

## The Measurement of Social Capital in Tehran<sup>1</sup>

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Received: April 5, 2015

Accepted: October 11, 2016

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the dimensions of social capital in Tehran. The data were collected by means of questionnaire. 2400 residents of Tehran were selected by stratified sampling who were over 15 years old. The theories of scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam in definition of social capital are applied. Social capital has been studied in five aspects including associational relationship, norms and social trust, social bonding and interpersonal trust, social cohesion and social support. Almost in all dimensions, social capital was medium and also the sum scale of it indicated that the rate of social capital in Tehran is medium.

**Keywords:** Social Capital, Associational Relationship, Norms and Social Trust, Bonding and Interpersonal Trust, Social Cohesion, Social Support.

**JEL Classification:** Z1, Z13, Z19, O.

### **1. Introduction**

Measuring social capital may refer to the way it is made in the society; also it can help people to rethink about local issues, make proper decisions, and form the social cohesion. Social engagement is the main component of social capital that consolidates the social progress. Recent years have witnessed a growing interest among academic people and policy makers in Iran in the concept of social capital. This paper is to sort out the various aspects of social capital theoretically, and to construct a measurement instrument of social capital in Tehran.

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1. The data source of this study is the *Measurement of Social Capital Survey in Tehran* provided by University of Tehran, Municipality of Tehran and University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences.

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Social capital consists of networks of social relations which are characterized by norms of trust and reciprocity. Combined, these elements are argued to sustain civil society which enables people to act to obtain mutual benefit (Lochner et al., 1999; Winter, 2000a); it is ‘the quality of social relationships between individuals that affect their capacity to address and resolve problems they face in common’ (Stewart-Weeks and Richardson, 1998).

Thus, social capital can be understood as a resource to collective action, which may lead to a broad range of outcomes. In his analysis of social capital and family life, Winter (2000b) argues that despite some conceptual confusion in the social capital literature, three of the most notable social capital writers each conceptualized social capital in this way, however in relation to differing outcomes of varying social scale. Bourdieu (1993), Putnam (1993) and Coleman (1988) each understands social capital as a resource to collective action, the outcomes of which concern economic wellbeing, democracy at the nation state level, and the acquisition of human capital in the form of education, respectively. The measure of social capital is various and intricate. Cavaya (2004) argues that social capital measurement has a generic trend.



Thus, we study the social capital with the review of its aspects including associational relationship, norms and social trust, social bonding and interpersonal trust, social cohesion, and social support in Tehran. This study can help people, social policy makers and government to make appropriate decisions in micro level of policies, issues, etc. and can exploit the effects of social capital on poverty, government performance, economic growth and ethic discrimination.

## 2. Background

Social capital is one of our trendiest terms, heard with increasing frequency by professors, pundits and world politicians which have a predictable consequence. The term proliferate meanings and provoke contents (Farr, 2004).

Social capital typically refers to those features of social organizations such as networks of secondary associations, interpersonal trust, norms of reciprocity and mutuality. That act as resources for individuals and facilitate collective action. However, approaches to the definition and measurement of social capital vary widely, and as result of this concept stretch, social capital has arguably been adapted indiscriminately, adapted uncritically and applied imprecisely (Fahmy, 2006).

The concept of social capital has been used by a great number of authors from a variety of disciplines since the early decades of twentieth century. Therefore the views on social capital in the literature are various; but the main definition of social capital can be traced to the work of three authors: Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam.

Coleman defines social capital as a collection of resources that helps individuals to overcome the rational choice dilemma of collective action: Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspects of social structures, and they facilitate certain action of actors, whether persons or corporate actors-within the structure (Coleman, 1988).

Despite observing a great deal of research on social capital, Sandefur and Lauman (1998) accepts Coleman's formulation of the construct without systematic analysis of the mechanisms through which social capital has its effects. Sandefur and Lauman (1998) offer that social capital conveys benefits through the provision of information, influence and control, and social solidarity. Their contribution helps explain how parents benefit from the information they gain about their children's school experiences when they get contact with teachers and school administrators. Information about their children's efforts and successes in school, for example, can help them influence their children to engage with school (Goddard, 2003).

In addition, although Coleman's elaboration of the construct is widely accepted, his theoretical perspective is criticized in some cases. Notably, Ston et al. (1999) describe social capital as an extension of social exchange theory. Accordingly, they argue for a focus on the types of social exchange that individuals are motivated to pursue in

order to create social capital for their benefit. This leads to their contention that social capital is the attribute of an individual, not a group. A less extreme position is that social capital has both public and private effects. Social capital is a collective resource that enables productive outcomes.

Putnam argues that social capital is the density of community networks and the text of interpersonal trust, mutuality and reciprocity: Social capital I mean features of social life- networks, norms and trust- that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives (Putnam, 1995). For Bourdieu (1997) social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.

Flora et al. (2004) incorporates seven forms of capital in her model: financial, human, built, cultural, political and social. Briefly, financial capital includes opportunities and the existence of tax credits and other business- friendly structures. Human capital includes numerous opportunities for professional and educational growth and skill-building. Built capital includes the physical structures of a community, for example, buildings, road and high way systems, mass transit, and public facilities. Natural capital includes diversity of plant and animal life, opportunities for interaction with nature, and high quality air and water. Cultural capital includes the presentation of local stories, history, art and craft forms and traditional foods and ways of preparation. Political capital includes accessibility to power through channels of local, original, state and federal government. Flora et al. (2004) also argued that each community possesses a unique mix of the various forms of capital based on its residents.

Social capital is not a new concept, Lyda Hanifan, a West Virginia secondary educator, was the first to define social capital in 1916 as “those tangible substances that count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families that make up a social unit... the community as a whole will benefit by the cooperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his associations the advantage of the help, the sympathy and the fellowship of neighbors (McGehee et al., 2010).

Social capital generally consists of three features: trust, reciprocity and cooperation. When these three elements are strong within communities, they are more likely to be in position to take advantage of economic, community-building, and capacity-enhancement opportunities in general. Likewise, when they are weak, communities are less likely to be in position to take advantage of the same opportunities (McGehee et al., 2010).

Woolcock and Narayan (2000) describe the various fields of social capital in their research including families and youth behavior, schooling and education, community life, work and organizations, democracy and governance, collective action, public health and environment, crime and violence, and economic development. Social capital is not non-dimensional, Harpham et al. (2002) distinguish between structural and cognitive social capital. The structural one focuses on what people do (behavior), whereas cognitive social capital focuses on what people feel (perceptions).

Putnam, who popularized the concept of social capital in recent decades, states much hard evidence has accumulated that social capital are practical preconditions for better schools, safer streets, faster economic growth, more effective government, and even healthier and longer lives (Putnam, 1998).

The concept of social capital has been used by a great number of authors from a variety of disciplines in the early decades of the twentieth century. It is therefore not surprising that the views on this concept in the literature are many and various. What these views have in common is that they more or less explicitly emphasize firstly its importance, social relations within families, communities, friendship networks and voluntary associations, and secondly, civic morality or shared values, norms and habits, and finally, trust in institutions, and generalized trust in other people (Van Wim et al., 2006).

The following paragraphs present some empirical studies in the field of social capital which has been conducted in Iran. Among some researches in this arena can be noted:

Borhan (2003) has studied Social capital status during years after the revolution in Iran by applying secondary analysis of documentary method. Findings showed a positive correlation between belief in freedom and sense of security with economic investment. Mirzakhani

(2000) has studied Social and cultural capital with the attitude to discipline and academic performance with a sample of 378 people in Tabriz. Taheri (2002) studied social capital in connection with the performance of rural councils in the central part of Qom.

Tajbakhsh (2002) discussed the effect of social capital on the effectiveness of local councils in the Fars province. This research was conducted by using survey with a sample of 2550 people in 25 cities. Results revealed a negative correlation between awareness and trust (social and institutional), social economic status and social and institutional trust, as well as a negative relationship between trust in the institutions and participation of council. Also it showed that political participation is positively related to trust in institutions and on the other hand, there is a significant relationship between education and economic and social base of knowledge, awareness and social and institutional trust, knowledge and confidence to participate.

An experimental Study of social capital in Mazandaran by SharePour (2003) under title of “to investigate social capital of young people aged 15 to 24” was conducted in all urban centers of the province. Results showed two types of groups and civic organizations in the sample: 1) organizations which are related to the private sphere, personal beliefs, personal ethics, sports and leisure related, 2) Organizations that were related more to the political and economic realm. A significant proportion of sample members were the first type and more of their social capital was bonding.

Moussavi and Shiani (2009) in “Youth social capital” used multidimensional Scale to measure social capital of young people. Results showed the weakness of social capital among youth, particularly in relations in association, trust in unfamiliar people and authorities. Personal characteristics and social impact of young people was significant. They suggested that it seem necessary to improve the social environment, strengthen the civil institutions, and reform the insights, attitudes and actions of people.

Piran, Moussavi and Shiani (2007) addressed a comprehensive review of social capital in Iran, including four component of reliability, network of relationships, reciprocity and collective action. Also they introduced the ninety-year-old concept of social capital and have immensely indexed for this complex and multidimensional concept.

### 3. Data

The data of this study was collected by the measurement of social capital survey in Tehran which was provided by University of Tehran, Municipality of Tehran and University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences. The measurement model of social capital in this study is based on the five dimensions: 1) associational relationship, 2) norms and social trust, 3) social bonding and interpersonal trust, 4) social cohesion, and 5) social support. In the following table, the indicators of social capital are defined.

**Table 1: Social Capital Dimensions and Indicators**

Dimensions	Indicators
Associational relationship	Social cooperation (cooperation with civic groups) and institution
	Membership in civic groups and institution
	Participation in civic groups and institution
	Mental contribution in civic groups and institution
	Financial contribution
Responsibility in civic groups and institution	Trust in organizations, institutions and inclinations
Social capital	Norms and social trust
	Trust in social groups
	Evaluation of society status
	Trust in managers
	Rights and commitments of citizenship
Values mortality	Belonging
Social bonding and interpersonal trust	Trust in others
	Voluntary participation for others
	Participation in aggregated collective activity
	Communication with others
Social cohesion	Social acceptance
Social cohesion	Inter ethnological cohesion
Social cohesion	Ethnological and tolerance
Social support	Feeling of social support

### Method

The empirical basis of this research is a survey conducted in 2010 with 2400 persons aged above 15 years residing in Tehran city. The survey was based on stratified sample and the data was collected by applying questionnaire. In order to design a more accurate assessment questionnaire of social capital, the bank of questionnaire was formed

and for better use of the studies that carried out, the number of questionnaires was collected from the following sources:

- Surveys conducted in some countries;
- Studies in Iran;
- MSc Theses and PhD dissertations in Iran.

Results indicate that social capital has been examined to the different types and have been numerously defined by its components and indicators. This study examines social capital dimensions including associational relationship, norms and social trust, social bonding and interpersonal trust, social cohesion, and social support. In order to measure social capital, we had to make the five dimensions instrument and the scales were validated in an inter-correlations factor analysis. According to the operational definition of social capital in this study, first the most important factors, indicators and reagents were reviewed in theoretical perspectives, and empirical sources were examined by a group of experts and well-known scholars in the field. Then, after collecting all their comments and suggestions, the initial questionnaire was prepared for the first pre-test. The questionnaire contained questions according to the dependent and independent variables which were made in three stages. Finally, it was conducted by Factor Analysis and also by the data which was collected from the last pre-done for several times in a row; Validity and reliability of the dependent variable (social capital) were reviewed and the scale of the next five obtained as follow.

The scale is as follows Kay (K-M-O) was shown by the suitability of the test sample, and Chi-square (Bartlett's Test of Approx-Chi-Square) is significant, and it is approved at a higher level. Finally, validity and reliability of indicators used in the preparation of this multidimensional scaling were confirmed.



**Table 2: Five Dimensions Instrument of Social Capital Measurement**

Dimensions and indicators	Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>1. Associational relationship</b>					
1-1 Social cooperation (cooperation with civic groups) and institution	0.885				
1-2 Membership of civic groups and institution	0.824				
1-3 Participation in civic groups and institution	0.777				
1-4 Mental contribution in civic groups and institution	0.690				
1-5 Financial contribution	0.669				
1-6 Responsibility in civic groups and institution	0.591				
<b>2. Norms and social trust</b>					
2-1 Trust in organizations, institutions and inclinations		0.777			
2-2 Trust in social groups		0.721			
2-3 Evaluation of society status		0.677			
2-4 Trust in managers		0.671			
2-5 Rights and commitments of citizenship		0.661			
2-6 values mortality		0.649			
<b>3. social bonding and interpersonal trust</b>					
3-1 Belonging			0.741		
3-2 Trust in others			0.720		
3-3 Voluntary participation for others			0.672		
3-4 Participation in aggregated collective activity			0.585		
3-5 Communication with others			0.528		
<b>4. social cohesion</b>					
4-1 Social acceptance				0.832	
4-2 Inter ethnological cohesion				0.814	
4-3 Ethnological and tolerance				0.631	
<b>5. social support</b>					
5-1 Feeling of social support					0.837

Extraction Method: principal component analysis

Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization Rotation converged in 5 interactions

**Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer- Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.846
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx	29853.380
Chi-square	df	465
Sphericity	Sig	0.000

#### 4. Results

According to the literature, the associational relationship dimensions pertain to cooperation, membership, participation, mental contribution, financial contribution and responsibility in civic groups and institutions.

In cooperation in civic and institution, results showed that 70.1 percent of respondents have low cooperation, 16.7 percent have medium and 13.2 percent have high. The measure of membership in civic groups and institutions is 60.4 percent low, 26.6 percent medium, and 13 percent high. The measure of participation in civic groups and institutions is 60.3 percent low, 26.0 percent medium, and 13.7 percent high. Also results showed that 85.9 percent of citizenships have low mental contribution in civic groups and institutions; 76.1 percent of them have low financial contribution and 90.7 percent of respondents have low responsibility in civic groups and institutions.

**Table 4: Associational Relationship**

Associational relationship	Percent			Average
	low	Medium	High	
Social cooperation (cooperation with civic groups) and institution	70.1	16.7	13.2	1.1
Membership of civic groups and institution	60.4	26.6	13.0	0.60
Participation in civic groups and institution	60.3	26.0	13.7	0.58
Mental contribution in civic groups and institution	85.9	10.7	3.4	0.19
Financial contribution	76.1	19.1	4.8	0.30
Responsibility in civic groups and institution	90.7	7.3	2.0	0.12

##### 4.1. Norms and Social Trust

Regarding the norms and social trust, we distinguish trust in organizations, institutions and inclinations, trust in social groups, evaluation of society status, trust in managers, rights and commitments of citizenship. In the following we discuss about the dimensions of norms and social trust.

The measure of the trust in inclinations is 31 percent low, 32 percent medium and 35 percent high. The measure of the trust in

social groups is 32 percent low, 33.3 percent medium and 33.5 percent high. The measure of the trust in managers is 56.2 percent low, 12.3 percent medium and 31.5 percent high. Respondents evaluated the society status 31.3 percent low, 36.5 percent medium and 32.2 percent high. Results show that the rights and commitments of citizenship are 40.1 percent low, 34.2 percent medium and 25.3 percent high. The measure of values morality by citizens is 50.7 percent low, 25.7 percent medium and 23.7 percent high.

**Table 5: Norms and Social Trust**

Norms and social trust	percent			Average
	low	medium	High	
Trust in organizations, institutions and inclinations	31.4	33.3	35.3	50.1
Trust in social groups	33.2	33.3	33.5	59.5
Evaluation of society status	31.3	36.5	32.3	12.55
Trust in managers	56.2	12.3	31.5	2.87
Rights and commitments of citizenship	40.4	34.2	25.3	11.7
Values mortality	30.9	32.8	36.3	14.2

#### 4.2. Social Bonding and Interpersonal Trust

Social bonding is the strong ties with people in the same community that enable you to 'get by'. Bonding implies links between individuals in different structural positions of power and may refer to links up and down (Kawachi, Subramanian and Kim, 2007).

Social bonding and interpersonal trust is measured by bonding, trust in others, voluntary participation for others, participation in aggregated collective activity and communication with others dimensions. Results indicated that respondents have 38 percent low, 34.4 percent medium and 27.6 percent high belonging.

Trust in others is 38.2 percent low, 32.7 percent medium and 32.3 percent high. Voluntary participation for others is 34.6 percent low, 33.1 percent medium and 32.3 percent high. The respondents participated in aggregated collective activity 42.4 percent low, 32.5 percent medium and 25.1 percent high. Results showed that 40.7 percent of respondents have 40.7 percent low, 35.2 percent medium and 24.1 percent high communication with others.

**Table 6: Social Bonding and Interpersonal Trust**

Social bonding and interpersonal trust	percent			Average
	low	medium	High	
Belonging	38	34.4	27.6	26.3
Trust in others	38.2	32.7	29.1	25.5
Voluntary participation for others	34.6	33.1	32.3	32.50
Participation in aggregated collective activity	42.4	32.5	25.1	18.15
Communication with others	40.7	35.2	24.1	13.3

### 4.3. Social Cohesion

Derived from Durkheim (1893; 1997), social cohesion refers to how societies and Communities integrate (or not) their constituent members and groups. It was found that social cohesion is a dynamic process in that solidarities, alliances, groups, and identities are constantly in the process of forming and transforming, as they come into conflict and accommodation as broader societal structures change. They argue that social cohesion needs to take into account materially and discursively rooted unequal relations in which groups are embedded.

A definition commonly used by policy makers suggests that social cohesion involves building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income, and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community (Maxwell, 1996: 13). This values-driven definition of social cohesion highlights what is believed to be the importance of a generalized culture and sense of belonging in making successful communities. The inclusion of relative equality in the definition is particularly about its contribution to social legitimacy and solidarity—for its effect on beliefs of people have the same opportunities to succeed (Jaffe and Quark, 2006).

The measure of Social cohesion is based on three items including the rate of social acceptance, the rate of inter ethnological cohesion and the rate of ethnological and tolerance. According to the findings, social acceptance is 29.8 percent low, 34.3 percent medium and 35.9 percent high. Ethnological cohesion is 29.7 percent low, 37.4 percent medium and 32.9 percent high. Results showed that the ethnological

and tolerance is 41.8 percent low, 28 percent medium and 30.2 percent high.

**Table 7: Social Cohesion**

Social cohesion	percent			Average
	low	medium	High	
Social acceptance	29.8	34.3	35.9	13.24
Inter ethnological cohesion	29.7	37.4	32.9	33.91
Ethnological and tolerance	41.8	28	30.2	7.21

The social support was measured only by feeling of social support. Results showed that 25.1 percent have low, 6.5 percent medium and 68.4 percent have high social support feeling. The most respondents have positive feeling about having social support in life time.

**Table 8: Social Support**

Social support	Percent			mod
	low	Not sure	High	
Feeling of social support	25.1	6.5	68.4	3

#### 4.4. Social Capital

In his treatise on social theory, Coleman (1990) began his description of social capital with three short vignettes that he used to describe relational networks, social trust, and norms as fundamental forms of social capital (Roger D. Goddard, 2003). Putnam (1993), for example, described social capital as “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions”. According to Putnam (1993), civic communities rich in social capital draw on citizens who are likely to be interested in the common good, trustful, tolerant, cooperative, politically interested and active, and endowed with norms of citizenship (Zmerli, 2010).

Sum scale of social capital in Tehran indicated that social capital is 39.6 percent low, 36.3 percent medium and 24.1 percent high. We can conclude that the measurement of social capital in Tehran tend to be medium.

Table 9: Social Capital

Social capital	Percent			average	mod	
	low	medium	High			
	39.6	36.3	24.1	98.29	73.37	97.21

## 5. Conclusion

Studying the literature, we distinguished five dimensions of social capital: associational relationship, norms and social trust, social bonding and interpersonal trust, social cohesion, and social support, within each, we further distinguished some aspects, which were operationalized with data from the 2010 Tehran's survey.

According to literature, social capital is 'the quality of social relationships between individuals that affect their capacity to address and resolve problems they face in common. For making the theoretical framework, we used privileged definition of social capital from Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam. Bourdieu defines social capital as the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. Coleman defines social capital as a collection of resources that helps individuals to overcome the rational choice dilemmas of collective actions. Putnam argues that social capital is the density of community networks and the text of interpersonal trust, mutuality and reciprocity. Finally and according to these literature, social capital in this study is defined as a network of relationships based on trust, social capital and social links between individuals and between groups and engagement with institutions, organizations and social groups that lead to having solidarity and social cohesion, providing social support to individuals and groups, and producing enough energy to facilitate actions in order to achieve individual and collective goals.

This resulted in twenty one indicator scales for social capital: social cooperation, membership of civic groups and institution, participation in civic groups and institutions, mental contribution to civic groups and institutions, financial contribution, responsibility in civic groups and institutions, trust in organizations, institutions and inclinations, trust in social groups, evaluation of society status, trust in managers, rights and commitments of citizenship, values mortality by

citizenship, belonging, trust in others, voluntary participation for others, voluntary participation for others, participation in aggregated collective activity, communication with others, social acceptance, ethnological and tolerance, and feeling of social support.

These scales were validated in an inter-correlations factor analysis encompassing all underlying survey items. This validation, between the scales were all positive, hence, we can conclude that social capital is a multifaceted phenomenon, and that we should construct a multidimensional measurement model of social capital using multiple indicators.

Having set a quintuple conceptual framework for the measurement of social capital and reviewed existing measures in this framework, this section of the paper presents the result of measurement of social capital in Tehran. The sum evaluation of associational relationship was low, norms and social trust, social cohesion and social bonding and interpersonal trust was tending to be slightly high and social support was in a high level. The measurement of social capital indicated that it was medium among residents of Tehran.

Considering the social capital in Tehran, in particular, there are differences between various dimensions. It can take steps to strengthen positive outcomes, at the same direction, policies and programs focused on the weaker aspects. On the other hand, the link was created between traditional elements – social protection – and modern elements. In general, it is necessary to invest in different of cultural, social, political, and economic sectors in order to strengthen the social capital.

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