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Becoming and staying a pastor in the age of changing work and changing religion: How does psychological assessment of students of theology predict later ordination and turnover?

Work in general is becoming increasingly short-term, scattered, project-based, and individualized. This presents a huge challenge to religious professions which still hold the ideal of a lifetime calling. In addition, privatization of religion and the decreasing role of religion in society manifest themselves to the pastor in the forms of loss of authority, spiritual doubts, increased risk of burnout, insecurity of employment etc. To ensure sustainable careers, precise recruitment of future pastors is of high importance. In many churches, psychological assessment of applicants to ministry is utilized for this purpose. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland organizes an obligatory assessment for people willing to be ordained as pastors in the middle of their studies. The results are meant to help the student to reflect on their career choice, and to provide information for the eventual recruiting diocese. It has not yet been investigated how these assessment results are connected with eventual ordination or early turnover. In this study, nationwide assessment data of third-year students of theology from 2006-2010 (n=720) was linked to follow-up survey data collected from the same subjects in 2012 (n=318). The merged dataset was analyzed statistically to find out what characteristics were connected to eventual ordination, selecting another career path, and/or early drop-out from a pastor's job. The results are discussed in the aforementioned contexts of the changing forms, modes and identities regarding work, and the current sociological situation of religion in the Western countries.