

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## Value attitudes in the context of the social capital of the regional population

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**Abstract.** Nowadays, researchers studying social changes take particular interest in social capital and its structural components. One of such components is personal values. They form social relations, and they are especially important for social and economic development (in addition to cultural norms and trust). Besides, these values allow measuring social capital. This article aims to show the role and importance of value systems in the construction of social capital's indicator model. The study was conducted by specialists of the Vologda Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences (VolSC RAS) in the Vologda Region. They identified different types of social capital carriers, as well as differences in their values. All respondents were divided into groups based on their preferences. Some were the carriers of paternalistic attitudes, which characterize people's desire for stability and their fear of change. This group could potentially resist any changes. The other group included active people, who were "catalysts" for changes and innovations. These people contributed to the design of new technologies, introduction of new management decisions in organizations, and the socioeconomic development of the region. Consequently, values are a significant indicator for measuring social capital and for conducting a comprehensive study of the country's and region's social capital. Such studies have already proved their worth, and they can be especially useful for managerial staff, including practitioners, researchers, as well as educators. The research methodology, tested in two regions of the Northwestern Federal District, has proved its validity and can be used to obtain and analyze data in other regions in Russia. This technique is also applicable in the management of corporations and organizations.

**Keywords:** social capital, value attitudes, measurement, indicator model, adaptation, responsibility, readiness for unification.

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## INTRODUCTION

Social transformations that have taken place in the world over the last decades entail significant changes in the mentality of Russian population. Researchers note the interconnection between the distribution of certain values and the level of society development, or trends in ongoing social processes. This is especially noticeable in connection with the modernization processes, the level of economic development, and the degree of democratization, as was pointed out by R. Inglehart in his studies [8]. Values are of great importance for socioeconomic development alongside cultural norms. Both values and cultural norms serve as the basis for the formation of social relations, whose indispensable part is taken up by social capital.

Social capital began to attract researchers' attention in connection with their understanding of its role and importance for the development of non-economic factors alongside economic ones. An opinion which is gaining popularity these days is that one of the reasons for Russian reforms lagging behind is the state of society which is not fully ready for these reforms [10].

## THEORETICAL BASIS OF ANALYSIS

The concept of social capital has deep theoretical roots, which are connected with the theory of capital by K. Marx, the theory of social solidarity by E. Durkheim, and the justification of democracy by A. de Tocqueville. P. Bourdieu extended the idea of capital to the area of social connections and introduced the term *social capital* to designate them. He proposed to understand social capital as a way to assess social competition and power in society [3]. We regard it as a social practice, as a way to achieve group solidarity, as a dynamic resource capable of changing forms. Social capital, as has been established, plays the role of an interconnecting principle, uniting other types of capital into total capital. It provides interaction and organization of social and economic subjects, contributes to the process of their improvement.

“Social capital acts as a network of social relations based on trust and characterized by common norms and values and the degree of people's involvement in them. It also functions as a set of external factors and results generated by social interaction within these networks and associations” [1]. Hence the opportunity to determine the characteristics of its resources, as well as the factors of social capital formation.

Being a fairly complex phenomenon, social capital can be represented as a model consisting of structural and cognitive components. The first component reflects the interrelation between social capital carriers and certain social structures, the second one describes the degree of social capital carriers' trust in other people, their ability to consolidate with them and their ability to influence events.

There are certain properties of social capital, to a certain extent similar to the characteristics of human capital. At the same time, the main specificity of social

capital is its realization in the social relations of people. The more social capital is used, the more it increases.

The development of the concept of social capital has led to the need to identify its types. Theoretical search in this direction turned out to be productive. Robert D. Putnam in the course of his analysis paid attention to the external relations of agents. He introduced the concept of bridging social capital, which describes connections that link people across a cleavage that typically divides society (such as race, or class, or religion) [13, 14]. Its other type—bonding capital—is aimed at intragroup interconnections, which contributes to enhancing identity and homogeneity in a group [14]. M. Woolcock supplemented the classification proposed by R. Putnam, by adding linking social capital. This type is formed when different members of the same community, being in an unfamiliar situation (in a different country), combine their resources [17]. Among Russian researchers, the distinction between bridging and bonding types of social capital has become a steady practice [1, 10].

The distinction of several types of social capital is of great importance for its study. In particular, the dominance of one of its types forms social relations, influences structural characteristics of society, inhibits or contributes to society development [2].

Values that constitute social capital are of great importance for the formation of its particular type. Both international and Russian sociologists established the relationship between values and social capital [9, 11]. F. Fukuyama focused on the role and importance of culture and its values in the development of society and the formation of social capital [6]. Values have a significant impact on the formation of individuals' mutually beneficial behavior; values ensure people's interaction, create conditions for collective behavior. Values that are oriented toward unification, mutual aid, and solidarity favorably influence social capital.

One of the problems in the study of social capital is the problem of its measurement. No unified approach to measurement parameters has been formed yet.

In our study of social capital while analyzing the information obtained, we identified a number of variables that reflect the following concepts: "... trust, networks, values and norms, solidarity, the ability to influence the state of affairs. These variables are disclosed through a system of social indicators, which together form a cognitive model that allows obtaining information on the phenomenon under consideration" [1]. These indicators correspond to the research hypothesis that values represent a certain type of regulatory relationships. According to R. Nureyev, they evolve in the context of a complex institutional choice [12]. Institutional context sets the direction for the formation of the type of a person who is a carrier of values. In our case, of interest is the transformation of values within the period of transformation processes experienced by Russian society. The transformation of values is reflected in a person's social attitudes, which can be identified in the process of research. The purpose of this article is to attempt to identify the role of values in an indicator model of social capital.



## METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODS

In the empirical measurement of social capital, we distinguished two of its types: bonding social capital—based on close connections and a narrow circle of trust—and bridging social capital—encompassing more large-scale connections and a wider circle of trust. These types of social capital are traditionally distinguished by sociologists. When measuring social capital, we included the following indicators: trust; networks of interpersonal informal connections; involvement in communities; solidarity, readiness for joint actions; the feeling of being able to influence the situation in one's environment; values [16].

According to the indicator model developed by the authors of this article, its value block is a multi-component model which includes several diverse indicators. It includes the level of adaptation to changing socioeconomic conditions, the locus of responsibility (internal or external), the general willingness to stay united, and innovative behavior [1].

The results of the study are based on the data obtained from a survey of the population of two regions of the Northwestern Federal District—the Vologda and Pskov Regions. The study was conducted as part of the research project “Regional Social Capital in Crisis Conditions”, implemented with the support of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR). The choice of the two regions is connected with the fact that the structure of the Northwestern Federal District includes different subjects of the Russian Federation: a city of federal significance, a republic, and a region. There are historical, cultural, and industrial centers in the district under study. The regions of the Northwestern Federal District vary considerably in their economic position. Given this diversity, the Pskov and Vologda Regions were selected for the study as they have an approximately equal socioeconomic position in the ratings for the population's quality of life [15]. The respondents were adult residents (over 18 years old) of urban settlements ( $n = 900$ ). The sample population was broken down according to quotas by gender and age composition. To reduce systematic bias, random elements were introduced into the sample. For the analysis of the obtained data, SPSS Statistics and Excel programs were employed.

## DATA ANALYSIS

At the first stage of the analysis, we identified groups of respondents—carriers of social capital of different types. Using the method of factor analysis, we revealed the relationship between the parameters included in the indicator model. Social capital indices were calculated for each respondent, on the basis of which respondents were assigned to specific types [7]. According to the methodology of our study, in accordance with the identified level of accumulated social capital, all respondents were divided into five groups. The first group included people with the lowest level of social capital (Type 1), the last one—people with a high level of social capital (Type 5). The remaining groups had intermediate values in the indicator model, according to the total accumulated index of social capital (Types 2-4). The study

showed that the selected groups differ significantly in their basic indicator features, such as trust, inclusiveness, responsibility, and values [7].

The validity of the presented system, which includes 46 indicators, is confirmed by significant differences in the answers given by respondents assigned to a particular type, for example, types 1, 2, 4, and 5. Thus, almost half of the representatives of type 1 (48%) believe that no one can be trusted, while out of the number of the respondents belonging to type 4, only every tenth person (9%) adheres to this opinion. Also, 4% of the respondents attributed to the 1st type are of the opinion that “the majority of friends can be trusted”; a similar answer was given by 28% of the respondents belonging to type 5.

Let us consider the first component—the level of adaptation to changing socioeconomic conditions. Constantly changing socioeconomic conditions require constant adaptation. According to O. N. Yanitsky, for the population in Russia, adaptation has become an “eternal problem” [6]. The indicator of the level of adaptation, in our opinion, reflects not only population’s flexibility and adaptability, but also their use of networks to which they belong. A highly adaptable person, when entering a difficult life situation, mobilizes all his contacts and all his surroundings. If he has faith in the stability and diversity of his environment, he is more confident in the future and is quickly guided in an unstable situation than a person with a small circle of contacts or unstable contacts.

The study shows that stability and adaptation are characteristic of a third of the respondents (36%). Significant differences are registered among the respondents belonging to different groups of carriers of social capital. Thus, among the respondents of the fourth and fifth groups (high and very high levels of social capital) 46% and 48% respectively showed high levels of adaptability.

Those who are trying to actively adapt, but require a considerable effort to do so we define as “negatively adapted” (19% of the respondents). In groups with higher levels of social capital, their number is insignificant (20-23% in the third group and 13-15% in the first two groups). The most representative is the following choice: “I manage to use new opportunities, achieve more in life, improve my financial well-being.” Only 4% out of the whole sample described themselves in the abovementioned terms, whereas in the fifth group and in the fourth group the number of those who made this choice amounted to 18% and 7% respectively). In the first group, this choice was absent, which indicates a low adaptive capacity of its representatives.

A significant proportion of the respondents in the first and second groups with a low level of social capital believe that in the current socioeconomic conditions they have to give up a lot while living in an atmosphere of strict self-restraint (more than 40% of the respondents in the first group, one-third in the second group), whereas among the people with the highest level of social capital there are only 3% of such people.

As a second component, we analyzed the respondents’ locus of responsibility depending on the type of social capital identified. Responsibility refers to the zone of control, the area of social space that an individual describes as the zone of his



influence. Most respondents limit the area of responsibility to their family circle or contacts related to their workplace or occupation. In the course of the available data analysis, it was established that there is a connection between an individual's typological features, which characterize his/her social capital, on the one hand, and indicators of his/her responsibility, on the other.

The locus of responsibility in the indicator model is a complex value; this indicator consists of three components: the locus of responsibility for respondents' financial position, for their career, for an interesting life. The idea of using this indicator is rooted in the notion that people with an active life position prefer to rely on themselves when implementing life strategies. At the same time, they are optimistic about the future, expand their circles, prefer to trust social institutions, which all indicates that they have a high level of social capital. Unfortunately, the majority of the population that adhere to traditional views are focused on paternalistic attitudes, on assistance from the state, employer, inner circle, but they do not actively seek to solve their own problems. Hence a pessimistic view of the future and a negative or suspicious attitude toward change, which corresponds to a low level of social capital.

The research hypothesis has been fully confirmed: respondents with a high level of social capital have an internal locus of responsibility: 73% of the respondents from the fifth group and 61% from the fourth group fully agree that "their financial situation depends on them; 70% and 59% of the respective groups agree that "every person is able to guarantee his/her own financial security." Only 4% of the fifth group did not accept the first statement, but everyone agreed with the second one. The situation is different among the representatives of the first and second groups. They have a pronounced external locus of responsibility: 46% of the respondents in the first group and 36% of the respondents in the second group do not agree that their financial situation depends on them. Their opinions regarding the second statement are even more categorical: 67% of the first group disagree that each person can secure their financial situation.

The respondents with different levels of social capital expressed clearer views on career, and hence the responsibility for their career development. All the representatives of the fifth group and 92% in the fourth group either fully or partially agree that their career development depends on them; while in the first group 69% (44% completely and 15% partially) disagree with this statement. In the second group, the number of those who disagree amounted to 35%.

General attitude to life also confirms the identified trends: 96% of the representatives with a very high level of social capital and 94% with a high level of social capital agree that the quality of their lives depends on them; 54% of the representatives of the first group do not agree with this statement. In the second group, the number of those who disagree with the abovementioned statement is significantly smaller (21%).

We also used a general indicator to measure readiness to unite for joint activities. This indicator helps to reveal the respondents' readiness to use their networks, their potential, and social circles for active actions.

The study showed that respondents with a high level of social capital have a high level of readiness for forming associations. Those with a low level are not ready to unite. Thus, 67% of the representatives of the fifth group answered that they consider themselves to be “those who are ready to unite,” 22% are almost ready to form associations. The fourth group is less inclined to form associations: the majority (56%) are likely to unite, but only 28% are ardent activists. Only 18% of the respondents in the first group and 23% of the respondents in the second group are ready to unite. Moreover, in the first group more than one-third of the respondents (36%) are categorically against any association.

Social capital forms a social environment conducive to the adoption of innovative forms of behavior. In their research, M. Dakhli and D. de Clercq [4] pointed out the interrelation between social environment and innovations. It is the environment that creates conditions for the dissemination of information. And here the main role is played by the networks within which social capital is formed. F. Fukuyama noted the importance of the dissemination of information for the emergence of innovations, especially in the field of high technologies [5].

Public Opinion Foundation methodology for lifestyle typology identification allowed revealing the respondents' tendency to similar patterns of behavior. This methodology was used both as a psychographic criterion and as an indicator of social capital. Owners of high-level social capital have an active life position, are innovators in introducing new ideas and practices, they trust new technologies and quickly adopt new behavioral practices. The choice of one form of behavior or another also demonstrates a connection with the economic capital of a person. According to our study, the fourth and fifth groups of the respondents, as carriers of higher social capital, differ significantly from other identified groups in the number of consumer practices. Almost everyone uses the Internet and email (90% in the fourth and 97% in the fifth groups), pays with cards (71-72%), therefore, trust banks and banking systems, and work on the computer (66-70%). But the most significant ones are rare consumer practices that distinguish people with high social capital from others. In the last two years almost every second respondent flew by the plane (43%), every third respondent received additional education (33%), was on a business trip abroad (17%); only 5 % of the representatives of the first group had all these indicators, however, the majority of the respondents belonging to the first group had none of them (0%).

## DISCUSSION

As the results of the research show, social capital is closely connected with the values of the population, and the level of their adaptation to changes. Paternalistic attitudes, the desire for stability, the fear of change characterize representatives with a low level of social capital. Such people are a potential group to resist any changes: socioeconomic and innovative changes in the country or the region, and organizational changes in the workplace. People with high social capital are the core, the asset, the catalyst for changes and innovations; they contribute to the development of new technologies and management decisions in the



organization, and to the success of the socioeconomic development in the region. Consequently, values are a significant indicator in the measurement of social capital and are necessary for a comprehensive study of the social capital of a country or region.

The data obtained in this research can be used by practicing managers. The research methodology, tested on two regions of the Northwestern Federal District, has proved its validity and can be used to obtain and analyze data in other regions of the Russian Federation. This technique is applicable to the management of corporations and organizations. Identification of social capital carriers of one type or another allows assessing a current situation in the community with a view to revealing those representatives who may become a pillar of innovation and development. Understanding the existing problems and attitudes among the paternalistic-minded part of the region's population gives grounds for finding necessary social tools for initiating innovative social practices among them.

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