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Psychology of Personality: Real and Virtual Context

TRUST AND SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING AS PREDICTORS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SECURITY OF PERSONALITY

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Abstract

For being commensurate with the current socio-economic situation and evolving scientific knowledge studies into trust and subjective wellbeing as a foundation for psychological security of today's society it is necessary to reveal the following interrelationships: people's trust at personal, interpersonal and inter-group level; social conditionality attached to the formation of personality subjective wellbeing; a sustainable development of a social milieu; effective strategies to overcome situations bearing threats to personality psychological security. The study was conducted in five federal districts of the Russian Federation. The sample involved 2514 people. All the participants of the empirical study were divided into 4 groups according to the intensity of self-trust and subjective wellbeing ($n = 578$). In order to examine subjective interpretations of the phenomenon "security" we carried out a study aimed at analyzing associative links of this concept. Subjective interpretations underlie attitudes towards it and determine appropriate behavior. As a result, factors specific to the state of security in all groups of the subjects were identified. These factors can be grouped broadly as follows: security as a state and security as a defense instrument. The typology obtained can serve for diagnosing individual psychological characteristics of different population groups.

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Keywords: Psychological security, subjective wellbeing, trust, typology.



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1. Introduction

Present-day psychological research efforts describe trust in the format of social and economic behavior. Given current conditions the creation and modification of diagnostic techniques allowing for revealing inclinations and trust level of different social groups acquires additional relevance.

A categorical pair “trust-distrust” has an essential content-based academic potential, however, the level of its theorization is likely to be one-sided. In a number of articles distrust and decreasing social trust have been considered. But the concept of trust and psychology of trust, in particular, have not been dealt with in sufficient detail.

On the one hand, studies with the focus on cognition indicate the role of cognitive mediation of social behavior, on the other, the impact of social factors on the processes of cognition. Under current socio-economic situation it is important to define human behavior patterns in order to reveal the significance of personality subjective wellbeing in the formation of these models. The thing is that “subjective wellbeing embraces wide in scale estimates of life and health satisfaction as well as particular feelings which reflect how people react to their life events and circumstances” (Zotova & Karapetyan, 2018, p. 983). The issues of trust development and subjective wellbeing as components of psychological security of today’s society take on even greater importance.

Existing studies into trust and subjective wellbeing have not provided a science-based conception of the place of trust and the subjective wellbeing concept in the system of psychological security of modern societies. A conceptual approach to identifying specificity of coping with situations upon building trust and personality subjective wellbeing has not been developed yet. Subjective wellbeing is defined as persons’ evaluations of their life and emotional experiences.

2. Problem Statement

For being commensurate with the current socio-economic situation and evolving scientific knowledge studies into trust and subjective wellbeing as a foundation for psychological security of today’s society it is necessary to reveal the following interrelationships: people’ trust at personal, interpersonal and inter-group levels; social conditionality attached to the formation of personality subjective wellbeing; a sustainable development of a social milieu; effective strategies to overcome situations bearing threats to personality psychological security and their implementation in behavior patterns. The insight into perceptions of personality subjective wellbeing provides us with the dynamic of subjective perceptions shaping assessments of satisfaction with life of the Russian citizens.

3. Research Questions

The realization of the study required addressing the following tasks:

1. To reveal differences in subjective wellbeing and trust in the Russian.
2. To create a typology based on the specificity of security perception.
3. To examine the specific features of security perception in the context of subjective wellbeing and trust.

4. Purpose of the Study

To explore the impact of trust and subjective wellbeing on the psychological security of personality and society.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Participants

The study was conducted in 5 federal districts of the Russian Federation: Central federal district (Moscow), Northern Caucasus federal district (the Republic of Dagestan), Crimean federal district (the Republic of Crimea), Privolzhsky federal district (the Republic of Tatarstan), and Ural federal district (the Sverdlovsk region). The sample of each area was representative and reflected the structure of the given region by gender, age, education and type of settlement. The total number of the respondents was 2514.

5.2. Methods

1. "Subjective Wellbeing scale" adapted by Sokolova (1996), a variant of the technique Échelle pour l'évaluation subjective du Bien-être developed in 1988 by Perrudet-Badoux et al. (1988).
2. "Reflexive Questionnaire on Self-trust" by Skripkina (1998).
3. The Free Association Method.

The data were processed with the help of the exploratory factor analysis and SPSS 20.0.

On the basis of M. V. Sokolova and T. P. Skripkina technique all the participants of the empirical study were divided into 4 groups according to the intensity of self-trust and subjective wellbeing (n = 578).

Group 1 is characterized by high level of self-trust and subjective wellbeing.

Group 2 entails the respondents with low self-trust and subjective wellbeing.

Group 3 involves the subjects with low self-trust and subjective ill-being.

Group 4 consists of the testees with high level of self-trust and subjective ill-being.

6. Findings

In order to examine subjective interpretations of the phenomenon "security" we carried out a study aimed at analyzing associative links of this concept. Subjective interpretations underlie attitudes towards it and determine appropriate behavior (Zinchenko et al., 2012).

6.1. Security perceptions of the first group of the respondents with high level of self-trust and subjective wellbeing

The analysis of association links of the concept "security" showed that the most commonly reported associations were "home" and "family". However, the results of factor-analytical processing related these notions to 4th and 5th places correspondingly.

The factorization of associations made it possible to define inner differentiation and the semantic structure of the concept "security" for the first group resulting in identifying 5 factors with 68.8% of the total variance. Only those scales producing this or that factor were examined whose factor loading was not less than 0.60.

The first factor (21.1%) is unipolar and embraces such associations as: “satisfaction” (0.97), “shelteredness” (0.97) and “health” (0.65). The content of features making up this factor allows us to treat it as “Security – psychological shelteredness”, which can be seen as a positive stable emotion, human awareness of being capable of satisfying his/her basic needs. Psychological shelteredness is one of the most important mechanisms that provide a sense of belonging to a group, adequate self-esteem, realistic aspirations, etc.

The second factor (15.6%) included: “confidence” (0.77), “reliability” (0.77) and “comfort” (0.71). The substance of this factor gives the opportunity to interpret it as “Security is comfort”. In this case comfort can be considered a state of content, inner peace owing to favorable, in the opinion of the respondents’, circumstances.

The following associations were singled out in the third bipolar factor (13.0%): “calmness” (0.74), “freedom” (0.68). The opposite pole is represented by “bunker” (-0.61), “parents” (-0.61). This makes it possible to construe this factor as “Autonomy and independence”. It is worth noting that the association “parents” appeared to be related to the negative pole. From the psychoanalytical perspective it is necessary to emphasize infantile coloration of this factor: to acquire autonomy so that to avoid dependence and become independent, to get rid of parental control and to break ties with family, to go beyond family circle, to find new aspirations and be free.

6.2. Security perceptions of the second group of the respondents with low level of self-trust and subjective wellbeing

The respondents with low level of self-trust are characterized by a reduced ability to take responsibility for themselves and their own life, to seek lasting support from other people and the world around. They are often incapable of making independent decisions, and trust for them can become an insatiable want. On the other hand, high level of subjective wellbeing implies that these subjects feel quite content being supported from outside.

In this group the most frequent associations with the word “security” were “confidence” and “shelteredness”.

As a result of factor-analytical processing tree factor were revealed accounting for 91.7% of the total variance. The first factor (38.9%) is represented by the scales: “information” (0.95), “law” (0.95) and “treat” (0.95). The opposite pole involves: “shelteredness” (-0.67), “confidence” (-0.67). The meaning of this factor resides in security provision linking this function to authorities. Although power in this case appears, to a greater extent, to be punitive posing fear and threats to people. Therefore, this factor can be interpreted as “Security is institutional order”.

The second factor (33.3%) is bipolar: “shelteredness” (0.69), “calmness” (0.63). The opposite pole consists of: “wellbeing” (-0.89), “stability” (-0.89). The inconsistency of the associations highlights the conflict-ridden content of the very concept security in the minds of the second group’ respondents, which allows us to see it as “Security as a conflict”.

The third factor (19.4%) “Security – deficit of information” embraces such associations as: “confidence” (0.69), “calmness” (0.62) and its opposite pole: “openness” (-0.89), “honesty” (-0.89). The content of the associations constituting this factor can be described with the help of a well known saying “ignorance is bliss” reflecting a kind of apperceptive blindness. The respondents of this group feel secure

in the absence of information: they do not need it and try to remain uninformed. Information flows seem to be dangerous and cause negative emotions.

6.3. Security perceptions of the third group of the respondents with low level of self-trust and subjective ill-being

The low intensity of trust brings about a drop in satisfaction with job, family life, leisure, friendly and intimate ties. “High distrust manifests itself as fear of losing a great deal” (Kupreytchenko & Tabkharova, 2007, p. 58). It is possible to assume some emotional internal contradictions, and this can have devastating consequences for individuals.

The analysis of association links of the concept “security” showed that the most frequent associations were “comfort”, “gun”, “courage”, and “army”.

Further data processing resulted in indicating factors and factor loadings.

The first factor (38.9%) involves scales with negative loadings: “home” (-0.93), “family” (-0.84). The content of this factor enables us to interpret it as “Detachment”. The given factor is very close to the psychological substance of Horney (1945) “detached personality”. In her opinion, a person with orientation to withdrawal, moving away “from people” prefers keeping an emotional distance with people around. In view of the fact that drawing closer to others in this personality type generates anxiety their self-sufficiency is developed. In a soft form detachment enhances preservation of individuals’ integrity and security. Mukhina (2006) states that a mechanism of detachment acts at both emotional and cognitive level. In extreme cases, detachment is replaced by alienation.

The second factor is made up of these scales: “confidence” (0.70) and on the opposite pole – “peace” (-0.78). Its content makes it possible to treat it as “Egoism – Altruism”. These are contra-directional evolutionary stable behavioral strategies, although egoism should not be viewed as an exclusively negative tendency. As Laverycheva (2008) argues “egoism manifests itself in both human being and animal in any individualistic reactions that either serve survival interests, or are included in behavior complex providing advantages in the battle for surviving” (p. 199). Egoism is not only and not quite such behavior that is dangerous for other people (cruelty, aggression, rudeness, meanness, callidity) but it also integrates positive volitional traits (courage, force, agility, responsiveness, goal-orientedness, ambition, persistence, good memory, witness, inventiveness, maximum creativity, and through patience, self-restraint, felinity, suspicion, cautiousness and other qualities – achievement of personal success). Thus, egoism is useful and basic hereditary feature in a species evolution and survival, and this applies to both human beings and animals (Dawkins, 2006).

The third factor involves the following associations: “reliability” (0.74), “quietude” (0.67). The opposite pole is represented by the association “stability” (-0.70). The associations’ content allows for interpreting this factor as “Passiveness”.

The associations of the fourth factor “Pleasure” are: “joy” (0.82) and “comfort” (0.70). The fifth factor includes the association “calmness” 0.91, the sixth – “defense” -0.89.

6.4. Security perceptions of the fourth group of the respondents with high level of self-trust and subjective ill-being

It is a contradictory zone consisting of high self-trust and negative emotions. Trust implies openness and some vulnerability, expectations of fair treatment. Ill-being supposes negative emotions which either prevail in a person's life, or he/she is inclined to them. Yaremchuk (2013) states that, subjective wellbeing diminishes in case of: conflicts between values and meaning-based spheres of personality; intense inward personal conflicts; and conflict escalation on personality way of making meaning of life. On the other hand, a combination of high self-trust and low subjective wellbeing motivates a person to change his life contributing to re-thinking conflicting spheres of personality where trust can act as a buffer that maintains a balance of livelihood.

The analysis of association links of the concept "security" showed that the most commonly reported associations were "calmness", "shelteredness" and "reliability".

As a result of factor analysis ten significant factors were revealed (63.8%). The large number of the identified factors reflects a cognitive complexity of the concept "security", its ambiguity and semantic uncertainty in the respondents' consciousness. For further interpretation the first two factors are of special interest. The first factor (9.6%) entails the following scales: "home" (0.76), "family" (0.70) and "friends" (0.68). The meaning of the factor can be understood as "Security is harmonious interpersonal relationships". The factor demonstrates traditional values that disclose the concept "security"; those values that are associated with home, family, friends in the respondents' minds.

The second factor (7.6%) includes: "police" (0.81) and "army" (0.80). The content of this factor gives an opportunity to treat it as "Security is enforcement structures" and links the subjects' hopes for security provision with professional security agents.

7. Conclusion

The examination of subjective wellbeing and trust as predictors of psychological security allowed us to consider semantic invariants and individual transformations of the four groups of the respondents under the influence of different psychological factors. The analysis resulted in revealing factors specific to the state of security of the subjects of each group. The identified factors can be conditionally divided into two groups:

1. Security as a state:

- accompanied by positive emotions (comfort, psychological shelteredness, pleasure, calmness, etc.).
- accompanied by negative emotions (conflict, passiveness).

2. Security as a defense instrument (enforcement structures, institutional order).

The singled out structures appear to be typical of a certain group and, as a consequence, these states turn out to be leading, become easily recognized, identified and included in behavior, emotional and intellectual components of the groups under study providing the organization of activity and behavior,

transformation and character accentuation. Also, a state of security/insecurity motivates an individual's conduct in a group performing an activating or sedative function.

It should be noted that an associative experiment reflects, to a greater extent, just objectively existing language. It intersects with real state of things but does not copy the world to the full. The thing is that man often lives in a world of illusions, and this world emerges not only due to human imperfection but also due to culture that dictates myths and stereotypes inherent to it. In this context, research on trust and subjective wellbeing as a foundation of the society security in different Russian regions with specific mythology is of great academic interest.

The proportion of dangerous and unstable situations generates human responses to these situations. A state of internal and external uncertainty influences a person's everyday life style, pushes him to act irrationally.

The study showed that security regulates social behavior. It lays groundwork for reflecting and assessing the world and acts as a reference point for guiding and determining the process of cognition.

The study conducted made it possible to figure out that differences in subjective wellbeing and trust largely define specificity of security perceptions: assessments, emotional state and people's behavior. The established typology revealed basic differences in real grounds for the variability of the ways every person defines the very security. These individual typological features enable us to find peculiar syndromes of individual consciousness associated with the intensity of subjective wellbeing and trust. This typology can serve as a basis for diagnosing individual psychological characteristic of various groups of population.

Improved knowledge of security perceptions in the context of subjective wellbeing and trust, in particular, will contribute to building a complex, system model of the Russian society security, raising awareness of the Russians with regard to their own wellbeing, improving their ability to cope with stress situations and everyday problems, establishing a balance between self-trust and trust towards the world, and devising their own strategies for living well.

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