

Rule of Law and Tolerance

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Research Question:

What impact does the Rule of Law have on a society's tolerance?

Theory

I theorize that an increased Rule of Law would decrease the level of perceived threat and enable people to be more tolerant. Tolerance is the level of mutual respect and understanding within and between cultures. Studies have shown that people have an increased capacity for tolerance when they have reduced threat perceptions. When people feel endangered by actions that differ from their norms they are less likely to respond in an affirmative and respectful manner. I suspect that an increased Rule of Law will enable people to feel safer even within a diverse context.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis #1: Reducing citizens levels of perceived threat through an increased Rule of Law (Independent Variable) will have a positive relationship with citizens levels of tolerance (Dependent Variable). Increasing the Rule of Law will enable citizens to feel safer within a diverse environment.

Hypothesis #2: An increased level of Interest Groups (Control Variable) within a society will have a positive relationship with tolerance (Dependent). Higher levels of Interest Groups will expose and familiarize a society to a more diverse set of ideas and cultures. The presence of these diverse ideas and cultures will cause a society to have more understanding and respect.

Methods

The data used to conduct the study came from the *Civics Enabling Environment Index 2013* (EEI). The EEI uses 71 secondary statistical data sources and 53 different indicators to compare and measure the "capacity of citizens (whether individually or collectively) to participate and engage in civil society" in 109 countries. The data was then studied using a quantitative research method. I analyzed the data and ran correlations and regression models on all the variables. The dependent variable is Tolerance, Independent Variable is Rule of Law, and Control Variable is Interest Groups.

Key Findings

The data found that an increase in the Rule of Law, when measured against the control variable, has a negative relationship with a culture's level of Tolerance. Because humans react negatively to potential threats it is imperative that citizens feel safe to possess differing opinions on politics, religion, etc. Cultures with a high level of Rule of Law may experience legal restrictions on the levels of diversity accepted and permitted. Heavy-Handed Rule of Law discourages differing from the accepted norms.

Interest Groups, which were not strongly correlated with Rule of Law, have a positive relationship, even when accounting for Rule of Law, with Tolerance in a society. Exposing a culture to a diverse range of ideas and cultures makes people more accepting of differences.

These findings are important as many societies think about methods of decreasing societal fractures and accommodating for an increasingly diverse population. This study indicates that increasing the Rule of Law is not an effective method of making society more tolerant. But, increasing Interest Groups may be an effective method of increasing Tolerance. Societies should think about ways of increasing Interest Groups as a tool of increasing Tolerance.

Sources and Acknowledgements

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