

Does trust make people more civically moral? An empirical study for the Romanian and Moldovan societies

Ali zaupanje naredi ljudi bolj moralne? Empirična študija na primeru romunske in moldavijske družbe

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Abstract

In past decades, the issue of trust and its decline in different societies became a matter of debate among scholars. The argument at forefront is that the low level of trust can affect other activities, especially among the ones linked to the concern of civic morality. The existing empirical evidence suggests the importance of social capital for civic morality. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to focus on the relationship between political and generalized trust on one hand, and civic morality on the other. The relation between civic morality and trust is examined by using survey data from World Values Survey, with Romania and Moldova as case studies. The results show that people with high level of generalized

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trust are more likely to consider claiming government benefits to which they are not entitled, and to see the avoidance of a fare on public transport as never justifiable. These differences do not have any significant effects regarding the political trust in the case of the two societies.

Key words: Civic morality; political trust; generalized trust; structural equation modeling.

Introduction

With the fall of communism, scholars assumed that a reduction of corruption in the societies of the post-communist countries would follow. The expectations were focused on the reduction unmoral actions such as bribery, which served as means of access to win concessions. These expectations have proved illusory (King, Kantor and Gheorghita 2003). Besides with corruption, post-communist societies struggle with problems that are part of a democratic society. Only a few of the transitional countries have achieved a relatively well-functioning democracy, and the gap between Central European countries and former Soviet republics is widening (Badescu and Uslaner 2003; Ekiert and Ziblatt 2013). The weakness of social capital is one of the reasons for the under-utilization of new opportunities offered for Eastern and Central European countries (Bartkowski 2003; Sarracino and Mikucka

2016). Trust can be considered as an essential element for the development of a strong society (Anderson, Schlösser, Ehlebracht, and Fetchenhauer 2014). Low interpersonal trust, low level of trust in political institutions, and business weakness of community spirit at local levels, or practices - these are all components of low social capital. Moreover, these components are directly related to the social image of the private sector. Social relations that happen in families, communities, friendship networks, voluntary associations, shared values, norms and habits, generalized and institutional trust, or civic morality are all part of a broader concept – social capital (Oorschot, Arts, and Gellissen 2006). Social capital can be seen as an umbrella consisting of the above mentioned approaches, highlighting the grouping of a wide range of social phenomena that influence the way a society operates.

Moral values and obligations are instituted with a certain kind of moral character that makes them available for assessment or judgement. People are morally accountable for their values and behaviors within the society (Summerville and Adkins 2007; Gino 2015; Sezer, Gino and Bazerman 2015; Ayal, Gino, Barkan and Ariely 2015). This is true especially if these moral values or behaviors contradict those which the society generally accepts. Furthermore, as Summerville and Adkins stress, the moral arrangements in which people are situated are not necessarily immune to reformulation. This is possible because moral values and behaviors become less stable when they are challenged or

reordered. In general, it is hypothesized that civic morality is weaker in new democracies than in those that are stable and consolidated. Factors such as weak economic performance, incompetent elites, or even relapses into authoritarianism in Government can explain low level of civic morality (Listhaug and Ringdal 2004, p. 343). New democracies are very sensitive toward these types of concepts, especially in the case when other democratic concerns do not have a stable foundation. The society is not ready to face these problems in the near future. However, the empirical research has shown that civic morality is not markedly stronger in stable democracies than in post-communist countries (Listhaug and Rigndal 2004, p. 358).

The decline of generalized and political trust in consolidated democracies has become a major worry over the past decades since those two aspects are proven to be highly correlated with democratic performance. The society could become less trustworthy thus negatively affecting its cooperativeness (Hardin 2006). Both a civil society and a society are composed of people with high level of trust. The high level of political trust is considered as an indicator for legitimacy (Coromina and Davidov 2013). Having only one of the levels high is not sufficient for maintaining stable democracy. In the case of a society where both levels are high, it would be more likely to support fundamental norms within it in particular (Uslaner 2002; Hamid et al. 2015). Even more, it is argued that democracy itself might be a source for both generalized and

political trusts (Ljunge 2014). Going further, morality can be understood as the moral values and obligations that are tied to citizen incumbents (Summerville and Adkins 2007). Moral codes of citizens and social trust combine to permit people to endorse strong standards of moral behavior that make the society better off (Uslaner 1999). These values are a central part of social capital, which help the society to solve collective action problems including elements of ethical behavior. As soon as the society has strong standards of morals behavior, it automatically will benefit from that by consolidating the relationship between people that live in this society and, in the same time, generating confidence for the others' actions.

Trust and one's own moral code lead people to approve standards of moral behavior. When there is the least consensus on what is moral, trust matters most on moral questions in terms of real monetary costs. After people observe organizations as being accountable and act in an impartial manner, the level of legitimacy will increase throughout the society (Tyler 2006; Ali, Elham and Alauddin 2014). As well, it will increase their willingness to comply with the rules that are present in it.

Components such as trust, reciprocity and honesty, constitute citizens that live in civic and trusting communities. Besides being more likely to respect norms, rules or obligations, these people also are more likely to develop interest toward trust than people living in non-civic regions

(Letki 2006, p. 4). In a less cooperative society, a decrease in the democracy level can happen. In addition, economic or social aspects decline triggering instability or decreases in the level of morality, aspects that are important for the society. Moreover, it is believed that different moral commitments could lead to different forms of engagement (Beyerlein and Vaisey 2013). Understanding its determinants can constitute a first step in the fight against the undemocratic practices within the society, especially for situations such as in Romania and Moldova. It could considerably increase the level of democracy and the level of social capital within post-communist countries. In addition, it can contribute to the overcoming of the transitional period and the consolidation of the democratic regime within the countries that struggle to have a secure evolution.

What determines the Romanian and Moldovan societies to engage in autocratic practices after turning toward a democratic rule?

This paper has the aim to address the concepts of civic morality, generalized and political trust, which are part of the larger understanding of social capital in a society. Therefore, considering the theoretical framework, and the relationship between the three variables (civic morality, generalized and political trust), three hypotheses will be tested:

H1: Individuals' level of political trust has a positive influence on the people's civic morality

H2: Generalized trust has a positive effect on the level of civic morality within Romania and Moldova

To test the hypotheses, the analysis will contain three models using Structural Equation Modelling:

- an aggregate model that covers waves from Romania and Moldova
- a model for waves three, four, and five in the case of Moldova
- a model for waves three, five, and six in the case of Romania.

The first section clarifies the theory of civic morality and trust. In the second section the paper addresses the roots of civic morality and the link with trust. In the third section discussion focus on the data and the methodology. The fourth section explains the measurement of the concepts. Finally, I explain and discuss the results of the suggested model in explaining civic morality in Romania and Moldova.

Morals and trust – an interconnectional foundation for interaction

Civic morality and its development is an important aspect of a society that is well functioning. When the citizens accept the regulations that

the state imposes, the governance can be more effective in its policies (Listhaug and Ringdal 2004, p. 341). Many observers will argue that societies in transitioning from totalitarianism to a democratic rule would be the least likely to create all the necessary conditions for the development of the morality and common good. This thing emphasizes the role of civic morality not only for the society itself, but also for the concept of social capital, in a context where the differentiation of values within Europe is very acute, despite the homogenization tendencies (Arts and Halman 2004). Civic morality is being an important focus when dealing with the relationship between the state and its citizens, especially for the interaction within the society, and between citizens in the daily circumstances (based on norms and laws that regulate the interaction). Civic morality denotes the “... *honesty of the public good. It is an ethical habit forming the basis of most theories of civic virtue, and it is often linked with trust and reciprocity*” (Letki 2006, p. 306). Taking this definition into account, civic morality refers to the civic responsibility for the public good, and entails obedience to the rules, and honest and responsible behavior. Moreover, citizens accept duties as given by the society (Letki 2006, p. 306). Individuals are willing to obey the rules, even in the case when they are unlikely to be caught and the punishment for not obeying these rules is minimal. Furthermore, free riding will be considered as something disapproved (Parts 2008). The disapproval is usually measured indirectly by asking people if they justify or not certain behaviors that are seen as being bad by the society.

As soon as a society in which the level of trust is constantly declining, it is expected to also have a downturn in other spheres of its daily life, which are strongly linked to the concept of trust (Strugis, Brunton-Smith, Read and Allum 2010). Though, in the literature, the debate on whether the relationship between trust and civic morality is bidirectional or not, is still present (Sønderskov and Dinesen 2015). In this sense, there are two main sources that generate civic morality among citizens. Firstly, scholars mention the cultural approach, which emphasizes the individuals' values and norms. Moreover, it refers to the experience and interactions based on trust and reciprocity, socializes citizens into trustworthiness or it reinforces the norms of moral and responsible behavior that already existed (Brehm and Rahn 1997). Civic morality indirectly comes from generalized trust, which will transform or will strengthen during the interaction between them. Therefore, it can be stressed that it promotes and contributes to the provision of public goods (Thöni, Tyran and Wengström 2012). Secondly, it is the role of political institutions. Scholars look at the public order and the performance of public officials and office holders. Institutional agents' trustworthiness and efficacy will encourage civic morality and trustworthiness among citizens (Lind and Tyler 1998; Tyler 1990; Murphy 2004; Becker, Boeckh, Hainz and Woessmann 2014). Therefore, if the citizens perceive the public officials or political institutions as being honest and fair, citizens will be more dedicated toward public good.

When citizens perceive public officials or political institutions as being honest and fair in the relationship with people from that particular society, the level of trust toward these political actors will increase. There is an effect on civic morality of these citizens, and besides that, an effect on the level of political trust among the population is also present.

In the literature scholars distinguish between generalized and particularized trust. If generalized trust is characterized by having confidence in the ones you meet for the time (not necessarily being alike), and additionally not knowing anything about their trustworthiness, the particularized trust is about trusting other people as part of one's own group (Freitag and Bühlmann 2009, p. 1538; Freitag and Bauer 2013). Additionally, trust is measured by focusing on values and attitudes around the world (Olivera 2015). The beneficial positive outcomes may result after making contacts with different people. And yet, deeper connections result from having connections in their inner social circles, such as families or close friends and attempting to avoid interactions with strangers (Uslaner and Conley 2003). As Uslaner (2015) argues, trust is not something shaped by experiences in one's later years, but rather learned at an early age.

Besides the focus on trust in people, relevant authors emphasize the need to distinguish between the interaction between people and people, as well as between people and institutions. The confidence of

people in the political environment determines the level of trust in institutions (Catterberg and Moreno 2005). For instance, there is the need to trust the government in order to support the government (Hetherington and Husser 2012) or to have a better democracy (Gormley-Heenan and Devine 2010). As to the case of the relationship between people and people, this relationship has some drawbacks that scholars have to address. Up to now, the literature makes no differentiation when it comes to trust in representative institutions such as parties, Parliament, Parliament, and other and institutions on the implementation side of the political system (Rothstein and Stolle 2008).

The roots of civic morality - a generalized and political trust approach

There are three factors specific for civic communities (Listhaug and Rigndal 2004, p. 344). The first refers to the interpersonal relations, meaning a person who is trustful toward others will be likely to develop positive attitudes toward a larger community. Nonetheless, it will lead to the acceptance of the rules that the Government sets in that particular community. Secondly, it is important to look at the performance. When a well-functioning democracy solves the society's problems and provides goods to its citizens, then these citizens tend to have a positive consequence on their morality. It is essential to look at all the types of

institutional performance, though economic examples can most easily illustrate it (i.e. tax collection). Thirdly, it is important to mention the presence of the cultural influence. The influence of culture and social structure is primarily an effect on civil norms, which are rooted in the citizens' past socialization and experience (Listhaug and Rigndal 2004, p. 344). When the society shares a certain culture and has a certain structure, civil norms will differ from society to society, because of the previous experience of the people. Perceptions of moral behavior of others can be an important issue for civic morality. If someone sees that in the society the norms and laws are constantly violated, it is very likely for this person to stop obeying the norms and laws, which will directly affect the level of civic morality of a society (Listhaug and Rigndal 2004, p. 346). Indirectly, this issue also can have essential consequences on the level of corruption. Once a citizen sees another citizen that does not obey the law, one starts questioning oneself whether one should continue doing it or not. The level of corruption increases when a person decides not to obey the norms that are in the society and the law. In the moment it increases, the level of trust and civic morality within the society dramatically decreases, which has an effect on the level of social capital in this particular society, but also on how democracy is going to work (Graeff and Tinggaard Svendsen 2013). Nevertheless, there is a strong negative correlation between the perception of corruption level and trust in political institutions (Schumacher, 2013).

Political confidence is a strong predictor of individuals' civic morality, not like in the case of trust in others, which is statistically insignificant (Letki, 2006 p. 319). Furthermore, concerning people's confidence in political institutions, the political and economic contexts also make a difference for the level of civic morality within the society.

Trust in Government and trust in other citizens significantly influences tax compliance according to the empirical results (Scholz and Lubell 1998; Kogler et al. 2013). The effects are statistically significant and to be of practical significance as well. Those that have a high level of trust in institutions are less likely to disobey rules. In the moment they consider that these institutions act in order to fulfill their obligations, people will tend to trust them, which means that they would pay taxes (Steimno 1993; Prinz, Muehlbacher and Kirchler 2014). As stated, tax paying is part of civic morality of the society, which means that these factors are inter-correlated. Some authors consider that the direction of the relationship is from trust toward civic morality (Steimno 1993; Scholz and Lubell 1998). These studies do not have a direct measure of civic morality, but more an indirect one. The willingness of taxpaying can be regarded as part of the civic morality concept.

The democratic system is influenced by the level of trust within the society (Mishler and Rose 2005). Because of the interaction between people on different levels, trust needs to be explained in the best

possible ways. As mentioned above, social capital is an important aspect for modern societies, and trust is being one of the features (Freitag and Bühlmann 2009). It has an impact on the perception of life of the societies. Trust plays a significant role within the cooperation processes that occur on political, economic or social levels. This process involves a wide range of actors, from families or friends, to political and economic agents. In order to have a good and productive coexistence between the members of the society, trust is the crucial key toward achieving this balance (Freitag and Bühlmann 2009: 1538).

Highest level of generalized trust is closely associated with religious/cultural, social, economic, and political characteristics (Delhey and Newton 2004). In addition, ethnic homogeneity has a high impact on the level of generalized trust among people. People that share the same ethnic background will tend to trust each other more easily, in comparison to people that have different ethnicities. Furthermore, wealthy and economically egalitarian societies are trusting societies (Delhey and Newton 2004, p. 27; Hamamura 2012; Reeskens 2013). The level of generalized trust is high when people have something in common with others, as in the case of the particularized trust. Generalized trust is stronger when people have a shared ethnic identity (Putnam 2007). Nevertheless, the importance of justice within the society can also be mentioned. When a perception of injustice is present in the society, it will reinforce negative stereotypes, and make people

feel that they are different and stick to their own kind (Rothstein 2005). People do not only care about the final result of personal interaction with public institutions, but they are rather equally interested in the procedure that eventually led to the final result which may be considered as fair (Rothstein 2005, p. 122).

As mentioned earlier in this paper, the literature does not make a very clear differentiation within the concept of political trust. Therefore, the representational side of the political trust has the role of a partisan, meanwhile the implementation side that holds the Government, or a majority in the Parliament, will focus on the implementation of its ideology (Rothstein and Stolle, 2008, p. 9). The explanation of political trust in general focuses on two approaches (Mishler and Rose 2001; Andre´ 2014). If the institutional approach focuses on the rational choice perspective, then the cultural approach originated not in the political sphere, but rather in the cultural values and beliefs of people (Mishler and Rose 2001, p. 30).

Young democracies that appeared after the fall of the Soviet Union have encountered a trend of mixed attitudes toward political institutions at the beginning of their existence as independent states (Mishler and Rose 1997). As the authors mention, the median attitude was one of skepticism. This direction of the evolution of people’s trust in institutions is not a specific characteristic for these new democracies.

Consolidated democracies which are suffering a long-term crisis, face the problem of low levels of political trust as new established democracies do. Low levels of trust in democratic regimes could lead to a possible collapse of the system (Blind 2006).

Data, hypotheses and methodology

This research relies on the data from World Values Survey. Questions concerning the level of civic morality for Moldova and Romania could be found in waves three and four (1998 and 2005). Relating to the remaining waves, questions on civic morality were in wave four (2002) for Moldova and wave six (2014) for Romania.⁵¹ This research is only from an individual perspective, omitting the regional one that might stress some differences within the area, or even at an aggregate level that could bring into consideration issues that are omitted at the individual level. It would be desirable to also have other variables that could measure the level of generalized trust within these two societies. Future research should also include other variables that might explain the level of civic morality within a particular country or how civic morality is being influenced in general.

⁵¹ In total World Values Survey there are present six waves of data collection, during 1981 – 2014.

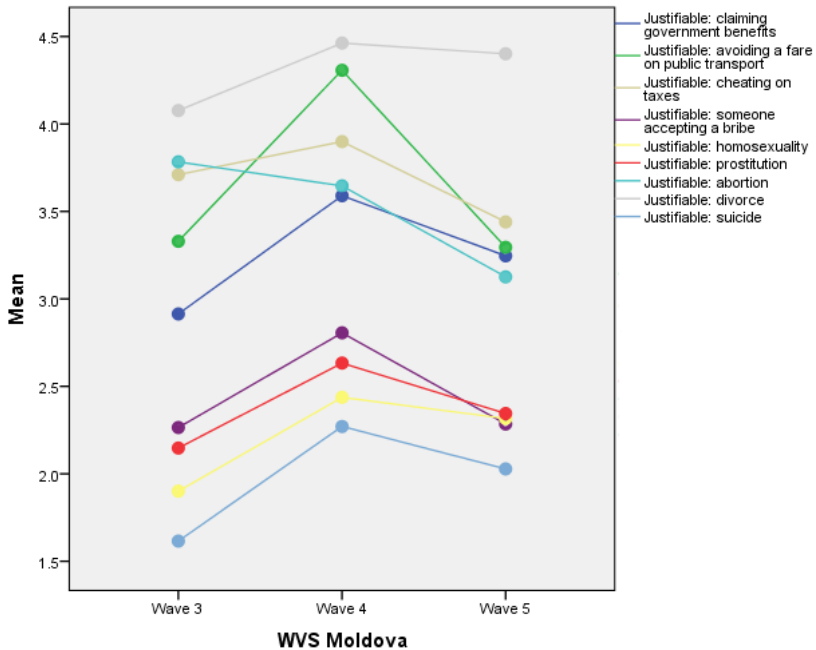
One of the possible limitations to this comparison regards the dimensions that are part of the bigger concept of civic morality. It is rather hard to decide the weight of each dimension and to decide the importance of each category. Further analysis of these dimensions will specify which factors must be taken into account when describing the concept of civic morality and see.

Measuring the concepts. Dependent variable - civic morality

Looking at how the concept of civic morality can be measured, Knack and Keefer (1997) refer to it as “civic cooperation”. Civic cooperation is assessed from responses to questions about whether it “can always be justified, never justified or something in between” (Knack and Keefer, 1997:1256). They look at: *a) claiming Government benefits which you are not entitled to; b) avoiding a fare on public transport; c) cheating on taxes if you have the chance; d) keeping money that you have found; e) failing to report damage you have done accidentally to a parked vehicle.* Respondents have to choose a number from 1 (never justifiable) to 10 (always justifiable). Listhaug and Ringdal (2004 p. 347) used almost the same measurement, without taking into account one of the dimensions “*avoiding a fare on public transport*”.

In the case of the World Value Survey, civic morality is being measured through a set of battery questions (on a scale from 1 never justifiable to 10 always justifiable). Civic morality is a variable, merged from nine questions that referred to how justifiable is claiming government benefits, avoiding a fare on public transport, cheating on taxes, someone accepting a bribe, homosexuality, prostitution, abortion, divorce, and suicide.

Graph 1: Mean: Civic Morality case of Moldova



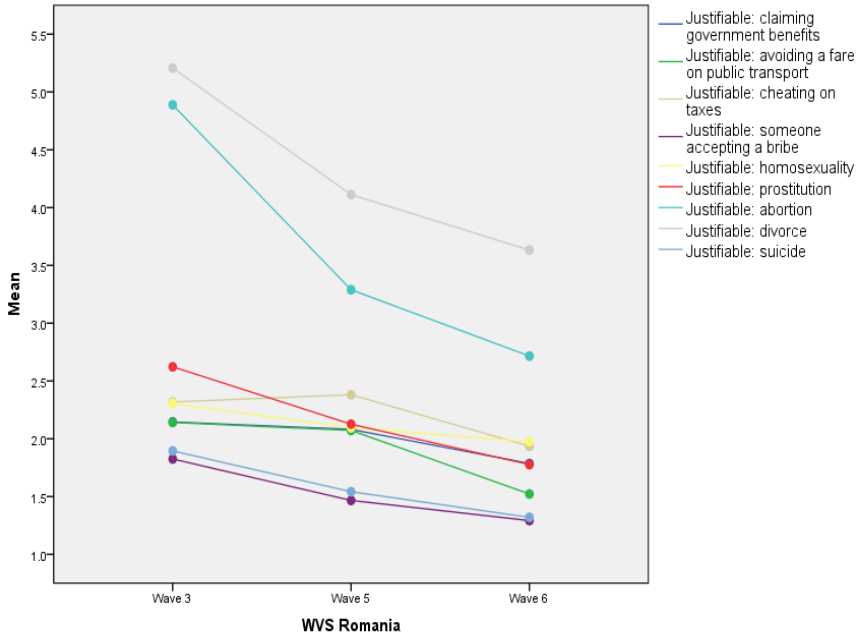
Source: Own calculations

In Moldova, the mean of the variables that measure civic morality has fluctuated in the three waves of the survey. What can be noticed is that from wave 3 to wave 4, the period can be characterized with an increase of the mean for all variables except the attitude toward abortion. One of the possible explanations for this phenomenon is the Russian economic

crisis from 1998, which served as a facilitator for bringing Moldova to the margin of bankruptcy, therefore the harsh economic conditions contributed to the acceptance of particular matters. Among these avoiding a fare on public transport, claiming government benefits or cheating on taxes can be mentioned. Moreover, all of these matters account to the economic dimension. Nevertheless, additional research ought to be done in order to sustain or reject this assumption.

On the other hand, from wave 4 to wave 5 there was a decrease, though the mean is higher compared to wave 3, except the attitudes of someone accepting a bribe, avoiding a fare on public transport and cheating on taxes. The tolerance toward certain topics decreased, and afterwards in the next period decreased, though for most variables the average mean is higher than in the initial point.

Graph 2: Mean: Civic Morality case of Romania



Source: Own calculations

For Romania, the mean fluctuates differently than in the case of Moldova. All variables (except opinion regarding cheating on taxes) have a descending trend. So, if in the case of Moldova, there was a period when the population considered more acceptable certain practices, the

Romanian society tends to consider certain practices as never justifiable rather than always justifiable. Questions regarding divorce and abortion can be considered as outliers, mainly because of the drastic change of the attitude compared to the rest of variables from wave 3 to wave 6.

The use of factor analysis (with principal component analysis extraction method) helps to examine the interrelationship between the variables and to explain them in terms of their common underlying dimensions. Even more, it will help to focus on a minimum number of factors that account a maximum portion of the total variance within civic morality. As a result, in the factor analysis it was considered the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient, which shows the degree of common variance among the variables that are selected for this type of analysis. The KMO coefficient must be bigger than 0.7 with the borderline at 0.5 (Kaiser, 1974), but also the p value of less than 0.05.

Applying the factor analysis for the aggregate model displayed a good result: the KMO coefficient of .790, and p value of .000. Moreover, the analysis showed that the variables regarding claiming government benefits and avoiding a fare on public transport explain 58.93% of the total variance and form the same component. Even if the variables regarding cheating on taxes and someone accept a bribe place in the same component, these factors will be avoided in the further analysis, because it does not bring a significant value to the total variance.

Independent variables: generalized trust and political trust

Discussing about generalized trust especially in the case of a comparative approach toward it, the validity of generalized trust measurements must be taken into consideration (Reeskens and Hooghe 2007). It is important to see whether trust is being measured in the same manner in all countries, taking into account the cultural, linguistic and other differences that might appear between them. Generally, it must be considered that because of the complexity of the concept, a multiple indicator approach has to be looked upon (Cormina and Davidov 2013). It will determine in having a higher quality of the measurement of the proposed indicator. The problem relies within the question that is used to measure generalized trust and in the instruments that are used to measure it. The indicators for measuring the latent concept generalized trust can differ from country to country, though the measurement of the latent variable in a cross-cultural context can be done through different methods. It is very important to arrive at a valid measurement of generalized trust, because it is not possible to measure or to have a cross-cultural comparative study only having three-item scale that were suited for all countries involved in the study (Reeskens and Hooghe 2007, p. 4).

Referring to the concept of generalize trust, the question used to assess the level of trust in a society is: “*Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted?*” (Knack and Keefer 1997, p. 1256). There is ambiguity with what people mean, because it could measure the level of trust in close friends, relatives, or strangers. In addition, they can refer to people they most transact with, when dealing with this perception. In the European Social Survey there are three items that tap generalized trust and which also can deliver cross-national equivalence (Reeskens and Hooghe 2007). These items are: a) *Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?*; b) *Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?*; and c) *Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?* As Reeskens and Hooghe concluded, the first question is a basic question on generalized trust, and the other two questions are as a supplement for measuring generalized trust among people.

Questions that contribute in general to the measurement of generalized trust consist of questions referring to trust in other people in the country, people you meet for the first time (on a scale from 1 trust completely to 4 not trust at all), and the statement that most people can be trusted. In the fifth wave of the World Value Survey, only the

question regarding trust in people you meet for the first time is included.

Political trust

As in the case of generalized trust, political trust is a complex concept, therefore it determines scholars to look at various aspects of the politics (Coromina and Davidov 2013, p.41). In the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) there are several statements that measure political trust (Schyns and Koop 2009, p. 152). Firstly, people are asked to answer the following statement: *“Most of the time we can trust people in Government to do what is right”*. Secondly, they had to response for the following statement: *“Most of politicians are in politics only for what they can get out of it personally”*. The answer categories for these items included: Strongly agree/ Agree/ Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree. Because when discussing political trust or trusts in institutions scholars refer not only at one political actor, there can be stated to which actors, trust refers to. Referring to the support for regime institutions, scholars can include attitudes towards Governments, Parliaments, the legal system and police, political parties, and state bureaucracy (Norris 1999). It offers the possibility to measure and observe political trust not only in one particular actor, but how citizens’ political trust of developed during an amount of time, as Norris

remarks. A comparison between actors is possible, but also some assumptions should be made on the way in which political trust is changing in a country at a certain point of time. The main actors are the institutions that are present in the political system of a particular country (Catterberg and Moreno 2005). It is expected to ask people how much trust they have in Parliament, Government or President. An eloquent example would be the following question: *On a score from 1 to 10 how much personally you trust the Parliament (1 means you do not trust the institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust)*. The same type of formulation can be used in measuring trust for the Government or trust in President, or other political institution in which the researcher is interested.

The level of political trust will be measured through the specific questions regarding the level of confidence in Parliament, Government, and Political Parties (on a scale from 1 a great deal to 4 none at all). These variables were selected due to the role that these institutions and political actors have in the country (being policy designers and policy implementers, both in Romania and Moldova). The level of confidence people have in the justice system will be an independent factor in explaining civic morality. Moreover, socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, and education (higher education level attained) will be used in the proposed models.

Discussion of the results

As mentioned earlier, the main question that I try to answer in the analysis is whether political and generalized trust determine the level of civic morality in Romania and Moldova or not. To this end, I created two aggregate models for both societies. I start with a model that does not include demographic variables meanwhile the second aggregate model includes these variables.

The first model, demonstrates that generalized trust (.981) has stronger effects on civic morality. Citizens that trust more people that they see for the first time, incline to be more moral. Meanwhile the effect of political trust is opposite (-.195). People with high political trust find some practices as being moral, and could engage in questionable actions, such as claiming a Government benefit to which they are not entitled and avoiding a fare on public transportation.

However, a more rigorous analysis is needed in order to have a more realistic model. In model II, other variables are added in order to place respondents according to different criteria. The model showed that education and age are the statistical significant variables. People that are older and more educated will perceive certain practices as being against civic morality (-.167 and -.968). Gender did not prove to be an

important variable in the explanation of the concept. The cases of Romania and Moldova are not the same in terms of the demographic variables. For Romania, the results of the analysis have proved to be more significant. In this line of argument, both variables (age and sex) showed a beta coefficient of .500. Education for Romanians does not seem to be important for the level of civic morality. The same conclusion is for political trust. If in the first model political trust had some effect on the level of civic morality, then in this case the effect disappeared.

| | Civic Morality | | |
|-----|--------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Model I Moldova | Model II | Romania |
| Age | -.167 (***) | .500 (***) | .036 (***) |
| Sex | -.025 (.081) | .500 (***) | .026 (***) |

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|--------|---------|---------|
| Education | | -.968 | .000 | .000 |
| | | (***) | (1.000) | (1.000) |
| Political trust | -.195 | .046 | .500 | .958 |
| | (***) | (.003) | (.288) | (.661) |
| Generalized Trust | .981 | -.180 | .500 | .283 |
| | (***) | (***) | (***) | (***) |

Though, generalized trust remained a factor that must be considered.

Table 1: Civic Morality and Trust

Notes: Entries are standardized regression coefficients; the figures in the brackets are the significance level: *** $p < .001$

Source: Own calculations

In terms of the Moldovan society, the results are much weaker for the age and sex variables (.036 and .026). Therefore, it is possible to assume that still being in a period of transition, other factors such as the economic aspects matter. Nevertheless, as it was stressed, in order to test this assumption, an additional research must be carried out. The level of education and political trust does not matter when it comes to associating it with civic morality. In addition, the more people trust each other, the more they will tend to consider certain practices as unacceptable. The analysis shows a beta coefficient of .283. Even if it is almost twice less than in the case of the Romanian society, it is a rather strong figure.

Despite various complex issues related to morality or civic morality, this paper has provided empirical results on the possible effect of political and generalized trust on civic morality in two post-communist countries, Romania and Moldova. Even though present paper has a lack of a wider case comparison, the research can indicate for both societies the prominence of generalized trust, which is associated with a more moral society. People will tend to consider as “unorthodox” some practices that are never justifiable. Therefore, people who trust others are more morally bounded. Additionally, the results show the possible effects of age and sex on civic morality. Though, in the case of the Moldovan society, the effect is very low on the two mentioned variables. In the case of political trust for both societies, the results come in contradiction

to what Letki (2006) found. Political trust is not a strong predictor for civic morality and generalized trust has an effect. This paper suggests that determinants of civic morality can be different in various societies. These concepts have an important for social ties in the society, especially when it refers to cooperation within society, and the link between individuals and state. In this line of argument, scholars should pay more attention to the topic related to the morals of the society, in order to be able to achieve satisfactory results in terms of improvement of the morals in the society, but also to increase the level of social capital. The topics of social capital and civic morality remain of acute prominence for post-communist countries, especially in the context of the unlike improvements of the civil society.

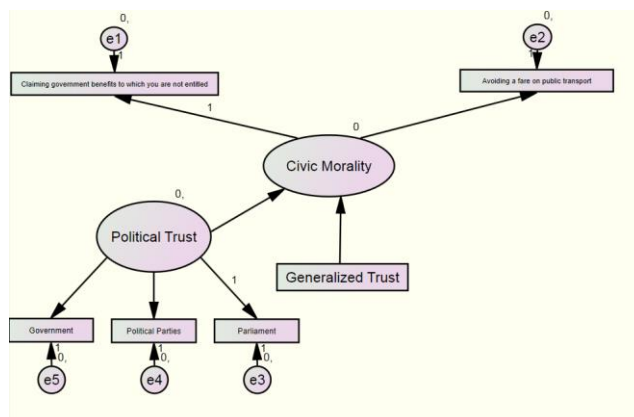
Additionally, these results can be regarded from a more general perspective, relying on the phenomena such as corruption (explicitly claiming benefits to which someone is not entitled) and free-riding. These phenomena do not have to be understood through the framework of economic development, but rather with the help of internal social processes – generalized trust. The development of trust in others can be incremental toward explaining the level of civic morality. Even more, trust and civic morality can ensure a fair play in interactions with other individuals of the society and create a better society by contributing to its development. In addition, within these two societies the level of education does not influence claiming government

benefits or avoiding a fare. As a result, it can be claimed that civic morality relies on other factors, rather than the educational ones. It can be assumed that civic morality is built with the help of other factors, rather than within the educational framework. Nevertheless, difference in age and sex influence civic morality, only in the case of Romania.

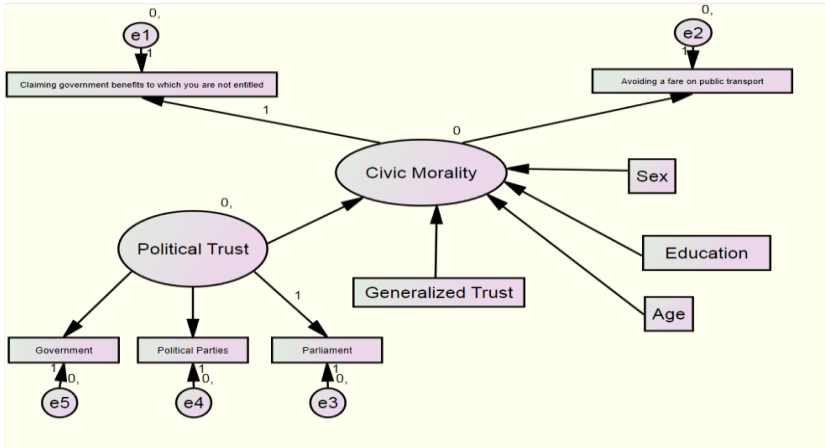
In addition, it must be understood that these results cannot be generalized for other cases. Therefore, future research should focus on a wider set of variables that measure not only civic morality, but also generalized and political trust. Moreover, a bigger set of countries have to be considered in order to have a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between the two concepts.

Appendix

Model I: Explaining Civic Morality for Romania and Moldova



Model II. Variables used in models for Romania and Moldova



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