Extended Abstract

Social Trust and Emigration Propensity from Iran

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ABSTRACT

Iran has experienced a negative rate of net migration since the 1990s. Recently, large-scale emigration from Iran to other countries (particularly to Europe and North America) has received considerable attention from academics and policy makers. Thus, this paper aims to examine various types of social trust including; interpersonal trust (i.e., trust in people) and institutional trust (e.g., trust in formal and informal institutions) on tendency to emigration from Iran to other countries. The data is drawn from *National Survey of Social Capital* (NSSC), including 14,200 people aged 18 and over in all provinces of the country, both of urban and rural areas in 2015. The results showed that almost one-fourth of respondents have high propensity to emigration from Iran. High emigration propensity is correlated with lower levels of interpersonal and institutional trusts. Individuals with a low amount of social trust have high propensity to emigrate to other countries. Multivariate analysis indicated that high propensity of emigration is significantly associated with various types of social trust, namely interpersonal trust, and institutional trust, even after controlling demographic factors such as; age, gender, education, marital status, employment status, religion, and rural-urban residency. In conclusion, one of the key and important factors on increasing tendency to emigration from Iran is declining of interpersonal and institutional social trusts in recent years.

Keywords: Social trust, Interpersonal trust, Institutional trust, Emigration, Ordinal regression, Iran.

INTRODUCTION

Iran has experienced a negative rate of net migration since the 1990s (World Bank, 2019). Recently, large-scale emigration from Iran to other countries (particularly to Europe and North America) has received considerable attention from academics and policy makers.

Thus, this paper aims to examine various types of social trust including interpersonal trust (i.e., trust in people) and institutional trust (e.g., trust in formal and informal institutions) on tendency to emigration from Iran to other countries.

DATA & METHOD

Data

We use data from the "*National Survey of Social Capital* (NSSC)". The survey was carried out in 31 provinces of the country, both of urban and rural areas, in 2015. A random multistage sample of people, aged 18 and over (N= 14200) was drawn. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews.

Dependent variable

Emigration propensity is measured by a question; how much would you do if you could migrate to another country?. The response in Likert-type ranging from 0 (none) to 3 (high) designed.

Independent variables

Social trust is main independent variable in this study. Social trust is conceptualized in two dimensions; institutional and interpersonal. *Institutional trust* displays how people perceive trust to the 23 formal and informal institutions and how well are operating. Responses are designed in Likert-type ranging from 0 (very low) to 4 (very high). Internal consistency for the scale was very good ($\alpha = 0.93$).

Interpersonal trust is defined to confidence in another person and a willingness to be vulnerable to him or her (or to each other). This variable is measured by 6 items that are designed in Likert-type ranging from 0 (very low) to 4 (very high). Internal consistency for the scale was good ($\alpha = 0.74$).

Control variables

We controlled for demographic variables, namely, age, gender, education, marital status, employment status, religion, and rural-urban residency.

FINDINGS

Demographic characteristics

The 14035 respondents included men (50.4%) and women (49.6 %). The mean age of respondents was 39 years. Almost 25 percent of the respondents were single and 70 percent were married. Almost one-third of respondents had university education while close to 26 per cent had only primary education or no education at all.

As Table 1 showed respondent's employment was 35 per cent. Shiite Muslims comprised 92 per cent, and 6.5 percent being Sunni Muslims with the rest being non-Muslim. In terms of residency, 70 per cent of respondents lived in cities and the rest being in villages.

Table 1. Respondents by demographic characteristics – the 2015 NSSC

Demographic characteristics		N	%
Gender	Men	7074	50.4
	Women	6961	49.6
Age	<30	4545	32.4
(Mean=38.9 years old)	30-44	4878	34.8
	45-59	3226	23.0
	60+	1386	9.9
Marital status	Single	3501	24.9
	Married	9855	70.2
	Divorced/ Widowed	657	4.7
Educational levels	Illiterate	1352	9.6
	Primary	2293	16.3
	Secondary	2288	16.3
	High school or Diploma	4014	28.6
	University; undergraduate	3504	25.0
	University; postgraduate	554	3.9
	Not stated	30	0.2
Employment status	Employed	4971	35.4
	Unemployed	1942	13.8
	Housewife	4674	33.3
	Student	1284	9.1
	Retired	1077	7.7
	Not stated	87	0.6
Religion	Muslim, Shiite	12976	92.4
	Muslim, Sunni	908	6.5
	Non-Muslim	151	1.1
Residency place	Rural	4149	29.6
	Urban	9886	70.4
Total		14035	100.0

Interpersonal & institutional social trust

Figure 1 indicated the levels of interpersonal and institutional social trusts among respondents. Interpersonal social trust was low for 45 percent of respondents, 41 percent was middle, and for 11 percent was high. While, institutional social trust was low for 32 percent of respondents, 53 percent was middle, and for 15 percent was high. Thus, the interpersonal social trust among respondents was lower than institutional social trust.
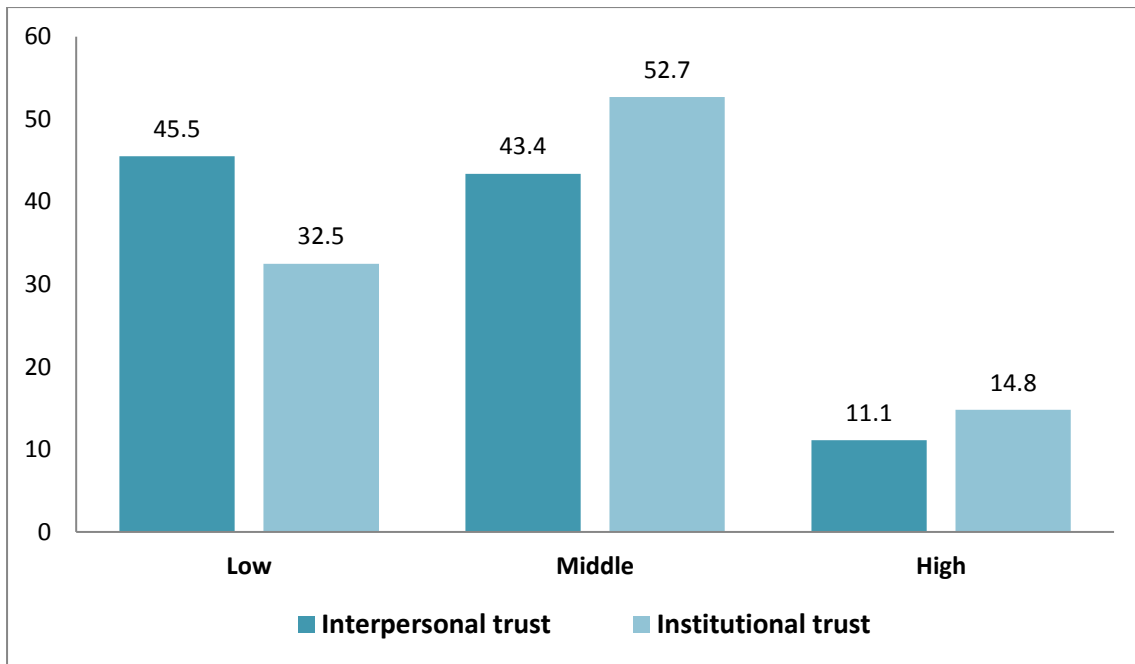
Figure 1. The levels of interpersonal & institutional social trust among respondents (%)

Migration propensity

The results in Figure 2 revealed that around 23 per cent of the respondents had high propensity to migrate to other countries.
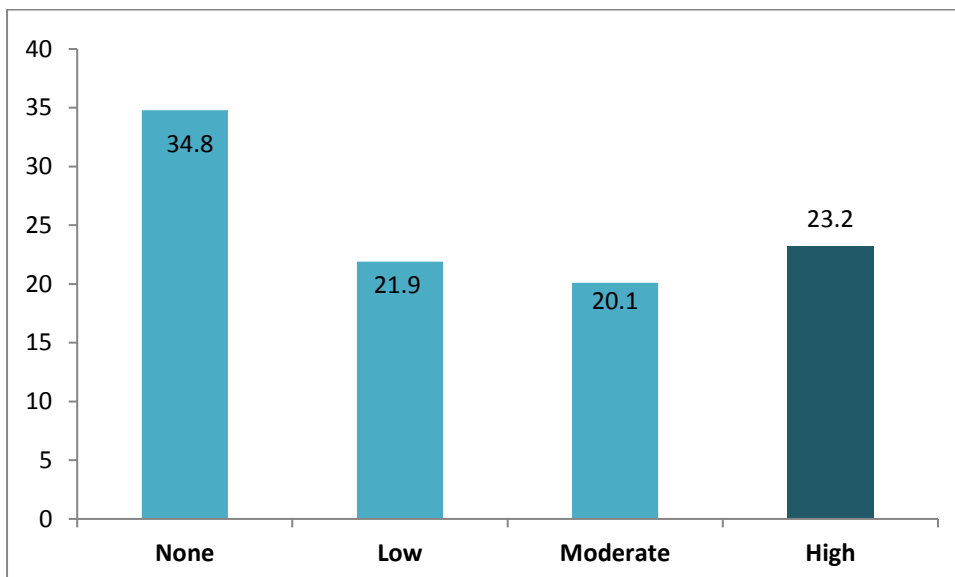

Figure 2. The emigration tendency of respondents to another country (%)

Social trusts and migration propensity

   a) Bivariate analysis

Using Spearman's r test we examined the association each of the social trust dimensions with propensity to emigration. The results indicate statistically significant relationships with propensity to emigration for both of social trust dimensions. As Figure 3 indicated 30 percent of people with a low level of institutional trust, have high tendency to migrate to other countries, while the high emigration tendency to people with a high level of institutional trust was 17 percent. Also, results showed 29 percent of people with a low level of interpersonal trust, have high tendency to migrate to other countries, while the high emigration tendency to people with a high level of interpersonal trust was 18 percent.
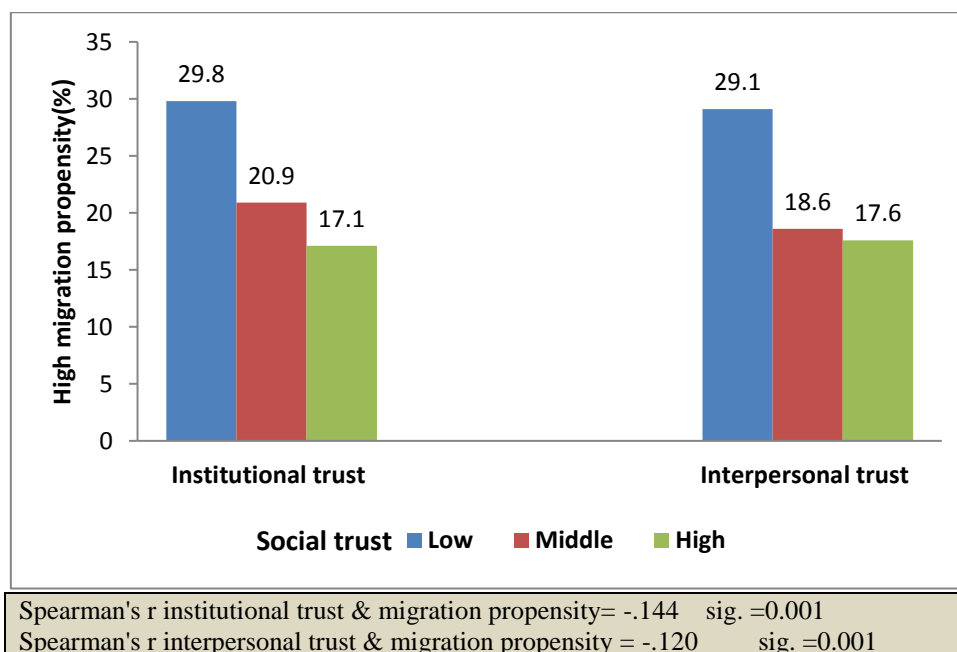

Spearman's r institutional trust & migration propensity= -.144 sig. =0.001
Spearman's r interpersonal trust & migration propensity = -.120   sig. =0.001

Figure 3. The relationships between social trust and high propensity to emigration (%)

   b) Multivariate analysis

The results of multivariate analyses are displayed in Figure 4. Ordinal regression analysis was conducted to estimate the effects of institutional and

Interpersonal trusts on propensity to emigrate controlling (adjusted) for the selected demographic variables. As results in Figure 4 showed that interpersonal and institutional social trusts significantly negatively associated with emigration tendency. Those categorized as low level of institutional trust, compared to high level of institutional trust, had 2.2 times higher odds of high propensity to emigrate to other countries. Also, those categorized as low level of interpersonal trust, compared to high level of interpersonal trust, had 1.6 times higher odds of high propensity to emigrate to other countries.
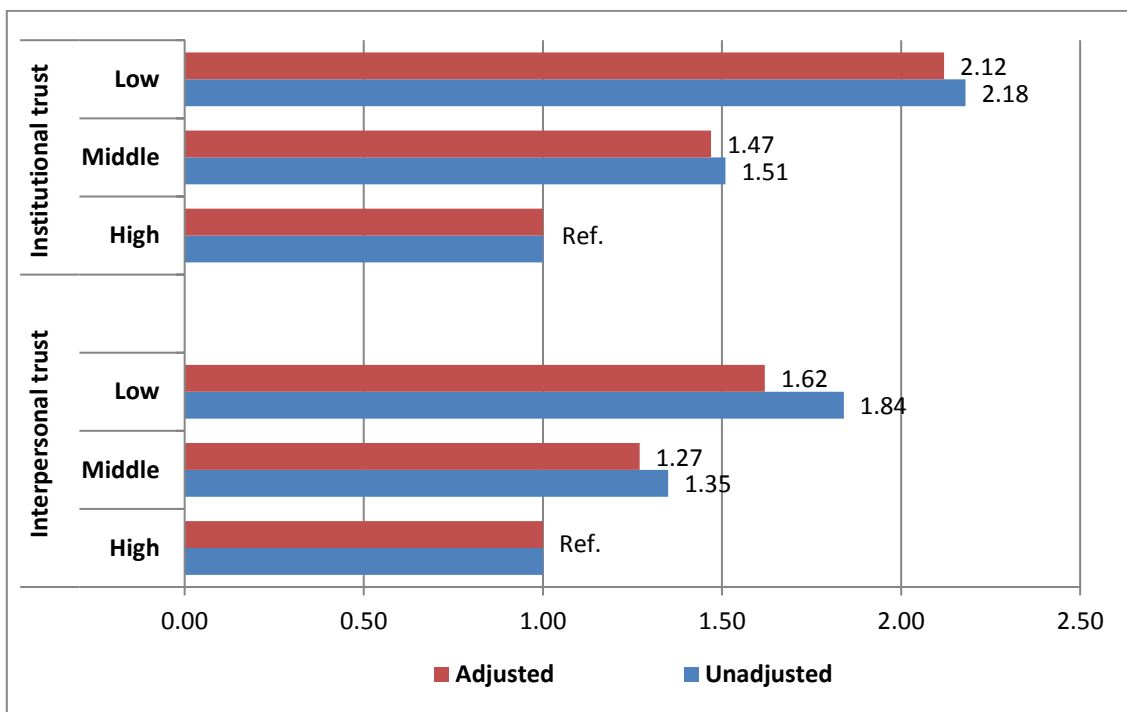

Figure 4. The effects of social trust on high propensity to emigration; Odds ratio from ordinal regression

CONCLUSION

These preliminary analyses suggest the propensity to emigration is partially strong among respondents, but that the levels of interpersonal and institutional social trusts do have significantly impacts on emigration propensity. Individuals with a low amount of social trust, both interpersonal and institutional, have high propensity to emigrate, while individuals with a high amount of social trust

have low propensity to emigrate to other countries. Thus, high propensity to emigrate to other countries is correlated with lower levels of interpersonal and institutional trusts.

Multivariate analysis indicated that high propensity to emigration is significantly associated with various types of social trust, namely interpersonal trust, and institutional trust, even after controlling demographic factors such as; age, gender, education, marital status, employment status, religion, and rural-urban residency. In conclusion, one of the key and important factors on increasing tendency to emigration from Iran is declining of interpersonal and institutional social trusts.