

## **EFFECT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ON THE PERFORMANCE OF LIBRARIANS IN SCHOOLS OF ALBORZ PROVINCE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the present research was to investigate the effect of social capital on the performance of librarians in the schools of Alborz Province, Iran. Improving employee performance and productivity are important issues facing managers. This study focused on social capital as an important predictor of employee performance using Nahapiet and Ghoshal's (1998) model. Data were collected using standard questionnaires for measuring social capital ( $\alpha= 0.809$ ) and performance quality ( $\alpha= 0.877$ ). The population consisted of 223 schools of which 86 were randomly selected based on Cochran's sample size formula. Kolmogorov - Smirnov test, Pearson correlation coefficient, and Friedman test were used for data analysis in SPSS. The results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between social capital and employee performance. Significant positive correlations were also observed between different dimensions of social capital and performance.

**Keywords:** *Social Capital, Structural Dimension, Cognitive Dimension, Relational Dimension, Employee Performance*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Social capital is receiving increasing attention in economic and social studies of advanced countries. Social networks are a valuable resource that affects the productivity and performance of individuals in an organization. As such, school libraries can benefit from stronger social networks among the librarians because they deal with students who have different needs and emotions. Therefore, the present research tries to examine the effect of social capital on performance of school librarians.

The concept of social capital became widely used in the 1990s. However, the use of the term goes back to L. J. Hanifan's article written in 1916. The modern view of social capital was first seen in the classic work of Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, published in 1961. In this book, Jacobs underlines the importance of people's networks in cities while explaining the struggle of urban neighborhoods for self-government and the actions of governments and capital which thwart them. "If self-government in the place is to work, underlying any float of population must be a continuity of people who have forged neighbourhood networks. These networks are a city's irreplaceable social capital" (Jacobs, 1961). However, the term "social capital" was brought into wider use in the 1980s and found a special place in sociology theories (Mousavi, 2006).

Definitions: There are various definitions of social capital. Coleman defines social capital as social-structural resources that facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure (Coleman, 1998). Putnam defines it as features of social organization, such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation (Putnam, 2003). After studying American civil society, he modified his definition of social capital to "features of social life—networks, norms, and trust—that enables participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (Putnam, 1995). Such networks are typically associated with norms that promote coordination, cooperation, and reciprocity for the mutual benefit of network members, allowing them to function smoothly and effectively.

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—or in other words, to membership of a group—which provides each of its members

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effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected (Bourdieu, 1986).

Fukuyama defines social capital as “the existence of a certain set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permits cooperation among them”. However, he argues that “the sharing of values and norms does not in itself produce social capital, because the values may be the wrong ones”. The norms that produce social capital include the meeting of obligations and reciprocity. Informally enforced norms reduce transaction costs entailed by formal coordination mechanisms. Fukuyama argues that social capital is not a subset of human capital because it is a property of groups rather than individuals. The norms underlying social capital ... must be shared by more than one individual to have any meaning (Fukuyama, 2000).

All these definitions share the concepts of reciprocity and generalized trust. In other words, individuals behave towards each other with the expectation that they share certain norms and values. They engage in actions which are of benefit to others in the expectation that those actions will be reciprocated at some point in the future (Alavi, 2001; Alvani and Shirvani, 2005).

**Dimensions of Social Capital:** Social capital is regarded as a resource for facilitating relationships between individuals. This resource includes a variety of components such as norms, trust, and networks that all focus on interactions between people and can affect their performance (Nasiri, 2011). As with different definitions of social capital, different dimensions have been identified for this construct. However, most of these dimensions revolve around trust, norms of reciprocity, and social connections (Mousavi, 2006).

According to Coleman, there are three forms of social capital:

1. Obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness of structures. This form of social capital depends on two elements: trustworthiness of the social environment and the actual extent of obligations held.
2. Information channels. This refers to the use of social relations to acquire information, facilitated by the use of social relationships maintained for other purposes.
3. Norms and effective sanctions. When a norm exists and is effective, it is a powerful, though sometimes fragile, form of social capital.

**Bourdieu's model** of social capital consists of two components:

1. The size of the network of connections
2. The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent.

Leana and Van-Buren (1999) define social capital at the organizational scale as a resource reflecting the character of social relations within the organization, realized through members' level of collective goal orientation and shared trust. They propose two dimensions for social capital:

1. Associability, which is the willingness and ability of participants to subordinate individual level goals and associated actions to collective goals and actions. By participating in efforts to meet group objectives, the individual not only achieves their individual goals, but also works toward the group objective.
2. Trust, which is defined as an individual's confidence in another's reliability and integrity.

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) distinguished between three different dimensions of social capital:

1. The relational dimension, the norms, expectations and levels of trust or respect that are developed through repeated interactions within the network.
2. The structural dimension or the overall configuration of the network at hand and the access to resources that it enables.
3. The cognitive dimension, the set of interpretive schemes, codes and languages that agents from the same network share and refer to in order to make sense of their behaviors and of the environment.

### **Performance Quality of Libraries**

A library is a social institutions, its existence is due to the demands of the society. Librarians interact with various groups of people. Thus, the value of libraries lies in their social capital. Librarians are the link between students and their research, guiding them in finding the most relevant and useful materials. They also play a key role in keeping books and materials updated, organizing information for easy access, and creating an attractive scientific and cultural environment in schools.

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Although the job description of librarians is clear-cut and straightforward, significant differences can be observed in their performance, which can be caused by a variety of factors, including knowledge, education, experience, salary, facilities, human capital, intellectual capital, and social capital. Social capital is an important resource that helps librarians achieve their desired goals and facilitates collective action. It has been shown that social capital is as important as physical and human capital. Absence of social capital can reduce an organization's efficiency and can hinder development.

### The Proposed Model

Given the review of the literature, the following conceptual model is proposed (Figure 1).

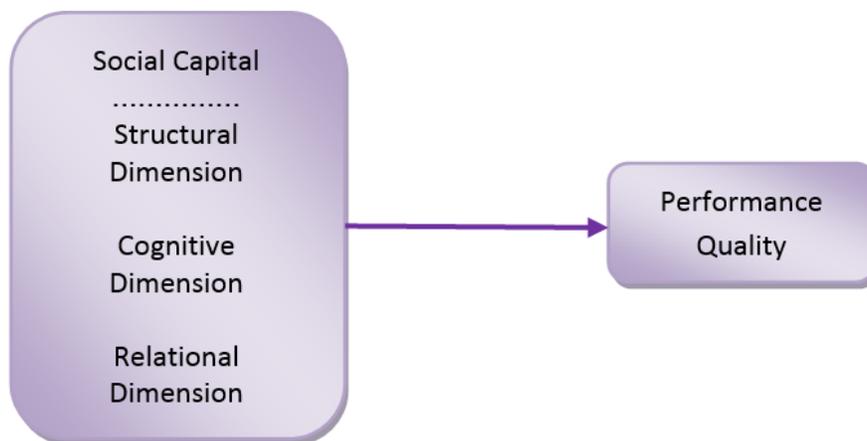


Figure 1: The conceptual model of the research

### Review of the Literature

Farr-Wharton and Brunetto (2009) employed a social capital and learning organization theoretical framework to examine how female entrepreneurs managed interactions with employees and whether they learned about new business opportunities from workplace networks. The results showed that female entrepreneurs used a relational approach to managing their businesses. The results also suggested that these female entrepreneurs did not engage in active learning from employees. McCallum and O'Connell (2009) investigated the role of social capital in leadership development. They outlined four impacts of social capital on leadership development: (1) trust, which leads to the reduced need for monitoring trading partners, (2) improved knowledge creation and sharing due to trust, shared goals, and common frames of reference, (3) more coherent action that flows from organizational stability and shared understanding, stabilized organizational membership through reductions in turnover, severance costs, and hiring and training expenses, and (4) maximization of the values of collaboration, thus increasing the rate of financial return. Zhang and Fung (2006) investigated the effects of social capital on the performance of Chinese private enterprises and showed that social capital is a significant determinant of enterprise performance. Similarly, Fanakar (2008) found that social capital improves the performance of human resources. Overall, the literature indicates that social capital has a significant positive impact on group efforts, stability, control and monitoring costs, and trust and cooperation among individuals, therefore improving organizational performance, learning, leadership, and development. To our knowledge, there are no studies that investigate the effect of social capital on performance of librarians. Thus, the present research can provide insights into this issue and can serve as a stepping stone for future studies.

### Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant relationship between social capital and performance quality.

H1-1: There is a significant relationship between the structural dimension of social capital and performance quality.

H1-2: There is a significant relationship between the relational dimension of social capital and performance quality.

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H1-3: There is a significant relationship between the cognitive dimension of social capital and performance quality.

H2: There is a significant difference between the effects of different dimensions of social capital.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The population of this descriptive-correlational study consisted of all the librarians in the 270 schools of Alborz Province. Forty-seven schools lacked a library, and out of the remaining schools 86 were selected as the sample using Cochran's sample size formula. Data were collected using a 33-item Social Capital Questionnaire (SCQ) and a 31-item Organizational Performance Questionnaire (OPQ). Both the questionnaires were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of the instruments, leading to an alpha of 0.809 for SCQ and an alpha of 0.877 for OPQ. The indices measured in this research are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Description of the variables**

Dimensions of Social Capital	Variables
Cognitive Dimension	Shared codes and language Shared narratives
Relational Dimension	Trust and trustworthiness Norms and sanctions Obligations and expectations Identity and identification
Structural Dimension	Network ties Network configuration Appropriable organization

**Data Analysis**

The Kolmogorov- Smirnov test of normality, Pearson correlation coefficient, and Friedman test were used for data analysis in SPSS software.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Results**

Kolmogorov - Smirnov test was used to test the normal distribution of the observations.

**Table 2: The results of one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test**

Variables	N	K-S statistic	Sig.	Result
Social Capital	86	3.902	0.002	Normally distributed
Structural Dimension	86	1.160	0.000	Normally distributed
Cognitive Dimension	86	2.036	0.000	Normally distributed
Relational Dimension	86	2.003	0.001	Normally distributed
Performance Quality	86	2.100	0.017	Normally distributed

As the data in Table 2 show, the significance level for all the observations is less than 0.05, indicating that they are normally distributed.

Table 3 shows the results of testing the main hypothesis, i.e. the relationship between social capital and performance quality.

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**Table 3: Correlation coefficient between social capital and performance quality**

<b>Performance Quality</b>			
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Pearson's r</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>N</b>
Social Capital	0.760**	0.000	86

The significance level of the test is less than 0.01. Thus, there is a significant relationship between social capital and performance quality at the 0.01 level. Pearson's r is 0.760, which suggests that the correlation is positive and strong.

Table 4 shows the results of testing the relationship between the cognitive dimension of social capital and performance quality.

**Table 4: Correlation coefficient between cognitive dimension and performance quality**

<b>Performance Quality</b>			
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Pearson's r</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>N</b>
Cognitive Dimension	0.699**	0.000	86

The data in Table 4 show that the significance level of the test is less than 0.01. Thus, there is a significant relationship between the cognitive dimension and performance quality at the 0.01 level. Pearson's r is 0.699, which suggests that the correlation is positive and moderate.

Table 5 shows the results of testing the relationship between the relational dimension of social capital and performance quality.

**Table 5: Correlation coefficient between relational dimension and performance quality**

<b>Performance Quality</b>			
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Pearson's r</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>N</b>
Relational Dimension	0.503**	0.000	86

The data in Table 5 show that the significance level of the test is less than 0.01. Thus, there is a significant relationship between the relational dimension and performance quality at the 0.01 level. Pearson's r is 0.503, which suggests that the correlation is positive and moderate. Table 6 shows the results of testing the relationship between the structural dimension of social capital and performance quality.

**Table 6: Correlation coefficient between structural dimension and performance quality**

<b>Performance Quality</b>			
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Pearson's r</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>N</b>
Structural Dimension	0.813**	0.000	86

The data table 6 shows that the significance level of the test is less than 0.01. Thus, there is a significant relationship between the structural dimension and performance quality at the 0.01 level. Pearson's r is 0.813, which suggests that the correlation is positive and strong.

Based on the second hypothesis, there is a significant difference between the effects of different dimensions of social capital.

**Table 7: Ranking of the dimensions of social capital**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Structural Dimension	1.97	2
Cognitive Dimension	2.24	1
Relational Dimension	1.79	3

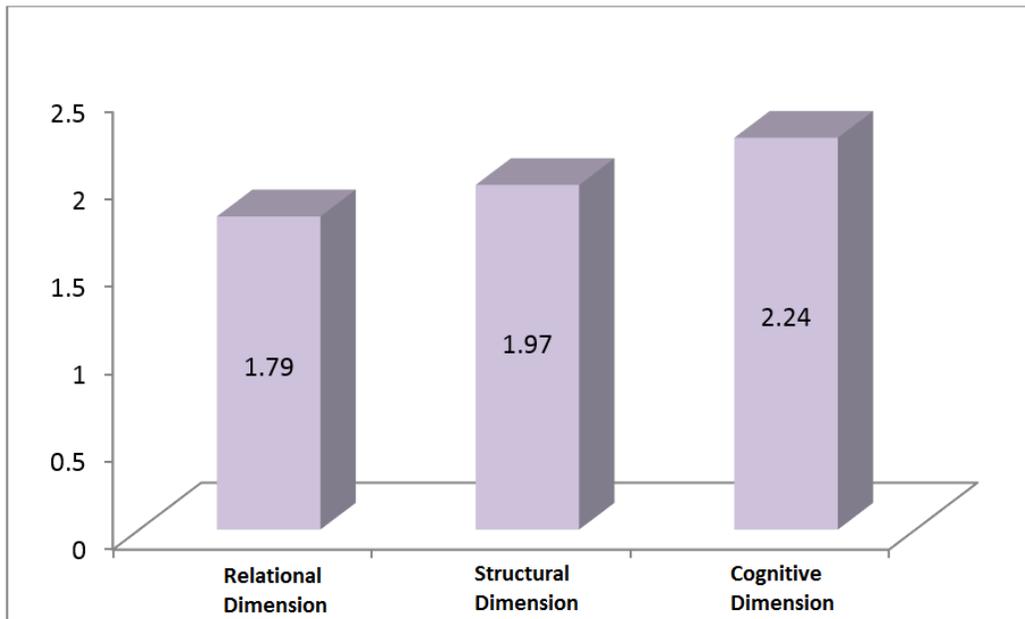
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**Table 8: The results of Friedman test**

Friedman Test	Values
N	65
Test Statistic	6.638
df	2
Sig.	0.036

The results in Tables 7 and 8 shows that there is a significant difference between the ranks of different dimensions of social capital at 95% confidence interval.

Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the rankings.



**Figure 2: Rankings of social capital dimensions.**

**Discussion**

The results showed that there is a significant association between social capital and organizational performance ( $r = 0.760$ ). In social capital, the connections between the members of a network are considered a valuable resource that is reinforced by trust and norms. The present findings also showed that there are significant associations between performance quality and the cognitive dimension ( $r = 0.699$ ), the relational dimension ( $r = 0.503$ ), and the structural dimension ( $r = 0.813$ ). The results of Friedman test showed that the cognitive dimension was the most important predictor of performance (2.24), followed by the structural dimension (1.97) and the relational dimension (1.97).

Research has shown that social capital has a significant effect on the increase in group efforts, stability, control and monitoring costs, trust, and cooperation among individuals, therefore improving organizational performance, learning, leadership, and development. Therefore, social capital is a critical factor in the success of organizations, including school libraries. Careful planning is required for motivating librarians and raising their social status. Moreover, special emphasis needs to be put on the emotional aspects of librarians. The government can also assume an active role by strengthening civil institutions and encouraging citizens to volunteer in social activities.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

1. Further studies can be carried out on the relationship between social capital and performance in other organizations.

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2. Given the critical role of social capital in organizations, future research can focus on its impact on factors such as organizational culture, intellectual capital, human resource performance, and knowledge management.
3. Future research can examine, in more detail, the mechanisms through which social capital affects performance in libraries and other organizations.
4. Research has shown that social capital is positively associated with job satisfaction. Therefore, studies can be carried out on the role of social capital in job development and social status, especially in librarians.

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