

Study of Social and Cultural Factors Affecting the Citizens' Social Trust between 18-65 Years Old in Mazandaran Province

Rajabali Allahyar Ahmadi^{*1}

Maria Zaslavskaya¹

Amir Malaki²

Received 28 August 2016; Accepted 8 March 2017

Abstract

At the present study, social and cultural factors affecting social trust have been investigated. for theoretical framework of the study, perspectives of scientists like Coleman, Putnam, Giddens, Tunis, Offe have been applied. Till now the studies on social and cultural factors affecting social trust have been investigated. For theoretical framework of the study, viewpoints of scientists like Coleman, Putnam, Giddens, Tunis, Offe have been applied. This study has been adopted using survey method and using questionnaire. The group of 400 people in age range of 18-25 years old, from Sari, Babol, Amol and Tonekabon were selected using Cochran formula based on random and cluster sampling method. After collection of data and confirmation of the instrument's validity by the professors, reliability of the questionnaire was also judged using Cronbach alpha in SPSS software. Final data analysis has been done descriptively using frequency, percent and diagrams and in inferential statistics, questions have been analyzed using Friedman test, Man Whitney, Kruskal-Wallis and Spearman Correlation. Findings of the study indicate that there is a significant difference among types of social trust. There is a significant correlation between perception of social openness and social trust. Also, there is a significant correlation between belief in social values and social trust. There is a significant correlation between attitude to government's performance and social trust.

Keywords: Social trust, Types of social trust, Belief in social values, Social justice, Attitudes, Government performance.

1*.Department of Sociology, Yerevan State University, Armenia, allahyar.rajab@gmail.com
(Corresponding author)

2. Department of Sociology, Payam Noor University, Iran

1. Introduction

In view of some scholars, many evidences refer to reduction of social trust in all aspects in relations at all levels in Mazandaran Province despite population of about 3 million and being in top position of tourism because of Caspian Sea and vast area beautiful jungles and increasing in expansion of urbanization, with high percentage of educated people, and preparedness to accept rapid cultural changes and expanded socioeconomic changes in it. Thus, it is essential to carry out thorough study on social trust in this province. As a result, the main question is that what is social trust in view of people of Mazandaran? And what is mutual effect of factors affecting social trust with triple aspect and types of social trust?

From Anthony Giddens's point of view, in pre-modern societies, concept of trust was different from view point of people living at the current societies. This issue is resulted from difference in type and quantity of relations of people, since in these societies, people have strong kinship or friendship ties and social interactions are in face to face manner.

However, in the modern societies, the relationships have been expanded and social trust has gained different concept with the development of technology. In view of Giddens, the current societies need concept of social trust for the purpose of advancement and development. In other words, in societies under dominance of subjective systems and time-place distancing, trust is very important. Need to trust is in direct relationship with this distance. In view of Giddens, there is no need to trust in people that are constantly available and their activities can be controlled directly (Ritzer, 2001: 8-767). Trust becomes essential, when as a result of increasing distancing of time and place; no perfect information is available about social phenomena (Ritzer, 2001: 768, quoted from Ian Craib, 1992: 99).

In the international community and especially Iran, trust and social trust are instruments for survival and sustainability of social system for different reasons including youngness of population.

Decrease in social trust in above studied population can result in undesirable outcomes and can enhance irregularity, job dissatisfaction, identifying crisis, negligence and increase in social promiscuity. Sztompka (2003) has investigated works of many scholars and has considered essential and important aspects of trust. He believes that in the contemporary societies, there are unique features that can lead to importance of social trust.

Life of modern societies can be impossible regardless of issue of trust and paying attention to it and considering it as an important issue is irrevocable. The main

purpose of this study is to identify and discriminate issue of social trust using sociological analysis of contemporary society of Iran with the case study of citizens of Mazandaran Province.

Here, several definitions of social trust applied in this study are referred. Social trust can be defined as good opinion or optimism of person to other members of society that can expand facilitation of social relation of person with them (Amir Kafi, 2001: 18).

In definition presented by Johnson about trust, it refers to communicating others and asking others for transparent acceptance and support, self-compliance and cope with others. Johnson believes that components of trust include transparency, sharing, acceptance, support, cooperative tendencies and trust-based behavior. David Johnson believes that trust is not a fixed and non-changeable feature, but also is it an aspect of relations that is constantly changing and to make relationship, people should provide a space full of trust to decrease fear of being left and increase hope to be accepted and supported (Johnson, 1993: 66).

Anthony Giddens has also defined trust as reliance on nature or feature of a person or accuracy of a statement and believes that it has 3 types of trust- fundamental trust, generalized trust and subjective trust.

Chalabi believes that if amount of social trust is increased in the society, executive costs and additional guarantees would be decreased in social relation system (Chalabi, 1996: 38).

Tunis states that in Gmynchaft communities, "us" is prior to "me". Feature of gmynchaft is intimate, private and monopoly life with each other. In community, people have to observe all social regulations since the beginning of the birth. On the contrary, in Gesellschaft communities, individualism and monetary relationship are the main features. The world of Gesellschaft is the Hobbesian world and person doesn't accept others as an element of the community, but also considers them as an instrument to reach the target and destination (Azkia and Ghaffari, 2005: 156).

Putnam has referred to some factors to discriminate reduction of social capital in the US including emergence of families with two jobs, suburbanization, television and electronic media and generational change. He believes that generational change is the most important factor (Putnam, 1999: 150).

Rothstein and Stolle have considered institutes in a society as important factor to create or destroy trust. They believe that capabilities of citizens are significantly under effect of public institutes and their policies. The approach states implicitly that a kind of institutional engineering is required to create social capital (Rothstein and Stolle,

2008: 2). Parsons has defined community as one out of the 4 main subsystems required to preserve order in every society. Community is the domain of social interactions in way of growth and prosperity of emotions, feelings and production of commitment, loyalty and responsibility to connect people and groups. Emergence of friendship, intimacy, trust, unity and social integration are specific functions of social subsystems (Abdolalhi and Musavi, 2007: 199-200).

James Coleman was the first scholar who conducted empirical study of concept of social capital and its operationalization. In regard with analysis of social capital, instead of considering nature and content, he has considered function of social capital. In his opinion, social capital is a part of social structure, which allows activist to achieve desired goals using it.

The aspects of social structures include duties and expectations, information networks, norms and sanctions that encourage or prohibit specific type of behavior (Coleman, 1998: 160-172).

From Giddens's point of view, the current societies need trust for development. The concept of trust refers not only to trust in a special person, but also it includes larger institutes and organizations such as specialized systems.

Giddens defines trust as follows: trust presents reliability of individuals or systems due to a certain group of events, where the trust expresses believe in honesty or love of another one or accuracy of subjective principles (technical knowledge) (Giddens, 1998: 5-34). In view of Claus Offe, one can investigate interest in trust and other relevant phenomena using a 3-stage deduction. Firstly, social order of modern society can be reproduced through 3 instruments including money, power and knowledge.

Secondly, final ideas of the 3 instruments are creating adaptability that trust is good example of cultural and ethical resources to make informal manner of creating adaptability possible.

Thirdly, using trust that is source of social cooperation, one can enhance quality of order and efficiency of using power, money and knowledge (Offe, 2006: 204-205).

The present study has been adopted based on perspectives of Coleman, Stolle, Putnam, Parsons and Tunis. In addition, the analysis model and research hypotheses are based on their theories. The aim by theoretical framework is making a model to be able to derive hypotheses, concepts and variables from it and to investigate them in studied population (people over 18 years old in Mazandaran) to test hypotheses. Only after final confirmation of some hypotheses and achieving to systematic stage, theoretical model is modified and theoretical framework is changed into theory with school principles.

In this study, theories of different persons have been referred. Each of the theories tends to investigate trust in the society from different aspects. In order to measure the variables, several items have been used in frame of Likert Scale.

Dependent variable is social trust and independent variable includes Gesellschaft society, belief in social values, sense of justice and attitude towards action. Fundamental trust is an attitude that individuals have to themselves and the surrounding area. The attitude is result of personal experiences of people in early years of their life. Generalized trust (interpersonal trust) occurs when people trust in others based on their cognition about others. In other words, in interpersonal trust, individuals are relied on information gained about another person. Subjective trust occurs based on Giddens's viewpoint, when people with industrial life, academic educations, urban people and Upper and upper-middle class have high subjective trust (Giddens, 2004).

Gesellschaft society or perception of openness of the society refers to a society, in which people take action to communicate others only for instrumental reasons. Tunis believes that Gesellschaft relations are based on mutual distrust and in this kind of society, everyone thinks about him or her own and people refuse to make relationships (Guy Roche, 1997: 43).

2. Social values

Social value is a system of features and criteria, through which actions and behaviors of people can be measured and judged and some sanctions would be also used. In other words, social value refers to desirable and undesirable things.

Moreover, social value refers to desirable and undesirable things that present themselves to people as norms moving toward high level of publicity and monopoly. The affairs and actions are valuable in the society and majority or all people regard them good and competent like intimacy, integrity, honesty, forgiveness, sacrifice, power, prestige and excellence, compassion, support from others, seeking beauty. Sarukhani (1997) has defined values as follows: members of a society praise the values and the agreement in this regard is relative agreement. Hence, social norms, models and social patterns have social value with features including deepness, relativeness and invariance (Sarukhani, 1997: 5-844).

Sense of justice: sense of justice is based on public attitude to the government, so that the basis in the society is Meritocracy and people should have the sense that their rights are observed based on justice.

Attitude to government's performance: government has some duties for themselves in the society and acts on bases of these duties can decrease unemployment and enhances health and improves education system and reduces poverty in the society and enhances types of trust including fundamental trust, interpersonal trust and subjective trust.

3. Methodology

In this study quantitative approach has been applied. In terms of manner of encountering this issue, the study is done using field method. Statistical group for the study consists of over 2100000 people of age 18-65 years old citizens of Mazandaran.

In order to find validity of the questionnaire, two types of validation have been considered including the face validity and the construct validity. The aim by face validation is to measure opinion of experts and scholars about appearance of issues.

The aim of construction validation is answering the question that to what extent structure of questionnaire is matched with primary goals of the questionnaire. For this purpose, confirmatory factor analysis has been applied. The aim by reliability of a measurement instrument is that if the measured feature is measured using same instrument and under same conditions, to what extent results can be same, accurate and reliable (Hooman, 1996: 218). In order to measure internal adaptability of items, Cronbach's Alpha statistics is applied. The closer the alpha coefficient is to 1, the more internal integration of items would be seen. Obtained alpha for total index of trust is equal to 0.91 and for types of fundamental, subjective and generalized trust; it is respectively equal to 0.735, 0.91 and 0.89. Moreover, it is obtained to 0.79 for variable of openness of society, to 0.96 for social values, to 0.77 for sense of social justice and is obtained to 0.89 for attitude to government performance.

4. Results

The present study has been adopted to investigate several hypotheses as follows:

Hypothesis 1: it seems that there is significant difference among types of social trust.

Table 1. Results of Friedman test for trust dimensions

trust dimensions	mean rank	Freidman value	df	sig
fundamental	2.80	671.470	2	0.000
subjective	2.20			
generalized	1.00			

In order to test the hypothesis, Friedman test has been applied. Friedman Value (671.470) due to significance level (0.000) indicated that there is a significant difference among types of trust. Data in table 1 indicate that the highest level of trust is related to fundamental trust (mean rank= 2.80) and the lowest trust level is related to generalized trust (mean rank= 1.00).

Hypothesis 2: It seems that there is a significant correlation between Gesellschaft society (perception of social openness) and social trust.

Table 2. Spearman Correlation test between perception of social openness and social trust

independent variable	dependent variable	sample	correlation	<i>P</i>
perception of social openness	fundamental trust	400	0.225	0.000
	subjective trust	400	0.144	0.004
	generalized trust	400	0.040	0.419
	social trust	400	0.177	0.000

Table 2 indicates measurement of the correlation between perception of social openness and social trust and its dimensions using Spearman correlation test. According to obtained results and based on correlation coefficient and p-value, there is a significant correlation between perception of social openness and social trust and its dimensions (except for generalized trust) in confidence level of 99%. The direction of correlation indicates that people with higher perception to social openness have higher social trust than others.

Hypothesis 3: it seems that there is significant correlation between belief in social values and social trust.

Table 3. Spearman Correlation test between belief in social values and social trust

independent variable	dependent variable	sample	correlation	<i>P</i>
belief in social values	fundamental trust	400	0.279	0.000
	subjective trust	400	0.055	0.274
	generalized trust	400	0.174	0.000
	social trust	400	0.135	0.007

Table 3 indicates measurement of the correlation between belief in social values and social trust and its dimensions using Spearman correlation test. According to

obtained results and based on correlation coefficient and p-value, there is a significant correlation between belief in social values and social trust and its dimensions (except for subjective trust) in confidence level of 99%. The direction of correlation indicates that people with higher belief in social values have higher level of social trust than others.

Hypothesis 4: it seems that there is significant correlation between sense of social justice and social trust.

Table 4. Spearman Correlation test between sense of social justice and social trust

independent variable	dependent variable	sample	correlation	P
sense of social justice	fundamental trust	400	0.275	0.000
	subjective trust	400	0.517	0.000
	generalized trust	400	0.243	0.000
	social trust	400	0.493	0.000

Table 4 indicates measurement of the correlation between sense of social justice and social trust and its dimensions using Spearman correlation test. According to obtained results and based on correlation coefficient and p-value, there is significant correlation between sense of social justice and social trust and its dimensions in confidence level of 99%. The direction of correlation indicates that people with higher sense of social justice have higher level of social trust than others.

Hypothesis 5: it seems that there is a significant correlation between attitude to government performance and social trust.

Table 5. Spearman Correlation test between attitude to government performance and social trust

independent variable	dependent variable	sample	correlation	P
attitude to government performance	fundamental trust	400	0.458	0.000
	subjective trust	400	0.502	0.000
	generalized trust	400	0.276	0.000
	social trust	400	0.542	0.000

Table 5 indicates measurement of the correlation between attitude to government performance and social trust and its dimensions using Spearman correlation test. According to obtained results and based on correlation coefficient and p-value, there is a significant correlation between attitude to government performance and social trust

and its dimensions in confidence level of 99%. The direction of correlation indicates that people with more positive attitude to government performance have higher level of social trust than others.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Social trust as the most important structure of social capital has gained attention of classic thinkers of social sciences since a long time; although change of social concepts from domain of difficult concepts to soft concepts at the developed world has caused more serious consideration of this issue.

Hence, with the expansion of relations, organizations, institutes and more complexity of society and increase in individualism, social trust has been considered essential to continue social life and to facilitate actions and social system. If the trust that is source of cooperation is preserved and activated, quality of social system and efficiency resulted from using power, money and knowledge can be also enhanced.

Trust in developed society can increase productivity of service and manufacturing organizations and legitimacy of governments and also the collapsing society can be systemized through implicit and explicit attachments between people (including trust and positive emotions).

Based on Fukuyama's view, the more people enter to industrial and preindustrial stage, the more social capital and trust are needed. Accordingly, various types of trust have been supplied by social thinkers including personal and group trust, political trust, institutional trust, generalized trust and so on.

This issue has been considered by thinkers to an extent that it seems it is a component of the contemporary world.

In other words, social trust in modern society has vital role in cooperation, productivity, political legitimacy, social order, attachment and unity and generally, development. It has been changed into one of the most important concepts in field of contemporary social thought.

Review of relevant theories of social capital and trust can demonstrate importance of concept of trust at the modern society. According to importance of concept of trust as one of the most important social structures, the study has aimed in assessing this issue. Hence, the present study has been aimed in assessing issue of social trust in contemporary society of Iran.

Obtained results from the study indicate that fundamental trust is strong in Iranian society (Mazandaran) that is along with people since childhood. Moreover, variables like belief in Gesellschaft society, social and ethical values, sense of social security,

sense of social justice and government performance have effective role in creating social trust.

Investigations indicate that there is a significant difference among three types of trust among sample population. Fundamental trust has the highest value and generalized trust has lowest value.

In this study, generalized trust is the weakest type among other types of social trust. Interpersonal or same generalized trust is another type of trust that can be appeared in face to face relations. This form of trust removes communicative barriers and causes a lot of effective interactions through decreasing defensive mode. This kind of trust can encompass a domain of interactions of lovers, friends, colleagues and trust between boss and employee, supervisor and employee, teacher and student, vendor and client, doctor and patient, the driver and passenger.

In Mazandaran Province, subjective and generalized trusts are at low level and fundamental trust is in high level. In other words, for different reasons, trust types that indicate modernity appearances in city have no significant presence in studied cities and same fundamental trust rooted in childhood of people has the highest value among citizens.

The investigations indicate that Gesellschaft society is in positive correlation with fundamental trust, subjective trust and social trust. However, it has no significant correlation with generalized trust.

Heydarabadi and Salehabadi (2012) have obtained inconsistent results. They have found in their study that Gesellschaft society can result in reduction of trust.

According to theory of Tunis, in Gesellschaft societies, trust-bases relations are existed, since people trust in their family members and friends. However, in modern societies with impersonal relations, people can't be trustable and can't claim that they trust in each other. As a result, in Gesellschaft society that interactions of people are mostly based on economic interest and commitment to contracts and commitments, social trust can be felt more than other societies.

Social trust as the most effective mechanism to provide and accept balance and agreement in the society can be useful, when it is not limited to people with face to face people and can be expanded to personal, family, group, ethnical, national and even more relations and can be confirmed and expanded in different structures and institutes of the society through socialization and acculturation. Investigations indicate that there is a significant correlation between sense of social justice and social trust and its aspects.

The results indicate that the more social justice is among citizens, the more social trust would be seen. Ketabi et al., (2010) has also found that there is a positive correlation between sense of social justice and social trust.

Undoubtedly, social trust can result in mental relaxation of people and such relaxation can lead to trust of citizens. Societies with more sense of social justice among citizens can have higher level of trust.

Investigations have indicated that there is a significant and positive correlation between government performance and social trust and its dimensions.

Ketabi et al., (2010) have found that there is a positive correlation between government performance and social trust. Role and function of government in the society can be considered as of the most important fields to increase or decrease in the social trust which has been emphasized a lot in theories, so that theorists have considered it as a basic factor to decrease or increase social trust.

References

1. Abdollahi, M., Mousavi, M. (2007). Social capital in Iran; the current situation, future prospects and the possibility of transition, *Journal of Social Welfare*, 25, pp. 233-195.
2. Amir Kafi, M. (2001) Social trust and its determinants, *Research Profile*, No. 18. Tehran: Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.
3. Azkia, M and Ghafari, G. (2005). *Sociology of development*. Tehran: Keyhan Publication.
4. Chalabi, M. (1996). *Sociology of discipline, theoretical analysis of the social order*. Tehran: Ney Publication.
5. Coleman, J. (1998). *Foundations of social theory*. Tehran: Ney Publication.
6. Giddens, A. (1998). *The consequences of modernity*. Tehran: Publishing Center.
7. Giddens, A. (2004). *Modernity and diagnostics, community and personal identity in the modern era*. Tehran: Ney Publication.
8. Guy, R. (1997) *Social Change*. Tehran: Ney Publication.
9. Johnson, D. (1993). *Reaching Out: Interpersonal effectiveness and self-actualization*. Boston, Ellyn and Bacon, 1993.
10. Offe, C. (2006). *How should citizens trust?* Tehran: Shirazeh Publication.
11. Putnam, R. (2001). *Democracy and civil traditions*. Tehran: Qadir Publication.
12. Ritzer, G. (2001). *Theory, sociology of contemporary times*. Tehran: Academic Press.
13. Rothstein, B., Stolle, D. (2008). The State and social capital: A theory of generalized trust. *Comparative Politics*, 40, 4.
14. Sarukhani, B. (1997). *Introduction to the encyclopedia of social sciences*. Tehran: Keyhan Institute.

-
15. Sztompka, P. (2007). *Sociological theory of trust*. Tehran: Tirjeh Publication.

Archive of SID