MEASURING ACQUIESCENCE IN DIFFERENT CULTURES
primary analysis of methodological experiments

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CeSSI
Comparing some basic indicators

THINGS ARE MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION IN OUR COUNTRY (% agree)

- Russia: 35
- Ukraine: 27
- Moldova: 25
- Georgia: 40
- Armenia: 41
- Azerbaijan: 50
- Kazakhstan: 70
- Kyrgyzstan: 36
- Tajikistan: 68

Survey data shows the results which are very different for different countries and not consistent with our knowledge of relevant issues in given countries. Why?
Issue of Acquiescence

- **Suggested definition**
  response style when respondents tend to answer questions in the survey consistently using particular categories of approval/agreement/in favor/support regardless of the question content.

- **Measuring:** In comparative context the differences in level of acquiescence between cultures were often suspected, but not often measured.

- **Need:** information about acquiescence issues before the survey, on survey-design stage
Impact on measurement and comparability

- **Increase of measurement error**
  - Reliability of distribution (skewness, under or over-estimation)

- **Comparability issues**
  - The size of acquiescence effect can be different in different cultures and countries
  - Acquiescence effect can be differential (which parameters?) and not the same in different cultures
Design of experiment

**Hypothesis:** acquiescence effect can be different within and between different cultures and nations

**Research questions**

- Does the size of acquiescence effect differ between countries?
- Does these issues undermine the data comparability?
- Is acquiescence effect different between different social groups (gender, age, language, ethnicity, urbanity, education)?
- Is acquiescence effect different for different survey questions-topics? The primary hypothesis that it should be rather stable regardless of the topic
- Is acquiescence effect the same for different answer scales?
Region for experiment
Cultural diversity of the region

Religion: Orthodox Christian + 8% Muslim
Language: Russian

Religion: Muslims
Language: Russian (75%), 25% Kazakh

Religion: Orthodox Christian
Language: half Ukrainian, half - Russian

Religion: 77% Muslim, 17% Christians
Language of interviews: Russian (47%), 42% Kyrgyz, 11% Uzbek

Religion: 77% Muslim, 17% Christians
Language of interviews: Tajik (73%), Russian (21%), Uzbek (6%)

Language=Language of interview selected by respondent
Design of experiment

**Design:** set of 3 questions were located in first part of the questionnaire, the same questions in reverse form were located at the end of the interview.

Minimum 25 minutes difference in the time of interview were between first and second set of questions

The same scale 5-points agree-disagree labeled scale with mid-point was used for all items.

**Sample:** questions were included in the survey Post-Soviet Trends (CESSI). This comparative survey of post-Soviet countries is based on bi-annual national surveys, minimum size is 1000-2000 people, face-to-face interviews in respondent’s homes.
Design of experiment - items

**POLITICS:** Today our country moves to the right direction/
    Today our country moves to the wrong direction

**GENDER ROLES:** Women can manage large businesses the same well as men/
    Women can not manage large businesses the same well as men

**ETHIC RELATIONS:** When important decisions about national affairs are taken, the opinion of all ethnic groups living in our country should be the same important as the opinion of ___ MAIN ETHNIC GROUP/
    When important decisions about national affairs are taken, ___ MAIN ETHNIC GROUP should take main decisions, and the opinion of other ethnic groups living in our country should be less important
## Size of acquiescence effect in different countries

Acquiescence: those respondents who agreed both to positive and negative wording of the same item (agreeing regardless on question content)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>POLITICS</th>
<th>GENDER ROLES</th>
<th>ETHNIC ATTITUDES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Size of acquiescence effect

- Size of acquiescence effect is different between countries – in some countries it is consistently lower than in other countries.

- Acquiescence effect is not the same for different survey topics within one country (in most countries it was the lowest for Politics and highest for Ethnic relations).

  Strength of opinion (opinion which are better formed, stronger supported is less influenced by acquiescence effect than less formed opinion.

  The easier the question, the less is acquiescence effect.

  The more consolidated is the opinion in the society, the lower the acquiescence effect.
Acquiescence effect among different ethnic and linguistic groups. Example of Kazakhstan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Language of interview</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Kazakh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLITICS</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENDER ROLE</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETHNIC RELATION</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acquiescence effect among different ethnic and linguistic groups. Example of Kyrgyzstan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Language of interview</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Kyrgyz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLITICS</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENDER ROLE</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETHNIC ATTITUDE</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Differential acquiescence effect

- Acquiescence effect is related to education (it is stronger among less educated groups). But it is very weakly related to gender or age.

- Acquiescence is strongly related to ethnicity - it is higher among some cultures and lower among others. It is related stronger to culture (ethnicity) than with country (the same ethnic groups in different countries shows similar degree of acquiescence effect).

- Acquiescence effect is related to language which was chosen for interview even when ethnicity is taken into account. It may due to the translation issues. Or it can be related to the integration to their native country.
Further research

- Different scales – is the size of acquiescence effect different or similar for different scales (agree-disagree, approve-disapprove, in favor-against)

- More topics or more items of the same topic. Are there topics where acquiescence effect is higher and why? Is acquiescence the result of methodological weakness of the question (difficult, long, unclear) or the indicator of unformed opinion/controversial opinions?