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Research paper



The Studying the Components of Social Capital and its Relationship with the Social Happiness in Iranian Students

zadeh Foroughinia[1], Hakimeh Mohammadzadeh[2*], Reza Pourmirza Kalhori[1], Neda Kianipour[3]

[1] Emergency Medical Department, Paramedical School, Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, Kermanshah, Iran
2Shoushtar Facultiy of Medical Sciences, Shoushtar, Iran
3Students Research Committee, Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, Kermanshah, Iran
**Corresponding author E-mail: hk.mo_2012@yahoo.com*

Abstract

The concept of social capital, due to its nature and content, is associated with almost all the issues in the human, social and health fields. On the other hand, the role of happiness and joy in mental health, physical health, and social inclusion are very important in the field of health. The purpose of this study was to investigate the components of social capital and its relation with social happiness of students in Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences in 2017. This study is descriptive-correlational. The research population consisted of 450 students in Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences in 2017who were selected by cluster sampling. Bullen& Onyx Standard Social Capital Questionnaire and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) were used to collect data. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient). Data analysis was performed using SPSS-23 software. In this research, social capital score was 3.17 ± 0.45 according to the students' score and the mean score of the social happiness was 3.68 ± 0.14. There was a positive and significant relationship between two variables of social capital and social happiness of students (r=0.423). Among the social capital fields, the variables of the value of life, trust, and security had the most and the least relationship with the overall social happiness. Social capital and its aspects have a direct and significant relationship with the social happiness; therefore, with increasing the social capital, the level of social happiness increases.

Keywords: *Social Capital, Social Happiness, Students.*

1. Introduction

Today, social capital is one of the social determinants of health that has attracted a lot of attention (1, 2). Social capital is the set of norms in social systems that promote the level of cooperation of its members and reduces the cost of exchanges and communications(3, 4). In summary, social capital means the norms and networks that make it possible for people to participate in social action in order to get the mutual benefit. This concept is more measured with the level of social trust and membership in formal and informal associations (5-7).

Many studies have indicated that those who actively participate in the social activities of their community and have a strong family support and social relations, have a more favorable health status than those who are socially isolated (8, 9). Health has the social and individual aspects, all of which can be linked to the social capital (10-13). Sociologists believe that the social capital, in the form of social trust(which is one of the most basic structures of social capital) ensures the prosperity of individual health, and social trust and social capital can distribute justicein the field of the health and distribution of health resources at the national geographic level (14-16).

Researches indicate that the presence of social capital creates a kind of social support for an individual and provides the financial, informational, practical and emotional support to a person, while the emotional support more clearly helps the individual (17-19). Giddens (1999) also argues that this emotional support is a shield protection when the ordinary people find them in its support in the face of everyday life issues (20-22).

One of the psychological needs of mankind is joy and happiness that has always occupied the minds of the human due to its major impact on people lives (23-25). Feeling of joy and happiness as one of the positive emotions, plays a decisive role in providing the health of the individual and society and is considered as one of the most essential human and psychological needs, so that many nations today are somehow trying to create a healthy and happy society (26-28). One of the key factors affecting the happiness is the level of social capital or individual pattern and the intensity of social communication with the others (29, 30). Strack et al. (1995) believe that the happy people are the ones who process and interpret the information make them happily (31). Happiness is a personality variable that according to Ayzenk's theory, biological basis can be considered for that (32, 33), and becomes more complicated when it comes into a cultural framework (34-36). The researches indicate that the happiness as a complex multi-aspectal concept is influenced by individual and cultural factors and has a strong reflection in all aspects of human life (37-40). As well as, it can play a role in the development of societies as a catalyst and facilitator (26, 41, 42).

Considering the importance of social capital and social happiness in all aspects of life, in a number of studies, the relation between these two variables has been studied, which is referred to in several examples; The results of Lindstrom (2008) found that there is a significant relationship between social capital and psychological well-being (43). The results of Jalilian et al. (2017) study showed that there is a significant relationship between the spiritual wellbe-

Copyright © 2018 Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

ing and happiness (44). Pourmirza Kalhory et al. (2017) in a study indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between the lifestyle and the happiness of students (45). Afshani et al. (2016) in a study showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the social capital and hope for the future(27). Lindstrom (2008) showed that there is a relationship between the social capital and psychological well-being (43). Costanza et al.(46), Veenstra (47)and Powdthavee (48) indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between the social capital and happiness.

The relationship between social capital and social happiness and the impact of each one on human life has always been one of the important issues that with much attention. Considering the students are the future makers of the country, their social capital and social happiness can have a significant impact on all aspects and levels of society. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to study the components of social capital and its relationship with the social well-being of students in Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences in 2017.

2. Method

The present study is a descriptive-correlational study that was conducted among the students in Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences in the academic year 2017. The sample size was calculated 350 ones using the Cochran formula. This figure was multiplied by design effect 1.5 using a cluster sampling method and 450 people were determined as the final sample. In this method, the community members are selected according to a hierarchy of types of community units. According to this method, the sampling process in this research was that at first among 6 faculties, three faculties (medicine, dentistry and pharmacy) were randomly selected. Then, from each faculty, according to the majors and classes, some of them (equal to the number of research samples) were selected and evaluated. The ethical principles of this research included obtaining the necessary permissions from the university's research and technology department and selected faculties, the entry of male and female students studying, a complete description about the objectives and method of work for the participants, maintaining the right to freely choose the research units to refuse or accept participation in the research, to ensure the confidentiality of the collected informationand the lack of disclosure of the samples' personal data and the lack of willingness to fill in the questionnaire as a criterion for exclusion from the study.

The tools used in this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part included the demographic characteristics (gender, age, place of birth, marital status, residence place, grade and the education faculty),and the second part, Bullen& Onyx Social Capital Questionnaire, which contains 36 questions and has eight fields; each part has specific questions (49).The fields include: participation in local communities (7 questions), leadership in social activities (7 questions), trust and security (5 questions), communication with the neighbors (5 questions), communication with family and friends (3 questions), the power of tolerance of the differences (2 questions), the value of life (2 questions), and working relationships (3 questions), and two questions, were individually examined because they could be in more than one field, and they were calculated on the total score of social capital. Responses are scored on 4-degree Likert Spectrum Scale as very low (1 score), low (2 scores), high (3 scores) and very high (4 scores).Since the number of questions in the fields was different, after calculating the mean of each field, all fields were measured with a scale of 100. Validity and reliability of this questionnaire have been confirmed in several studies, whose alpha coefficient is 0.82 (49, 50). the third part, the 29-question Oxford questionnaire used by Argyle & Lu to measure happiness (Argyle & Lu, 1990), consists of five fields: life satisfaction (8 questions), self-esteem (7 items), subjective well-being (5 items), satisfaction (4 items), and positive mood (5 items), (51). Responses based on the 4-degree Likert Spectrum Scale were considered for the options "always", "sometimes", "low" and "at all" and scores 3, 2, 1, 0 respectively. The total score of the subjects fluctuates from 0 to 87. The reliability coefficient of this questionnaire was obtained by Alipoor and Noorbala (52) and Kalhori et al. (2017) using Cronbach's alpha (93%) and reliability of open-ended test 92%. In the present study, the reliability of this questionnaire was 0.92 (45). For data analysis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to determine the natural distribution of data, descriptive statistics (percent frequency, mean and standard deviation) and Pearson correlation coefficient were used. All tests were analyzed by SPSS-23 software. It should be recalled that before the above tests, the pre defaults were examined and all the tests were at a significant level $P<0.01$.

3. Findings

Among 450 people, 9.48% were male and 1.51% werefemale. The mean age of the students participating in the study was 23.87 ± 4.8 years. The group younger the age of 20 years old, had the most frequency (2.36%). In terms of the marital status, the most students (87.6%) were single. In terms of education grade, 3.77% of samples were studying at the bachelor level. The most samples (7.40%) were the health students. In terms of residence place, 4.40% of the samples were residents of the dormitory (table 1).

The mean and the social capital deviation of all students was 3.17 ± 0.45. Regarding the social capital of the samples, the results showed that the highest value was related to the value of life with the mean and standard deviation of 3.64±0.75, and the lowest was related to working relationships with the mean and standard deviation of 2.34±0.67. The mean and standard deviation of social happiness of all students was 3.68±0.14. The results showed that the highest and lowest rates were related to self-esteem with a mean and standard deviation of 3.77 ± 0.19, and then the subjective well-being with a mean and standard deviation of 3.55±0.35 (table 2).

To investigate the correlation between social capital and social happiness, Pearson correlation coefficient was used. The results showed that the relationship between social capital and social happiness of all students was positive and significant ($r=0.424$, $p<0.01$). Also, life value had the highest relationship with the total social happiness ($r=0.444$, $p<0.01$). However, there was no relationship between trust and security with the total social happiness ($r=103.10$, $P<0.01$) (table 2).

Table 1:. Frequency description of demographic characteristics (N = 420)

demographic characteristics	groups	Numbers (percent)
gender	male	220(48.9%)
	female	230(5101%)
marital status	single	394(87.6%)
	married	56(12.4%)
age	≤ 20	163(36.2%)
	21-25 years old	146(32.4%)
	26-30 years old	80(17.8%)
	≥ 30	61(13.6%)
Residence place	Father's home	133(29.6%)
	Personal home	135(30%)
	Dormitory	182(40.4%)
Education grade	associate	52(11.6%)
	bachelor	348(77.3%)
	master	35(7.8%)
	Ph.D.	15(3.3%)
Faculty place	medical	183(40.7%)
	Dental	153(34%)
	Pharmacy	114(25.3%)

Table 2:. The mean scores of different aspects of social capital and social happiness in the study population

Statistical Indices		Mean±SD
Scales	**Subscales**	
Social capital	The value of life	3.64±0.75
	relationship with family and friends	3.53±0.63
	Relationship with neighbors	3.47±0.58
	The power of bearing differences	3.38±0.75
	Participation in local communities	3.15±0.59
	Pioneering social activities	3.10±0.60
	Trust and security	2.78±0.64
	work relationships	2.34±0.67
	Total social capital	3.17±0.45
Social happiness	self esteem	3.77±0.19
	satisfaction	3.74±0.32
	satisfaction with life	3.69±0.23
	positive mood	3.68±0.33
	subjective well-being	3.55±0.35
	Happiness (Total)	3.68±0.14

Table 3:. Pearson correlation coefficients between social capital areas and social happiness of students

independent variable	The dependent variable	r	P-Value	N
Social capital	Social happiness			
The value of life	Social happiness	0.441**	0.000	450
Connect with family and friends	Social happiness	0.389**	0.000	450
Relationship with neighbors	Social happiness	0.369**	0.000	450
Pioneering social activities	Social happiness	0.281**	0.000	450
Participation in local communities	Social happiness	0.216**	0.000	450
work relationships	Social happiness	0.188**	0.000	450
The power of bearing differences	Social happiness	0.134**	0.000	450
Trust and security	Social happiness	0.103**	0.000	450
Total social capital	Social happiness	0.423	0.000	450

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4. Discussion

The research was done with the aim of studying the components of social capital and its relationship with the social happiness in students of Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences in 2017. The analysis of the research findings shows that the mean of social capital among the students is 3.17 ± 0.45. The high levels of social capital in society can develop the individuals' power and responsibility. In recent years, it has been indicated that social capital with providing support and providing an effective source of self-confidence and mutual respect, increasing access to local health services, facilitating the prevention process of crime, promoting the rapid transfer of medical information, promoting the modeling from behavioral health norms and enhancing the social control of deviant behaviors associated with the health has a significant role in public health (43, 45). almost all researches on social capital measurements in Iran are at the average level (53-58). This point implies the need for more attempt of policymakers and planners in the field of the university to pay attention to the proper foundation, in order to develop the student social capital. If a university can create social capital as a social unit, it will be able to work better and more. With increasing this capital through the university, society will also benefit from the benefits of social capital, which is a prerequisite for public trust and confidence.

According to the average social happiness obtained in this study, the most students declared their social happiness at a high level. The social happiness, one of the positive emotions and very influential on the other's behaviors and states, plays a decisive role in providing the mental and physical health of the individual and society. Happiness in the community can give people a sense of hope and engage them in their social and personal lives, and also can motivate them to improve the social life, and can significantly reduce the effects of these damages. In addition, with creating a vibrant and hopeful environment among the society people, can suggest new and dynamic alternatives for development (59-61). The results of the research done by Zahoor et al. (2003), indicated that there is no significant difference between the average happiness of students in Iran University of Medical Sciences with the average happiness of students in developed countries (62). The research done by Jafari et al. (2004), indicated that among the students of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, 78% of them had high levels of happiness and the rest had the average level of happiness (63).

The value of the Pearson correlation coefficient indicated a significant and direct relationship between the social capital and social happiness. In other words, with the increase of social capital, the level of the students' social happiness also increases. The results are consistent with the findings of the researches done by Costanza et al, Veenstra et al, and Powdthavee et al, (46-48). In these researches, it has been concluded that the social capital increases the level of happiness and well-being in students. The results of this study are also in line with Yamaoka (64) and Lindström (43) one. The researchers believe that the social capital provides the students with satisfaction with the life and mental health of the students. In this research, social capital is the most important predictor of social happiness and mental health. Leung et al. (2010) found that a strong social network with friends is an important factor in the happiness of an individual. To Putnam et al., the social capital is also a powerful predictor of people happiness and the quality of life in the community (64-66).

The main limitation of this study was collecting data using the self-report method, which may affect the accuracy of the results. In addition, the individual differences in research samples may also affect the generalizability of the research findings.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the social capital and social happiness; therefore, with the increase of social capital, the level of social happiness increases. It is recommended that the university administrators, with the aim of promoting the social capital, increase the social happiness in students.

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