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Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,  
Lingüística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

Año 36, 2020, Especial N°

# 26

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

ISSN 1012-1537/ ISSNe: 2477-9385

Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



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# The role of social capital in the innovative development of society

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## Abstract

The purpose of research is to conduct a survey among students to determine their attitude to social capital and its impact on the development of communities; identify the main problems that may be associated with social capital; develop recommendations that can help solve problems in this area via an empirical study based on a survey method. The results of the study demonstrated that students may not fully understand the very definition of social capital; however, they realize that it affects the development of the community. In conclusion, social capital plays an important role in the formation and development of communities.

**Keywords:** Social capital, Community development, Innovative.

# El papel del capital social en el desarrollo innovador de la sociedad

## Resumen

El propósito de la investigación es realizar una encuesta entre los estudiantes para determinar su actitud hacia el capital social y su impacto en el desarrollo de las comunidades; identificar los principales problemas que pueden estar asociados con el capital social; desarrollar recomendaciones que puedan ayudar a resolver problemas en esta área a través de un estudio empírico basado en un método de encuesta. Los resultados del estudio demostraron que los estudiantes pueden no comprender completamente la definición misma del capital social; sin embargo, se dan cuenta de que afecta el desarrollo de la comunidad. En conclusión, el capital social juega un papel importante en la formación y desarrollo de las comunidades.

**Palabras clave:** Capital social, Desarrollo comunitario, Innovador.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social capital is an economic concept that takes into account economic and structural relations, such as access to material resources and capital distribution. A key property of social capital is how individuals or groups are connected to larger forms of social organization; and how resources and privileges are distributed by class, race, and gender. A French sociologist BOURDIEU P. (2005) was the first to introduce the concept of social capital in order to describe social relationships that can be used as a resource for obtaining benefits.

In the modern sense, social capital is based on relations between people and differs from human capital, which is the totality of knowledge and abilities of an individual (ZWINGENBERGER, 2003). The concept of social capital is actively used by anthropologists, sociologists, political experts, and economists. This demonstrates the complexity and multifacetedness of the phenomenon. It should be noted that the links between the innovative development of society and the level of total social capital are mediated by the political system, religious traditions, dominant values and cultural characteristic (OYELANA & NINI, 2015).

In the period from 1967 to 1973, the employees of the IBM national departments were surveyed in more than 50 countries around the world; as a result, four-factor models of values defining national cultures were developed (HOFSTEDE, 1983):

- Power distance is defined as the degree of inequality in power between people that they consider acceptable or normal;
- The desire to avoid uncertainty shows to what extent employees strive to have clearly defined ethics rules and well-defined work standards;
- Masculinity – femininity demonstrates the extent to which the society seeks to minimize or maximize the social sex role division;
- Individualism – collectivism characterizes the degree to which people prefer to act as individuals rather than group members

and vice versa. Individualism as a value is evident in the fact that people define themselves as individuals and care only about themselves; collectivism is characterized by a close relationship between a person and a group where they take care of meeting collective needs, providing them with support and security in exchange for devotion. It is the latter value that is directly related to the understanding of the nature and essence of social capital with due regard to the national factor.

Social capital can be broadly defined as the value derived from the resources embedded in social networks (LIN, 2008). Initially, this concept was used to characterize the structure of opportunities and actions in communities or groups, but later this idea was adapted to study individual behavior and commitment to politics and the public sphere. This adaptation is closely related to the change in the conceptualization of the community as an object, determined by the spatial structure, the economic infrastructure, as well as the structure of interpersonal relations in the community. Thus, when scientists started to consider community as dispersed networks of personal relationships, they recognized that social capital is a value that these relationships add to people's lives.

The exogenous narrative of the concept suggests that social capital is not a joint decision, but a structural element of society created through the emergence of certain cultural values, religion, and the political system, past and present institutions, as well as social structure. From this perspective, social capital can be referred to as cultural capital.

Apart from different approaches to social capital, a network is necessary for its distribution in society. A network is defined as relations between society members and a tool that promotes the diffusion of social capital. If people in society are rich in social capital, but the network is not wide enough, positive effects are not achieved. It is believed that high-trust societies are characterized by high density and a well-connected network, while societies with isolated groups can have a negative impact on the social capital formation (OSTROM & AHN, 2003).

Social capital is determined by its function. It is described as resources obtained from the social networks of people. Researchers find this concept attractive because it provides a conceptual link between the attributes of individual subjects and their immediate social context, especially the household, school, and neighborhood (LEVIN, WALTER, APPELYARD & CROSS, 2016; Popova et al., 2018). Arguably, human capital and social capital are two human resources in the context of community development. It is suggested that human capital includes the skills and knowledge obtained through formal and non-formal learning (JACKSON, CARDEN & COMPTON, 2015).

Human capital as an economic category has become one of the general economic concepts; it describes and explains many economic processes through the prism of human interests and actions. Human capital is considered in two aspects: Firstly, as a stock; secondly, as an income stream. Human capital as a stock demonstrates the productive forces of man, providing an opportunity to generate income. In

addition, the composition of the productive forces is determined differently. Let us single out the main components of human capital: Health; natural abilities; general culture; knowledge, experience, and skills; motivation and activity. On the other hand, human capital is an important asset that provides an income stream throughout a person's life. This shows the essence of human capital as an income stream. There are various approaches to measuring social capital, which can be roughly classified as follows:

- The approaches focused on the formation or use of human capital: profit and cost approaches;
  
- The approaches focused on the units for measuring the assessment results.

The application of the cost approach is based on the monetary value of investments in human capital formation. The exact opposite is the profit approach. It is focused on assessing the return on investment in the development of human capital. This refers to monetary benefits from unlocking human capital, which include the income of the employed as the return on investment in their professional training. According to this approach, income is capitalized, which reflects the accumulation of human capital. The measurement by income is aimed at determining the accumulated human capital through its actual and future benefits.

Examining the nation-building effort made by Egypt in 1900-1950, PARCEL & DUFUR (2001) pinpointed a significant role of social capital in national development and its association with wealth, education, and healthcare. Given its role in national production, social capital is a major factor in the nation's prosperity (MADHAVARAM & HUNTM, 2017).

Social capital can be considered as a multidimensional construct, which consists of structural, relational and cognitive dimensions. The structural dimension of social capital refers to the fact that entities that are better connected are more likely to achieve results due to their network contacts (DASPIT & LONG, 2014). In other words, networks can provide opportunities or impose restrictions on access to resources. Social capital often explains that people work better due to their good connections with other people, and better networks predict business success (LAURSEN, MASCIARELLI & PRENCIPE, 2012).

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

Based on the research purpose, it was decided to conduct an empirical study based on a survey method. We used a quantitative research methodology to collect and analyze the interpretations of the survey. Based on the research purpose, we conducted an empirical study involving bachelor students. In total, 850 students aged 18 to 21 took part in the survey (52% of women and 48% of men). All students

were intramural students. The purposive sampling was the most appropriate sampling method. In order to extend the coverage of the problem in the existing limitations of the questionnaire, the survey was conducted among the students from the first to the fourth year of study. A questionnaire was compiled for the survey. The survey involved students from seven universities in three different countries:

1. Lomonosov Moscow State University
2. Al-Azhar University
3. MGIMO University
4. Murdoch University Dubai
5. Heriot-Watt Dubai Campus
6. Almaty University of International Business
7. Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University

The survey involved 150 students from Lomonosov Moscow State University, 140 students from Al-Azhar University, 143 students from MGIMO University, 137 students from Murdoch University Dubai and 130 participants from Heriot-Watt Dubai Campus. There were 150 Kazakhstan students who participated in the survey (83 students from Almaty University of International Business and 67 students from Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University).

To expand the coverage of the problem and to provide a deeper consideration of social capital, the students were selected not only from various years of study but also specialties. The study involved the representatives of humanitarian and technical specialties. The survey was conducted among the students from the first to the fourth year of study in various specialties. The criterion for this selection is due to the fact that representatives of different domains, age and gender can have a different understanding of social capital and its impact on community development.

### **3. DATA ANALYSIS**

The results of the survey were analyzed in the STATISTICA system. The software allows visualization of data in statistical analysis. The margin of error is 1%, about 8 questionnaires were incorrectly filled in (some respondents did not answer all the questionnaire questions or chose more than one answer).

### **4. RESULTS**

A summary of survey results is presented in a brief table below, which shows the frequency of positive answers for each university. Results for question 8 were not included due to its general nature.

Table 1: The number of students who answered positively

University Name	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5	Q 6	Q 7	Q 8
Lomonosov Moscow State University	60	94	90	90	90	100	107	80
<i>Al-Azhar</i> <i>University</i>	52	88	80	88	93	98	98	68
MGIMO University	58	96	88	101	96	99	101	74
Heriot-Watt Dubai Campus	67	82	74	80	82	92	97	78
Almaty University of International Business	42	76	67	70	76	78	77	53
Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University	44	70	68	80	78	80	80	56
Lomonosov Moscow State University	70	100	92	95	103	111	110	83
Murdoch University Dubai	66	82	78	84	85	98	103	86
Total number of students	459	688	637	688	705	756	773	578

The more detailed information about the students' responses is given below. The first question did not demonstrate a high awareness of social capital. Only 54% of the respondents were familiar with the concept. This may be due to the fact that the concept is not so common in everyday life and maybe unfamiliar to students that do not study humanities. However, this result may be considered positive as more than half of the respondents chose the yes option. Despite the

relatively low awareness of the concept, 81 % of the students agreed that society cannot develop and function without an adequate level of social capital. This suggests that despite the unfamiliarity with the terminology, the respondents may intuitively understand the importance of the phenomenon.

The next question results were not surprising: 75% of the respondents agreed that a high level of social capital in certain groups positively affects the community as a whole. This may also be due to the fact that students may not be familiar enough with this concept: They do not realize that high social capital in closed groups does not have a positive influence on the community as a whole.

The fourth question showed that 81% of the respondents agreed that social capital can be formed from school age and 83% said that it can be formed within a family. This suggests that students are aware of the comprehensive formation of social capital. They realize that it affects not only education but also family relationships. Most respondents (89%) noted that a high level of social capital contributes to a higher level of education.

In the seventh question, 91% of the respondents agreed that a high level of social capital contributes to the innovative development of society. This suggests that they understand the relationship between social capital and the development of education, which provides the possibility of innovation.

The next question also demonstrated quite a high result: 68% agreed that a high level of social capital contributes to more sustainable community development. This also indicates students' awareness of the positive aspects of the phenomenon.

The last question provided us with unexpected results: only 35% of the respondents from Russia, 37% from Kazakhstan and 42% from the United Arab Emirates noted that the level of social capital is high in their country. This may suggest that at the moment the students are not satisfied with the current situation in their country and associate it with insufficient development of social capital.

Within the framework of our research, the interpretation of data is of interest to those countries whose students participated in the survey as there is a question of whether the answer trends are the same or different. Here, it is possible to conclude whether students of different political systems, religious views and cultural backgrounds have different opinions.

Thus, social capital plays an important role in the development of society, including the development of innovations. The proper level of social capital is required for the stable functioning of various services (such as health care, the legislative system, etc.). In addition, a high level of social capital makes the education system more developed, which allows training qualified specialists who can subsequently make a positive contribution to the development of society and continue to raise the level of social capital.

Based on the survey results, it was revealed that students from the three countries do not fully understand the concept of social capital. This is a serious problem as it can negatively affect its development. In addition, in order to fully realize a phenomenon, it is necessary to understand it. To solve this problem, two ways were proposed:

The formation of an adequate level of social capital requires the awareness of the concept. With specific reference to students, introduction courses can be organized to familiarize students with the importance of this phenomenon, the ways of its formation and its impact on the development of communities. In the future, similar courses may also be organized for various specialties, schoolchildren, etc., in order to broaden the understanding of the concept of social capital. In order to increase the level of social capital, a favorable environment promoting as many social networks as possible is required. This will help to make the maximum use of social capital: social networks will facilitate the exchange of experience, the adoption of other social groups, etc. The formation of the necessary environment can take place both at the state and organization levels.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

The research on social capital is conducted all over the world. In 2012, there was a study that took place in Turkey. It examined the relationship between social capital and the tendency for students not to

complete their studies. The study is similar to our research as it also involved students and regarded them as future specialists forming social capital. Based on the results of the study, it was revealed that the children whose mothers were more prone to illiteracy and fathers were less likely to have steady jobs with a constant income dropped out of school. This suggests that social capital has not been properly formed in adolescents living in such households. This affected the education level of children and their parents, as well as the family income as parents were engaged in menial work (LIN, 2008).

Thus, this confirms the assumption of our research that social capital must be formed at the family level to ensure its sustainable development. In order to understand the contribution of social capital factors to school status, the second logistic regression was conducted. It introduced three social capital factors as predictors in addition to six significant social risk predictors. Since social risk factors are fixed or quasi-fixed characteristics, they logically and temporarily preceded social capital variables and were introduced first in the analysis. Two of the three factors of social capital — namely, positive relationships with teachers and parental involvement in school life — positively affected the likelihood that teenagers will not drop out of school (GÖKŞEN & CEMALCILAR, 2010).

There are many reasons for dropping studies. Their elimination requires structural changes in several policy areas, including poverty, labor market structures and gender inequality, which are not amenable to short-term political reforms and form the country's social capital.

The results of this study demonstrate the benefit of closer attention to school-related social capital, which may increase the likelihood that socially disadvantaged students will complete elementary school (STANTON-SALAZAR, 2011; KANTOR & PROEKT, 2019).

There is a positive effect of school social capital on educational outcomes, especially for disadvantaged groups. However, this should not detract from the fact that social groups have different access to social capital due to their structural positions and connected social networks. It is important to recognize the positive effects of school social capital, but this does not mean that the desired educational outcomes can be achieved on a mass scale without removing deep-rooted structural inequalities.

Thus, we consider social capital in the context of education and its impact on competency and vice versa. The advantage of our study is that it involved students. They are future specialists who will form social capital and create innovations for the development of society. In addition, our research involved the representatives of the country (Kazakhstan) that is trying to raise the level of social capital to implement the state policy.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Thus, it can be concluded that social capital plays an important role in the formation and development of communities. Higher levels

of social capital contribute to better and more sustainable development. Based on the research purpose, we conducted an empirical study involving bachelor students from Russian, Kazakhstan and Arab universities. In total, 850 students aged 18 to 21 took part in the survey. The study showed that students may not fully understand the definition of social capital, but they realize that it affects community development.

First of all, it is necessary to introduce the concept of social capital. The formation of an adequate level of social capital requires the awareness of the concept. The introduction courses can be organized to familiarize students with the phenomenon. Similar courses can also be organized for various specialties, schoolchildren, etc., in order to broaden the understanding of the concept of social capital. In order to increase the level of social capital, a favorable environment promoting as many social networks as possible is required. This will help to make the maximum use of social capital: social networks will facilitate the exchange of experience, the adoption of other social groups, etc. The formation of the necessary environment can take place both at the state and organization levels. Further research can be more extended and conducted among master students, workers in different areas, high school students, as well as the citizens of other countries.

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Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

Año 36, Especial N° 26 (2020)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.

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