deviance. Those who tend to distinguish their economic condition and religious purity are so rational as those who economize their religiosity to escape from unemployment.

According to <Table 1>, on the other hand, 80% of people marked as 'no religion' think that their non-religious tendency is not helpful economically in terms of their job-seeking activities. Although they know they will not receive any religious support as job seekers and hence have less available resources than religious people, they give up religious affiliation as an economic resource. From an economic point of view, this implies that they have too low a level of expectation of the economic utility of religious affiliation to offset the expense of religious commitment.

However, there are more things to be considered when we ask why about 50% of the population in Korea still remain non-religious in each Population and House Census conducted since 1985. Religiosity of respondents marked as 'no religion' is difficult to explain by religious affiliation or commitment only. The category of 'no religion' includes various type of religiosity deriving from atheists, agnostics, those with no preference, those with no affiliation, and also members of small groups.<sup>18)</sup> Korean religious market is actually filled with unchurched believers who prefer shamanism, scriptural divination, geomancy, and physiognomy.<sup>19)</sup> In this context, Korean respondents under the category of no religion are bound to make a religious choice in their real life and then are subject to a cost-benefit analysis of holding religious non-affiliation in job-seeking activities. This rationality can be understood in the same context that respondents with religious affiliation try to economize their religiosity.

#### IV. Comparative Analysis

Now let us examine how the economic utility of religion is related to other religious attitudes. <Figure 1> shows the ratio of positive answers to each question, which is frequently used to estimate roughly an extent of religious commitment in the sociology of religion. When the number of positive answers is classified into each religious affiliation, it is noteworthy that the pattern of religious attitudes is very similar to the results of <Table 1>. As a whole, Korean Protestants, who are more likely to regard religion as an economic resource, have a stronger belief in a transcendental being or God, the afterlife, and pray for the purposes of

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18) Glenn M. Vernon, "The Religious "Nones": A Neglected Category" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 7(2), 1968, p. 219; William S. Bainbridge, "Atheism" In *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Peter B. Clarke, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 319-320.

19) Andrew Eungi Kim, "Nonofficial Religion in South Korea: Prevalence of Fortunetelling and other Forms of Divination" *Review of Religious Research* 46(3), 2005, pp. 284-302.

obtaining employment more frequently than the other religious/non-religious groups. Protestants and Catholics respond much more positively to each question in <Figure 1> than Buddhists and non-religious people. It suggests that Christians with a relatively clear religious identity economize their religiosity more effectively than other religious or non-religious people. The comparison of <Table 1> with <Figure 1> leads us to these questions: how religious identity is related to the extent of economizing religiosity? In particular, why are Korean Buddhists less successful in economizing their religiosity?

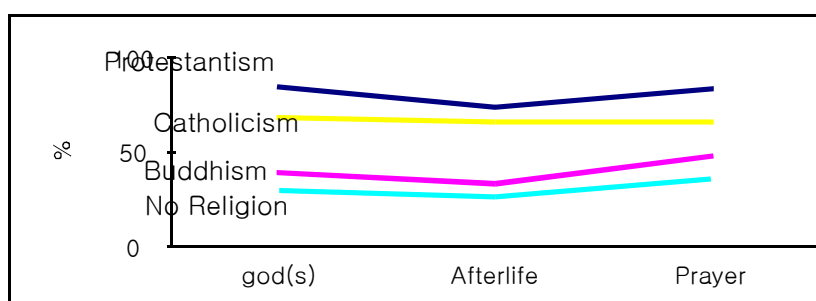
An answer can be inferred from the low level of religious commitment required in Buddhism. <Figure 1> shows obviously that Buddhist respondents are willing to distance themselves from religiously-dictated behavior such as belief in the transcendental or God and prayer.

<Figure 1> Comparison of religious commitment among job seekers

**Question 1:** *Do you believe in god(s) or transcendental beings?* <sup>20)</sup>

**Question 2:** *Do you think that there is an afterlife?*

**Question 3:** *Have you ever prayed in order to get the job you want during your job-seeking activities?*



20) The question assumes that many gods or transcendental beings were and are still worshipped in Korean popular Buddhism, although they do not depend on the idea of original Buddhism.

Compared to Christianity, the level of requirements for being Buddhist is close to nothing. Perhaps even the concept of 'religion' or 'religious membership' is alien to traditional Buddhism. In fact, as Korean Buddhist temples do not have any criteria for being Buddhist, the cost of becoming a Buddhist is very low compared to Christianity. As Laurence R. Iannaccone puts it, this disparity between Buddhism and Christianity makes a difference in the stock of religious human capital which can be attained through investing time, money, and emotion in maintaining religious membership.<sup>21)</sup> In short, Protestants, who have invested more time and money in their own religious practices and belief, are more likely to economize their religiosity, whereas Buddhists invest less and hence expect less. If it is admitted that religion is a salvation good to defend the uncertainty of the future, the role of salvation goods is to satisfy different psychological and social needs.<sup>22)</sup> In consuming salvation goods suitable for their different preferences, Buddhism reflects a risk-avoiding tendency of religious actors whereas Protestantism reflects a risk-preferring tendency of religious actors.

In this sense, the tendency to economize a religiosity is influenced by the difference of risk preference rather than economic rationality. Risk preference depends on a psychological status which can not be explained to the extent of rationality. That means that every actor estimates subjectively the present value of salvation goods to be realized in the future. The below formula shows very clearly the matter of risk preference among salvation goods by the mathematical equation between the present value (**PV**) and the future value (**FV**) of a reward expectable after a certain period of time (**n**). Precisely speaking, **n** is the unit of time that it takes to gain a future value, and then **i** is a discount rate, which transforms FV into PV:

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21) Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Religious Practice: A Human Capital Approach," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29(3), 1990, p. 299.

22) Jorg Stolz, "Salvation Goods and Religious Markets: Integrating Rational Choice and Weberian Perspectives." *Social Forces* 53(13), 2006, p. 19.

$$\frac{\mathbf{FV}}{(1 + i)^n} = \mathbf{PV}$$

In this equation, an important point is that  $i$  is the only variable to influence  $\mathbf{PV}$  independently because  $\mathbf{FV}$  and  $n$  is a constant number. As a result, we get the function of  $\mathbf{PV}$ :

$$\mathbf{PV} = f(i_n)$$

It is not until the rewards to be obtained in the future are discounted by the  $i$  that religious actors are in position of giving their religious commitment. If human beings know the meaning of  $i$ , they will not confuse the face value of otherworldly rewards with the real value.  $\mathbf{FV}$  of otherworldly rewards itself does not become a determinant in religious choice. Although otherworldly rewards such as eternal life, revival, or the kingdom of God can generate religiously extended commitments,<sup>23)</sup> all believers are bound to evaluate salvation goods in terms of the present. Risk preference is influenced by the extent of time preference between the future and the present, and then the discount rate is determined psychologically as well as economically. As a result, it suggests that a rational choice of religiosity is made through estimating the present value of religious rewards differently in terms of time preference.

Why are Korean Buddhists satisfied with a relatively low level of religious loyalty? An important answer to be given by rational choice theory is that this can be a useful strategy for Buddhist job seekers, especially in the post-capitalistic milieu where the demarcation of religion and economy blurs. We see a good example in <Table 2>. This shows that Korean Buddhists, Catholics, and non-religious people are more flexible than Protestants toward the religious policy of employers.

<Table 2> Religiosity and Job Offer

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23) Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 2000, p. 100.

<b>Question:</b> <i>If a job offer with high payment is presented by a company which has a religious policy markedly different from your religiosity, will you accept it?</i>			
	Yes	No	Other
Protestantism	38	39	7
Buddhism	40	22	7
Catholicism	26	13	2
No Religion	121	56	24
<b>Total</b> (n=395)	225	130	40

In a religiously-pluralized metropolitan city like Seoul, every employer is forced to have a religious policy, including religious neutrality. For example, the expectation is that Protestants will avoid working on the weekend, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses prefer a self-employed business to the 9-to-5 workplace. However, Buddhists rarely experience these kinds of religious restrictions concerning their religious activities. In the case of Catholicism, the ratio reflects the fact that contemporary Korean Catholicism holds a very flexible attitude toward other religions, as the Second Vatican Council declared that "the Roman Catholic Church does not deny anything right and sacred that is involved in other religions."<sup>24</sup> In addition, based on the fact that 60% of non-religious respondents answered yes to this question, we can guess that the majority of respondents without religious identification are not atheistic or anti-religious enough to mind the religious policy of their would-be employers.

In short, a religious flexibility among job seekers can increase the opportunity and scope of job choice through improving individuals' adaptability to fit into the religious policy of employers. Therefore, the fundamentalist tendency of Korean Protestantism provides a relatively inappropriate market strategy for Protestant job seekers in a religiously-pluralized labour market.

## V. Conclusion

24) 한국천주교 중앙협의회, 『제2 공의회 문헌: 현장, 교령, 선언문』, 1986, p. 608.

This article tried to explain how and why religiosity is economized in the labour market, based on the findings of field research on job seekers in eastern Seoul. Unlike existing studies of unemployment, the findings of this research are mainly interpreted on the basis of rational choice theory which incorporates religious and economic phenomena into a consistent behavioral system of rationality. The mechanical dichotomy of religious and economic behavior provides no longer a theoretically effective viewpoint of various ambivalent behaviors across the boundaries constructed by a modern paradigm of understanding humanity as segmented compartments. This research on religiosity of job seekers is meaningful as a case study to see if the new paradigm such as rational choice theory can be applied to a religiously pluralized Korean religious market.

Protestant job seekers are more likely to utilize their religion as an economic resource than any of the other religious respondents. Its exclusive membership tends to facilitate a closer economic cooperation between members and make clear its feature as private club goods. With regard to a few factors of measuring religious commitment, Protestant participated in the labor market report a higher extent of belief in a transcendental beings or god(s), the afterlife, and the frequency and efficacy of prayer. The difference in religious commitment between Protestantism and especially Buddhism is related to the stock of human capital and the degree to which each religion requires them to invest themselves. Protestants who are asked to spend a relatively larger amount of money and time have a psychologically stronger motivation to economize their religiosity, where as Buddhists invest less and hence expect less. The research supports a tendency that Protestantism is based on the risk-preferring religiosity, while Buddhism is based on the risk-avoiding religiosity. Thus, the economic utility of religion is a matter of risk preference, but not a matter of the extent of economic rationality inherent in each religion. Especially in a religiously pluralized society like the city of Seoul, Protestant job seekers are subject to a less flexible strategy in the face of the religious policy of employers than Buddhists, Catholics, and even respondents without religious identification.

Finally, in spite of these findings on the religiosity of job seekers in Seoul, we still have no idea of how many of the job seekers who participated in this research eventually succeeded in getting a job. There needs to be more researches on a wider scale in order to better understand the relationship between religion and employment in Korean context.

Keywords: Religiosity, Unemployment, Free Rider, Human Capital, Rational Choice Theory

원고접수일: 2013년 5월 1일  
심사완료일: 2013년 6월 8일  
게재확정일: 2013년 6월 10일





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<국문초록>

## 합리적 선택이론에서 종교성과 실업

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거대도시로서 서울은 높은 실업률을 통제하기 위한 다양한 사회적 지원 프로그램을 갖고 있다. 그러나, 이런 프로그램들의 이론적 근거들이 주로 경제적 및 심리적 접근들에 편향되어 있어 구직자들의 종교성 또는 비종교성이 구직 과정에서의 주요한 변수로 고려되지 못하고 있다.

이 논문은 실제 구직활동에 종사하고 있는 서울시 거주자 395명을 대상으로 한 설문조사 및 심층 인터뷰에 기초하여 개신교, 불교, 천주교 신자들 및 무종교인들이 하나의 구직전략으로서 그들의 종교를 어떻게 활용하고 이해하고 있는지에 대한 경험적 지식을 얻고자 시도하였다. 비교분석을 통해 종교간 인식의 차이나 활용의 정도를 조사한 결과에 의하면, 개신교도들은 구직전략의 하나로 자신들의 종교를 활용하는 데 있어서 적극적이었던 반면에, 기업들의 종교 정책에 대해서는 상대적으로 경직된 대응 태도를 보여주었다. 개신교의 조직 구조가 무임 승차자를 통제하는 데 유리한 클럽제의 특성을 갖고 있음에도 불구하고, 상대적으로 높은 종교적 구속력을 요하는 종교들은 노동시장에서 구직전략의 유연성을 감소시킨다. 불교나 천주교 신자들은 종교를 구직 활동의 도구로 활용하는 것에 상대적으로 낮은 관심을 보였음에도 불구하고, 기업의 종교 정책에 대한 반응에서는 비종교적인 구직자들만큼이나 유연한 구직전략을 갖고 있는 것으로 나타났다.

합리적 선택이론에서 본다면, 낮은 종교적 구속력을 요하거나 또는 종교적 포트폴리오를 구사하기가 상대적으로 쉬운 종교들이 노동시장에서 더 유리한 구직전략으로 기능한다는 것을 의미하는 것이며, 개신교의 높은 종교적 구속력은 종교시장에서는 종교적 성장에 기여하는 면이 크지만, 노동시장에서는 기업과 구직자 모두에게 종교 정책적 대응력을 떨어뜨리는 역할을 한다.

주제어: 종교성, 실업, 무임승차자, 인적자본, 합리적 선택이론