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## SOCIAL CAPITAL AND HUMAN WELL-BEING IN ROMANIA: AN INDIVIDUAL LEVEL ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

*Social capital theorists claim that social capital has positive impacts on various aspects of societal life, such as economic well-being, health, crime rates, educational achievement, and adolescent development (Woolcock, 1998). Thus, on the basis of data collected from 1344 individuals by World Values Survey (WVS) wave 6 Romania 2012, the present paper examines the inter-linkage between social capital and human well-being in Romania. In the study, social capital is measured by two proxy indicators, the generalized trust among individuals and the membership of individuals in voluntary organizations. At all Romania level, mean score for individuals on the social capital index is found to be 5.22 points out of possible 100 points with standard deviation 10.81. To examine the impact of social capital on human well-being, OLS regression model is used where human well-being (measured by happiness in life, health condition, satisfaction in life, freedom of choice, satisfaction of the individual with his/her financial situation, Romanian citizenship proud, and the extent of savings) is taken as the dependent variable, and on the other side, social capital, human capital and income level are taken as the explanatory variables along with two demographic characteristics of the individuals, gender and age. At mean social capital score of 5.22, the coefficient of the variable shows that a one unit increase in social capital would increase well-being of individuals by 4.9%. Finally, the study suggests that human well-being programmes should integrate social capital as an essential element.*

**KEY WORDS:** *membership, organization, social capital, trust, well-being.*

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** *A13, D71, I31*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Social capital theorists claim that social capital has positive impacts on various aspects of societal life, such as economic well-being, health, crime rates, educational achievement, and adolescent development (Woolcock, 1998). Thus, the main objective of this paper is to examine the inter-linkage between social capital and human well-being in Romania. It is revealed in the analysis of data that social capital has a positive impact on human well-being in Romania. So the paper supplies an argument in the favour of social capital to be considered as one of the fundamental determinants of economic development. The paper is divided into six sections. Following introduction, second section presents the data sources and methodology. The concept of social capital is defined in section three. Section four measures the social capital in Romania. The social capital scores with its two dimensions, membership and trust, are tabulated with individual socio-economic characteristics in this section. Section five examines the impact of social capital on human well-being and the paper concludes in section six.

## 2. DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The study is based on data collected from 1344 individuals in Romania by World Values Survey (WVS) wave 6 Romania 2012. The WVS is a global research project that explores people's values and beliefs, how they change over time and what social and political impact they have. It is carried out by a worldwide network of social scientists who, since 1981 (Romania since 1995 with wave 3)<sup>1</sup>, have conducted representative national surveys in almost 100 countries. The work is also frequently used by governments around the world, scholars, students, journalists and international organizations and institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations (United Nations Development Programme and UN-Habitat). The present paper is based on the individual responses for 25 questions out of a total set of 258 common questions used in WVS in all countries. The collected data are analyzed by using regression, t-test, F test, one way ANOVA, multiple comparison of means test by applying post Hoc tests in addition to descriptive statistics.

## 3. THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital has been widely discussed across the social sciences in recent years. One of the pioneers in the study of social capital is Hanifan<sup>2</sup> (1920) who argued that "social capital...refer(s) to...those tangible assets (that) count for most in the daily lives of people, namely: goodwill, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit." Others include: Jacobs (1961), Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Loury (1977) [As cited in Woolcock, 1998], and Meehan et al. (1978). Bourdieu (1984; 1986) developed the concept of social capital during the 1970s and 1980s, but it attracted much less attention than other areas of his social theory. In the past 20-25 years, Putnam (1993; 1995) and Coleman (1988; 1990) are credited with bringing the term "social capital" to prominence<sup>3</sup>.

In the literature, social capital is often defined as a sociological variable, i.e., referring to the relationships between people. From this perspective social capital is relational, not something owned by any individual, but rather something shared in common. However, there is a perspective that social capital stands for the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in networks or other social structures (Portes, 1998).

Thus, it is possible to distinguish 'individual' and 'group' social capital. Individual social capital, sometimes referred to as 'social network capital', can be defined as the set of social attributes possessed by an individual – including charisma, contacts and linguistic skill – that increase the returns to that individual in his or her dealings with others.

Community-level 'group' social capital is defined as the set of social resources of a community that increases the welfare of that community (Glaeser et al., 2002). Bezemer et al. (2004) used the term 'relational capital' for individual social capital, and 'social network' or 'communal social capital' for group social capital.

Knack (1999; 2002) differentiated social capital as government social capital and civil social capital. He defined government social capital as the institutions, the rule of law, and the civil liberties that influence people's ability to cooperate for mutual benefit; and civil social capital as the common values, norms, informal networks, and associational memberships that affect the ability of individuals to work together to achieve common goals.

Grafton and Knowles (2004) distinguished between civic social capital and public institutional social capital, with the latter being defined by measures of corruption and democracy. Grootaert (1999) talked about a macro level of social capital which includes institutions such as government, the rule of law, civil and political liberties etc. These notions of government, public institutional and macro social capital are identical to formal institutions. Collier (1998) noted that many people restrict the term "social capital" to civil social capital. Thus, for the individual

level study to find the inter-linkage between social capital and human well-being, it seems wise to restrict the definition of social capital to civil social capital.

#### 4. MEASUREMENT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN ROMANIA

Measuring social capital is said to be difficult. There is a challenge in identifying a contextual relevant indicator of social capital and establishing an empirical correlation with relevant benefit indicator. This is because these social capital indicators differ both geographically and sectorally and for this reason and due to the strong contextual nature of social capital, it is unlikely that a few “best” indicators that could be generalized for use everywhere can be arrived at (Okunmadewa et al., 2007). Thus, instead of devising global measures of social capital that span entire countries and continents, a locally relevant measure of social capital is advised. In the study, social capital is measured by two proxy indicators, the membership of individuals in voluntary organizations and the generalized trust among individuals.

*(a) Membership in Voluntary Organizations:* The effectiveness of social capital to reduce opportunistic behaviour, to disseminate information, and to facilitate collective decision making depends on many aspects of the groups and organizations like group membership, working with others in the community and an active participation in the organizations. In Romania there are many formal and informal organizations, groups and networks like, religious or church related organizations; sports and leisure organizations; educational, art and music organizations; labor unions; political parties; ecological organizations; professional associations; humanitarian or philanthropic associations; consumer associations; support, mutual aid groups etc. Each household was asked in the survey that for each organization, whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization.

Overall, the data indicate that, out of 1344 sampled individuals, 472 are members of one or more organizations; the maximum number of group memberships for an individual is eleven. The total number of memberships included in the sample added up to 979, which indicates that on average each individual (out of 472) is a member of about two organizations (Table 1). But out of 979 memberships, individuals are active only in 475 memberships which indicate that individuals actively participate in one association only. Membership is most common in religious or church related organizations (18.60%) as shown in Table 1. However, individuals actively participate in the activities of four organizations: educational, art or music organizations (with 57.14% active members); religious or church related organizations (with 56.00% active members); labour unions (with 55.46% active members); and support, mutual aid groups (with 53.45% active members).

The mean score on group membership dimension of social capital for 1344 sample individuals is found to be 4.92 with standard deviation 10.72 (Table 2). For single (unmarried and not living with partner) individuals, the mean score on group membership and active participation in groups is found to be 7.66 which is significantly high as compared to the married and widowed individuals in Romania. The memberships in groups are related to the religious composition of the sample individuals since Buddhist, Muslim, Unitarian and other (not specified) sample individuals are on average member of more groups than the Christian, Orthodox and other (with no religion) sample individuals. The difference between mean score for group membership is also significantly different among Christian and Orthodox individuals. There is no significant difference between male and female respondents as the group membership dimension is

concerned. The individuals in the age group of 18 years to 30 years has the group membership mean score 6.48 which is significantly high as compared to the individuals in the other two age groups, 31 years to 60 years and 61 years to 85 years. The results of the analysis of data show in Table 2 that as the level of education and the level of income rises, the mean score on group membership is also increasing, but this difference in mean score is found to be insignificant.

**Table 1: Membership of Individuals in Voluntary Organizations**

Organization	Total Membership <sup>a</sup>	Active Member <sup>b</sup>	Inactive Member <sup>b</sup>
Religious or Church related Organizations	250 (18.60)	140 (56.00)	110 (44.00)
Labor Unions	119 (8.85)	66 (55.46)	53 (44.54)
Sports and Leisure Organizations	107 (7.96)	53 (49.23)	54 (50.47)
Political Parties	100 (7.44)	39 (39.00)	61 (61.00)
Educational, Art or Music Organizations	91 (6.77)	52 (57.14)	39 (42.86)
Professional Associations	72 (5.36)	33 (45.83)	39 (54.17)
Support, Mutual Aid Groups	58 (4.32)	31 (53.45)	27 (46.55)
Humanitarian or Philanthropic Associations	54 (4.02)	23 (42.59)	31 (57.41)
Ecological Organizations	48 (3.57)	15 (31.25)	33 (68.75)
Consumer Associations	36 (2.68)	8 (22.22)	28 (77.77)
Other Organizations and Groups	44 (3.27)	15 (34.09)	29 (65.91)
Total	979 (18.86) <sup>#</sup>	475 (48.52)	504 (51.48)

a. Figures in parentheses are percent values calculated as  

$$= \frac{\text{Number of individuals who are member of an organization}}{\text{Total number of sampled individuals}} = \frac{250}{1344}$$

b. Figures in parentheses are percentages of total memberships =  $\frac{140}{250}$ .

# This percentage is calculated as =  $\frac{\text{Total number of memberships reported by individuals}}{\text{Maximum number of possible memberships}} = \frac{979}{5192}$

Source: Calculated from World Values Survey, Wave 6, Romania 2012 Data.

*b) Trust:* The psychic and transactional costs of interacting with people we trust is lower than the costs of interacting with someone we distrust. When levels of trust are low among a group, associational activity and collective action are inhibited. Trust and trustworthiness increase the chances of exchange among people without written contractual obligations. Instead, people rely on expectations of mutual obligation, honesty, reciprocity, mutual respect, and helpfulness. In this environment, if there is a perceived need, cooperative action is more likely to occur than when trust is low among people living in the same village (Narayan, 1997). To measure generalized trust, individuals were asked in World Values Survey about the following question

*Generally speaking, would you say that one can trust most of the people or it is better to be cautious in dealing with people?*

The responses are coded as most people can be trusted as '2' and need to be very careful as '1'. Overall the mean score on this indicator of trust is found to be 1.07 points with standard deviation 0.25 out of maximum possible 2 points (Table 2). The index of trust does not show

any distinct religious and socio-economic patterns in Romania. All the differences in mean scores on trust dimension of social capital are found to be statistically insignificant. However, as the mean score results reveal in Table 2, it is found that as the level of education and level of income rises, the mean score on trust also rises.

**Table 2: Mean Score on Group Membership, Trust and Social Capital with Individual Characteristics**

Individual Characteristics	Number of Individuals	Group Membership	Trust	Social Capital
<i>Marital Status</i>				
Married	838	4.67 (10.17)	1.06 (0.24)	4.94 (10.25)
Living together but not Legally Married	83	5.86 (11.23)	1.11 (0.31)	6.08 (11.41)
Divorced	70	4.22 (10.12)	1.07 (0.26)	4.55 (10.25)
Separated	11	2.07 (2.98)	1.27 (0.45)	3.31 (3.92)
Widow	154	3.07 (7.65)	1.04 (0.19)	3.25 (7.71)
Single (Unmarried and not living with partner)	188	7.66 (14.39)	1.09 (0.28)	8.05 (14.43)
<i>Religion</i>				
Christian <sup>a</sup>	166	7.01 (11.74)	1.08 (0.28)	7.396(11.88)
Orthodox	1153	4.50 (10.15)	1.06 (0.24)	4.79 (10.23)
Other <sup>b</sup>	7	25.97 (34.08)	1.14 (0.35)	26.62 (33.62)
None	18	4.04 (6.41)	1.06 (0.23)	4.29 (6.33)
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	579	5.28 (10.66)	1.08 (0.27)	5.64 (10.80)
Female	765	4.65 (10.77)	1.06 (0.23)	4.90 (10.80)
<i>Age (in Years)</i>				
18-30	258	6.48 (11.94)	1.08 (0.27)	6.84 (12.08)
31-60	736	4.71 (10.60)	1.07 (0.25)	5.02 (10.66)
61-85	350	4.21 (9.91)	1.05 (0.22)	4.44 (9.96)
<i>Education Level</i>				
None	15	4.55 (11.38)	1.00 (0.00)	4.55 (11.38)
Primary <sup>c</sup>	125	4.91 (11.79)	1.02 (0.15)	5.02 (11.77)
Gymnasium <sup>d</sup>	174	4.23 (11.21)	1.09 (0.29)	4.65 (11.37)
Secondary/High School <sup>e</sup>	765	4.60 (10.07)	1.05 (0.23)	4.85 (10.17)
University <sup>f</sup>	228	6.04 (11.60)	1.10 (0.30)	6.48 (11.53)
MA/PhD	37	7.86 (10.86)	1.16 (0.37)	8.60 (11.32)
<i>Income Group</i>				
Poorest	154	2.80 (5.89)	1.05 (0.21)	3.01 (6.07)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Decile	75	3.09 (8.10)	1.04 (0.20)	3.27 (8.08)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Decile	122	4.28 (8.85)	1.04 (0.20)	4.47 (8.98)
4 <sup>th</sup> Decile	169	4.57 (11.72)	1.05 (0.22)	4.81 (11.69)
5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	314	5.76 (12.58)	1.06 (0.23)	6.02 (12.66)
6 <sup>th</sup> Decile	201	5.02 (9.70)	1.09 (0.29)	5.45 (9.71)
7 <sup>th</sup> Decile	177	4.93 (10.36)	1.08 (0.27)	5.29 (10.52)
8 <sup>th</sup> Decile	99	6.66 (12.52)	1.08 (0.27)	7.02 (12.58)
9 <sup>th</sup> Decile	15	9.70 (14.55)	1.20 (0.40)	10.61 (15.00)
Richest	18	8.59 (13.29)	1.17 (0.37)	9.34 (13.08)
All	1344	4.92 (10.72)	1.07 (0.25)	5.22 (10.81)

Figures in parentheses are standard deviations.

- Christians include Baptist (4), Christian (1), Christian Reform (66), Evangelical (3), Greek Catholic (6), Jew (1), Pentecostal (4), Protestant (35), Roman Catholic (43), and Seven Day Adventist (3).
- Others include Buddhist (1), Muslim (3), Other – Not Specific (2), and Unitarian (1).
- Primary includes Incomplete Primary, and Complete Primary.
- Gymnasium includes Incomplete Gymnasium, and Complete Gymnasium.

- e. Secondary includes Upper Secondary (Lower Level of Vocational Training), Vocational Upper Secondary, Incomplete High School, High School, Post High School, and Complete Secondary School (Technical/Vocational Type).
- f. University includes Incomplete University Degree, University (Short Term Formation), and University (Long Term BA).

Source: Calculated from World Values Survey, Wave 6, Romania 2012 Data.

(c) *Social Capital*: Individual scores on these two dimensions, group membership and trust, are added and the resultant score is rescaled from 0 to 100 to construct the additive Social Capital Index (SCI) where 0 represents the lowest level of social capital. At all Romania level, mean score for individuals on the social capital index is found to be 5.22 points out of possible 100 points with standard deviation 10.81 (Table 2). Social capital mean score of 8.05 is significantly high for single (unmarried and not living with partner) individuals as compared to married and widowed individuals. It is revealed in the analysis of data that social capital is significantly different among Christian, Orthodox, other religion and no religion individuals. The absolute mean difference of social capital scores between male and female respondents is 0.74 which is statistically insignificant. With highest mean score of 6.84, social capital is significantly high for the individuals in the age group of 18 years to 30 years than the individuals in other two age groups, 31 years to 60 years and 61 years to 85 years. It is also observed in the analysis of data that as the level of education and the level of income rises, the mean score on social capital index also rises, however, this difference in mean score is statistically insignificant for both of these characteristics.

## 5. SOCIAL CAPITAL AND HUMAN WELL-BEING

The main objective of this study is to analyze the impact of social capital on human well-being of individuals. In relating social capital to human well-being the customary or conventional model of individual socio-economic behaviour under constrained utility maximization relates the level of happiness in life, health condition, satisfaction in life, freedom of choice, satisfaction of the individual with his/her financial situation, citizenship proud, and the extent of savings directly to the exogenous asset endowments of the individual and variables describing the social and economic environment in which the individual makes decision. The individual well-being is hypothesized to be influenced by the independent variables included in the equation below:

$$W_i = a + b_1SC_i + b_2HC_i + b_3Y_i + b_4SX_i + b_5AG_i + u_i \quad (1)$$

Where,

$W_i$	= Index of Human Well-Being of Individual i
$SC_i$	= Individual Endowment of Social Capital
$HC_i$	= Individual Endowment of Human Capital
$Y_i$	= Individual Income Level
$SX_i$	= Gender of Respondent
$AG_i$	= Age of Respondent
$u_i$	= Error Term

The key feature of this model is the assumption that social capital is truly “capital” i.e. a stock, which generates a measurable return (flow of income) to the individual. Social capital has many “capital” features: it requires resources (especially time) to be produced and it is subject to accumulation and destruction. Much social capital is built during interactions which occur for social, religious, or cultural reasons. The key assumption is that the networks built through these interactions have measurable benefits to the participating individuals, and lead, directly or

indirectly, to a higher level of well-being. There is an impact assumption that social capital is embodied in the members of the household. This conforms to the position advocated by Portes (1998), which highlights that, although the source of social capital is the relationship among a group of individuals, the capital itself is an individual asset. This is in contrast to the position of Putnam (1993), who sees social capital as a collective asset. For the purpose of this study, the position by Portes (1998) is adopted. Hence, social capital is viewed as an individual asset.

### 5.1 Variable Definitions

- a) *Human Well-Being*: Human well-being index is prepared by adding individual scores on seven different aspects namely, happiness in life, health condition, satisfaction in life, freedom of choice, satisfaction of the individual with his/her financial situation, citizenship proud, and the extent of savings. The responses on these aspects are added and then rescaled from 0 to 100.
- b) *Social Capital*: The social capital is calculated on the basis of additive scores on two dimensions of social capital: group membership and active participation in groups; and the level of generalized trust.
- c) *Human Capital*: The human capital variable is measured as the highest education level attained by the individual.
- d) *Income*: Level of income is calculated by asking individuals that counting all wages, salaries, pensions, and other incomes in what group the individual consider his/her household in the ten income groups, where first decile is the lowest income group.
- e) *Gender of Respondent*: A dummy variable is used for the gender of respondent (D=1 if male, D=0 if otherwise).
- f) *Age of Respondent*: Age of respondent is measured in years.

### 5.2 Results and Discussion

In the first column of Table 3 is the basic model of individual well-being without social capital. This model shows that about 24.8% of the variations in well-being of individuals are explained by the specified human capital, income and demographic factors of the individuals. In specific terms, higher the level of income and education of the individual significantly improves the well-being (coefficients 0.452 and 0.078 respectively). In the second column of Table 3, additive social capital variable is introduced.

The inclusion of this variable led to improvement in the adjusted  $R^2$  from 0.248 to 0.250. It is also found that along with human capital and income, social capital significantly influences the welfare status of individuals. At mean social capital score of 5.22, the coefficient of the variable shows that a one unit increase in social capital (i.e. 19.16%) would increase well-being of individuals by 4.9%. More importantly, by comparing the model with and without social capital it is found that the inclusion of social capital reduced the human capital and income coefficients from 0.078 and 0.452 to 0.077 and 0.448 respectively. This suggests that at least some of the human capital and income effects operate through the social capital. In other words, especially for human capital, there is some empirical validity to the proposition "It's what you know, not whom you know". However, the study results also suggest that a better formulation might be "It's what you know 'and' whom you know".

The results in the second column of Table 3 also show that human well-being is not influenced by gender, whereas age of the individual has an inverse impact on well-being.

**Table 3: Social Capital and Human Well-Being**

	<b>Basic Model (without Social Capital)</b>		<b>with Social Capital</b>	
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>(t-values)</i>	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>(t-values)</i>
Intercept	40.486*	(18.116)	40.145*	(17.936)
Social Capital	---		0.049**	(2.052)
Human Capital	0.078*	(2.950)	0.077*	(2.926)
Income	0.452*	(17.929)	0.448*	(17.708)
Gender of Individual	0.006	(0.246)	0.005	(0.190)
Age of Individual	-0.058**	(-2.305)	-0.055**	(-2.201)
Number of Observations	1344		1344	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.250		0.253	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.248		0.250	
F-Statistics	111.695*		90.412*	
Durbin-Watson Statistics	1.948		1.948	
Figures in parentheses are t-values. *significant at 1% and **significant at 5%. The dependent variable is the well-being of individuals. Source: Computed from World Values Survey, Wave 6, Romania 2012 Data.				

## 6. CONCLUSION

In the present paper the impact of social capital on human well-being is studied on the basis of field survey data collected by World Values Survey, Wave 6 in Romania in 2012. In the study, social capital is measured as the additive score on two dimensions of cooperative and mutual beneficial behavior of individuals – the membership in local groups and active participation in these groups; and the generalized trust among people. It is found in the study results that social capital, human capital, and income are the important variables to raise well-being of individuals. Thus, with the many positive benefits of social capital, it is concluded that increasing levels of this dynamic form of capital can help individuals, households and communities become socially as well as economically more sustainable. Finally, the study suggests that development programmes should integrate social capital as an essential element and like human capital the investments in the social capital should be made.

## NOTES

1. The World Values Survey (WVS) included Romania in its third wave in 1995-98; wave 5 (2005-09) and wave 6 (2010-14).
2. Hanifan, an educational administrator, was interested in the contribution of ‘goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse’ to collective prosperity and well-being, an argument he then used to bolster his case for community centres in rural areas (Farr, 2004).
3. Foley and Edwards (1999) have described Pierre Bourdieu, James S. Coleman and Robert D. Putnam as representing three ‘relatively distinct tributaries’ in the literature on social capital.

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