



# Religion and Education as Shaping Factors in Managerial Decisions: A Case Study on the Main Religious and Irreligious Groups in Romania

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## ABSTRACT

This study statistically analyzes data provided by the National Institute of Statistics on the national distribution of Romanians' educational achievement in formal education structures: primary, secondary and university, according to their religious or irreligious affiliation. Religious groups: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Reformed, Pentecostal, Adventist, Baptist and Muslim, and irreligious groups: atheist, agnostic and non-religious, i.e. those groups that refuse any religious belief or practice. The method used is factorial correspondence analysis. The objective of the research is to scientifically validate the existence of significant differences between religious and irreligious groups in Romania in terms of education, and to show how these differences influence differently the behaviors of decision makers in business management. The results showed that religious and educational diversity in Romania also results in a varied shaping of organizational cultures through specific traditional values and beliefs that play a central role in the way human resources and managerial decisions are managed. Religious groups with an emphasis on traditions, such as Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Reformed, Pentecostal, Adventist, Baptist and Muslim, tend to prefer hierarchical, conservative, community-oriented and inclusive organizational structures. In contrast, less traditional groups such as agnostics, atheists and the religiously non-religious will prefer a rational, flexible and open approach to management, influenced by liberal values, meritocracy and individualism.

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## 1. Introduction

The analysis of the relationship between religion and education is a topic of major interest for socio-economic and business management research. In an increasingly globalized and diversified society, religious values continue to play a significant role in shaping individual and collective behavior. The distribution of education by denomination also has an impact on the way organizations are run and on the managerial culture in companies.

The objective of the research is to scientifically validate the existence of significant differences between religious and irreligious groups in Romania in terms of education, and to show how these differences influence the behavior of decision-makers in business management.

Therefore, analyzing the correlation between religion and educational attainment among representative religious and irreligious groups in Romania allows us to explore how beliefs influence interest in formal education and, consequently, how leaders from different religious backgrounds may adopt distinct managerial styles.

Research results show that the tradition and stability promoted by Orthodoxy is reflected in a preference for hierarchical and conservative management, while the individualism and non-conformism of atheists, agnostics and the non-religious lead to flexible, change-oriented and innovative approaches to business management.

## 2. Theoretical background

Religion and education are two fundamental areas that simultaneously influence social development and the way ethnic, religious or irreligious groups integrate into economic structures. In terms of the influence of religious principles on management and organizational culture, the literature emphasizes that religious values can shape managerial behaviors and decisions at both individual and collective levels (Abbas, Ekowati, Suhariadi & Anwar, 2024).

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One of the main themes in sociological and economic studies is how religious affiliation influences educational attainment (Biesta, 2021). Several research have concluded that religion plays an important role in shaping interest in education, either through the traditions and norms it imposes or through its role in shaping work ethic and personal development (Bloom et al., 2020; Braşoveanu, 2015; Braşoveanu 2023). Religious values shape not only individual behaviors but also the way people assume leadership roles in organizations. The values of traditionalist faiths, with their emphasis on tradition, hierarchy and stability, will lead to standardized management styles that prefer hierarchical organizational structures based on continuity and respect for norms (Nugraha et al., 2023.)

Another important dimension emerging from the data analysis is the role of secularism in shaping managerial behavior (Justice & Macleod, 2020; Herciu et al., 2023). Atheist, agnostic, and non-religious groups are significantly more represented among the highly educated (Barnes, 2022). The relationship between religious nonconformity and advanced education drives individuals in these groups toward a rational, innovation and efficiency-oriented approach. In the organizational environment, these groups will contribute to pragmatic, critically based managerial styles, preferring decentralized decision-making structures with a greater openness to innovation and change in both technology and strategy (Xu & Ma, 2022; Justice & Macleod, 2020).

The religious and educational diversity in Romania also results in a diverse shaping of organizational cultures through specific traditional values and beliefs that play a central role in the way human resources and managerial decisions are managed (Aivaz, 2021; Du, Grigorescu & Aivaz, 2023; Aivaz & Teodorescu, 2022).

### 3. Research methodology

The study used an advanced exploratory method of exploratory analysis known as factorial correspondence analysis. Factorial Correspondence Analysis (CFA) is a complex exploratory statistical method used to identify and interpret hidden relationships or subtle patterns between categorical variables, allowing a two-dimensional representation of complex data, highlighting significant connections and latent structures that define interactions between different groups, providing a solid basis for quantitative and qualitative analysis.

By applying this method, relevant associations were identified between the characteristics of religious groups and the educational attainment of the members of these groups, providing a deeper insight into the nuances in managerial decisions.

The data used in this research were processed using SPSS, version 28, an advanced statistical analysis software, which allowed accurate and efficient data processing. The main data sources were accessed from the Romanian National Institute of Statistics platform, which provides a wide range of demographic, economic and social information.

### 4. Findings and results

Table 1 provides insight into the distribution of Romanian populations across different levels of education according to their religious affiliation. Religion influences not only personal ethics and values, but also the interest in and willingness for education and, therefore, the way people integrate into economic and social structures (Aivaz & Petre, 2024).

In the case of the Orthodox religion, which is the majority in Romania, we observe a relatively balanced distribution of education, with a significant number of believers having higher education (about 2.3 million) and high school education (about 3.5 million). Only a small percentage of the Orthodox population is uneducated (6.1%, about 500 thousand). If we also consider the fact that 401997 of Roma Romanians are Orthodox and that this ethnic group still has problems of inclusion in educational structures, for reasons related to ethnic tradition rather than religious affiliation, all this suggests that Orthodox values stimulate interest in formal education. The medium and high level of education of most Orthodox believers directly influences the organizational culture in the companies in which they occupy managerial roles, through a conservative approach to management based on values of continuity, respect for hierarchy and social cohesion (Aivaz, Mişa & Teodorescu, 2024).

**Table 1. Distribution of Romanian populations by different levels of education according to their religious affiliation**

RELIGION	People				
	No School	High School	Primary	Higher	Active Margin
Adventist	2619	14743	9205	8796	35363
Agnostic	213	4998	239	18089	23539
Atheist	549	13700	757	35231	50237
Baptist	4873	23627	11849	19407	59756
No Religion	2928	16100	3479	31327	53834
Greek Catholic	4214	25506	9535	29783	69038

RELIGION	People				
	No School	High School	Primary	Higher	Active Margin
Muslim	3272	15109	7464	11152	36997
Orthodox	503654	3542786	1319423	2314791	7680654
Pentecostal	33236	71709	68902	25766	199613
Reformed	16667	130013	44445	62522	253647
Roman Catholic	28343	186908	69575	103529	388355
Active Margin	600568	4045199	1544873	2660393	8851033

Source: Author's own processing

The other religious groups with significantly smaller numbers of adherents also show a diversity in the distribution of the population across the different levels of education and a similar percentage as the Orthodox population at each level. Those with no school are about 7% in all denominations, except for Pentecostals who have a 16.7% out-of-school percentage. Those with elementary education are between 17% and 26%, except for Pentecostals who have a 34.5%. Those with secondary education are close to 40% among Adventists, Baptists and Muslims and close to 50% among Orthodox, Reformed and Roman Catholics. And those with a college education are close to 30% among Orthodox, Muslims, Reformed and Roman Catholics and 43.1% among Greek Catholics. Pentecostals have only 12.9% of those with an academic education.

Groups with no religious affiliation, such as atheists, agnostics and the non-religious, although small, have a significant percentage of people with higher education. The highly educated individuals in these groups, being inclined towards secularism, if involved in organizational environments will have a more liberal, efficiency and innovation-oriented approach (Alewell et al., 2023).

Therefore, this distribution of education by religion suggests that religious values and beliefs not only shape individual behavior, but also directly influence how businesses are organized and run (Munteanu et al., 2024). Organizations with leaders or majorities coming from conservative and traditionalist religious communities, although educationally well represented, will prefer more hierarchical, standardized and communitarian managerial styles, whereas organizations with leaders or majorities coming from liberal, atheist or agnostic groups will prefer managerial styles oriented towards efficiency, innovation and meritocracy (Hübel, Stan & Tasente, 2023).

Table 2 provides a detailed look at the educational distribution of the various religious groups in terms of percentages. Each column represents the proportion of a particular religious group in each of the four specific educational categories analyzed: no school, high school, elementary, and college. Interpretation of these data highlights trends and particularities in the ways in which religious groups relate to education, influencing organizational culture and managerial decisions differently.

**Table 2. Educational distribution of different religious groups**

RELIGION	People				
	No School	High School	Primary	Higher	Active Margin
Adventist	.074	.417	.260	.249	1.000
Agnostic	.009	.212	.010	.768	1.000
Atheist	.011	.273	.015	.701	1.000
Baptist	.082	.395	.198	.325	1.000
No Religion	.054	.299	.065	.582	1.000
Greek Catholic	.061	.369	.138	.431	1.000
Muslim	.088	.408	.202	.301	1.000
Orthodox	.066	.461	.172	.301	1.000
Pentecostal	.167	.359	.345	.129	1.000
Reformed	.066	.513	.175	.246	1.000
Roman Catholic	.073	.481	.179	.267	1.000
Mass	.068	.457	.175	.301	

Source: Author's own processing

Most denominations have a preponderance in secondary education with a percentage between 30% and 50%, while in higher education they have a significantly lower percentage, between 25% and 30%. Only the Greek-Catholic denomination registers a percentage of 43% in the higher education category, distancing itself by about 10% from the percentage of the other denominations.

In the case of agnostics, atheists and the non-religious there is an impressive prevalence of higher education: 76.8% of agnostics, 70.1% of atheists and 58.2% of the no-religion have university degrees. This inclination towards academic education suggests that they are involved in high-level professional environments, which could influence organizational culture through an orientation towards innovation, critical

thinking and efficiency (Siala, Pedeliento & Andreini, 2022). These groups, not having a religious-traditionalist worldview, will have a secular approach to management, emphasizing objectivity, rational analysis, efficiency and competitiveness in decision making.

In contrast, Pentecostals have a larger distribution in the elementary, high school, and no school categories. 16.7% of Pentecostals have no formal education and only 12.9% have an academic education. There are two possible explanations for this distribution of educational levels within the Pentecostal denomination: either because Romanians with a low standard of living join this denomination due to intra-EU support policies, or because of the high percentage of Romanians of Roma ethnicity who have joined this denomination (23.7% of the membership of this religious community), an ethnic group that traditionally rejects school, or both. This situation influences the organizational culture by orienting it, within the Pentecostal communities, towards stimulating interest in diverse vocational education, technical qualifications and vocational practices.

The Orthodox group, dominant in size, shows a balanced distribution across educational categories. Approximately 46% have high school education and 30% have higher education, suggesting that this group is well integrated into formal educational structures. In an organizational context, this could imply a preference for traditional hierarchical structures, but also an ability to adapt and integrate into modern and professional environments, where higher education plays a key role.

Table 3 provides an interpretation of the proportion of each religious group within the different grades of schooling: no-school, high school, elementary, primary, and tertiary, compared to the total of each educational category. This helps us understand how religious groups are represented in each educational segment and how this influences socio-economic and organizational structures.

**Table 3. Proportion of each religious group within different grades of schooling**

RELIGION	People				
	No School	High School	Primary	Higher	Mass
Adventist	.004	.004	.006	.003	.004
Agnostic	.000	.001	.000	.007	.003
Atheist	.001	.003	.000	.013	.006
Baptist	.008	.006	.008	.007	.007
No Religion	.005	.004	.002	.012	.006
Greek Catholic	.007	.006	.006	.011	.008
Muslim	.005	.004	.005	.004	.004
Orthodox	.839	.876	.854	.870	.868
Pentecostal	.055	.018	.045	.010	.023
Reformed	.028	.032	.029	.024	.029
Roman Catholic	.047	.046	.045	.039	.044
Active Margin	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	

*Source: Author's own processing*

The Orthodox religion dominates all education categories, with values above 80% in each column, reaching a maximum of 87.6% in high school education and 87% in university education. Since the Orthodox are the largest religious group in Romania, this predominant distribution in the educational structure of the population suggests that their religious values significantly influence the business environment and organizational culture generating a predilection for hierarchy, tradition, conservatism and stability.

In contrast, irreligious groups, such as agnostics, atheists and the non-religious, are much better represented in higher education and with extremely low representation in lower educational categories: atheists represent 1.3% of those with higher education, those without religion 1.2%, and agnostics 0.7%. These groups are motivated to pursue academic studies and engage in professional environments that require high qualification, influencing organizational culture towards rationality, innovation, critical thinking, professionalism, meritocracy, and efficiency in the fields where they are present (Stan & Vancea, 2013; Stan et al., 2023).

The Pentecostal group has a significant representation among those with a primary education, 4.5%, and a notable presence also in the no-school category, 5.5%. This distribution suggests that this religious group has a larger base of believers with lower education, indicating a different socio-economic structure, with stronger involvement in sectors of the economy that require low professional qualifications (Tomescu, Stanescu & Aivaz, 2023). In the organizational setting, this could influence managerial approaches through an emphasis on community solidarity and mutual support.

Roman-Catholic, Reformed and Greek-Catholic groups, although in the minority, show a more balanced distribution in all educational categories. Roman Catholics represent 4.5% of those with primary education, 4.6% of those with secondary education and 3.9% of those with tertiary education. Reformed represent 2.9% of those with primary education, 3.2% of those with secondary education and 2.4% of those with tertiary

education. This suggests that these groups are well integrated across all levels of education and can contribute to a balanced organizational culture where tradition meets innovation.

Table 4 provides a dimension analysis resulting from the factorial correspondence analysis used to explore the relationships between two categorical data sets: religion and education.

The results show that the first dimension explains more than 80% of the total variance, which is essential to simplify the complex data and to focus our interpretations on the most important factors. In this context, the first dimension may represent a fundamental relationship between religion and educational attainment, a relationship that dominates the interactions between the variables. Thus, we can argue why managerial decisions and organizational cultures are mainly influenced by these dominant variables.

**Table 4. Analysis of the dimensions resulting from the correspondence factor analysis**

Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Chi Square	Mr.	Proportion of Inertia		Confidence Singular Value	
					Accounted for	Cumulative	Standard Deviation	Correlation 2
1	.132	.017			.815	.815	.000	.446
2	.062	.004			.181	.995	.000	
3	.010	.000			.005	1.000		
Total		.021	188779.678	.000 <sup>a</sup>	1.000	1.000		

a. 30 degrees of freedom

Source: Author's own processing

The statistical significance of *Chi-Square* and *Sig.values* ( $p < 0.000$ ) in Table 4 indicate that the relationships between religion and education are strong and statistically relevant. This validates the approach of the paper, which explores how religious values influence managerial decisions and organizational structures. The results also indicate that there are significant differences between religious groups in education.

The output reveals that the first two dimensions, which together explain 99.5% of the total variance, are the most important, which requires us to focus on the interpretation of these two essential dimensions.

The strong correlation of the first dimension (0.446) indicates a robust relationship between the analyzed variables. This shows that the religious values of a group directly influence the educational level which is subsequently reflected in managerial behaviors and decisions. Thus, these results support the hypothesis that religious values play a central role in shaping managerial decisions and culture in organizations.

Table 5 provides a detailed understanding of how different religious groups participate in educational variations and, implicitly, how these may influence managerial behaviors and decisions in different organizational contexts. This comparison of results shows the extent to which religious affiliation and educational level influence management style and organizational structures.

The *Orthodox group*, representing a mass of 0.868, dominates the sample, being the largest religious group in Romania, implying that Orthodoxy plays a central role in the formation of collective norms and values, including in the context of business management. We observe that the scores in dimensions for the Orthodox are relatively low, 0.021 in the first dimension and -0.040 in the second dimension, indicating low variance and therefore stability in educational behaviors. From a business management perspective, this stability in educational values will lead to an organizational style that prefer continuity, respect for hierarchy, and greater resistance to change. Orthodoxy, through this relatively even distribution across the dimensions, could generate leaders who value tradition and authority over flexibility and rapid innovation.

**Table 5. Participation of different religious groups in educational variations**

RELIGION	Mass	Score in Dimension		Inertia	Contribution				
		1	2		Of Point to Inertia of Dimension		Of Dimension to Inertia of Point		
					1	2	1	2	Total
Adventist	.004	-.514	.309	.000	.008	.006	.630	.107	.738
Agnostic	.003	2.636	1.549	.003	.140	.103	.860	.140	.999
Atheist	.006	2.345	1.117	.005	.237	.114	.903	.096	1.000
Baptist	.007	-.036	.505	.000	.000	.028	.011	.972	.982
No-Religion	.006	1.535	1.105	.002	.109	.120	.797	.194	.991
Greek Catholic	.008	.668	.613	.001	.026	.047	.716	.284	1.000
Muslim	.004	-.168	.439	.000	.001	.013	.236	.763	.999
Orthodox	.868	.021	-.040	.000	.003	.023	.370	.622	.992
Pentecostal	.023	-1.634	1.114	.010	.457	.451	.820	.179	1.000
Reformed	.029	-.209	-.414	.000	.009	.079	.348	.641	.989



RELIGION	Mass	Score in Dimension		Inertia	Contribution				
		1	2		Of Point to Inertia of Dimension		Of Dimension to Inertia of Point		
					1	2	1	2	Total
Roman Catholic	.044	-.171	-.155	.000	.010	.017	.681	.265	.946
Active Total	1.000			.021	1.000	1.000			
a. Symmetrical normalization									

a. Symmetrical normalization

Source: Author's own processing

*Agnostic* and *atheist* groups have very high scores in the first and second dimensions. Agnostics have a score of 2.636 in dimension 1 and 1.549 in dimension 2, and atheists have scores of 2.345 and 1.117 in the same dimensions. The positive and high scores in dimension 1 indicate that these groups have a distinct educational variation compared to the other religions analyzed, with a high share in higher education. These characteristics suggest that in organizations in which these groups are well represented, being religiously indifferent and oriented towards rationalism, individualism and secularism, their managerial decisions will be more based on critical analysis and evidence and less on traditions, religious norms or conservative principles (Giacomin et al., 2023). In business, this will lead to an innovative organizational culture, oriented towards efficiency and change, in which individual values take precedence over traditional ones. Managers in these groups might adopt a more pragmatic leadership style based on measurable goals, preferring flat and decentralized structures in organizations (Stan, Vancea & Zaharia, 2023; Rus, 2022).

The *Pentecostal* group has a relatively high inertia (0.010) and significant contributions to the first dimension (0.457). The high scores in the dimensions, -1.634 in dimension 1 and 1.114 in dimension 2, indicate that this religious group shows a large dispersion in educational behaviors compared to other denominations and religions. The negative score in dimension 1 shows the low level of education within this community, with a high percentage of uneducated people, which will influence the organizational culture by the need to adopt strategies for professional inclusion on various trades.

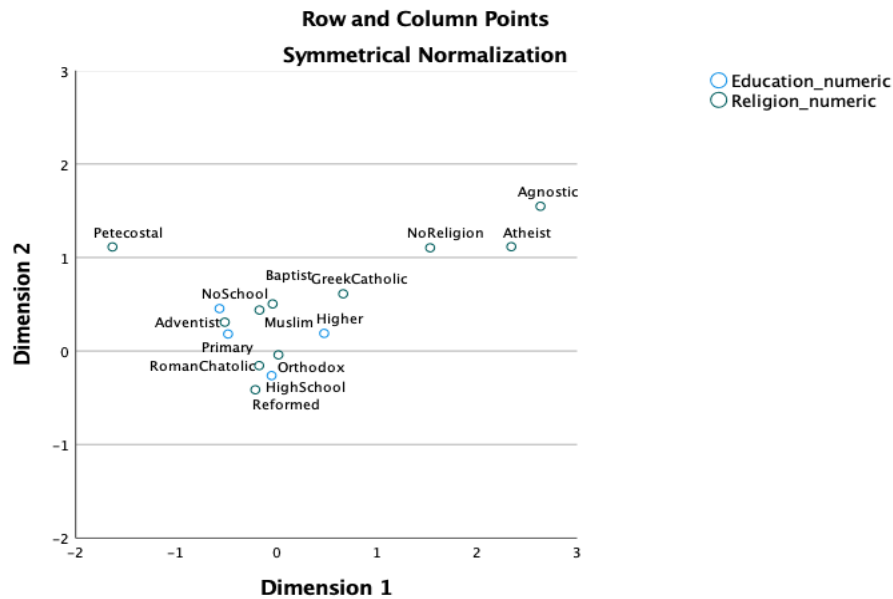
The *Reformed*, *Greek Catholic* and *Roman Catholic* groups have moderate scores in both dimensions and significant contributions to overall inertia. Reformed have a score of -0.209 in dimension 1 and -0.414 in dimension 2, Greek Catholics have scores of 0.668 and 0.613 and Roman Catholics have scores of -0.171 and -0.155. These scores indicate a stable educational presence with moderate variation across educational categories. This educational stability generates a balanced managerial culture in which religious tradition and values are harmoniously integrated with modern education and current economic needs. Managers in these groups will adopt a leadership style that blends respect for traditions while also demonstrating an openness to innovation, efficiency, and adaptation to technological and economic change (Edwards, 2021).

The *Muslim* group has a relative mass of 0.004 and low scores in both dimensions, -0.168 and 0.439, indicating little educational variance and a balanced presence across all educational levels. Coupled with the fact that Muslims are informally educated in the family to respect their traditions, this orientation towards tradition and stability will lead to a hierarchical organizational culture with well-defined decision-making structures and an emphasis on respect for authority. Muslim managers will prefer a centralized leadership style with an obvious power structure, where decisions are based on clear rules and traditional values (Faraji, et al., 2023).

Figure 1 provides an additional visualization and clarifies the relationships between the two variables, religion and schooling, in the dimensions resulting from the factor analysis of correspondences, visually highlighting how religious groups and educational levels position themselves in relation to the two dimensions. The dimensions in the graph make it easier to see the factors relevant to the variations between groups.

Agnostics, atheists and those with no religion are positioned in the upper right, Pentecostals in the upper left, while the Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Reformed, Roman Catholic, Baptist and Adventist groups are closer to the center. This visualization clearly shows that agnostics, atheists, those with no religion, and Pentecostals have distinct educational behaviors and values from the other groups, which would not have been as obvious from the tabular analysis alone.

The graph makes it easy to see the closeness or distance between religious groups on the one hand and educational categories on the other. The Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic, Reformed, Baptist, and Adventist groups are relatively close, indicating that these religions have similar levels of schooling and that their values influence organizational culture in a comparable way.



**Figure 1. The relationship between religion and schooling in the dimensions resulting from AFC**  
*Source: Author's own processing*

In contrast, Pentecostals, agnostics, atheists and those with no religion are distanced from the other groups, suggesting fundamental differences in the level of education and, therefore, in the management styles within the organizational cultures they adopt. For example, the *higher education* category is positioned in the center of the graph, close to the Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic and Muslim groups, suggesting that these groups have a similar distribution of people with higher education.

The groups atheist, agnostic and no religion, being placed towards the right of the graph, at a large distance from the *higher education* category, show that they have a high share of people with higher education compared to the other groups. Pentecostals are positioned negatively on the first dimension, far from the *higher education* category, indicating a high proportion of people with no formal education. They are also positively positioned on the second dimension far away from zero which indicates a distinct value behavior compared to other denominations closer to the center.

Graphically, the complexity of the relationships in the table is simplified and the variations between groups become more intuitive and easier to interpret.

The graph adds clarity and provides a visual understanding of the data in terms of the relationships between the variables, making it easier to understand the educational and value differences between religious groups, which helps to support the working hypothesis on the impact of religion on organizational culture and managerial decisions.

## 5. Conclusions

The study showed that religious groups in Romania that base their narratives on traditional values, such as Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, Reformed, Adventists, Baptists and Muslims, have a balanced distribution in all levels of formal education. At the two extremes are the irreligious groups, such as atheists, agnostics and the non-religious, who do not adhere to any religious narratives or practices, and the Pentecostal group. The irreligious groups have a preponderance in the higher levels of formal education, with between about 60% and 77% of the members of these communities having an academic education, while at the other extreme, the Pentecostal group has a preponderance in the lower levels of formal education, with a rather high percentage, 16.7%, of the members of this community having no formal education. This percentage can be explained by the adherence to this denomination, motivated by intra-community aid practices, of Romanians with a low standard of living and by the adherence of Romanians of Roma ethnicity, 23.7% of the total number of Pentecostals being of Roma ethnicity, an ethnic group that traditionally refuses schooling.

The findings of the study show that religious groups that base their narrative on traditional values influence organizational culture through a preference for hierarchical, well-defined, stable, conservative, less flexible but open to the collective good and inclusiveness, while irreligious groups that base their narrative on individualistic and liberal values influence organizational culture through a flexible, rational, adaptive, adaptive approach, open to meritocracy, competitiveness, innovation and, from a workforce perspective, restructuring. In addition, the low level of education among the Pentecostal community influences the leadership in business management towards strategies of inclusion and the realization of diverse professional qualification programs.

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