An Investigation of the Factors Affecting Social Capital Improvement Among Rural Islamic Council Members of Tehran

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**A B S T R A C T**

The purpose of this present was to identify the factors affecting social capitals among Islamic council members. It was a non-experimental, causative and applied study. The statistical population included members of rural Islamic councils of Tehran (3588 people). The sample size was determined 143 using Cochrane formula. The main data gathering tool was questionnaire. The questionnaire validity was evaluated using specialists panel and its reliability was also evaluated by computing Cronbach coefficient for its different sections. As the research findings revealed, 24.5% of the sample was at a high level in terms of social capital and 74.8% of the sample was at an average level. Also, it was observed that there is a significant positive relation between age, membership background, social dignity, and awareness level of Islamic councils and social capital. It was also found that four variables of awareness of rural Islamic councils, attitude towards council, membership in council, and social dignity determine totally 51.7% of the variations related to the research dependent variable.

**INTRODUCTION**

People participation in managerial processes is one of the oldest methods in society management. In sustainable development, local gatherings and localism has specially emphasized and cooperative management is considered a strategy to achieve this end [12]. Meanwhile, rural communities need social capital to apply cooperative management [30]. Currently, the positive effects of social capital have been identified by governments and applied as focus-removing policies, public participation encouragement, and cooperative management in many countries [6]. In Iran, public participation has also been developed by establishing rural and urban councils but it should be investigated that to what extent these councils have influenced social capitals improvement in communities.

The World Bank considers social capital as a phenomenon which is the result of the effect of social institutes, human relations and norms in social interactions’ quality and quantity and the experiences of this organization indicate that social capital has a significant effect in various countries’ economy and development [34]. According to Flora [8], social capital can be the result of some phenomenon including trust, mutual social interactions, social groups, sense of group identity, and sense of a common image form future and team work in a social system. Grootaert and Bastelaer [13] believed that social capital are considered as some valuable concepts such as social networks, mutual relations, public trust, and commitment. Again, Kawachi *et al* [15] believed that social capital is the extent of health distribution homogeneity in geographical areas of a region. Winter [32] asserted that there is a reasonable agreement in the definition of social capital. He provided an applied definition about social capital. Social capital is the bilateral benefits of social relations created through norms, beliefs and mutual interaction.

Lock Lee [18] attempted to summarize theoretical principles of various designs of social capital dimensions. He divided social capital into two dimensions of quality and structural networks. Quality includes mutual relations and trust and trust is divided into institutional and social types. The structured considered to measure this dimension involves social trust, political participation, civil leadership, voluntarily spirit, religious participation, non-official social networks, diversity in friendships, and justice in civil participation.
Woodhouse [33] believed that the min variables of social capital include social participation, official relations network, information exchange with out of system, inter-group social capital, and social awareness.

Rosalyn and Maryanne considered the dimensions of social capital as participation, social commitment and loyalty, control and self-sufficiency, perceiving structures or characteristics of society’s levels, mutual social action, social networks, social support, social trust, and social coherence.

Sabatin [25] claimed that permanent social capital is formed through family links and temporary social capital is formed through weekly links among friends, neighbors and organizations’ members voluntarily. Anckar believed that there are conceptual and causative relations between social capital, trust, mutual relation and participation. There is mutual relation between trust and participation. Ufegh and Fosh showed that there is a direct relation between family income and work market status, employment status including job security, income level and additional time, religion, religious commitment education, age, city against suburb, family size, gender, participation, women’s work market, and the variable of social capital.

Krishna and Aref observed a significant relation between age, gender, residence duration in village, education, and family size and the variable of social capital. People have more social capital, legislation, information and information source in the village, the families solved village’s problems with others’ help, the villages with more group decision making processes controlled by traditional leaders or technical specialists.

Noumsa et al believed that to develop human resources optimally, at the first degree, it is needed to participate in project, members ownership in project and project leadership in order to more sustainability in projects. Nel et al stated that considerable economic and social prosperity and promotion can be achieved in communities through supporting non-official active organizations. According to Rin in the process of participation, the combination of technical expert, tastes decision making, rational values, exchange of mutual arguments and notions should be focused. Vari [30] claimed that financial supports and supplying cooperative designs budget, stimulating factors, social organizations’ activity type, and individual characteristics are of the importance factors in participation. Akabayashi [2] asserted that individual characteristics such as gender, higher age, ideas growth, and individuals’ familiarity with participation process are of the important factors of participation. The World Bank [35] believed that for rural communities, participation is a way to identify and implement the priorities.

In Iran, rural Islamic councils with a 15-year background have implemented various functions in rural society. One of the most important functions is to increase social capital among local communities which is a key factor to develop rural communities. But the factors reinforcing social capitals among rural Islamic councils of Tehran are unidentified and unknown. Therefore, the present paper has been attempted to answer the following questions:

- How is social capital status among rural Islamic councils of Tehran?
- Is there any relation between individual, social, and economic factors of council members and the amount of social capital?
- What are the strategies to reinforce social capital in rural Islamic councils of Tehran?
- What factors affect the amount of social capital in council members?

**METHODOLOGY**

The present study with a rationalism approach attempted to identify the factors affecting social capitals among Islamic council members. It was a non-experimental, communicative-causative and applied study seeking to find the relation between events and status quo. The statistical population included members of rural Islamic councils of Tehran (3588 people). The statistical sample was selected randomly and the sample size was determined 143 using Cochran formula. Firstly, 12 cities of Tehran province were randomly selected (Varamin, Savojbolagh, Robat karim, and Damavand). Then, a list of the villages of these cities was provided and based on the number of villages in each city, the samples were determined in each city. Afterwards, with respect to the number of the considered samples, 10 villages were randomly selected and questionnaire was distributed among them. The main data gathering tool was a 36-item Likert scale-based questionnaire. The questionnaire validity was evaluated using face validity and experts opinions and its reliability was also evaluated by computing Cronbach coefficient (0/817) for its different sections. Social capital was investigated through 36 Likert scale-based items in three parts of trust, participation and social coherence. The obtained results were then analyzed using regression analysis.

**FINDING**

Investigating the relation between predictive variables and social capital:

According to the findings, there is a significant positive relation between age, social dignity, attitude and awareness toward rural Islamic councils, and social trust. Investigating the relation between social coherence amount and the research predictive variables revealed a significant positive of between age, social dignity, and attitude and awareness toward rural Islamic councils and social coherence. That is, social coherence is increased
in the confidence level of 99% by increasing age, social dignity and awareness of council members. Investigating the relation between social participation and the research predictive variables indicated that there is a significant positive relation between age, awareness about Islamic councils and membership background in councils, social dignity, and social participation. In other words, social participation is increased at the confidence level of 99% by increasing age, awareness about Islamic councils and membership background in councils. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Investigating the relation between predictive variables and social participation amount.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictive variable</th>
<th>Criterion variable</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Social capitals</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>**0.361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land number</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>0.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal number</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>0.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly income</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>0.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social dignity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>**0.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmopolis orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>0.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of using media</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness about Islamic councils</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>**0.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership background in council</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>0.165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ** and * indicate significance level of 0.01 and 0.05, respectively**

Dependency analysis:

Step wise regression analysis was used to investigate the factors affecting social capitals in rural Islamic councils. As shown in Table 2, the variable of awareness about rural Islamic councils was entered into the equation firstly. The multiple correlation coefficient (R) value is computed 0.487 and determination coefficient value ($R^2$) is computed 0.237. In the second step, the variable of social dignity was entered in the equation. This variable increased the multiple correlation coefficient to 0.631 as well as determination coefficient to 0.398. In other words, 16.1% of the variable variations depending on social capitals are determined by this variable (social dignity). In the third step, the variable of membership background in council was entered into the equation. This variable enhanced multiple correlation coefficient to 0.677 as well as determination coefficient to 0.459. Therefore, 6.1% of the variations of social capitals are determined by this variable. At the final step, the variable of attitude towards rural Islamic council was entered into the equation and this variable increased multiple correlation coefficients to 0.719 as well as determination coefficient to 0.517. Hence, 5.8% of the social capitals variations are determined by this variable.

Table 2: Investigating the factors affecting social capitals in Islamic councils with coefficient values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$R^2_{Adj}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Awareness about rural Islamic councils</td>
<td>0.487</td>
<td>0.237</td>
<td>0.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social dignity</td>
<td>0.631</td>
<td>0.398</td>
<td>0.368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Membership background in council</td>
<td>0.677</td>
<td>0.459</td>
<td>0.418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Attitude towards Islamic councils</td>
<td>0.719</td>
<td>0.517</td>
<td>0.468</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: The amount of the variables’ effect in social capitals in Islamic councils.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness about rural Islamic councils</td>
<td>64.96</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social dignity</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership background in council</td>
<td>1.068</td>
<td>0.224</td>
<td>1.791</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards Islamic councils</td>
<td>1.670</td>
<td>0.263</td>
<td>1.192</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness about rural Islamic councils</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.268</td>
<td>1.711</td>
<td>0.021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering regression coefficient and the constant value obtained from step wise multiple regression analysis, the research regression equation can be presented as follow:

$Y = 64.96 + 3.65x_1 + 1.068x_2 + 1.670x_3 + 1.82x_4$

According to Table 3, the variable of awareness about rural Islamic councils (Beta=0.363) has the highest effect in Islamic councils’ social capitals in the cities of Tehran province. In the next priorities, there are attitude towards rural Islamic council (Beta=0.268), membership background in council (Beta=0.263), and social dignity (Beta=0.224). These four factors totally determine 51.7% of the variations related to the research dependent variable.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

As the research findings revealed, there is a significant positive relation between age of councils’ members and social capitals. This finding is consistent with the results reported by Nategh Pour and Firouz Abadi [20] and Firouzjani et al. The findings indicated that higher age of respondents leads to higher social capitals.
Considering the correlation coefficient regarding relation between age of councils’ members and social capitals, consistent with the results reported by Nategh Pour and Firouz Abadi [20] and Firouzjani et al, higher age of respondents leads to higher social capitals. It is also consistent with the finding reported by Gliser et al [10].

Consistent with the results obtained by Guguin and Kebosombing and Gliser et al [10], longer membership background in council increased the respondents’ social participation and social capitals. Consistent with the findings observed by Mosavi Khamene [19], Asman Vafef [5], Nancy Johnson et al, and along, higher social awareness leads to higher social capitals.

According to the research results, four variables of awareness about rural Islamic council, social dignity, membership background in council, and attitude towards Islamic councils have a determinant role to reinforce social capitals components in Islamic councils. Social awareness about Islamic councils is the most important variable to increase social capitals level in rural councils. Trust and cooperation has a direct relation with awareness, especially in the new world of knowledge and information, it plays a significant role in social evolutions so that it is considered as a main factor to achieve social capitals. Low information and awareness will lead to low social capitals opportunities. Awareness and attention is the necessary cognitive prerequisite and the more active form of civil responsibility causing interest and concern. The opposite point of awareness is the cognitive situation of ignorance, indifference and formation of opportunistic attitude.

Considering the obtained results, the following suggestions are presented to reinforce social capitals among rural Islamic councils’ members:

1. Considering to the affective role of respondents’ social awareness to reinforce social capitals in rural Islamic councils, it is suggested that by holding educational courses for councils members, the opportunity is provided in the beginning to promote their attitude, knowledge and skill. It is also suggested that various responsibilities are assigned to members during responsibility period in order to provide the opportunity of increasing awareness in different dimensions of council for members.
2. Municipalities and Dehyaries Of the country should oblige Dehyaries to promote social awareness among councils members in order to provide the opportunity or social awareness reinforcement in members by holding educational courses to present the recent achievements regarding the nature and framework of councils and their place. In this regards, it is suggested to design brochures, booklets and other appropriate educational materials with the least principles and rules about councils’ activities to be used for informing and increasing social awareness. In this case, it is suggested that educational programs are provided in councils as a comprehensive and organized program.
3. Considering the research findings, it is suggested that rural people’s awareness about councils is increased by holding educational conferences. It can be claimed that this strategy will influence social capitals in council directly.
4. Considering the fact that there is a significant positive relation between membership experience and social capital in council, experienced people are asked to share their knowledge and experiences with new members to promote social capitals in councils. To this end, holding educational courses using experiences people are suggested.
5. With respect to the fact that people with higher education have higher social capital, it is suggested that the possibility of people with higher education is provided in election regulations; that is, lower literacy people are limited to participate in election.

REFERENCES


