

Relation between Civic Attitudes, Generalized and Institutional Trust in Six Regions of the Russian Federation

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ABSTRACT

Objective – The article presents an analysis of the relationship between generalized and institutional trust indicators and manifestation of civic representations, attitudes and behaviour in six Russian regions: Altai, Jewish Autonomous region, Trans-Baikal, Kemerovo, Omsk and Orenburg regions.

Methodology/Technique – The data collected in 2015 from multistage stratified sample 2400 respondents and their age from 18 to 70 years.

Findings – Among the studied regions, the highest levels of both interpersonal trust and confidence in social institutions were founded in the Jewish Autonomous Region, the lowest trust levels for many government entities and non-profit organizations are in the Trans-Baikal Territory, the Kemerovo Region and the Omsk region. The levels of civic participation are higher in regions with higher levels of trust.

Novelty – The study suggests that trust, both interpersonal and institutional, are a factor in the development of civil society.

Type of Paper: Empirical

Keywords: Trust; Generalized Trust, Institutional Trust; Civic Attitudes; Civic Engagement; Civic Responsibility; Non-Profit Organizations; Regions of Russian Federation.

JEL Classification: Z13, Z18.

1. Introduction

The contemporary understanding of political, economic, scientific and technical growth, sustainable development of states relies on its strong linkage with social capital, civicism and responsibility of its members and civil society as one of the powerful societal actors. The aim of up-to-date modernization of economic and social sphere in Russia cannot be achieved without engaging in this process the most possible amount of creative, free-thinking and active citizens. That is why the assessment of the real state, conditions and factors,

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triggering or slowing down the mechanisms of civic identity and social capital formation are in the focus of scientific researches and political agendas.

Positive civic orientations and loyalty depends greatly on the amount of trust the citizens have in each other, in public, legislative and state institutions. The trust facilitates economic transactions, have a positive impact on organizational governance, being an important component of horizontal and vertical social relations (Fukuyama, 1995; Dasgupta, 2000; Evans & Krueger, 2009). The level of trust or distrust may be treated as an indicator of public feelings, a “thermometer” of social health and effectiveness of social system as a whole. Objective laws and stable patterns of trust behavior in different historical periods and different societies allow to speak about the national cultures of trust, representing a culturally encouraged trustful orientation towards some society, regime, organizations and institutions, independent of personal disposition, rational calculations or other logical grounds (Sztompka, 1998; Seligman 2000; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). The trust is conceptualized as a core element of social capital, maintaining social integrity, playing a significant role in fostering group identity, strengthening community spirits and cooperation among citizens, stimulating their self-organization (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Coleman 2000; Putnam, 2000; Letki, 2006). The role of trust in the society is so great that it engenders many metaphors, highlighting its immanent character and relational functions. Thus, Sztompka (2008, p. 26) defines trust as: “a bet about the future contingent actions of others”. For famous Nobel Laureate in economics Kenneth Arrow (1974) trust was “an important lubricant of a social system”. Manifested in everyday practices, the trust underlies value orientations and attitudes, related to social activity, solidarity, tolerance and responsibility.

Meanwhile, in spite of endeavors of Russian powers to support civil institutions by targeted governmental, presidential or regional grant and subvention programs and apparent upsurge of grassroots social patriotically oriented movements, the world-wide and national analytical reports show that the activity and productivity of civil society in Russia remains very restricted (CIVICUS, 2015; Civil Society Organization, 2015; Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, 2015). Experts note that the level of trust remains a weak component of social capital of Russian society (Rose, 1998; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000; Twigg & Schechter, 2003; Maximova et al., 2016). Hence, the work on enhancement of generalized and institutional trust of citizens would benefit not only public governance system but also civil society organizations in Russia. The study of interrelations between depersonalized – general, in-group and institutional trust and the development of civic participation may help to reveal problems existing in different regions and find out possible solutions.

2. Methods

The multiplicity of definitions of trust, due on the one hand to the objective multidimensionality and complexity of the concept, and to the theoretical and methodological disunity of researchers focusing on the trust, on the other, allows to consider it as expectation, attitude, state, relation, process of social exchange and communication, personal and social feeling, a form of social solidarity, social competence and so on (Seligman, 2000; McKnight & Chervany, 2001; Mersiyanova & Pakhomova, 2012). In the general, synthesized sense, the trust is treated as a mental state of individual, conscious of his/her vulnerability or dependence and expecting from ‘others’ (that may be a concrete person, member of a group or society as a whole), that they will behave predictably, according to accepted rules and norms (Fukuyama, 1995; Colquitt et al., 2007).

Despite of existing multiple variations of this definition, its main conceptual elements are vulnerability, positive expectations and active position of a trusting person. The trust is always associated with risk, since there is always a probability of getting loss or disappointment as a result of trust. Without vulnerability it makes no sense to talk about trust proper, as in this case it turns into confidence – rational faith in the absence of negative consequences (Luhmann, 2000). Similarly, the trust cannot exist without positive expectations about the trustee, which are usually directed outside (when we speak about trust it is familiar to bear in mind other people and not ourselves), otherwise, the trust may be destructive, because to trust somebody who has little credibility is not only illogical but even dangerous. And, finally, the trust is not passive obedience to

circumstances, resignation, but the result of a decision, of a choice, which may entail unreliable or impossible to be validated result (Sztompka, 2008, pp. 79-82).

Depending on who or what is trusted two types of trust are commonly distinguished: *interpersonal* or *horizontal trust*, pointed at concrete individuals – interaction partners in definite social situations, and depersonified trust, going beyond the direct interaction, personal experience and assessment of the credibility of counterparty. This depersonified trust may take the form of *generalized trust*, disregarding moral qualities and past experience of individuals, or *particularized trust*, manifested in close relations between members of non-formal groups (relatives, representatives of one ethnic group, professionals etc.), or trust towards organizations and institutions as the most abstract social structures, represented by systems of regulations, norms, rules or roles. Hence, the depersonified trust may be horizontal or vertical whether we are talking about micro or macro-level social objects. It is exactly the depersonified trust which is in the focus of our research, especially its relation with civicism and civic attitudes of people, living in different regions of Russia.

There are two alternative approaches of analyzing the interrelation of trust and civic virtues in individuals' attitudes and evaluations. The first, which may be denoted as cultural or societal, refers to individuals' values and norms, enhancing a willingness for honest and trustworthy behavior, either embedded in private values, interiorized in childhood or learned through participation in the social life (Putnam, 2000; Fukuyama, 1995; Uslaner, 2002; Letki, 2006). The second approach, institutional (Rothstein & Stolle, 2003), links civic goodness with the quality of public order and focuses on the degree of engagement of individual in the activity of formal legitimate political institutions, among which the most important are those insuring social welfare and security of citizens (Stolle, 2002, pp. 407-408). Both approaches see an individual's civic qualities largely as contingent on behavior of other agents and we have relied on their synthesis as on basic theoretical grounds.

The analysis, given in this paper, was based on the data, collected for the sociological research (multistage stratified sample, n=2400, respondents' age from 18 to 70 years) fulfilled in 2015. The research covered six regions of the Russian Federation: Altai, Jewish Autonomous, Trans-Baikal, Kemerovo, Omsk and Orenburg regions. For the generalized trust evaluation, a classical question "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?" was used, but instead of two possible answers it was assessed by 10-point scale. The informal trust was analyzed throughout four groups – family, friends, neighbors and colleagues. The institutional trust inventory included different civil and governmental institutes (mass media, political parties, public and human right, consumer protection, religious, charitable organizations, ethnic diasporas, bodies of territorial self-government, federal, regional and local executive, judiciary and legislative powers). All items related to informal or institutional trust were assessed by 4 or 5-point (depending on the group) Likert scales. The civic attitude indicators included: level of social responsibility; evaluations of the level of cohesion and unity in Russian society; of the degree of solidarity between different categories of population; attitudes towards the interaction between civil society and the State; social activity and relations with non-profit organizations.

At exploratory stage, non-parametric procedures (Mann-Whitney and Kruskal–Wallis one-way analysis of variance) with post-hoc multiple comparisons tests provided necessary evidence for revealing significant factors, affecting the variation of trust in six regions. IRT graded response models were used to calculate integral indexes of generalized, informal and institutional trust. At the final stage of analysis, we used a logistic regression models to examine the relationship between civic participation and demographic, social and cultural factors, including integral indexes of generalized, institutional and informal trust.

3. Results

3.1 Levels of generalized, group and institutional trust

The generalized trust denotes potential willingness of people to cooperate with each other, to act together. Attitudes of generalized trust go beyond the interpersonal face-to-face interaction, relationship based on family ties and friendship and always suppose the interaction between unknown people. Hence, generalized trust is

distinguished from specific trust, manifested in real life situations in interaction with real groups and is thought as the trust towards people in general, independently of context, personal acquaintance or group membership. It is precisely generalized trust and not specific trust which is associated effective political and civic institutions, good government, wealth, and income equality (Uslaner, 2003; Delhey & Newton, 2005; Letki, 2006).

Generalized trust is mostly important in modern urban societies with weak and vast social ties and heterogeneous and mobile population (Granovetter, 1973; Aral, 2016). At the individual level, the generalized trust plays a greater role in establishing a cooperative relationship. Individuals with a higher level of trust not only have mutually beneficial relations, they are more socially active, tolerant, disposed to human rights protection, that gives them and their society opportunity to be more viable (Stolle, 2002; Maximova & Morkovkina, 2016).

The most difficult theoretical questions, related to generalized trust, are about its genesis and reproductive mechanisms, causes, and consequences. In the frame of societal approach, represented by early works of Banfield (1958) and Mathias (1979) as well as by works of R. Putnam and F. Fukuyama, the society's ability to generate generalized trust among its members depends on the regularity of social interactions, such as voluntary associations or other informal networks. According to institutional approach (Rothstein & Stolle, 2003), generalized trust cannot exist independently of government policy and civil society, which are canalizing and regulating quality and quantity of produced social capital. As Stolle (2002) argues, that the influence of the State and its political institutions on generalized social trust is not evident and gives rise to doubt, as to whether real effects exist and have positive or negative impact (it bears mentioning that several institutional systems may entail distrust instead of generalized trust) (Stolle, 2002, pp. 407-408). Meanwhile, generalized social trust is apparently interrelated with institutional structures of which it forms an integral part.

The level of generalized trust of the population in six regions was rather moderate ($m=4.57\pm0.03$) with a tendency to low values: only 13% of respondents had flagged 8 points or more, whereas 3 lowest points were marked by 34.7%. The most significant differences in generalized trust were revealed between the Jewish Autonomous region ($m=5.34$) and other regions where means varied from 4.11 to 4.84 points ($p<0.05$, Kruskal-Wallis tests). The poor generalized trust had a significant impact on the evaluation of possibilities of effective cooperation between different stratum: only 8.3% of respondents were confident in mutual understanding between the rich and the poor, and even less – 6.9% in the possibility of cooperation between “ordinary people” and those who has “much power”.

Unlike generalized trust which is a rather uncertain feeling, determining the perception of the environment as hostile or open and friendly, the trust towards informal groups obeys the laws, regulating processes of group dynamics having social psychological nature. For informal groups, with which individuals are bound by family, friendship, or cooperation ties, the trust is an inherent attribute owing to ease and personal significance of interaction, the possible delicate character of the subject matter. Informal bonds and spontaneous communication emerging from them being an important element of social capital form the basis of effective cooperation and creation of the voluntary association. It is exactly in informal social networks relationship of trust becomes horizontal and reciprocal (Wasserman, & Faust, 1994; Kay, 2006).

According to experimental and theoretical studies (Brewer, 1981; Kramer, 1999; Hogg, 2006; Tajfel, 2010), people tend to have more faith in groups they could identify with and which support their positive image and self-concept. The identification process is performed on the base of categorization and comparison by means of several criteria, among which could be a degree of kinship, ethnicity or citizenship, common values, behavior, lifestyle, homeland, shared destiny. These criteria structure the bounds of interpersonal trust, extending them beyond personal acquaintance and rational assessment of costs, inherent in dyadic communication, interpreted in the categories of social exchange. Thus, moving from the personal to the group level of identification, individuals are beginning to display depersonified trust, reasoned only by membership and representations, expectations and stereotypes, associated with this group. At the horizontal level, such in-group informal trust serves as an intermediate link between generalized trust towards unknown people and

interpersonal trust, based on the experience, and at the vertical level – between personal trust among individuals and depersonified trust towards social institutions.

According to our research, the informal trust to family members had remained very important for participants from all regions: about 87% of respondents experienced it to a greater or lesser extent, the level of trust towards close friends was about 67%. Traditions of confidential relations with neighbors and colleagues, typical for previous decades of soviet communal life practically have lost their meaning and became transformed in conditions of intense territorial and labor mobility and the change of cultural codes: only about a third part of respondents have noted that they can rely on them. The Trans-Baikal region differed from other regions by its low rates of informal trust, Orenburg region – on the contrary by higher rates.

Among the above-mentioned types of trust the last type – trust towards social institutions and especially towards the state represents one of the most complicated. As Sztompka (2012, p. 119) wrote, institutional trust is “a trust towards establishments and organizations, treated as a unity of structural rules, within which borders actions and interactions take place”. Thus, institutional trust belongs to the sphere of abstract relations, mediated by regulation systems – State administration, legislation, justice, and others. Despite this, institutional trust has personal component too, as we have to trust not only depersonified institutions – contracts, laws or organizations, we need to trust persons, responsible for the functioning of those rules and norms. Thus, the trust towards institutions is a form of trust which is mediated by human relations.

The institutional trust ensures social stability, facilitates social and political activity, forms positive attitudes towards politicians and social organizations (Levashov, 2006). The lack of trust towards the State, uncertainty about the efficiency of official structures and established procedures give rise to a proliferation of non-formal and illegal practices, engender forms of quasi-trustful relations, aimed to compensate the lack of basic trust (Gudkov, 2012).

Within the scope of research in six regions of Russia we explored three groups of institutions: institutions of civil society and democracy, State institutions, and financial institutions and organizations. Civil society organizations occupied rather low positions in the overall rating of social institutions: veteran, customer protection, charitable NGOs, and organizations, working with persons with disabilities were trusted to a greater or lesser extent by the third part of respondents, human rights organizations – by 20,9%, national-cultural associations – by 18%. Only 12-14% of positive answers were given to mass media, religious organizations (except Russian Orthodox Church which is evaluated as very trustworthy by 38% of the population), ethnic diasporas and territorial self-governance bodies. Political parties acquired the lowest level of trust – 9,5%. According to integrated index, the highest level of trust towards civil and democratic institutions was observed in Jewish Autonomous and Orenburg region, the lowest – in Altai, Trans-Baikal and Omsk regions.

Hierarchy of trust towards State institutions had demonstrated existing in public conscience tendency of overestimation of confidence in central governmental bodies. The highest evaluations of trust traditionally were rendered to the President (73%) and the Armed Forces (71%), federal executive, judiciary and legislative bodies (39-50%), local and regional authorities acquired about 34-35% of positive answers. Three groups of regions were distinguished on the basis of mean ranks comparisons: Jewish Autonomous region (the highest values), Omsk region (the lowest values) and other regions with intermediate positions.

The research has revealed factors, influencing all types of trust – generalized, informal (particularized) and institutional. Such general factors were sex (women were about a third more trusting than men), place of residence (the level of trust was higher among rural inhabitants), financial situation (wealthy citizens gave higher estimates almost for all trust items).

An ambivalent effect was found in relation to the impact of educational attainment: generalized and informal trust were positively associated with the growth of educational capital, whereas the trust towards public, financial or State institutions, in contrast, was negatively correlated with it. Ethnicity of respondent, especially belonging to Russians, had positive impact on many terms of institutional trust, while among other ethnic groups a higher level.

The ethnicity of the respondent, especially belonging to Russian nationality had a positive effect on many terms of the institutional trust, while among other ethnoses we have noted higher rates of trust towards religious non-Orthodox organizations, autonomous ethnic cultural organizations, ethnic diasporas, representing their interests.

The religiosity was positively correlated with many State and public institutions, apart from those being related with judiciary and rights protection system. Therefore, engagement of population in the activity of pro-governmental religious organizations contributed to a loyal, more conformist attitude towards the State and public structures, functioning under its care.

The factor of age had disclosed existing intergenerational world-view gap in perceiving trust and trustworthiness. The Russian youth proved itself more tolerant towards many public institutions and “expert systems” intrinsic for modern societies – mass media, religious organizations, financial structures, business. The elder generation, in contrast, had demonstrated devotion to patriarchal values, having more trust for pillars of traditionalist State – a strong President, army, and church distrusting business and civil society institutes and relying almost entirely on the official social security system.

The most vulnerable categories of populations from the point of view of the lack of different types of trust were those who had been excluded socially and economically – unemployed and living rough, under the poverty level. The wave of distrust, accompanying their lives, didn’t allow them to tear themselves away from constant deprivation, the ruin of hopes. Evidently, these categories of the population need special measures to be taken to increase their positive social capital, linking them with networks of life success and wealth.

3.2 Civic attitudes and impact of generalized and institutional trust on civic behaviour: multivariate model

Population of six regions had positive attitudes towards civil and broadly social activity, the majority of respondents agreed with the statements “The policies adopted by the power must be transparent and public” (81,3%), “Every reform, exerting influence on my interests have to be monitored by non-profit civic organizations” (72,3%), “It is advantageous for citizens to form interest associations” (69,4%), about a half of them agreed that “Non-profit public organizations have to receive more authority from the state” (51,0%). For the meantime, this certainty about advantages of voluntary associations and internal willingness to join them was not allied with real social activity, which was represented mainly by helping people by money, foods or clothes (48,4%), charitable funds transfers and participation in charitable actions (20,9%) voluntary work (18,1%), contacts with authorities (17,9%), signing petitions (15,7%). The contest behavior was extremely rare, only 5% of respondents reported that they had participated in public street actions or political protest actions.

Over 37% of participants of our research were engaged in some way in activity of non-profit organizations, especially in charitable organizations (22,4%), bodies of territorial self-government (20,3%) and professional communities (19,9%). Other kinds of non-profit organizations (human rights, religious, political, ecological etc.) were attractive for less the 10% of participants of the research. Population activity varied significantly by region of research, the highest proportions of affirmative answers were collected in Jewish Autonomous, Altai and Trans-Baikal regions, while the lowest frequencies were found in Omsk, Orenbourg, Kemerovo regions. Thus, almost all efforts of population were oriented towards charitable purposes or voluntary work with vulnerable categories of citizens or local problems related to housing or communal system, while freedoms and rights protection, especially by non-conventional political methods, promotion of civic initiatives was not practically claimed.

On the base of logistic regression models we explored the association between the civic participation in the activity of non-profit organizations (dependent variable) and indexes of trust, attitudinal indicators (level of responsibility, representations about the functions of civil society organizations) and socio-demographic characteristics (age, sex, place of residence, self-assessment of material position, level of education, social status, religiousness and national identification) as independent predictors.

According to final model (quality of prediction by classification table – 82%, the accuracy measured by ROC-curves – $AUC = 0.73$), gender, nationality, educational attainment and income, levels of responsibility and trust towards civil and democratic institutions had little impact on civic behavior, given the other factors rested fixed. The most significant predictive power had the factor of administrative location and social status: in comparison with Orenburg region (reference category), the odds of being engaged in non-profit sector respondents from Trans-Baikal ($\beta = 0.81$, $p < 0.01$) and Jewish Autonomous ($\beta = 0.79$, $p < 0.01$) regions were 2.25 times greater, from Altai region ($\beta = 0.76$, $p < 0.01$) – 2.13 times, whereas from Kemerovo ($\beta = -0.87$) on the contrary 0.42 times less.

The probability of civic participation among high school students ($\beta = 1.09$, $p < 0.01$) or managers ($\beta = 0.91$, $p < 0.01$) was 1.5 times greater than among non-workers, the same odds were also relevant for urban inhabitants ($\beta = 0.70$, $p < 0.01$), religion practitioners (independently of concrete religion) ($\beta = 0.83$, $p < 0.01$). The generalized trust ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$) and the trust to state institutions ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$) had significant but less strong association with dependent variable that socio-structural factors. The impact of the trust towards informal groups ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.01$) and of age ($\beta = -0.14$, $p < 0.05$) was negative.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The level of trust in society is a good indicator of its openness and security, necessary for the formation of vertical and horizontal relations, providing social capital, favoring civil society development by creation of associations and grassroots communities. The level of generalized trust in six regions, included in our project, was moderate, strongly differentiated and affected by multiple factors, especially by welfare, cultural and human resources. The level of generalized trust was significantly lower in comparison with trust expressed towards surrounding people and readiness to assist others.

The trust to non-formal groups acts as an intermediate point between interpersonal dyadic and depersonified as well as between interpersonal and institutional form of trust, ensuring basic need in social contacts and moral support from people with a shared identity. This kind of trust plays a dual role in the development of social capital and civil society: in one way it contributes to the development of horizontal relations, based on mutual trust and shared common values, so important for civic initiatives, but in another way – the informal trust within groups with strong identification processes may lead to particularism and bonding social capital, spread of informal and often illegal practices, social disintegration. Our research had shown that the trust towards close friends and relatives is the narrowest circle of trust, keeping its importance for the population across all regions, participated in the research.

The population had revealed a rather high level of trust and intentions for cooperation with social organizations, but, at the same time, non-orthodox religious organizations were almost discredited, the activity of ethnic diasporas was perceived as suspicious, and the level of trust to political institutions gives evidence concerning the deep crisis of Russian conventional politics.

The hierarchy of levels of trust towards State institutions evidently displayed a trend of centralization: the higher was the level of governance, the higher were the assessments of trust. By contrast, the closer these institutions were to everyday problems of people, the fewer respondents were reassured in their ability to change something in their lives, in honesty and decency of leaders, representing these institutions. The highest degrees of trust were traditionally placed in the President and in the Russian army, whose authority was almost indisputable and deeply rooted in the conscience. Among financial institutions the population had more confidence in The Pension Fund, whereas the trust towards banks and business did not exceed 30 percent, insurance companies were the least trusted among all financial institutions, proposed for evaluation.

The trust towards state institutions had a positive effect on civil participation, but it was mainly directed by the centralized mechanism of interaction between the State and the civil society, the role of local authorities and grassroots organizations was very unclear. Values of indicators, related either to trust or civic activity varied significantly in regions, distinguished by different standards of living and cultural conditions, but the

tendency of higher civic participation rates was more visual in regions where the levels of trust, especially generalized and institutional were also high.

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