TRUST AND LIFE SATISFACTION IN ALBANIA

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Abstract

Scholars argue that life satisfaction is one of the primary goals of most individuals. With regard to post-socialist societies, research has found that their citizens self-report lower levels of life satisfaction compared with those of the individuals living in the affluent Western countries. Evidence shows that post-socialist countries have undertaken several complex economic and institutional reforms which have reshaped their institutions, changed their rules and adapted their norms to meet the European Union admission criteria. The previous research reveals that a trusting society is also a satisfied society because it establishes trustful conditions for its members to maximize their benefits. However, few studies have examined the link between various types of trust (i.e., social trust, and institutional trust) and life satisfaction in post-socialist countries, in general, and in Albania, in particular. Therefore, the main purpose of the present quantitative study was to assess to what extent various types of trust (i.e., social trust, and institutional trust) are associated with individual life satisfaction in Albania after controlling for gender, age, and education level. It used data from a sample of 1,063 participants aged 18-74 years who participated in the round 6 of the European Social Survey conducted in Albania in 2012-2013. Results of ordinal and multiple ordinal regression analyses showed that both types of trust were significantly associated with life satisfaction. However, gender did not make a significant contribution to the model. Findings of this study have some implications for policy makers.

Keywords: social trust, institutional trust, life satisfaction, gender, education level

1. Introduction

A large body of research indicates that trust matters for individuals and society as a whole. At the micro-level, trustful individuals are open, tolerant, positive of the intentions of other people and willing to help them which, in turn, encourage them to have a more pro-social behavior and cooperate for the good of the society (Crowley, & Walsh, 2018; Stolle, 2001). At the macro-level, a high level of trust in the society means the presence of the effective collaboration of citizens who live in a stable environment and trust institutions and government actions enhancing their legitimacy and effectiveness (Clench-Aas, & Holte, 2021; Mishler, & Rose, 2001). On the other hand, lack of trust at the micro-level favours segmented individualistic approaches to deal with problems (Morris, & Klesner, 2010) while at the macro-level

it nurtures corruption (Morris, & Klesner, 2010) and fosters clientelism (Cleary, & Stokes, 2006).

Researchers argue that the majority of people would prefer to live in a society featured by a high level of trust (Andreasson, 2017) because its institutions can reduce uncertainties, prevent violence, encourage citizens' involvement in political processes and reinforce their rights which can affect their life satisfaction (Bjørnskov et al., 2010; Wu, & Zhu, 2016). Studies show that the citizens of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), and the post-socialist societies self-report lower levels of trust and life satisfaction than those reported by people living in the Western European countries (Hakhverdian, & Mayne, 2012; Nikolova, 2015). This less optimistic picture is closely linked to the change of their underdemocratic system which introduced institutional discontinuities (Mishler, & Rose, 2001) and social anomie that deeply affected their social fabric increasing the feeling of institutional exclusion (Bartolini, Mikucka, & Sarracino, 2012; Zhao, & Cao, 2010). Newly developed institutions did not progress well in all post-socialist countries (Askarov, & Doucouliagos, 2015).

This is the case of post-socialist Albania where socio-economic, institutional, and political reforms undertaken to comply with the requirements of the European Union integration agenda have been challenged by the persistence of various gaps and deficits inherited from the past. Fragile institutions were not able to manage the complex process of transition, while citizens were not ready to fully understand and play their role. As a result, state-citizens relations have been weak questioning their trust. Moreover, the profound social change of values and norms caused unprecedented tensions and conflicts among generations, actors and community members. New phenomena including mass rural-urban migration (United Nations Development Program, 2002; Meçe, 2017a), and the resurgence of the blood feud deeply rooted in the customary law (the Kanun) which was suppressed during the socialist period (Meçe, 2017b) were combined with economic hardship and violence that negatively impacted trust among people and institutions. Resecnt results of the 2019 opinion poll showed low trust ratings for domestic institutions including the government (41.3%), the parliament (28.4%), the courts (27.1%), and political parties (22.5%) (Institute for Democracy and Mediation, & UNDP, 2020). Moreover, the results of the Balkan Barometer 2019 survey revealed that 12% of the Albanians were mostly satisfied with life compared with 39% who reported to be completely dissatisfied. Their dissatisfaction increased over time making Albanians the most dissatisfied people in the Western Balkan region (Regional Cooperation Council, 2019).

Most of the research conducted so far about the relationship between trust and life satisfaction has been primarily focused on developed countries. Little is known about the link between various types of trust (i.e, social trust, and institutional trust) and life satisfaction in transition countries, in general, and in post-socialist Albania, in particular. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to examine to what extent various types of trust (i.e, social trust, and institutional trust) are associated with

individual life satisfaction in post-socialist Albania after controlling for gender, age, and education level. Building on previous studies, this paper extends them and contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it focuses on Albania where various types of trust and life satisfaction are understudied. Limited research conducted on the relationship between trust and life satisfaction in transition countries has produced inconclusive results (Anna, 2015; Glatz, & Eder, 2020; Jovanović, 2016). Therefore, this study will examine it in the context of post-socialist Albania. Second, determinants of life satisfaction at individual level including gender and age have not been well documented in the literature (Lachmann et al., 2018) leading to inconsistent results (Joshanloo, & Jovanović, 2019). Therefore, this study will contribute to establish a clear understanding of their influence while examining the link between various types of trust and life satisfaction. Third, various transformations during the years of transition have altered institutional arrangements and affected the maintenance of trust. Since the improvement of life satisfaction of the citizens is one of the main goals of the governments, the study may help policy makers in Albania and other post-socialist countries understand how various types of trust matter for life satisfaction of transitional citizens.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework of Trust

Trust is a key element of social capital which manifests as individual's expectations that others will behave in a proper and predictable manner (Kubbe, 2013). According to Coleman (1990, p. 99), "trust involves putting resources in the hands of parties who will use them to their own benefit, to the truster's benefit, or both". Scholars argue that trust is a complex, dynamic, and context-dependent concept (Eurofound, 2018) that is why the debate on how it is formed is still ongoing. According to cultural theorists, trust is learned during the childhood mainly by parents (Dohmen et al, 2012). It is deeply rooted in cultural norms and transmitted to the individuals during their early-life socialization (Mishler, & Rose, 2001). Thus, micro-cultural theories explain variations in trust among individuals with different socialization experiences. By contrast, institutional theorists argue that trust is endogenous and rationally based implying individuals' evaluation of the result-oriented performance of the institutions based on their own experiences (Mishler, & Rose, 2001).

Literature distinguishes various types of trust including social trust (also known as generalized trust) and institutional trust (Glatz, & Eder, 2020). Social trust is defined as "the degree to which people trust other people who they do not know" (Andreasson, 2017, p. 11). Previous research has documented that social trust is positively associated with volunteering (Sønderskov, 2011), altruistic attitudes (Putnam et al, 1984), tolerance (Reeskens, 2013), better life chances' perceptions (Rothstein, 2013), engagement in socializing activities (Landy et al, 2016), prosocial

interactions (Jordan et al, 2016), low level of conflict (Zak, & Knack, 2001), and happiness (Rodriguez-Pose, & Von Berlepsch, 2012).

On the other hand, institutional trust is defined as the degree of individuals' confidence on formal institutions mainly the government, the parliament, the police, political authorities, social institutions, economic institutions, and the judicial body (Anna, 2015; Glatz, & Eder, 2020; Hudson, 2006). Scholars argue that institutional trust is necessary to facilitate decision-making and ensure correct functioning of democratic institutions (Ciziceno, & Travaglino, 2019). Previous research has found that institutional trust is positively associated with civic participation (Bjørnskov, 2003), the feeling of certainty (Glatz, & Eder, 2020), efficient governance (Tyler, 2011), social cohesion (Abrams, & Travaglino, 2018), and less corruption (Van de Walle, 2017). Nevertheless several studies have revealed that social trust and institutional trust are correlated (Dinesen, 2011; Nannestad et al, 2014; Sønderskov, & Dinesen, 2016).

2.2 Theoretical Framework of Life Satisfaction

A high number of studies has documented the immense important of life satisfaction in everyday life. Nevertheless, the concept of life satisfaction is not easily defined while the debate on what a good life means is ongoing (Prasoon, & Chaturvedi, 2016). Some researchers argue that life satisfaction implies how individuals evaluate their own life as a whole based on their personal judgments (Berggren, & Bjørnskov, 2020; Diener et al, 1985). There are several theories that try to explain life satisfaction at micro-level including: a) the needs-based approach, b) the activity-oriented approach, and c) the personality predispositions approach (Diener et al, 2011).

The supporters of the needs-based approach posit that every human being has some needs and life satisfaction is achieved when they positively assess the fulfillment of their various needs (Apprah, 2010; Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2009; Diener et al, 2011). The hierarchy of needs developed by Maslow (1943) grouped them in five levels including psychological, safety, affection, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs. Some of them are very basic and necessary for human survival (i.e, needs for food), while some others are salient and mostly concern better off people (i.e, self-actualization needs) (Diner, Lucas, & Oishi, 2018).

The activity-oriented approach supports the idea that individual's life satisfaction is achieved when the person is engaged in activities that are assessed as being meaningful (Diener et al, 2011). People's engagement in a range of activities that meet what they want to achieve in life can lead to their improved life satisfaction. The supporters of the personality predispositions approach argue that personality matters in individual's life satisfaction. For instance, neuroticism is very sensitive to negative emotions (Clark, & Watson, 2008) and tend to show lower levels of life satisfaction compared to extraversion. Previous studies have found that life

satisfaction is positively associated with self-esteem (Moksnes, & Espnes, 2013), social support (Selda et al, 2013), resilience (Guo, 2017), self-reported health status (Kööts-Ausmees, & Realo, 2015), but negatively associated with deprivation, social exclusion (Bellani, & D'Ambrosio, 2011) and corruption (Wu, & Zhu, 2016).

Literature is inconclusive about the socio-demographic determinants of life satisfaction at the micro-level. So, mixed results have been been yielded about the relationship between gender and life satisfaction. Some scholars found that women reported lower levels of life satisfaction compared to men (Schnepf, 2010), others found that women were more satisfied with their life compared to men (Glatz, & Eder, 2020, Jovanović, 2019; Joshanloo, & Jovanović, 2019; Nikolova, 2015). Yet, some studies have revealed that gender was non-significant for life satisfaction (Golgher, 2014). Large international studies found that young and old cohorts reported more satisfaction with life compared to the middle-aged ones (Crowley, & Walsh, 2018), while other studies found a negative relationship between age and life satisfaction (Glatz, & Eder, 2020; Golgher, & Coutinho, 2020). Large-scale research found a positive association between education and life satisfaction (Blanchflower, & Oswald, 2004; Crowley, & Walsh, 2018), while other large international studies found a small positive effect in transition countries and a small negative effect in the affluent countries (Glatz, & Eder, 2020). Yet, other studies found no significant differences between education level and life satisfaction (Melin, Fugi-Meyer, & Fugi-Meyer, 2003). Even though there is a complex relationship between income and life satisfaction, citizens of post-socialist societies and European transition countries report lower levels of life satisfaction compared to the citizens living in rich Western countries (Bartolini et al, 2012). Studies found that life satisfaction gap is about 0.9 on average (Nikolova, 2015).

2.3 Association between Trust and Life Satisfaction

Scholars argue that life satisfaction at the micro-level is closely linked to the formal institutions because they provide necessary resources to generate productive efforts and purchase basic goods and services to meet their materialist needs and create "the action space of individuals" to satisfy their post-materialist needs (Berggren, & Bjørnskov, 2020, p. 4). Moreover, formal institutions set rules that enable or constrain activities where citizens can engage in and find meaningful things to satisfy their life (Berggren, & Bjørnskov, 2020). Therefore, trust in formal institutions has a direct effect on individual life satisfaction. On the other hand, trust in people in general reduces unwanted barriers created by fears that others may take advantage on them and nurtures interactions, exchange of information and resources helping individuals achieve what they want to do in life.

But literature is inconclusive about the relationship between various types of trust (i.e, social trust, and institutional trust) and life satisfaction. Some studies have found a negative relationship between social trust and life satisfaction in transition

countries (Anna, 2015), but a positive one in Western developed countries (Glatz, & Eder, 2020; Growiec, & Growiec, 2014). Other studies found a positive association between institutional trust and life satisfaction in transition countries (Anna, 2015; Glatz, & Eder, 2020) and advanced European countries (Glatz, & Eder, 2020; Hudson, 2006) but a limited predicting role in the Western Balkan countries namely Serbia (Jovanović, 2016).

In summary, the review of the literature showed that little is known about the association between various types of trust (i.e, social trust, and institutional trust) and life satisfaction in post-socialist societies, in general, and in Albania, in particular. Examined separately in most of the studies conducted in developed countries, the socio-economic determinants of the life satisfaction at the micro-level have yielded inconsistent results.

2.4 The Present Study

The present study examined the association between various types of trust (i.e, social trust, and institutional trust) and life satisfaction in post-socialist Albania after controlling for gender, age, and education level. It analyzed data from the round 6 of the European Social Survey carried out in Albania in 2012-2013. The present study addressed the following research question: To what extent are various types of trust (i.e, social trust, and institutional trust) associated with life satisfaction in Albania controlling for gender, age, and education level? Based on gaps identified in the previous research conducted in transition countries including Albania and inconsistent results about various types of trust, life satisfaction at micro-level and socio-demographic factors, this study hypothesized that:

H1: Social trust will be positively associated with individual life satisfaction.

H2: Institutional trust will be positively associated with individual life satisfaction.

H3: Social trust, and institutional trust will be positively associated with individual life satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, and education level.

3. Methods

3.1 Data and Participants

The present study employed data from the round 6 of the European Social Survey which were collected in Albania during 2012-2013 (European Social Survey, 2013). The final sample was composed of 1,063 participants aged 18-74 years. As showed in Table 1, the sample was primarily female (54.7%). Most of them were young aged 18-36 years (37.9%) and had up to 8/9 years of schooling (44.0%). More than half were employed (53.9%) and resided in rural areas (41.1%).

3.2 Measures

Social trust was measured by the following single item close-ended question "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" Response categories ranged from 0 (you can't be too careful) to 10 (most people can be trusted), while intermediate numbers were unlabelled. The validity of this measure has been confirmed (Bergh, & Bjørnskov, 2014) and it has been used in other studies (Clench-Aas, & Holte, 2021; Glatz, & Eder, 2020). In this study, this measure produced a median value of *3.00*.

Institutional trust was measured by the following five-item question "On a score of 0 – 10, how much you personally trust each of the institutions in your country: a) the parliament, b) the legal system, c) the police, d) politicians, and e) political parties?" Response categories ranged from 0 (no trust at all) to 10 (complete trust), while intermediate numbers were unlabelled. The primary focus of this study was trust in domestic institutions that is why international institutions namely, the European Parliament and the United Nations were dropped from the orginal measure used in the round 6 of the European Social Survey carried out in Albania (ESS, 2013). A new scale was created with these five items which showed an internal consistency of ($α$ = *.84*). Factor analysis revealed that Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (*KMO* = *.79*) while the Barlett's test of sphericity was significant *(< .05)*. Each item loaded greater than *.3* on a single item. It should be mentioned that this five item new scale has also been used in other studies (Anderson, & Singer, 2008; Hakhverdian, & Mayne, 2012). In this study, this measure produced (*M = 3.10, SD = 2.45*).

Life satisfaction was measured by a single close-ended question "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?" Response categories ranged from 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied) with unlabelled intermediate numbers. The validity of this measure has been confirmed (Pavot et al, 1991) and it has been used in various studies (Arpino, & De Valk, 2018; Clench-Aas, & Holte, 2021; Glatz, & Eder, 2020). In this study, this measure produced a median value of *6.00*.

3.2.1 Control Variables

Gender was a categorical variable with two reponse categories (1 = male, 2 = female).

Age was a continuous variable ranging from 18 to 74 years old (*N = 1068, M = 43.75, SD = 16.37*).

Education level was a categorical variable with 14 possible answers (1 = illiterate; 2 = primary school; 3 = 8/9 years of schooling diploma; 4 = general high school diploma; 5 = vocational high school certificate (2 years); 6 = vocational high school certificate (more than 2 years); 7 = non-universitary tertiary education; 8 = university diploma/bachelor; 9 = professional master; 10 = post-graduate diploma; 11 = master of arts; 12 = master of science; 13 = long-term specialization; 14 = doctoral degree)

3.3 Data Analysis

Analyses were conducted through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22. Initially data were screened for missing values and since they were missing less than 5% for each study variable then listwise deletion was applied to handling them (Enders, 2010). Univariate analyses along with descriptive statistics were used to explore data distribution and calculate measures of central tendency. Bivariate analyses were run to examine the association among study variables. Social trust and life satisfaction were ordinal variables while institutional trust was continuous variable. Furthermore, study variables and control variables were collapsed, dummy coded, and recoded when needed. Thus, life satisfaction was collapsed as follows: *0-3 = 1 (low), 4-6 = 2 (medium), 7-10 = 3 (high)*; gender was dummy coded; education level was collapsed into three categories (*up to 8/9 years of schooling = 1; high school = 2; university degree and higher = 3*).

Data analysis followed four steps. In the first step, Spearman rank order correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the strength and direction of the association between social trust and life satisfaction, while Pearson correlation was used to examine the association between institutional trust and life satisfaction (Morgan et al, 2011). In the second step, separate simple ordinal regression analyses were conducted to assess the relationships between social trust, institutional trust, and life satisfaction (Norušis, 2007). In the third step, various correlation analyses were conducted including Spearman rank order correlation to examine the strength and direction of the association between life satisfaction and education; Chi-square test to investigate the association between life satisfaction and gender; and Pearson correlation analysis to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between life satisfaction and age (Morgan et al, 2011). In the fourth step, a multiple ordinal regression analysis was conducted to examine whether social trust, and institutional trust were associated with life satisfaction controlling for gender, age, and education level (Almquist, Ashir, & Brännström, 2014).

There is an open debate among scholars on how to use ordinal independent variables in regression analysis (Winship, & Mare, 1984). Some of them suggest considering them as nominal variables which can be dummy coded while emphasizing the difficulty of interpretation of their results due to the high number of their categories. Other scholars argue that ordinal independent variables can be handled as continuous even though their items are not equally spaced (Pasta, 2009). Therefore in this study, social trust (independent variable) was handled as continuous variable in ordinal and multiple ordinal regression analyses conducted.

4. Results

Descriptive statistics showed that 32.1% of the participants self-reported very low level of social trust 'You can't be too careful' versus 3.3% who self-reported

'Most people can be trusted'; 41.2% of the participants self-reported 'No trust at all' to country's parliament versus 5.0% who self-reported 'Complete trust'; 34.0% of the respondents self-reported 'No trust at all' in the legal system versus 7.7% who self-reported 'Complete trust'; 17.5% of the participants self-reported 'No trust at all' in the police versus 14.0% who reported 'Complete trust'; 53.3% of the participants self-reported 'No trust at all' in politicians versus 2.5% who reported 'Complete trust'; 45.9% of the participants self-reported 'No trust at all' in political parties versus 3.7% who reported 'Complete trust'. Surprisingly, 12.2% of the participants self-reported being extremely dissatisfied with life versus 15.7% who self-reported being extremely satisfied.

Hypothesis 1, which stated that social trust is positively associated with individual life satisfaction, was tested. Results of the Spearman rank order correlation analysis revealed a positive and small correlation between social trust and personal life satisfaction ($r_s = .12$, $p = .00$). As was expected, those who self-reported higher scores in social trust tended to self-report higher scores in life satisfaction. Simple ordinal regression analysis examined association between social trust and individual life satisfaction. As was expected, results (Table 2) showed that social trust made a significant contribution to the individual life satisfaction (*Estimate = .08, SE = .02, Wald = 14.89, p = .00*). The model was a good fit but weak and explained 1.6% of the variance in life satisfaction scores, *[OR = 1.08, 95% CI(1.04, 1.12)]*. For every unit increase in social trust scores, personal life satisfaction increased by 1.08.

Hypothesis 2, which stated that institutional trust is positively associated with individual life satisfaction, was tested. Results of the Pearson correlation analysis indicated that there was a positive, weak but statistically significant correlation between institutional trust and life satisfaction ($r = .27$, $p = .00$). As was expected, those who self-reported higher institutional trust ratings tended to self-report higher life satisfaction scores. Simple ordinal regression analysis examined association between institutional trust and individual life satisfaction. As was expected, results (Table 3) showed that institutional trust made a significant contribution to the personal life satisfaction (*Estimate = .24, SE = .03, Wald = 85.54, p = .00*). The model was a good fit but weak and explained 9.4% of the variance in life satisfaction, *[OR = 1.27, 95% CI(1.21, 1.34)]*. Thus, for every unit increase in institutional trust scores, personal life satisfaction increased by 1.27.

Hypothesis 3, which stated that social trust and institutional trust are positively associated with individual life satisfaction after controlling for age, gender, and education level, was tested. Separate correlation analyses examined the relationship between life satisfaction and control variables (gender, age, and education level). Results of the Pearson correlation analysis revealed that there was a negative, weak but significant correlation with age ($r = -.12$, $p = .00$). Results of the Chi-square test showed that there was a statistically non-significant association between life satisfaction and gender, $\chi^2(2, N = 1061) = .48$, $p = .NS$. Results of the Spearman rank

order correlation analysis revealed that there was a positive and small correlation between life satisfaction and education level (r_s = .12, p = .00).

Multiple ordinal regression analysis examined the association between social trust, institutional trust, and life satisfaction controlling for age, gender, and education level. As was expected, results of the multiple ordinal regression (Table 4) showed that both social trust (*Estimate = .05, SE = .02, Wald = 4.66, p = .00*) and institutional trust (*Estimate = .23, SE = .03, Wald = 74.20, p = .00*) were positively associated with life satisfaction. The model was a good fit and explained 12.0% of the variance in individual life satisfaction controlling for age, gender, and education level respectively, [*OR = 1.05, 95% CI(1.00, 1.07)*] for social trust and [*OR = 1.26, 95% CI(1.19, 1.33)*)] for institutional trust. Age was significantly related to the ratings of life satisfaction (*Estimate = -.21, SE = .07, Wald = 7.76, p = .00*), [*OR = .81, 95% CI(.70, 1.13)*] indicating an inverse relationship between them. Thus, younger cohorts expressed greater satisfaction with life than the older ones. As people grow old, their satisfaction with life declines. Education level was also significantly related to the ratings of life satisfaction indicating an inverse relationship between them. Thus, those who had up to 8/9 years of schooling (*Estimate = -.67, SE = .19, Wald = 11.81, p = .00*) and those who had high school (*Estimate = -.38, SE = .19, Wald = 3.85, p = .04*) such that those who had up to 8/9 years of schooling expressed lower satisfaction with life than those who had a university degree and higher [*OR = .51, 95% CI(.35, .75)*]. In the same way, [*OR = .68, 95% CI(.46, 1.00)*], such that those with high school expressed lower life satisfaction than those with university degree and higher. Gender was not significantly related to life satisfaction.

5. Discussion

This article researched the extent to which various types of trust (i.e, social trust, and institutional trust) were associated with personal life satisfaction among a sample of 1063 participants aged 18-74 years, after controlling for age, gender, and education level. It was based on data taken from the round 6 of the European Social Survey carried out in Albania in 2012-2013. Trust and life satisfaction have been mostly studied in the context of developed countries. But very limited research has been documented in the context of post-socialist countries, in general, and of Albania, in particular.

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, results of the Spearman rank order correlation analysis showed that there was a positive and statistically significant association between social trust and individual life satisfaction, while simple ordinal regression analysis indicated that estimated odds ratios favored a positive relationship between social trust and life satisfaction. This result is also supported by other studies (Clench-Aas, & Holte, 2021; Crowley, & Walsh, 2018; Glatz, & Eder, 2020; Mikucka et al, 2017) which found that social trust is beneficial for the life satisfaction of individuals and makes their lives more comfortable.

Consistent with Hypothesis 2, results of the Pearson correlation analysis revealed that there was a positive, weak but statistically significant correlation between institutional trust and individual life satisfaction, while simple ordinal regression analysis indicated that estimated odds ratios favored a positive relationship between institutional trust and life satisfaction. This result was supported in previous research (Anna, 2015; Crowley, & Walsh, 2018; Eurofound, 2013; Glatz, & Eder, 2020; Hugson, 2006) which found that trust in formal institutions influences institutional practice, support, and efficiency to implement good policies that improve life satisfaction among citizens. Even though social trust and institutional trust were positively associated with individual life satisfaction, findings of this study showed that institutional trust was a stronger determinant of personal life satisfaction than social trust.

Consistent with Hypothesis 3, results of the multiple ordinal regression analysis indicated a positive and significant association between social trust, institutional trust and individual life satisfaction controlling for age, gender, and education level. Even though Hypothesis 3 was confirmed, not all control variables made significant contribution to the model. Results of the multiple ordinal regression analysis showed that age was inversely related with life satisfaction. Thus, young participants scored higher life satisfaction than older ones. This result is supported by previous research (Glatz, & Eder, 2020; Golgher, & Coutinho, 2020) which tries to explain this negative relationship with changes in political and historical context. For instance, years of post-socialist transition deeply affected people's ability to create and maintain social trust and political trust. Old cohorts have spent a greater part of their life under a dictatorial system that is why they show a slow adjustment to complex transition which, in turn, may have a negative effect on their life satisfaction. Moreover, fast change of traditional norms and social values along with new unconsolidated formal institutions may confront them with greater stress and increase their social exclusion. On the other hand, life satisfaction literature suggests that people differ in both the type of specific daily activities they engage in and psychological mechanisms that assign to them (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, & Ilies, 2012). Since young generations are more actively involved in various types and amount of activities, they may experience more positive emotions leading to a better satisfaction with their lives.

This study found that education was positively associated with life satisfaction. Thus, highly educated participants were more satisfied with life than low educated ones. This result is supported by previous research (Blanchflower, & Oswald, 2004; Crowley, & Walsh, 2018) which suggests that education empowers people and opens up various opportunities to live flourishing lives. In line with previous research (Golgher, 2014), gender was not significantly related with life satisfaction. Literature suggests that conflicting results about the link between gender and life satisfaction may be influenced by other factors including socio-cultural context, the status of females within and outside home, and gender equality (Meisenberg, & Woodley,

2015). Therefore, future research should examine the link between gender and life satisfaction taking into consideration various socio-cultural factors.

Findings of this study made some significant contributions to scant literature on various types of trust (i.e., social trust, and institutional trust) and life satisfaction in the context of transition countries. Although they support previous research, they provide helpful evidence to advance understanding of the link between various types of trust and life satisfaction. Further, this study investigated the association between various types of trust (i.e., social trust, and institutional trust) and life satisfaction in the context of post-socialist Albania where such a topic is under-researched. By assessing them, findings of this study confirmed positive association between social trust, institutional trust, and life satisfaction after controlling for age, gender, and education level. Yet, they open a 'new window' for future research on determinants of individual life satisfaction in post-socialist societies.

Findings of this study have some implications for individuals and policy-makers. From the point of view of individuals, social trust matters for their life satisfaction that is why they should invest to build it up. Trustful people develop trustful relations that can generate positive interactions and fruitful cooperation whose effects will improve their life satisfaction. From the point of view of policy-makers, wellbeing of citizens is an important goal of each government that is why they should create necessary conditions to design trustful institutions which will have "a high probability of generating higher subjective wellbeing" (Berggren, & Bjørnskov, 2020, p. 42).

The present study has some limitations that should be noted. Despite its strength to use a large sample obtained by the round 6 of the European Social Survey (ESS, 2013), its cross-sectional nature allowed examining the association between various types of trust and life satisfaction in short-term. This means that the findings of this study may be changed in the long-term. Second, some scholars argue that it is difficult to analyze the relationship between social trust and its consequences because it is "a matter of which came first" (Andreasson, 2017, p. 13). Therefore this study is restricted to provide evidence on association between social trust, institutional trust and life satisfaction without making any causal interpretation. Third, study variables (social trust, institutional trust, and life satisfaction) were self-reported. Thus, their ratings might have been affected by bias. Since these measures are truly subjective ones, their validity can be hardly measured by "other methods than by asking people" (Clench-Aas, & Holte, 2012, p. 13).

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Table 1
Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Characteristics	*n*	%
Gender		
Female	581	54.7
Male	482	45.3
Age		
18 - 36 years old	403	37.9
37 - 55 years old	366	34.4
56 – 74 years old	294	27.7
Education level		
up to 8/9 years	464	44.0
High school	452	42.8
University and higher	139	13.2
Employment relation		
Employee	573	53.9
Self-employed	119	11.2
Working for own family	75	7.1
Not applicable	292	27.5
Place of residence		
A big city	282	26.7
Suburbs or outskirts of big city	123	11.6
Town or small city	207	19.6
Country village	434	41.1
Farm or home in countryside	11	1.0

Note. N = 1063

Table 2
Results of Ordinal Regression Analysis for Social Trust and Life Satisfaction

		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	p	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Threshold	Satis (low)	-.92	.09	101.68	.00	-1.10	-.74
	Satis (Medium)	.44	.09	26.07	.00	.27	.62
Location	Social Trust	.08	.02	14.89	.00	.04	.12

Link function: Logit.

Table 3
Results of Ordinal Regression Analysis for Instituional Trust and Life Satisfaction

		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	p	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Threshold	Satis (low)	-.49	.10	24.39	.00	-.68	-.29
	Satis (Medium)	.95	.10	88.05	.00	.75	1.15
Location	Ins. Trust	.24	.03	85.54	.00	.19	.29

Link function: Logit.

Table 4
Results of Multiple Ordinal Regression Analysis for Social Trust, Institutional Trust and Life Satisfaction controlling for Age, Gender, and Education Level

		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	p	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Threshold	Satis (low)	-1.28	.24	27.68	.00	-1.76	-.81
	Satis (Medium)	.19	.24	.60	.44	-.28	.66
Location	Social Trust	.05	.02	4.66	.03	.00	.09
	Instituional Trust	.23	.03	74.20	.00	.18	.28
	Female	-.04	.12	.14	.71	-.28	.19
	Age	-.21	.07	7.76	.00	-.35	-.06
	Up to 8/9 years	-.67	.19	11.81	.00	-1.05	-.29
	High school	-.38	.19	3.85	.04	-.76	.00
	University and higher	0[a]	.	.	.	.	.

Link function: Logit.
a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.