



Investigating the Role of Social Trust in Establishing Security in Society

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ABSTRACT

Social trust is recognized as one of the most fundamental instruments for strengthening security. It refers to the reciprocal relationships and levels of cooperation among individuals and groups within a society. Security, understood as freedom from fear and danger and the sense of being free from any threat, has been one of the primary and essential human needs since the dawn of human life. Security in this sense has a profound connection with the economic, social, and cultural structures of society. Therefore, the feeling of security is shaped by various factors, one of which is social capital. Social capital consists of multiple components, among which social trust is recognized as one of the most influential in enhancing the level of social security in society. In other words, social trust functions as a key factor in strengthening social bonds, and these bonds play an important role in establishing security in society. These bonds include family, friendship, neighborhood, and even organizational relationships, which, by creating a sense of shared ownership and responsibility toward others, reinforce security. Furthermore, social security, as a guarantor of individual and social rights and interests and a source of peace and comfort for members of society, is contingent upon social trust. Ultimately, awareness of the state of security perception among residents of a community plays an effective role in identifying challenges and development strategies and in strengthening the infrastructure of that community.

Introduction

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Social trust is one of the most important and key concepts in sociology, recognized as one of the most fundamental instruments for strengthening security. It refers to the reciprocal relationships and levels of cooperation among individuals and groups within a society. Social trust can function as an informal bond between individuals, creating an environment of confidence and trust that facilitates cooperation and the peaceful resolution of problems. In societies with high levels of social trust, individuals naturally have greater trust in one another, leading to reduced insecurity, prevention of anti-social behaviors, and the strengthening of social networks. Conversely, in societies with low levels of trust, even substantial investments in security may fail to yield desired outcomes due to citizen mistrust (Khosravi, 2016). On the other hand, the weakness of this type of trust can lead to increased insecurity, a lack of trust in social institutions, and even the escalation of tensions and collective conflicts.

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It can be said that social trust, as an invisible glue, plays a vital role in strengthening solidarity, collective participation, and reducing societal tensions.

Hence, Robert Putnam considers social trust to be a component of social capital, functioning as a network of relationships based on cooperation and mutual assurance among individuals and groups. In his view, social trust facilitates collective cooperation, increases the efficiency of institutions, and strengthens democracy (Putnam, 2001:23).

Security, as one of the most fundamental human needs, has always been a focal concern of social systems. However, achieving security is not realized solely through formal mechanisms such as law enforcement and judicial institutions; social and cultural factors also play a key role in this process. Security in society is recognized as one of the most important determinants of social stability and development.

Security not only contributes to the creation of a comfortable environment but also enhances the

economic, cultural, and political efficiency of society. In other words, social trust functions as a key factor in strengthening social bonds, and these bonds play an important role in establishing security in society. These bonds include family, friendship, neighborhood, and even organizational relationships, which, by creating a sense of shared ownership and responsibility toward others, reinforce security (Zarei,2018). Overall, social trust is recognized as a key factor in the creation and maintenance of security in society. This trust not only helps to reduce crime and social anomalies but also strengthens the feeling of security and tranquility among citizens. Therefore, it can be said that from the perspective of sociologists, security, as a basic human need, plays an important role in social interactions and societal structures. For example, Anthony Giddens, in his theory of modernity and social structure, emphasizes the importance of security as part of the processes of trust-building and social stability. He maintains that security in modern societies is created and maintained through institutions and social systems (Giddens,2005). Today, the issue of declining social trust in Iran has become one of the fundamental concerns in the realm of national and local security. Statistics from the Statistical Center of Iran (2021) indicate that 65% of Iranian citizens assess their level of trust in security institutions as "moderate to low." This situation not only undermines public cooperation with security agencies but has also paved the way for the spread of organized crime, collective violence, and social anomalies (Rahmani,2021). On the other hand, field studies, such as Ahmadi's (2016) study in Tehran, confirm a significant relationship between declining social trust and a 20% increase in street crimes. Finally, it is worth noting that social trust is recognized as one of the most important factors in establishing security in society. However, challenges such as social and economic inequality and the decline of social capital can impede the development of trust. Therefore, to strengthen social trust, social institutions must continuously strive to enhance transparency, accountability, and justice. Ultimately, a society built on mutual trust will enjoy greater security and stability.

Research Questions

- ✓ Does social trust play a role in establishing security in society?
- ✓ What factors can increase the level of social trust in society?
- ✓ Can this increase in social trust lead to enhanced security in society?

Significance and Necessity of the Research

Social trust is a social phenomenon that is essential as the most important component of social cohesion, and through it, one can strengthen the feeling of

security and, consequently, social security. This is because it provides the groundwork for greater belonging and attachment of individuals and efforts toward societal development. In this way, social trust connects individuals and strengthens collective relationships, and under the shadow of this trust, individuals will strive to reinforce social security. Furthermore, the significance of examining and understanding the dimensions and aspects of the feeling of security is necessary because actors, in performing actions, refer to their historical subjectivity to make decisions and take action, and their evaluation and perception of the action space play a significant role in this decision-making. This is because the relationship between objective structures (security) and subjective forms (feeling of security) forms the basis of individuals' decision-making. In societies with high levels of trust, the need for intensive surveillance and costly security measures diminishes, as citizens spontaneously tend to comply with laws and support one another. This is economically and socially more optimal. It can be said that social trust increases citizens' sense of belonging and responsibility. This, through mechanisms such as informal social surveillance, reducing the isolation of at-risk individuals, and addressing the socio-economic roots of crime (such as poverty and discrimination), contributes to the prevention of insecurity. This is because in the present era, phenomena such as the spread of misinformation, cyber-violence, and identity crises threaten social security. Ultimately, research on social trust and security not only leads to a deeper understanding of psychological and sociological mechanisms but also offers practical solutions for building stable, cohesive, and resilient societies against internal and external threats. This issue, given the complex security challenges of today's world, is of paramount importance.

Overall Objective and Specific Objectives

The overall objective of this research is to investigate the role of social trust in establishing security in society. The specific objectives include:

- ✓ Examining the factors effective in increasing social trust in society.
- ✓ Examining the factors effective in enhancing security.
- ✓ Proposing solutions for increasing trust and security in society.

Theoretical Framework

This article draws upon multiple theoretical perspectives, including the works of Francis Fukuyama, Émile Durkheim, Robert Putnam, Anthony Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, Niklas Luhmann, Zygmunt Bauman, and Jürgen Habermas.

- ✓ **Francis Fukuyama:** In his theory, he emphasizes the role of social trust in creating

security and economic and social development in societies. He maintains that societies with high levels of social trust are better able to establish efficient democratic and economic institutions. Fukuyama also defines trust as a form of social capital that allows individuals to cooperate with one another without the need for close supervision or strict laws. This trust reduces transaction costs and increases efficiency in society (Fukuyama,2000:56-60).

✓ **Émile Durkheim:** In his theory, he addresses the role of trust and social norms in establishing order and security in society. He believes that trust in institutions and social norms strengthens social solidarity and reduces disorder (Durkheim,2006:150-155).

✓ **Robert Putnam:** In his theory, he examines the role of social capital and trust in creating solidarity and social security. He maintains that social trust increases citizens' participation in collective activities and strengthens social networks. He further argues that the decline of social capital and social trust in modern societies, particularly in the United States, has led to a reduction in civic participation, increased insecurity, and the weakening of democratic institutions (Putnam,2001:200-205).

✓ **Anthony Giddens:** In his theory, he examines the role of trust in modern societies, considering trust as a key element in creating security and stability in complex and modern societies. He states that in modern societies, trust in abstract systems has replaced traditional interpersonal trust, and this trust in systems is essential for creating security and stability in society. He also introduces the concept of "ontological security," which refers to individuals' sense of stability and security in everyday life, and argues that trust in institutions and systems helps individuals maintain ontological security (Giddens,2005:350-355).

✓ **Pierre Bourdieu:** In his theory of social capital, Bourdieu introduces trust as one of the forms of social capital that can contribute to the creation of security and stability in society. He believes that trust-based social networks provide individuals with resources that can help enhance security during critical situations (Bourdieu,2010:120-125).

✓ **James Coleman:** In his theory, he examines the role of social trust in creating solidarity, security, and efficiency in society. Coleman introduces trust as one of the key components of social capital, enabling individuals to participate in social networks and benefit from their advantages. Coleman also believes that social trust contributes to the creation of security in society. In his view, in societies with high levels of social trust, individuals are more inclined to trust institutions and social networks, and this trust leads to reduced insecurity and increased social solidarity. He also

warns that if social trust is weakened, societies will face security crises and instability (Coleman,2006:150-155).

✓ **Niklas Luhmann:** In his systems theory, he examines the role of trust in modern societies. Luhmann introduces trust as a key mechanism for reducing complexity and creating security in social systems. He also addresses the relationship between trust and power, believing that trust in institutions and systems of power is essential for creating security in society; without trust, power cannot operate effectively (Luhmann,2008:100-105).

✓ **Zygmunt Bauman:** In his theories, Bauman examines the role of social trust in creating security and stability in modern societies. He argues that in modern societies, social trust has faced a crisis due to rapid changes, instability, and individualism. This crisis of trust, in turn, negatively impacts security and social solidarity (Bauman,2010:60-65).

✓ **Jürgen Habermas:** Within the framework of his theories, Habermas examines the role of social trust in creating security and stability in modern societies. He introduces communicative action and the public sphere, stating that social trust is formed through dialogue and communicative interactions in the public sphere, and this trust, in turn, contributes to the creation of security and solidarity. He further argues that in societies with high levels of social trust, individuals are more inclined to trust institutions and social networks, and this trust leads to reduced insecurity and increased social solidarity. He also addresses the role of social institutions such as family, education, and religion in creating and strengthening security and social trust, stating that these institutions help individuals internalize social norms and values and trust social networks (Habermas,2006:250-255).

Literature Review

Safari and Rezvani (2015) in their study entitled "Social Trust and Political Security in Iran" demonstrated that social trust is recognized as a factor in strengthening political participation and reducing political tensions. In societies with high levels of social trust, individuals are more inclined to accept political institutions and laws, which contributes to political stability and national security.

Fallahti et al. (2016) in their study entitled "Investigating the Relationship between Social Trust and the Feeling of Social Security in Tehran" found that there is a positive and significant relationship between social trust and the feeling of social security. Increased trust among individuals and social institutions leads to a reduction in fear of crime and an enhanced sense of security in society. Zarei et al. (2017) in an article entitled "Investigating the Impact of Social Trust on Social Security in Major Iranian Cities" concluded that

social trust functions as a key factor in reducing social anomalies and increasing social solidarity. In societies with high levels of social trust, individuals are more inclined to cooperate and participate in collective affairs, which leads to reduced crime and increased social security.

Mohammadi et al. (2018) in their study entitled "Analysis of the Relationship between Social Trust and Economic Security in Iran" found that there is a positive and significant relationship between social trust and economic growth. Increased social trust can contribute to the reduction of economic corruption and the enhancement of economic security.

Rezvani and Hosseini (2018) in their study entitled "Social Trust and Social Security in Iran: A Case Study of Isfahan" concluded that social trust functions as a factor in reducing social anomalies and increasing citizen participation in Isfahan. Increased social trust has led to reduced crime and enhanced social security.

Rahimi et al. (2019) in an article entitled "The Role of Social Trust in Establishing National Security" demonstrated that trust in political and governmental institutions plays an important role in reducing political crises and enhancing national security. Strengthening trust in political institutions can contribute to the reduction of internal tensions and the enhancement of national solidarity.

Ghasemi and Mousavi (2019) in a study entitled "Investigating the Relationship between Social Trust and Social Security among Youth in Mashhad" found that there is a positive and significant relationship between social trust and the feeling of social security among youth. Increased social trust leads to a reduction in fear of crime and an enhanced sense of security among young people.

Ghaffari and Rezaei (2020) in their study entitled "Analysis of the Relationship between Social Trust and Psychological Security in Iranian Society" concluded that social trust functions as a key factor in reducing anxiety and enhancing the feeling of psychological security in society. Increased social trust can lead to a reduction in psychological tensions and an increase in social tranquility.

Mohammadi and Rezaei (2020) in an article entitled "The Role of Social Trust in Establishing Social Security in Rural Areas of Iran" found that in rural areas of Iran, social trust plays an important role in establishing social security and reducing local tensions. Strengthening social trust can lead to increased cooperation and reduced insecurity in these areas.

Karimi and Rezaei (2021) in a study entitled "Investigating the Impact of Social Trust on Social Security in Border Regions of Iran" demonstrated that in Iran's border regions, social trust plays an important role in establishing social security and reducing ethnic and religious tensions. Strengthening social trust can contribute to

increased social solidarity and reduced insecurity in these areas.

Francis Fukuyama (1995) in his study entitled "Trust, Social Capital, and Economic Growth" found that social trust functions as a factor in facilitating economic interactions and reducing transaction costs. In societies with high levels of social trust, greater economic growth and higher economic security are observed.

Sampson et al. (1997) in a study entitled "Trust, Crime, and Neighborhood Security" demonstrated that social trust and social solidarity function as key factors in reducing crime and enhancing neighborhood security. In neighborhoods with high levels of social trust, crime is lower and the sense of security is greater.

Knack and Keefer (1997) in an article entitled "The Role of Social Trust in Reducing Long-Term Unemployment" concluded that social trust functions as a factor in reducing long-term unemployment and enhancing economic security. In societies with high levels of social trust, individuals are more inclined to participate in economic activities and investment.

Robert Putnam (2000) in his study entitled "Trust and Security: The Role of Social Capital in Reducing Crime" found that social trust and social capital function as key factors in reducing crime and enhancing social security. In societies with high levels of social trust, individuals are more inclined to cooperate and participate in collective affairs, which leads to reduced crime and increased social security.

Colletta et al. (2000) in a study entitled "Trust and Social Cohesion in Post-Conflict Societies" demonstrated that social trust functions as a factor in strengthening social cohesion and reducing post-conflict tensions. In societies with high levels of social trust, individuals are more inclined to cooperate and participate in societal reconstruction.

Nissenbaum (2001) in a study entitled "Trust and Security in the Digital Age" concluded that social trust in the digital age functions as a factor in enhancing cybersecurity and reducing online threats. In societies with high levels of social trust, individuals are more inclined to participate in secure online activities.

Slanner (2002) in an article entitled "Social Trust and Human Security" demonstrated that social trust functions as a factor in reducing social tensions and enhancing human security. In societies with high levels of social trust, individuals feel more secure and are more inclined to participate in social activities.

Rothstein and Slanner (2005) in their study entitled "Social Trust and Political Stability" found that social trust functions as a factor in strengthening political stability and reducing political tensions. In societies with high levels of social trust, individuals are more inclined to accept political institutions and

laws, which contributes to political stability and national security.

Delhey et al. (2005) in a study entitled "Social Trust and the Feeling of Security in Europe" demonstrated that there is a positive and significant relationship between social trust and the feeling of security in European countries. In countries with high levels of social trust, individuals feel more secure.

Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) in an article entitled "Trust, Inequality, and Social Cohesion" found that social trust and the reduction of inequality function as key factors in increasing social cohesion and social security. In societies with high levels of social trust, less inequality and greater social security are observed.

Summary

Social trust and the feeling of security in society are two sides of the same coin, essential for the continuity of social interactions in any society. Numerous theories and studies exist in this field.

For example, Fukuyama emphasizes the role of social trust in creating security and economic and social development in society. He believes that trust functions as a form of social capital, helping to reduce costs and increase efficiency in society.

Durkheim maintains that trust in social norms and institutions strengthens social solidarity and reduces disorder.

Putnam believes that social trust increases citizens' participation in collective activities, and that the decline of social capital and social trust in modern societies leads to reduced civic participation, increased insecurity, and the weakening of democratic institutions. According to Giddens, trust functions as a key element in creating security in complex societies, where trust in abstract systems has replaced traditional interpersonal trust. He also introduces the concept of "ontological security," referring to individuals' sense of stability in life, and asserts that trust in institutions helps maintain this security.

Bourdieu, in his theory of social capital, states that trust can contribute to the creation of security and stability in society, and that trust-based social networks can help enhance security during critical situations.

James Coleman examines the role of social trust in creating solidarity, security, and efficiency in society, believing that social trust enables individuals to participate in social networks and benefit from their advantages, and that social trust can contribute to the creation of security in society.

Luhmann, in his systems theory, addresses trust in modern societies, introducing trust as a key mechanism for reducing complexity and creating security in social systems, and believes that trust cannot operate effectively without power.

Bauman argues that in modern societies, social trust has faced a crisis due to rapid changes, instability,

and individualism, and this crisis of trust, in turn, negatively impacts security and social solidarity.

Habermas, within the framework of his theories, examines the role of social trust in creating security and stability in modern societies. He introduces communicative action and the public sphere, arguing that social trust is formed through dialogue and communicative interactions in the public sphere, and this trust, in turn, contributes to the creation of security and solidarity. He also addresses the role of social institutions such as family, education, and religion in creating and strengthening security and social trust, stating that these institutions help individuals internalize social norms and values.

Safari and Rezvani in their study identified social trust as a factor in strengthening political participation and reducing political tensions.

Fallahti et al. found that there is a positive and significant relationship between social trust and the feeling of social security meaning that as trust among individuals and social institutions increases, the feeling of security in society also increases.

Zarei et al. concluded that social trust functions as a key factor in reducing social anomalies and increasing social solidarity.

Mohammadi et al. found a positive and significant relationship between social trust and economic growth, meaning that increased social trust can contribute to the reduction of economic corruption and the enhancement of economic security.

Rezvani and Hosseini concluded in their study in Isfahan that social trust functions as a factor in increasing citizen participation, and that increased social trust leads to reduced crime and enhanced social security.

Rahimi et al. demonstrated that trust in political and governmental institutions plays an important role in reducing political crises and enhancing national security.

Ghasemi and Mousavi found a positive and significant relationship between social trust and the feeling of social security among youth, meaning that increased social trust helps reduce fear of crime and enhance the feeling of security among young people. Ghaffari and Rezaei concluded that social trust can function as a key factor in reducing anxiety and enhancing the feeling of psychological security in society.

Mohammadi and Rezaei found that in rural areas of Iran, social trust plays an important role in establishing social security and reducing local tensions, and can help increase cooperation and reduce insecurity in these areas.

Karimi and Rezaei demonstrated that in Iran's border regions, social trust plays an important role in establishing social security and reducing ethnic and religious tensions, and strengthening this trust can contribute to increased social solidarity and reduced insecurity in these areas.

Fukuyama introduced social trust as a factor in facilitating economic interactions, stating that in societies with high levels of social trust, greater economic growth and higher economic security are observed.

Sampson et al. discussed the impact of factors such as social trust and social solidarity in reducing crime and enhancing security, stating that in neighborhoods with high levels of social trust, crime is lower and the sense of security is greater.

Knack and Keefer introduced social trust as a factor in reducing unemployment and enhancing economic security, believing that social trust can lead to participation in economic activities and investment. Robert Putnam found that social trust and social capital function as key factors in reducing crime and enhancing security, and believes that social trust can help increase participation in collective affairs, reduce crime, and enhance security.

Colletta et al. demonstrated that social trust can function as a factor in strengthening social cohesion and reducing tensions.

Nissenbaum concluded that social trust is a factor in enhancing cybersecurity and reducing online threats.

Slanner introduced social trust as a factor in reducing social tensions and enhancing human security, believing that social trust makes individuals more inclined to participate in social activities and feel more secure.

Delhey et al. demonstrated that there is a positive and significant relationship between social trust and the feeling of security in European countries meaning that in countries with high levels of social trust, individuals feel more secure.

Rothstein and Slanner found that social trust functions as a factor in strengthening political stability and reducing political tensions, which contributes to political stability and national security.

Wilkinson and Pickett introduced social trust and the reduction of inequality as key factors in increasing social cohesion and social security, believing that in societies with high levels of social trust, less inequality and greater social security are observed.

Factors Affecting the Increase of Social Trust and Security in Society:

✓ **Social Justice and Equitable Distribution of Resources:** Justice in the distribution of economic, social, and cultural resources reduces inequalities and enhances the feeling of security in society. Economic and social inequalities can lead to a decline in social trust and an increase in insecurity.

✓ **Strengthening Civil Institutions and Citizen Participation:** The activity of civil institutions and grassroots organizations helps increase citizens' participation in social and political decision-making.

This participation strengthens trust between individuals and institutions.

✓ **Promoting a Culture of Trust and Social Solidarity:** The culture of trust and social solidarity can be strengthened through education, media, and cultural institutions. Promoting values such as honesty, mutual respect, and cooperation can contribute to increasing social trust.

✓ **Judicial and Legal Security:** The existence of a fair and efficient judicial system capable of effectively addressing crimes enhances the feeling of security in society. The impartial and non-discriminatory enforcement of laws is also an important factor in increasing social trust.

✓ **Strong Social Connections:** Strong social networks and positive interpersonal relationships can help increase trust among individuals. Societies with strong social networks typically enjoy higher levels of trust and security.

✓ **Education and Awareness-Raising:** Educating citizens about their social and political rights and responsibilities can help increase their awareness and participation in society. This awareness leads individuals to have greater trust in social institutions.

Conclusion

Social trust, as one of the fundamental pillars of collective solidarity and cooperation, plays a key role in the formation of sustainable security in society. This trust whether at the level of interpersonal relationships or in interaction with social institutions reduces tensions, increases civic participation, and strengthens the sense of collective belonging. In general, social trust refers to the existence of reciprocal relationships and a sense of assurance among members of society, formed on the basis of mutual respect, cooperation, and belief in shared interests. This trust plays an important role in creating a safe and healthy environment. On the other hand, social trust functions as a preventive factor in reducing crime and violence; for in its shadow, individuals resort to institutionalized mechanisms for dispute resolution rather than individual or violent solutions. Furthermore, during times of crisis (such as natural disasters or social unrest), the existence of social capital arising from mutual trust increases society's capacity for recovery and maintaining stability. However, social trust is fragile and requires constant care through transparency, distributive justice, institutional accountability, and the strengthening of social dialogue. In the absence of trust, even advanced security systems cannot guarantee true security, as subjective insecurity and mistrust gradually undermine the foundations of society. Therefore, strengthening social trust is not merely a choice but an unavoidable necessity for achieving comprehensive security and sustainable dynamism in society.

Strategies and Recommendations

To increase social trust and security in society, the following strategies and recommendations can be proposed:

- ✓ Strengthening the foundations of the feeling of security among members of society can increase trust both among the public and between private and governmental institutions.
- ✓ Given that the feeling of economic security has the highest correlation with social trust, in this regard, by providing objective conditions such as employment, more equitable distribution of societal resources, reducing income gaps, and attending to people's livelihood conditions particularly in deprived urban areas citizens' feelings of economic insecurity can be reduced.
- ✓ Providing the necessary conditions for the presence of organizations and social groups to strengthen social relationships and greater interaction between people and community officials will foster a greater sense of political and psychological security, thereby increasing social trust in society.
- ✓ Increasing transparency in the performance of judicial and law enforcement institutions, expediting case proceedings and implementing justice in a fair and non-discriminatory manner, and strengthening oversight mechanisms to combat corruption in governmental and non-governmental institutions.
- ✓ Creating digital platforms for reporting problems and facilitating interaction between citizens and responsible institutions.
- ✓ Increasing police patrols in various areas, particularly in high-crime areas; utilizing technologies such as closed-circuit cameras and intelligent systems to enhance security; and implementing crime prevention programs with a focus on citizen education and awareness-raising.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed to data analysis, drafting, and revising of the paper and agreed to be responsible for all the aspects of this work.

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