

# The Study of Contemporary Chinese Undergraduates' Interpersonal Trust

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**Abstract:** Trust is the outcome of relationships and interpersonal trust is a kind of general expectation of individual to others. Interpersonal trust is the outcome of relationships. In western countries, it is the performance of the contract spirit. In China, it is the trust of personality. Rotter's Interpersonal Trust Scale is widely used as the measurement for credibility in China. Undergraduates, a special group in society, are sensitive to the change of social life. Various uncertain factors lead to the trust fluctuates of undergraduates. Therefore, we should get to know the current situation of undergraduates' interpersonal trust and put forward projects which can improve undergraduates' interpersonal trust to create favorable conditions, provide solid theoretical support and practical basis for the harmonious development and personnel training for colleges and universities.

**Keywords:** Interpersonal trust; Credibility; Undergraduates

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. The Research Status of Trust Theory at Home and Abroad.

#### 1.1.1. The origin of trust theory

In *The Philosophy of Money*, Simmel (Simmel, 1900) believed that trust is "one of the most important comprehensive strength in society". He pointed out that "if the interpersonal trust can't be reliable or more reliable like theory evidence or the personal experience, then very few relationships can keep down". Eriksen (1950) believed that trust is the good expectation to the object in human contact. Deutsch (Deutsch, 1958) carried on the empirical research on interpersonal trust. He designed an experiment called Prisoner's Dilemma to reflect the level of interpersonal trust through the action that whether the participants cooperate or not. Rotter (Rotter, 1967) defined interpersonal trust as one's general expectation of reliability on others' words, reliable commitments, oral and written statements. It is also the most widely used definition among the research on interpersonal trust at home and abroad.

Lewis and Weigert (Lewis & Weigert, 1985) believed that trust is the production of interpersonal relationship which is based on the relationship of rational calculation and emotional connection. In his book *Trust: The Social Virtues and The Creation of Prosperity*, American economist Fukuyama interpreted trust as following: it is the league members' expectation to other's normal, honest, cooperative behavior in a community, its foundation is the jointly owned norm among community members and the individuals' role one played in the community which he belonging to".

#### 1.1.2. The development of interpersonal trust theory in China

The trust in western is a kind of trust. Basically, the trust of Chinese people is a kind of personality trust. Zuo Zhuan: The 25th Year of Xi Gong told us that "Trust is the treasure of a country". Xun Zi, the *Discuss of War* told us that "The policy and law of a powerful nation is believed by its people, the policy and law of a weak nation lose people's trust." Guanzi Chengzi told us that "Businessman can not run business if he is not honest." In China, since ancient times, trust is built on the basis of relatives, friends and acquaintances, it is a "behavior norms among patriarchal clan, consanguinity and humanity relations beyond commercial utility relations, it is a kind of moral spirit based on kinship family, friendship, social culture and feudal state patriarchal relations". Chinese traditional trust view is developed on the basis of a long-term autarky feudal small-scale peasant economy. Most of the time, trust is used to adjust ethical relations between individuals or between individuals and government which do not need trust system and the adjustment of trust system.

Through the research of employees in Taiwanese companies, Chen Jiexuan and Gao Chengshu (1991) point out that interpersonal trust contains both the traditional human relations and the rational calculation based on the acquired achievements. Yang Yiyin (1992) argues that interpersonal trust is the related reliability expected among interpersonal cooperation motivation, cooperation behavior and role specification on the object of communication.

Trust can be influenced by various social factors (Zhou Shengchun, Yang Ying, 2011). In the aspect of living address, there was no significant difference among undergraduates' interpersonal trust, relationship trust and institutional trust (Wang Qing, 2012). In school education in China, the education of sincerity and trust are very important content. In general, the side which was showed to students are usually the positive side. But under the network environment, the various negative events in society has had a great impact on undergraduates' interpersonal trust level which lead to undergraduates' interpersonal trust level be complex and not high. When studying the internal problems of trust between the groups of undergraduates, Xiang Dongchun (Xiang Dongchun, 2010) points out that the analysis of trust relationship between administrators group (including administrative personnel, party and government personnel) and academic staff groups (including the group of teachers and students) should stand in the breach.

## 2. The Related Research on the Measurement of Interpersonal Trust

Interpersonal Trust Scale, sometimes also known as the interpersonal trust test. Most of the domestic research on interpersonal trust adopted Rotter's Interpersonal Trust Scale (1967) to collect data. Interpersonal Trust Scales (hereinafter referred to as ITS) is compiled by an American psychology professor of University of Connecticut named Rotter J.B. in 1976. ITS is used to measure subjects' estimates of reliability towards the behavior and promise of others. It includes a variety of situations of interpersonal trust, involving different social roles (including parents, salesman, judges, the general population, politicians and the media). Most of the projects associated with the trustworthiness of social role. Of cause there are some projects related to the level of optimism for the future. The scale of the retest reliability (interval 7 months) is 0.56 ( $P < 0.01$ ), half-believed reliability is 0.76. The Scale of retest reliability (interval 3 months and 7 months is 0.68 and 0.56, both have no surpass the significant level.

Rotter J.B. compiled Interpersonal Trust Scale (Interpersonal Trust Scale) with Social Learning Theory to measure subjects' estimates of reliability towards the behavior, promise and state (oral or in black and white) of others. The scale established psychological contact through interpersonal communication which reflects in group activities. Interpersonal trust involved in each individual in the society, it has very important significance for the healthy development of individual personality, the establishment of a good family relationship and the harmonious development of the whole society. v

After being translated into Chinese, ITS is widely used in China. It adopts 5 point (1 to 5) score system and includes 25 projects. The score shows the trust level. The

theoretical minimum score is 25 points, the highest score is 125 points, the median is 75 points. It is proved that ITS has good reliability and validity. The internal consistency reliability is 0.91 of Jian Jia' report about the ITS, retest reliability is 0.78, the structure validity and criterion validity are both ideal (Jian Jia, 2007). High interpersonal trust is good for the social individual to work actively and have a happy life, so that the whole society presents a positive, optimistic and harmonious atmosphere. On the contrary, whether at work or in life low interpersonal trust makes one can't fully trust others, therefore, the communication will be bound, the feelings will be hurt which will lead to the whole society filled with inharmonious atmosphere such as tension, hostility and negative, etc.

Mutual trust between people is the lubricant of the economic and social life, it is good for improving the efficiency of the operation of social organization, promote the growth of macro-economy. Through the Survey data of Chinese trust provided by World Values Survey respectively in 1990 and 1990 and the 2001, we can find that from 1990 to 2001, there is a the declining trend of Chinese mainland residents' trust level. As a special group in society, undergraduate is sensitive to the changes in social life. The most realistic effect caused by the rapid changes of social to undergraduates is the uncertainty of future employment. In recent years, undergraduates' employment situation is quite serious, which makes undergraduates more psychological pressure and worries about the future life. According to the research by Wang Shaoguang and Liu Xin (2002), the less optimistic about the future, the more sensitive they are to the uncertainty, thus, the drop of trust level is more obvious. Obviously, the uncertainty is likely to become one of the reasons for the decrease of the trust level of the students.

## 3. The Significance and Thoughts of Studying Undergraduates' Interpersonal Trust

As a member of the undergraduates who are going to enter society, although they have the ability of independent thinking and problem analysis, they are lack of self-protect consciousness and social experience, it is not enough to cope with the complex social relations. Facing the fact that the loss of social trust and interpersonal trust scale is gradually reduced, the undergraduates' interpersonal trust is gradually reduced, it even affected the trust of college, friends, teachers, even the family. Lack of trust will bring many problems to undergraduates such as lack of insecurity, self-efficacy, and subjective well-being.

### 3.1. The theoretical significance

At present, there are a lot of researches on undergraduates' interpersonal trust, but most of them adopted ITS compiled by Rotter in 1967 to survey on undergraduates'

interpersonal trust. Although this scale is an international authority, it was compiled many years ago and was not a tailor-made for undergraduates, so the survey of the undergraduates' interpersonal trust measured by it may not be accurate. Therefore, it is necessary to revise a more suitable, accurate scale to measure the interpersonal trust of undergraduates who born after 2000.

The previous researches of undergraduates' interpersonal trust in our country are mostly focused on the characteristics, dimension, and influential factors of undergraduates' interpersonal trust. The studies from the aspect of ideological and political education to improve undergraduates' interpersonal trust are limited. On the basis of compiling more suitable measurement tool for the survey of Chinese undergraduates' interpersonal trust and discussing undergraduates' interpersonal trust, this paper puts forward effective suggestions of improving the interpersonal trust of university students from the aspects of college ideological education work, it provides help for completing the quality of undergraduates' personality and promote undergraduates' mental health development, it also provides theoretical guidance and reference for school education management and create favorable conditions for schools' harmonious development and the cultivate of talents.

### 3.2. The practical significance

Revise the Undergraduates Interpersonal Trust Scale and make it an effective tool for measuring the interpersonal trust of undergraduates who born after 2000 and enrich the tool for measuring undergraduates' interpersonal trust. From the perspective of the importance of college ideological education work we can see that improving undergraduates' interpersonal trust can effectively reduce and avoid the bad influence on their psychological health and interpersonal trust caused by trust crisis and let students learn to build a harmonious interpersonal relationship properly.

Improving undergraduates' interpersonal trust by college ideological and political education work can make undergraduates do better in the maintenance and development of their interpersonal relationship and strength their competitiveness skill and social competitiveness.

### 3.3. The research thoughts

First of all, the author revised and measured Undergraduates Interpersonal Trust Scale through literature review and interviews. Build the dimension of undergraduates' interpersonal trust scale in 6 interpersonal relationship including family, friends, lovers, professional teachers, counselors and ordinary students. Test the reliability and analyze the results. Secondly, discuss undergraduates' interpersonal trust according to the different population which undergraduates communicate and the testing results. Finally, consider the relationship between ideology

education work and the students trust, puts forward the effective methods which can improve undergraduates' interpersonal trust.

Undergraduates are the strength of the construction of our country in the future and an important part of society. Undergraduates' interpersonal trust may also affect the future development trend of the society, so it is necessary to pay more attention on undergraduates' interpersonal trust, understand the current situation of undergraduates' interpersonal trust, targeted bring out suggestion to improve undergraduates' interpersonal trust so as to lead the entire society and campus to an actively and harmonious state.

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