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# TRUST TOWARDS ADMINISTRATIVE INSTITUTIONS AMONG YOUTH IN TURKEY: THE CASE OF KONYA

## Abstract:

The concept of trust is one of the important signs of living together and a reflection of one's feelings about social others. Although social, administrative and political consequences of the concept has been a subject of research, there is an increase in the attention paid to the concept after Putnam's inclusion of trust as one of the component of social capital. The concept of trust is defined very differently in different social science disciplines and therefore there is no consensus on a single definition.  Coleman has defined the concept as 'decision to cooperate under uncertainity' while Hardin defines it 'interconnected interests'. According to Braun, trust is a characteristic of a the relationship between two people. Miller and Listhaug defines the concet as a summary of those attitudes that political system will be responsive even when there is no permanent survelliance.

Since trust towards public institutions is an abstract concept, it is difficult to measure it. In the literature, there are different theories about the source of trust and its determining factors as well as its explanations. Trust emerges from the legitimacy of administrative-political system, specific experiences of public insitutions and services and the dynamic interaction between these two factors. Further, the volatility of public opinion about public institutions and cognitive chaos makes research about the concept of trust more problematic.

Young people are most dynamic actors of social and political life. Notwithstanding their dynamism, recent research shows that among youth there is a decrease in interest and trust towards political and social life. This study aims to understand the level of trust among youth in Turkey towards social, administrative and political institutions. The study utilizes Uslaner's three dimensional classification and defines trust as 'trust towards institutions'. A survey has been conducted among mainly university students in Konya to determine their level of trust towards institutions. The study uses data from a 2012-2013 Project to increase political participation of youth and supported by the Ministry of Turkish Youth.

## Keywords:

Trust, trust towards institutions, Youth

**JEL Classification:** H83

## 1. Introduction

Due to the fact that, the concept of trust is defined in different ways in many disciplines, it is not all that possible to mention a definition, on which everyone agrees on, in the literature. The main reason for this is trust being a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Uncertainties about trust arise, due to various different approaches on trust; each disciplines' examining the issue of trust from their own perspective (*see* Frankema and Costa, 2005: 260-261; Matzler and Renzl, 2006: 1261-1265; Demircan and Ceylan, 2003: 139-142) trust issue's making sense according to moral, social and cultural elements, such as manner, traditions, customs, values, religions and ideologies, in different societies . However, it can also be stated that there are some similar definitions of trust (for more details see Kramer, 1999: 571; Kim, 2005: 614-615; Cox et al , 2006: 1123-1125 ; Becerra and Huemer , 2000; Küskü , 1999:136 ) .

In many national and international academic studies conducted in recent years, teenagers' interests about the political and social events of have been found to decrease gradually. In this context, being able to direct young people to the existing ways of participation, and make those ways function wholesomely are extremely important. Just because, that is the only way for the young people's trust in government and its institutions, to be increased.

In the study, after putting forward various definitions of trust, the main aims of the "Education Project for Increasing the Effective Participation of Young People in Political Life and Strengthening Their Role on Decision-making Processes" are briefly mentioned. In order to determine the young people's level of trust in administrative institutions, survey method was preferred. At the beginning of the education program, a survey was conducted over 200 participants and the findings obtained through the survey study were analysed.

## 2. Meaning of the Concept of Trust

While the concept of trust is defined as "decision to cooperate in uncertainty"; Coleman (1990), and "interpenetrating interests" by Hardin (2002); Braun, define trust as "positive orientation for objects based on certain standards and expectations; or characteristic of two persons' relationship  with each other". Miller and Listhaug (1990) state that trust is a summary of the convictions for the system to be responsive to the demands of the citizens and to do the right thing even if the system is not under constant supervision. On the other hand, in his book "The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity", F. Fukuyama (1995) defines trust as "a factor to explain the differences between states in terms of economic performances" (Fukuyama, 1995: 12). In another definitions the concept of trust is stated to occur as; a result of a high predictability of doing the right thing, which arise through long term and repeated interactions (Wang and Wart, 2007: 270; *as cited in* Yıldırım, 2010: 3) or as an expression of the future behaviour expectation based on a person's past interactions and experiences with another person (Roca, Garcia Vega, 2009: 98). In this context, trust exhibits a subjective and contingent nature, which changes according to those perceived, felt and experienced (Ateş, 2004).

According to the trust typology of E. Uslaner, there are three different types of trust. Those are: "Strategic/partial trust"; "Moral/generalized trust" and "trust in institutions" (Uslaner 2004: 2-6). In this study, the concept of trust is used in the meaning of "trust in institutions".

In the literature, "political trust" is seen to be commonly used instead of "trust in institutions" (*for more details, see* Akgün, 2001: 1). Newton, characterize trust in political institutions and actors as "political trust" (Newton, 2001: 201). Almond and Verba (1965), who have make the first studies on political trust describe trust as "generalized attitudes for the system, as a whole", while Easton (1975) describes the concept as "widespread support for political authorities or the regime" (Gökçe, 2010: 168-169). Political trust, which is portrayed as the requirement for a democratic and stable system by Newton (2001), is a result of some external and objective conditions and depends on the continuous interaction of the individuals with their political environment, rather than their worldviews. From this point, citizens' low level of political trust is "the most important indicator of something going wrong" (Newton, 2001: 205).

Due to trust in public institutions being an abstract phenomenon; it also difficult to measure it (Gökçe, 2007: 122). Trust occurs through the interaction between various general and systemic factors such as the legitimacy of the political-administrative system, specific experiences about public institutions and their services, and the dynamic interaction between those two factors. In addition, highly variable and inconsistent public opinion about public institutions -in other words cognitive confusion on the subject- (Christensen and PR Lægreid, 2002: 7) complicates the studies on trust, as well. Therefore, it is quite difficult to state trust in institutions to be one-dimensional. Trust in institutions will change in line with the experiences of individuals with institutions, the intensity of the need for those institutions, and their long-term performance (Adaman and Çarkoğlu, 2000: 15).

### 3. Education Project for Increasing the Effective Participation of Young People in Political Life and Strengthening Their Role on Decision-making Processes

Young people are the most dynamic actors of social and political life. A substantial awareness for increasing active participation of youth in social life has emerged in international community in recent years; and a consensus has been built in terms of the nedd for promoting young people's participation in the decision-making processes about the issues involving them and all the social issues, in general. Young people are considered a disadvantaged group by the United Nations, great care is taken for their participation, and all the authorities in local and central level are conferred for the responsibility of increasing their participation. In 1992 Rio Declaration, it was decided to keep the youth in the forefront in terms of participatory mechanisms and processes. In the Agenda 21, which was considered the main output of Earth Summit, young people were recognised as one of the basic elements, in the framework of developing democratic practices, and pluralistic and participatory policies. In this context, in order to provide a more democratic environment for the young people, it is expected to ensure their participation, starting from local level. In many national and international academic studies in recent years, it has been determined that the interest of young people in political and social events has gradually decreased. In this context, being able to orientate young people to the present ways of participation, and make those ways function wholesomely are extremely important. In that way, young people's level of trust in the government and the institutions of it will be increased, as well.

This study is based on the findings derived in the "Education Project for Increasing the Effective Participation of Young People in Political Life and Strengthening Their Role on Decision-making Processes", which was supported by the Ministry of Youth

and Sports in the scope of 2012 Youth Projects Support Programme. Among the objectives of this project, there are;

Increasing social and political participation behaviour of young people living in Konya, their effectiveness in decision-making mechanisms, and their competitiveness in political life,

Providing them knowledge on basic citizenship rights, functioning of the decision-making processes at local and national levels, the processes to be monitored by them for seeking their rights, and the opportunities and services available to them,

Strengthening their leadership capacity,
Creating political awareness by bringing the youth under the denominator of "young"
Increasing the visibility of young people in politics,
Increasing the level of trust in the government and public institutions,
Promoting their ability to use information and communication technologies, and also providing their participation in various youth networks via internet, by increasing their usage level of social media tools,

Strengthening of social capital stocks,
Increasing their feelings of belonging to their cities, and their social cohesion,
Increasing their participation in various volunteer activities,

Creating awareness for eliminating the negative perceptions of the general society about the participation of young people, and promoting young people for participating in the decision-making processes.

In order to realize the purposes of the project stated above, an intensive education program for the young participants was implemented. Academicians, each of whom is specialized in his/her field, gave both theoretical and practical lessons, during the education program. In the context of education program; first, participants were given lectures on theoretical knowledge relating to political science, communication skills, and self-improvement and experience sharing. In-depth analyses were made on the subjects of "Basic Concepts of Politics"; "World Politics and Turkey"; "Electoral Systems and Voter Behaviour"; "Political and Administrative Structure of Turkey"; "Local Governance and Legislation"; "European Union-Turkey Relations"; "The Arab Spring and Its Impact on Turkey"; "Relation between Economics and Politics"; "History of Turkish Democracy"; "Effective Communication Skills and Body Language"; "Personal Image and Image Management"; "Leadership and Motivation"; "New Constitution Debates"; " Social Capital and Youth"; "Project Management for Young People"; "City and Civilization" ; "Ethics and Administration"; "Social Media and Participation" and "Correspondence Techniques". During the educational program: workshops were conducted; several panels were organized; scholars, who are experts in their fields, were brought together with young people; and establishment of a permanent network between the participants was provided.

## 4. Field Study
## 4.1. Aim and Method of the Study
In the study, level of trust of young people, who participated in the education project, in administrative institutions was attempted to be determined and analysed. In the comparisons between countries and the empirical studies, most commonly used

measures are the surveys conducted by various international organizations and individual investigators. Indicators based on perception and experience is the most commonly used type of criteria in the studies conducted by survey method. In this study, due to the fact that trust level in administrative institutions is tried to be measured through participants' perceptions, survey method was preferred, as well. In this context, a survey study was conducted over the participants at the beginning of the education program, and their level of trust in administrative institutions was tried to be determined.

The education program was carried out between 26th of January, 2013 and 25th of May, 2013. The survey was conducted over 200 participants, at the beginning of the education program. The data derived from the questionnaires were installed to SPSS 16.0 software. Then the analysis phase was started. Questionnaire data collected in the study were analysed using SPSS 16.0 (Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences) package software.

Reliability of the questionnaire form was measured and the Cronbach's Alpha value was measured to be 0,7982.

### 4.2 Findings of the Research

Findings about the socio-demographical characteristics of the young people, who participated in the field study, is summarised in the Table 1.

**Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

| Gender | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 87 | 43,5 |
| Female | 113 | 56,5 |
| **Age** | | |
| 18 | 20 | 10 |
| 19 | 39 | 19,5 |
| 20 | 57 | 28,5 |
| 21 | 40 | 20 |
| 22 | 27 | 13,5 |
| 23 | 7 | 3,5 |
| 24 | 4 | 2 |
| 25 | 6 | 3 |
| **Educational Level** | | |
| Undergraduate | 200 | 100 |
| **(Family) Income Level** | | |
| Group of Low- Income | 25 | 12,5 |
| Group of Middle-Level Income | 172 | 86 |
| Group of High-Income | 3 | 1,5 |
| **Total** | **200** | **100** |

While 43,5 percent of the participant are males, 56,5 percent of them are females. The age groups of the participants are observed to include the ones between the ages of 18 and 25. Young people between 18 and 25 were accepted for the education program. Therefore, the participants age profile is the same with the young people accepted for the program. All of the participants are university students. Additionally, most of the participants' family income level is in the group of middle-level income.

In the survey study the questions, which were set for measuring the trust level of the participants, were arranged in two categories. First, a series of questions were asked, in order to determine the level of social trust of the participants. Later, questions prepared to determine their level of trust in administrative institutions, took place in the questionnaire form.

First, the question of "In your relationships with other people, do you generally think that, they can be trusted or you should be careful?" was asked to the participants. The participants' responses to the question are arranged in Table 2.

**Table 2. Trust in Other People**

| Response | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Yes, I trust. | 36 | 18 |
| No, I think one must be careful | 164 | 82 |
| *Total* | *200* | *100* |

According to the findings; 82 percent of the participants think that one must be careful in their relationships with other people. In this regard, it can be stated that young people have a low level of trust in other people.

The participants were asked to answer the question of "To what extent do you trust in the people having the same religious beliefs with yours?". The responses of the participants are arranged in the Table 3 given below.

**Table 3. Trust in the Individuals Having the Same Religious Beliefs**

| Response | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Considerably little | 6 | 3,0 |
| Little | 16 | 8,0 |
| Neither less, nor much | 145 | 72,5 |
| Much | 30 | 15,0 |
| Considerably much | 3 | 1,5 |
| *Total* | *200* | *100* |

Young people are chary of trusting other people having the same religious beliefs with theirs. Vast majority of the participants (72,5 percent) are doubtful about trust or distrust in other people, even if they have the same religious beliefs with theirs, or not.

The question of "To what extent do you trust in the people having different religious beliefs from yours?" was asked to the participants. The participants' responses to the question are arranged in Table 4.

**Table 4. Trust in the Individuals Having Different Religious Beliefs**

| Response | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Considerably little | 25 | 12,5 |
| Little | 44 | 22,0 |
| Neither less, nor much | 121 | 60,5 |
| Much | 9 | 4,5 |
| Considerably much | 1 | 0,5 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Total* | *200* | *100* |

Young people are also chary of trusting other people having different religious beliefs from theirs. Majority of the participants (60,5 percent) are doubtful about trust or distrust in other people, who have the different religious beliefs from theirs.

The participants were asked to answer the question of "To what extent do you trust in the people from the same race/ethnic structure with yours?". The responses of the participants are arranged in the Table 5 given below.

### Table 5. Trust in the Individuals from the Same Race/Ethnic Structure

| Response | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Considerably little | 5 | 2,5 |
| Little | 17 | 8,5 |
| Neither less, nor much | 152 | 76,0 |
| Much | 22 | 11,0 |
| Considerably much | 4 | 2,0 |
| *Total* | *200* | *100* |

Vast majority of the participants (76 percent) are doubtful about trusting other people from the same race/ethnic structure with theirs.

Additionally, the question of "To what extent do you trust in the people from a different race/ethnic structure from yours?" was asked to the participants. The responses of the participants are given below in the Table 6.

### Table 6. Trust in the Individuals from Different Races/Ethnic Structures

| Response | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Considerably little | 21 | 10,5 |
| Little | 29 | 14,5 |
| Neither less, nor much | 141 | 70,5 |
| Much | 9 | 4,5 |
| Considerably much | - | - |
| *Total* | *200* | *100* |

Most of the participants (70,5 percent) are doubtful about trusting other people a different race/ethnic structure from theirs. In addition, their level of trust in the people from different or the same races/ethnic structures is considerably low.

The participants were asked to answer the question of "To what extent do you trust in your family members?". The responses of the participants are arranged in the Table 7 below.

### Table 7. Trust in the Family Members

| Response | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Considerably little | | |
| Little | 1 | 0,5 |
| Neither less, nor much | 8 | 4,0 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Much | 60 | 30,0 |
| Considerably much | 131 | 65,5 |
| *Total* | *200* | *100* |

Trust level of the young people in their family members is observed to be significantly high. In this context it can be stated that the young people mostly trust in the individuals from their own families.

The question of "To what extent do you trust in your relatives?". The responses of the participants are given below in the Table 8.

**Table 8. Trust in the Relatives**

| Response | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Considerably little | 14 | 7,0 |
| Little | 12 | 6,0 |
| Neither less, nor much | 92 | 46,0 |
| Much | 56 | 28,0 |
| Considerably much | 26 | 13,0 |
| *Total* | *200* | *100* |

When the findings are observed, the young people's level of trust in their relatives is seen to be lower than that of their trust in their family members. Approximately 41 percent of the participants trust in their relatives.

In order to determine the young people's level of trust in administrative institutions, they were given the names of institutions and they were asked to answer the question of "Can you please specify your level of trust in the institutions written below, by giving them marks between 0 and 10?"

**Table 9. Trust in the Administrative Institutions**

| Institutions | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The President | 0 | 10 | 6,83 | 2,39 |
| Turkish Armed Forces | 0 | 10 | 6,42 | 2,58 |
| Law Enforcement Agency/Police | 0 | 10 | 6,33 | 2,58 |
| Universities | 0 | 10 | 6,10 | 2,46 |
| Government | 0 | 10 | 6,07 | 2,56 |
| Hospitals | 0 | 10 | 5,90 | 2,49 |
| TGNA | 0 | 10 | 5,79 | 2,05 |
| Governorates | 0 | 10 | 5,71 | 2,14 |
| Nongovernmental Organizations | 0 | 10 | 5,63 | 2,10 |
| Educational Institutions | 0 | 10 | 5,35 | 2,50 |
| Municipalities | 0 | 10 | 5,25 | 2,31 |
| Courts | 0 | 10 | 5,07 | 2,53 |
| Tax Offices | 0 | 10 | 4,65 | 2,06 |
| Land Registry Offices | 0 | 10 | 4,57 | 2,01 |
| Political Parties | 0 | 10 | 4,04 | 2,25 |
| The Media | 0 | 10 | 2,86 | 2,38 |

Notes: (i) 0 means "Distrust" and 10 means "Trust". (ii) Cronbach's Alpha= ,78340 (iii) According to Friedman's two tailed ANOVA Test ($\chi2$=22789,692: $p<.001$) the results are statistically significant.

When the Table 9 is observed, it can be indicated that; the institution, which is perceived to be the most trustworthy institution, is the President with a mean point of "6,83". The president is followed by Turkish Armed Forces with a mean point of 6,42; Law Enforcement Agency/Police with a mean point of 6,33; universities with a mean point of 6,10; the government with a mean point of 6,07; hospitals with a mean point of 5,90; TGNA (Turkish Great National Assembly) with a mean point of 5,79; governorates with a mean point of 5,71; nongovernmental organizations with a mean point of 5,63; educational institutions with a mean point of 5,35; municipalities with a mean point of 5,25; and courts with a mean point of 5,07. The institutions mentioned can be considered "trusted institutions", because of their mean points of trust above 5. On the other hand; Tax offices, land registry offices, political parties and the media, which have received points below 5, are perceived as "distrusted institutions", regarding their mean points.

**Conclusion**
The concept of trust can be defined in different ways in the literature and different features of the concept can be emphasized in different disciplines. Since, it is impossible to mention a definition of trust, on which everyone has a consensus. However, trust can be stated as the most important indicator of coexistence; and the individual or social externalization or reflection of the inner feelings, which emerges in social relations, for the other.
In recent years, it has been determined that interests of the youth in political and social events are gradually decreasing, in many national and international academic studies. In this context, the ability for directing the young people to present contribution ways, and making those ways function properly are extremely important. Because, that is the only way of increasing the young people's trust in the government and the administrative institutions.

The field study was based on the findings derived in the "Education Project for Increasing the Effective Participation of Young People in Political Life and Strengthening Their Role on Decision-making Processes", which was supported by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in the scope of 2012 Youth Projects Support Programme. During the project a field study was conducted over 200 participants, and various questions were asked to participants, regarding the young people's level of trust.

According to the findings obtained in our study, overall trust level of the young people was considerably low. The young people were seen to be quite chary about trusting in the people having same or different religious beliefs, same or different race/ethnic structure, with them. However, their levels of trust in their family members were at relatively very high levels. Similarly; their trust in their relatives is high as well.

The young participants' level of trust in administrative bodies is notably low. Among the institutions on the trust scale, President has the first position, while Turkish Armed Forces has the second. Similar studies (Gökçe, 2007; Adaman, Çarkoğlu and Şenatalar, 2001, 2003, 2009), indicate that the level of trust in the President and Turkish Armed Forces has decreased, when compared to the previous years, however they are the most trusted ones among the institutions. The results of our study support those findings, as well. As a result of these determinations; it can be

stated that, a deduction of the presidency and Turkish Armed Forces not being affected excessively by periodic or cyclical events, will not be extremely wrong.

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