

# **Constructing a Scale to Measure Social Cohesion Using a Quantitative Data Collection Survey**



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# Why this topic?

Constructing a scale to measure social cohesion is a challenging and complex process.

1. Conceptual Clarity,
2. Complex and multifaceted concept,
3. Cultural and Contextual Sensitivity,
4. Social desirability bias.



Overall, constructing a social cohesion scale requires careful attention to conceptual clarity, measurement properties, cultural and contextual sensitivity, and data bias.

## What We did: ① Agree on definition

- "Social cohesion refers to the degree to which individuals in a society share a common set of values, beliefs, and norms, and are able to work together to achieve common goals" (Putnam, 2000).
- "Social cohesion can be defined as the extent to which a society is held together by shared values and social bonds, and the degree to which individuals feel connected to and supportive of their community" (OECD, 2011).
- "Social cohesion refers to the ability of a society to ensure the well-being of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization" (UNESCO, 2014).
- "Social cohesion can be defined as the degree to which social relations within a community are characterized by trust, mutual respect, and a willingness to cooperate to achieve common goals" (Kawachi & Berkman, 2000).
- "Social cohesion refers to the extent to which individuals and groups are able to form meaningful connections and engage in productive and collaborative relationships with others in their communities" (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2001).

The shared values and norms, social bonds and relationships, well-being and inclusion, trust and mutual respect, and productive collaboration.

## What We did: ② Adopt a Conceptual Framework

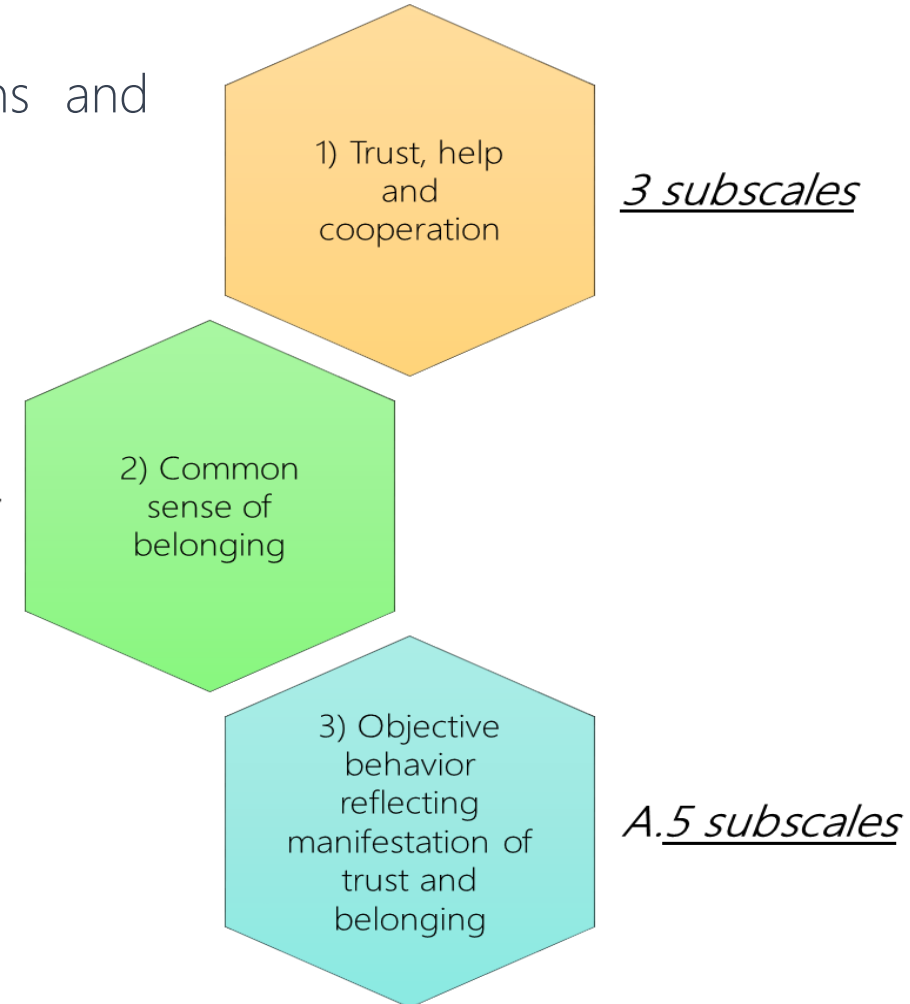
A conceptual framework that outlines the different dimensions and factors that contribute to social cohesion was adopted.

Based on framework proposed by Chan et al. (2006, p. 289)

A society is cohesive "only if the following three criteria are met:

1. They can trust, help and cooperate with their fellow members of society.
2. They share a common identity or a sense of belonging to their society
3. the subjective feelings in (1) and (2) are manifested in objective behavior."

2 subscales



Without a conceptual framework, it can be difficult to ensure that the scale is comprehensive and captures all of the different dimensions and factors of social cohesion.

# What We did: ③ Develop Social Cohesion Subscales and Questions

## Commonly used items



### Subscale 1: Trust, help and cooperation

|   |         |         |
|---|---------|---------|
| • Generalized trust, help and cooperation | 5 items | 3 items |
| • Out-group trust                         | 6 items | 4 items |
| • Vertical Trust                          | 9 items | 4 items |



### Subscale 2: Common sense of belonging

|   |         |         |
|---|---------|---------|
| 2.1. Generalized belonging                    | 5 items | 5 items |
| 2.2. Shared sense of belonging with out-group | 7 items | 4 items |



### Subscale 3: Objective behavior reflecting manifestation of trust and belonging-Interactions

|   |             |         |
|---|-------------|---------|
| 3.1. Interactions with in-group             | 3 items     | 2 items |
| 3.2. Interactions with members of out-group | 4 items     | 2 items |
| 3.3 Horizontal civic participation          | 6 items     | 3 items |
| 3.4. Vertical civic participation           | JO-4; SYR-1 | 1 items |
| 3.5. Sociocultural participation            | 4 items     | 0       |



A. General trust, help and cooperation.

| Adults   |
|--|
| Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?                               |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Most people can be trusted</li> <li>2. You can't be too careful dealing with people</li> </ol>                 |
| The level of trust between the people in my neighborhood is high.  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strongly Agree</li> <li>2. Agree</li> <li>3. Disagree</li> <li>4. Strongly disagree</li> </ol>                 |
| People living in this community help one another.  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strongly Agree</li> <li>2. Agree</li> <li>3. Disagree</li> <li>4. Strongly disagree</li> </ol>                 |
| People in this area do things to help the community.   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strongly Agree</li> <li>2. Agree</li> <li>3. Disagree</li> <li>4. Strongly disagree</li> </ol>                 |
| From your own perspective, how would you rate the relationships between Jordanian citizens and Syrian refugees within your community?                    |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Very Friendly</li> <li>2. Somewhat Friendly</li> <li>3. Some Unfriendly</li> <li>4. Very Unfriendly</li> </ol> |

A. Out-group trust

| Adults  |
|---|
| Scale:  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Definitely</li> <li>2. Probably</li> <li>3. Probably not</li> <li>4. Definitely not</li> </ol>  |
| Would you be less willing to cooperate with someone if he/she has the following background?   |
| A. He/she is from a lower social stratum than yours   |
| B. He/she is from a higher social stratum than yours  |
| C. He/she is from a different nationality?  |
| D. His/her political view is much different than yours  |
| E1. (if nationality = 1) He/she is refugee?   |
| E2. (if nationality = 2) He/she is Jordanian?   |
| F. He/she is from a different religion?   |
| Alternative item  |
| I'd like to ask you how much you trust people from various groups. Could you tell me for each whether you trust people from this group completely, somewhat, not very much or not at all? |
| A. People you meet for the first time   |
| B. People of another nationality  |
| C. People of another religion   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Completely</li> <li>2. Somewhat</li> <li>3. Not very much</li> <li>4. Not at all</li> </ol>   |

A. Vertical trust

| Adults  |
|---|
| Scale:  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Completely</li> <li>2. Somewhat</li> <li>3. Not very much</li> <li>4. Not at all</li> </ol> |
| Indicate the extent to which you trust each of the following institutions:  |
| 1- The government   |
| 2- The media  |
| 4- The parliament   |
| 5- The municipality in your area  |
| 6-The elected municipality officials (the council and the mayor)  |
| 7- The judicial system.   |
| 8- Political parties  |
| 11- The police  |
| 13- civil society organizations   |
| Alternative measure   |
| 1.3.1- Generally speaking, to what extent do you trust the government?  |
| 1.3.2- To what extent do you trust the government to handle its responsibilities?   |
| 1.3.3- Generally speaking, to what extent do you trust the house of representatives?  |
| 1.3.4- To what extent do you trust your electoral zone representatives?   |

#### D. Belonging (General)

| Adults   |
|--|
| Scale  |
| 1. Strongly Agree  |
| 2. Agree   |
| 3. Disagree  |
| 4. Strongly disagree   |
| I really feel part of this community.  |
| People in this area treat each other with respect.                               |
| In this area, there are those who belong and those who do not belong (reversed). |
| People in this area accept those who are different from them.                    |
| People in this area share a lot of community spirit.                             |

#### D. Shared sense of belonging with out-group.

| Adults  |
|---|
| Scale:  |
| 1. Definitely   |
| 2. Probably   |
| 3. Probably not   |
| 4. Definitely not   |
| <p>i. In this area, Jordanians and Syrians feel part of one community.</p> <p>ii. Syrians and Jordanians have customs and values different from one another (reversed).</p> <p>iii. (If nationality = 1) I will be happy if I'm having a Syrian as a neighbor.<br/>(If nationality = 2) I will be happy if I'm having a Jordanian as a neighbor.</p> <p>iv. (If nationality = 1) I will not be very happy about someone in my family marrying a (Syrian).<br/>(If nationality = 2) I will not be very happy about someone in my family marrying a (Jordanian).</p> <p>v. (If nationality = 1) There is a tangible benefit to cooperate with Syrians around issues in the community.<br/>(If nationality = 2) There is a tangible benefit to cooperate with Jordanians around issues in the community.</p> |
| <p>(If nationality = 1) In general, how would you describe your current perceptions and attitudes toward Syrians in your community within your city/ town?</p> <p>(If nationality = 2) In general, how would you describe your current perceptions and attitudes toward Jordanians in your community within your city/ town?</p> <p>1. Very positive</p> <p>2. Somewhat positive</p> <p>3. Somewhat negative</p> <p>4. Very negative</p>  |
| To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Syrians receive the kind of help that Jordanians need but do not get.   |



F. Interactions with in-group

|  |
|--|
| Adults   |
| Scale:<br>1. Strongly Agree<br>2. Agree<br>3. Disagree<br>4. Strongly disagree |
| I have many friendships with people of my nationality.                         |
| I have many friendships with people I am not related to.                       |
| When I deal with people in this community, the experience is usually positive. |

H. Civic participation (horizontal)

|  |
|--|
| Adults   |
| Scale:<br>1. Yes<br>2. No  |
| In the past two years, have you been member in an association or union or other civic institution?                             |
| In the past two years, how often have you participated in community activities at local institutions?                          |
| In the past two years, how often have you taken part in community activities at a local institution?                           |
| In the past two years, have you done any voluntary work that is not associated with an official institution?                   |
| In the past two years, have you sat with members of your community to discuss community problems?                              |
| In the past two years, have you participated in demonstrations or objections around something of importance to your community? |

G. Interactions with members of out-group

|   |
|---|
| Adults  |
| Scale:<br>1. Not at all<br>2. Once or twice a year<br>3. Every few months<br>4. Every few weeks<br>5. Every week  |
| If nationality = 1<br>How often do you<br>i-Deal with a Syrian person<br>ii-Have casual visits with a Syrian person<br>iii-Have a meal with a Syrian person<br><br>If nationality = 2<br>How often do you<br>i-Deal with a Jordanian person<br>ii-Have casual visits with a Jordanian person<br>iii-Have a meal with a Jordanian person |
| Scale:<br>1. Strongly Agree<br>2. Agree<br>3. Disagree<br>4. Strongly disagree  |
| I have many friendships with people of different backgrounds.   |
| (If nationality = 1) When I get together or interact with Syrians living in my community, the experience is usually positive.<br>(If nationality = 2) When I get together or interact with Jordanians living in my community, the experience is usually positive  |
| Has close friendships with people from a different nationality.   |

I. Civic participation (vertical)

|  |
|--|
| Adults   |
| Scale:<br>1. Yes<br>2. No<br>3. I was not eligible   |
| (if nationality = 1) Have you voted for the parliament in the last parliamentary elections?  |
| (if nationality = 1) Have you voted for the municipal council in the last municipality elections?                                    |
| (if nationality = 1) Have you voted for the local/governorate council in the last decentralization elections?                        |
| In the past two years, have you attended any local council meetings?   |
| To what extent do institutions allow for your participation in decision-making and governance in the matters which affect your life? |
| How would you describe your participation in the institutional decisions which may affect your life?                                 |

J. Sociocultural participation

|  |
|--|
| Adults   |
| Scale:<br>1. Not at all<br>2. Once or twice a year<br>3. Every few months<br>4. Every few weeks<br>5. Every week   |
| How often do you:<br>i. Participate in community social and cultural events.<br>ii. Participate in community occasions.<br>iii. Member of a cultural or sport group.<br>iv. Attend education classes |



## What We did: ④ Pre-Test the Survey Questions

- The quantitative measure was pre-tested with 82 respondents.
- Assess Variability of the Answers: the response distribution was examined to assess the variability in the answers. More variability is desired and an indication of an effective measure. The analysis looks at each sub-scale separately, in addition to the “social cohesion scale” as a whole.
- Scale reliability to inform about the quality of the measures/sub-scales by assessing the degree to which each item of the scale produces a result coherent with the other items on the scale was done. The statistic presented is Cronbach’s Alpha which can have a possible value between 0 and 1. As a general rule in applied social research, a reliability statistic above 0.600 is acceptable, whereas higher values, above 0.700 are desired.
- In addition to the scale reliability statistic, when we found questionable or contradictory results, correlations tables are presented to help answer main questions related to the tool’s finalization.

# What We did: 4 Pre-Test the Survey Questions

## Sample of Scale Testing Analysis

| Scale  | Items   | Response weight  | Calculation | Reliability statistics<br>(Cronbach's $\alpha$ ) |
|--|---|--|-------------|--|
| Outgroup trust, help and cooperation (SCALE A) | Suppose someone asked for your help in doing something, would you be less willing to help if he/she has the following background? |  |             | 0.967  |
|  | OTa1: He/she is from a lower social stratum than yours  | Definitely not = 1<br>Probably not = 2<br>Probably yes = 3<br>Definitely yes = 4 | OTa1 – 2.5  |  |
|  | OTa2: He/she is from a higher social stratum than yours   |  | OTa2 – 2.5  |  |
|  | OTa3: He/she is from a different nationality?   |  | OTa3 – 2.5  |  |
|  | OTa4: His/her political view is much different than yours   |  | OTa4 – 2.5  |  |
|  | OTa5: He/she is refugee?  |  | OTa5 – 2.5  |  |
|  | OTa6: He/she is from a different religion?  |  | OTa6 – 2.5  |  |
| Total score                                    | Outgroup trust = Mean (OTa1 to Ota6)/1.5  |  |             |  |

# What We did: 4 Pre-Test the Survey Questions

## Sample of Scale Testing Analysis

Correlations Table 1: Outgroup trust scales A and B correlations with relevant items under out-group belonging and outgroup interactions \*

|                        |                     | OGI4: I have many friendships with people of different backgrounds | OGI6: When I get together or interact with Syrians living in my community, the experience is usually positive | GB2: People in this area treat each other with respect | GB4: People in this area accept those who are different from them | OB1: In this area, Jordanians and Syrians feel part of one community | OB4: (If nationality = 1) I will not be very happy about someone in my family marrying a (Syrian) | OB6: In general, how would you describe your current perceptions and attitudes toward Syrians/ Jordanians in your community within your city/ town | GI1: I have many friendships with people of my nationality |
|------------------------|---------------------|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| Outgroup trust SCALE B | Pearson Correlation | -0.066   | .307*   | .331*  | .294*   | .0226  | -.433**   | .775*  | -0.152   |
|                        | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0.637  | 0.038   | 0.014  | 0.031   | 0.100  | 0.003   | 0.024  | 0.273  |
|                        | N                   | 54   | 46  | 54   | 54  | 54   | 46  | 8  | 54   |
| Outgroup trust SCALE A | Pearson Correlation | .424*  | 0.145   | 0.185  | 0.299   | -0.008   | -0.063  | . <sup>a</sup>   | -.392*   |
|                        | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0.031  | 0.490   | 0.357  | 0.129   | 0.967  | 0.754   |  | 0.048  |
|                        | N                   | 26   | 25  | 27   | 27  | 27   | 27  | 0  | 26   |

The yellow cells flag logical correlations whereas the blue cells flag illogical correlations – those significant in an unexpected direction. The green cells flag correlations of marginal significance – having acceptable magnitude but a margin or error of 10-15%.

## What We did: 5 Refine the Scale

- Based on the analysis of the responses and the evaluation of the reliability and validity of the scale, the items that need improvement were identified and refined. Some of the items that are not contributing to the scale were removed, rewrite or reword items to make them clearer or more relevant to the construct being measured, and add new items to the scale based on the feedback received from participants.

- Examples:

- 4 items to measure horizontal civic participations had very good scale reliability at 0.719. The only recommendation is to use the binary scale Yes/No scale for HCP2 rather than the 4-point scale.
- Three items acted inconsistently, and the consultant found responses may be confounded by other factors within the respondent's environment, and therefore not a reliable measure of belonging in the local context. These three are recommended to be removed from the questionnaire:
  - OB2: Syrians and Jordanians have customs and values different from one another**
  - OB3: I will be happy if I'm having a Syrian/Jordanian as a neighbor**
  - OB7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Syrians receive the kind of help that Jordanians need but do not get**

- “Not a single study adopts an official definition of “cohesion” or “tension” and numerous studies employ a variety of indicators and proxies intended to capture its presence.
- When constructing a scale to measure social cohesion, it is important to consider all of its dimensions and to ensure that the scale is measuring the construct in a comprehensive and nuanced manner.
- The scale should be culturally appropriate: Social cohesion can vary across different cultural and social contexts. When constructing a scale to measure social cohesion, it is important to ensure that the scale is culturally appropriate and relevant to the population being studied. This may involve adapting or modifying the scale to ensure that it is appropriate for the specific cultural and social context.

- Consider the appropriate response options: The response options used in the scale can have a significant impact on the validity and reliability of the scale. It is important to choose response options that are appropriate for the construct being measured and to ensure that the response options are clearly defined and well-understood by participants.
- Conducting long-term longitudinal research is essential for predictive purposes if organizations want to understand trends over time and monitor and evaluate changes in the level of social cohesion.
- As a lot of what social cohesion is: are the perceptions held by people, perceptions of key issues can drive or inhibit social cohesion.