

# Women's Social Capital and Social Network in Iran

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**Abstract-** The study and recognition of present status of social capital, concerning social network of men and women is the main purpose of this article. This research has been done through survey method in Iran in 2011. Men and women over 18 mostly residents of Esfahan form the statistical community of this research. The results of multi regressive analysis show that the variables in the equation including effective social capital, gender and income in comparison with other variables have the most effect on social capital respectively and are kept in the equation. There is a significant difference between gender and social capital.

**Keyword:** Social Capital, Social Network, Socio-Economic Status, Women.

## 1. Introduction

One of the main criteria in recognition of social capital is the form and way of people's social relationships with each other. The concept of social capital reflects the social relations and the role of trust to get benefits. Generally, the rate of social capital in every society and group is indicative of level of individual's confidence on one another. The majority of available social science studies belong to the influence of social capital on other social phenomena. Social capital has often been invoked to explain differences in gender. The key question is how the present status of social capital in Iran (Esfahan) is, regarding social network of men and women. While the term "social capital" has been used in a variety of ways, it can be defined as networks of social relations which are characterized by norms of trust and reciprocity [1,2, 3]. Social capital is a multi-dimensional concept that emphasizes both the quality and structure of social relationships. In social capital terms, both network structure and quality of relationships are thought to be important in achieving various outcomes. Although, the social capital studies are abundant in Iran, but the studies belonging to women's social capital are limited. In this article the focus is on women's social networks and social trust in Esfahan. Social capital is a facilitator of actions. Social network analysis is focused on uncovering the patterning of people's interaction. Network analysts believe that how an individual lives depends in large part on how that individual is tied into the larger network of social connections. In general terms, it can be said that social capital is the result of social relations, derived from the preferential treatment and the cooperation between individuals and groups. social capital is often understood as the networks that a person possesses. It is more the disposition to create, maintain and develop such networks that constitutes real social capital.

## 2. Theoretical Frame

The concept of social capital is attributed to Putnam [4,5,6]. In this approach, social capital is seen in terms of social trust. Fukuyama [7,8] considers the relationship between social capital and civic society. He expands the concept of social capital via "trust radius" and trust networks in his articles. From network viewpoint, the resource of many gender-based differences originates in social capital and the relation-based membership of men and woman. It is the result of cultural and social backgrounds that has caused expansive discrimination. Stone and Hughes [9] distinguish three types of networks - informal ties with kin, families, friends, neighbors, and workmates; generalized relationships with local people, people in civic groups, and people in general; and relationships through institutions. In social resource theory, valued resources in most societies are represented by wealth, power and status [10]. At the individual level, the outcomes could include better physical and mental health, life satisfaction, wealth, power and reputation [11].

## 3. Research's Literature

In Putnam's studies [3,4], social capital is indicated by participation in civic associations and social groups. Coleman [12] and Bourdieu [1] are often cited as the early proponents of the concept of social capital.

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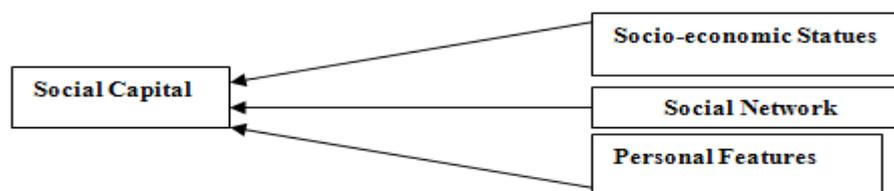
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Coleman's concept of social capital assumes that "individuals are embedded in a system of normative obligations created by social consensus" [6]. This system is drawn upon by families to benefit the members, an idea that is similar to Bourdieu's concept that families' symbolic and material resources could be mobilized for the benefit of its members [6]. Coleman [12] provides examples of diffusion of information and mobilization through social circles among radical Korean students (network as capital). Portes [13] specified "consummative" and instrumental consequences of social capital. Coleman [12], McLanahan and Sandefur [14], consider social capital as an attribute of individuals; families and communities. Adler and Kwon [15] identified that the goodwill that others have toward us is a valuable resource. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor's social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor' [15]. Dekker and Uslaner [16] posited that social capital is fundamentally about how people interact with each other. Females benefited more than males social capital in terms of their life satisfaction. Feminists have pointed out how gender has been air-brushed out of discussion of social capital[17]. The bounded form of social capital nevertheless provides differential access to hierarchies of influence much in the way differential ownership of financial capital does. So the impact of women's community organization tends to get restricted to system maintenance, keeping heads above water, rather than effecting change in the underlying circumstances of the community, partly because women tend to get represented by men the higher 'up' the system one goes [18, 19].

The modern emergence of social capital concept renewed the academic interest for an old debate in social science: the relationship between trust, social networks and the development of modern industrial society. Social Capital Theory gained importance through the integration of classical sociological theory with the description of an intangible form of capital. In this way the classical definition of capital has been overcome allowing researchers to tackle issues in a new manner[20]. Through the social capital concept researchers have tried to propose a synthesis between the value contained in the communitarian approaches and individualism professed by the 'rational choice theory.' Social capital can only be generated collectively thanks to the presence of communities and social networks, but individuals and groups can use it at the same time [20].

### 3.1. Conceptual Model's Research

Coleman's description[12] of social capital - including how it is created and its properties - could encompass different organizations and networks. In this article based on Putnam, Bourdieu, Lin, Stone and Hughes, Fukuyama social's theoretical view points and conceptual model, Social capital and networks of men and women are studied.



Conceptual Model's Research

### 3.2. Methodological Approach

This research has been done through survey method in Iran in 2011. Men and women over 18 mostly residents of Esfahan form statistical community of this research. Based on sample volume formula, 300 people were questioned. Data was gathered through the questionnaires; using survey method and data collecting techniques, this article has gathered necessary data. Regarding population statistics of people, over 18 in Esfahan and sample volume formula, a sample of 300 people from 3 different districts( northern, central, southern) consisting of district 3, 6 and 14 has been considered. Method of sampling is combination of simple random and class random. Interviews were done through questionnaires.

### 3.3. Statistical Methods

In this research uses individuals as units of analysis. To analyze the relationship among variables and test hypothesis, correlative coefficient and multi variable regression have been used. Based on main indices mentioned in the conceptual definition of social trust network, some indicators were introduced and the evaluation of their nominal validity and reliability of each one of indices was determined regarding Corenbach Alpha coefficient.

### 3.4. Hypothesis

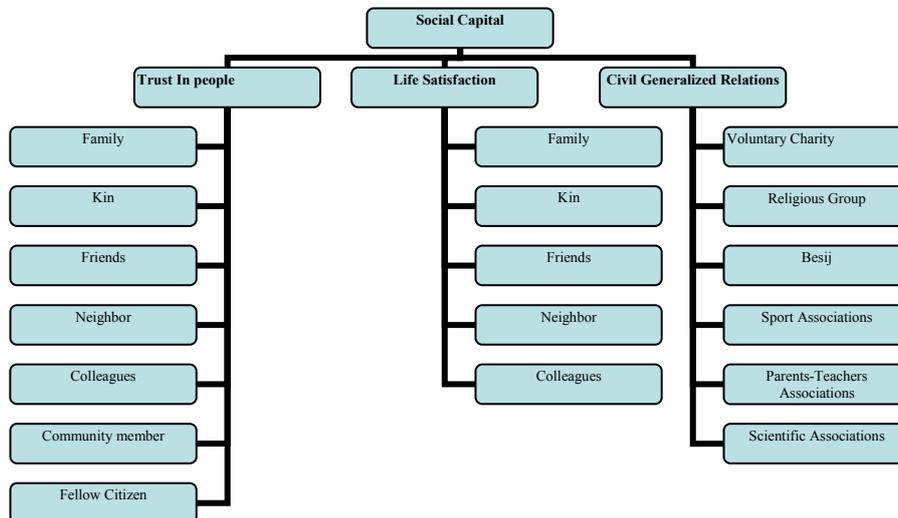
- There is a meaningful difference between personal features and social capital.
- There is a meaningful difference between socio-economic status and social capital.
- There is a meaningful statistical difference between type of network and social capital.

### 3.5. Theoretical and Practical Definition of Variables

Social Capital: Social capital is a sociological concept, which refers to connections within and between social network. The variety of authors have examined the concept of social capital, and its use in research [6,13, 21, 11]. There are a variety of related definitions, that share the idea that social network are social capital and include social contacts of individuals and groups. Measures of Social Capital and Network: Bourdieu provides a structural view explaining social capital, which is represented by the size of the group or network [1]. Social capital is measured based on the trust, life satisfaction, civil generalized relations. Trust is one of the key elements of social capitals' recognition.

### 3.6. The Main Indicator Of Social Capital and Network

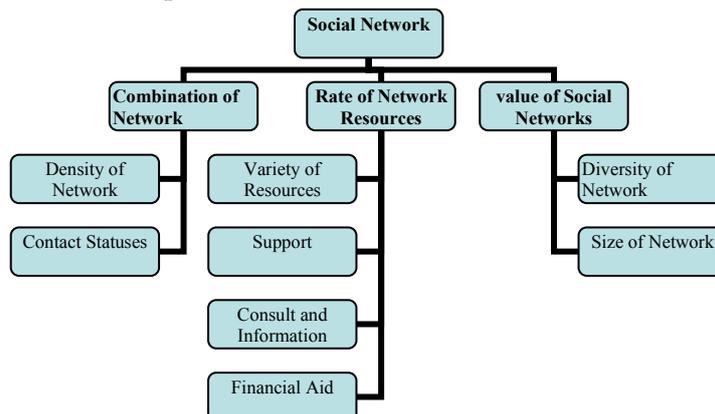
Lin et al have brought up social capital in three dimensions of neighbor link, social network and civil involvement in regard with social trust, social and cultural features in the following framework: The groups of variables, were derived for measuring of the following dimensions: (1) trust in people, (2) diversity, (3) trust in civil institutions. Trust is the key index of social capital. The confidence among individuals is formed in social relationships. Membership in associations increase face-to-face interactions between people.



Source: author

The measurements of network includes the network combination, size, rate of network resources and diversity. Type of networks divide to emotional and supportive network.

For measures of networks based on generalized relationship with people and civic groups, membership or participant in the associations was used. The level of confidence in various institutions and group such as police, doctor, teacher. Lawyer, etc, was used as an indicator of the trust dimension of the third type of network. In this paper, networks of family, friends, neighbors and kin are measured through several indicators of people social relationships.



Source: author

Measurement of social resources can be further specified as network resources and contact resources. Network resources refer to resources embedded in individual networks.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Description of Variables

A little more than half (54%) of the respondents were women and the rest were men. The highest percentage of the respondents belonged to the age group of 20- 24 (26%) and the lowest belonged to the age group of 40- 49. Most of the respondents had a bachelor degree (41.3%). 26% of the respondents had a diploma degree and 8 % had an M.A and Ph.D degrees. The lowest percentage of the respondents were illiterate. 86% of the respondents were born in the city and the rest were born in the village. 56% of the respondents had a lot of family comings and goings and 40.7% had a lot of communication with their friends. 51% of the respondents had little comings and goings with their neighbors and 41% had no communication with them. Based on table 1, the rate of social capital is totally low. 174 of the respondents have had low social capital. That rate of the respondents' membership and participation in civil institutes was totally.

### 4.2. Hypothesis Testing

**The first Hypothesis:** There is a meaningful statistical difference between personal features and social capital. These personal features include gender, marital status, birth place and age.

### 4.3. Bivariate and Multivariate Analysis

The result of statistical tests of measurements of the relationship between social capital and considered independent variables in a hypothetical model are shown in tables 1. Regarding the level of significance in Leven's test, there was no possibility of using T test, therefore, non parametric test was used. Considering the level of significance the relationship between the gender and social capital is meaningful. In nominal measurement level there has been a meaningful relationship between the men and women social capital regarding the testing result and the level of significance ( $\text{sig}=.03$ ) and V Cramers and  $\chi^2$  test. Generally the rate of social capital for female is low compared to males. This rate for female is 102 respondents. In average level both of them are about 50 (54 for males and 50 for females). High level of social capital for females and males is low.

Table 1: Gender and social capital

Gender	social capital			Total
	Low	Average	High	
Men	72	54	13	139
Femal	102	50	9	161
Total	174	104	22	300

The social capital of Variance age groups is difference in men and women. The result of Variance analysis show that the mean of social capital among the employed people is more than the unemployed and the employed have a higher social capital compared to other groups. The next group with the highest social capital are the students. The people out of work and looking for a job have a lower social capital in regard with others. This shows that the job is an effective factor in increasing people's social capital. Regarding the level of significance, the relationship between the respondents' place of birth and social capital is not meaningful. The high rate belongs to city as the place birth with 254 respondents. There is not a meaningful statistical difference between respondent's job and social capital. Also, based on level of significance, there is not a meaningful statistical relationship between the respondents' marital status and social capital.

In ordinal measurement level, considering the level of significance the relationship between the age and social capital is not meaningful. The older the person gets, the fewer contacts he has in the networks.

**The Second Hypothesis:** There is a significance relationship between socio-economic statuses and social capital.

108 of the respondents who had a low socio- economic statues had an average level of social capital belonged to the high socio- economic. In ordinal measurement level, regarding Kendall’s tau B and C and Gamma tests, there is a meaningful statistical relationship between the respondent’s level of education and social capital. In scale measurement level, there has been a meaningful relationship between the respondent’s income and social capital based on coloration test.

Table 2: ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR RESULTS Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	12140.906 <sup>a</sup>	109	111.384	4.014	.000
Intercept	3782.397	1	3782.397	136.322	.000
Gender	1.617	1	1.617	.058	.810
Socio-economic status	11554.538	92	125.593	4.527	.000
Gender * Socio-economic status	939.586				

a. R Squared = .698 (Adjusted R Squared = .524)

ANOVA was used to compare the mean of simultaneous effect of gender, socio- economic status and social capital. Results indicated that socio- economic status had the highest mean(mean = 11554.538) whereas gender had the lowest mean (mean = 1.617). Based on an alpha level of 0.00, the relationship between socio-economic status and social capital was statistically significant [F (4.014), p<0.05]. Thus, second hypothesis was supported.

Based on Spearman’s correlation test, there is a significant relationship between socio-economic status and social capital in the level of .001; relationship intensity equals .25 and indicates direct and average relationship between two variables. In other words, as socio-economic status level promotes, social capital, also, increases and people who belong to a higher level enjoy more network based social capital. The hypothesis on relationship between these two variables is confirmed.

**The Third Hypothesis:** There is meaningful statistical difference between type of networks and social capital.

There is meaningful statistical difference between emotional network features and social capital, regarding correlation coefficient testing results (sig=/.02) and (Gamma) having carried out the three- variable testing of gender emotional and supportive networks and trust. Based on T test, there is a meaningful difference between supportive networks of women and men but there is no difference between emotional networks of men and women.

#### 4.4. Hypothesized and multivariable regression Relationships

To analyze the data, the multivariable regression has been used. Considering the results from the multivariable regression statistical analysis of social capital, equals  $R^2=.3$ . It can be concluded that the gender and income have affected the social capital. The comparison of regression quotient shows that social capital has the most share in dependent variable changes. According to regression analysis, the best model with the least variable and  $R^2=.3$  is meaningful. So one can come to this conclusion that 30% of social capital is interpreted by variables of gender and income.

### 5. Discussion

This study, using data collection of 300 people over 18 from Iran (Esfahan), has considered the effects of some factors on men and women’s social capital. Produced results of multi variable analysis of this study agree with theoretical experiences. In this article, the main subject is social capital and networks. Social capital is a multi-dimensional concept that emphasizes both the quality and structure of social relationships. The conceptualization of social capital is closely linked to the social network.

Social networks have an increasing importance in forming the person social individuality. Old traditional collective structures are replaced by observable and tangible social networks. Small structures present related mental social structures. They are a space to choose and a resource out of resources. Considering Morro's view, there are a lot of differences between men and women in their rules related to social networks. The skills and goods have an emotional value of an important source which are more accessible to women because of their focus on a private area, specially where the networks are recognized through effective links[22]. This difference included emotional and supportive sources based on network resources. Men's social capital mean (5) is more than that of women's based on ANOVA there is a meaningful difference between social capital and supportive network of respondents. Granovetter mentions the functions and power of weak links. He believes that power is a linear combinational link of time spent on interaction, emotional intensity intimacy (mutual trust) and mutual services existing in a network link[23]. A weak link is the origin of network sources including inquiring information communication, running errands and ...[24]. Considering the results from the multivariable regression statistical analysis of social capital, it can be concluded that the gender and income have affected the social capital. As men are involved in official occupations their networks are more formal than those of women and include mostly colleagues and less relatives. On the other hand, women's networks are less formal and include more relatives comparing men's networks. Parallel theories, also, have been utilized to depict different network compositions, believing that people have different inclinations and approaches regarding people to whom they are related and relevant network. Women have tendency for close and intimate links with relatives and less none family links. On the contrary, men tend mostly towards out of family links.

Concerning the expansion of communications and individual contacts in communities, bringing about individual and also group benefits, nowadays, the amount of these communications, the variation of resources and protections, available to people, have considerable importance. However, there exists kind of segregation and inequality in relation-based membership of men and women. Different systems provide men and women with different ways of reaching social positions and sources, through which different networks, various communications and different kinds of cooperation are formed[25]. Family life also makes men and women's contacts with opposite sex possible and provides an opportunity of interaction for men and women, apart from their same-sex inclinations. Anyhow, because of strength of social factors and structural obligations in society, men have more opportunities of various contacts than do women[25]. consequently sex differences, seemingly inherent, are result of a self-protective system. Some important events during lifespan e.g. marriage and giving birth to babies possibly influence women's communication patterns. Expansion of family networks prior to none-family ones, conduct women into conditions different from men's and hinders their having expansive and useful networks like those of men, with same arrangement and combination as family links[26].

Regarding the result of this research, there is difference between supportive networks of women and men but there is no difference between emotional networks of men and women. Granovetter mentions the functions and power of weak links. He believes that power is a linear combinational link of time spent on interaction, emotional intensity intimacy (mutual trust) and mutual services existing in a link [23]. A weak link is the origin of network sources including inquiring information communication, running errands and ...[24]. In Wellman's research[27] this is confirmed via stating that men and women's networks are not basically different and sex differences will vanish or at least decrease providing that life events e.g. marriage, giving birth and employment be controlled.

In this research based on result, the rate of social capital for female is low compared to males. To answer the key question in this research 'how is the present status of social capital in Iran(Esfahan)?' it can be said that 'why the present status of social capital in Iran(Esfahan) is like this?

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