

Social Capital and Delinquency Study Case: High School Students of Shiraz City

Habib Ahmadi¹, Roodabe Dehghani^{2*}

¹Professor of Sociology in Shiraz University, Department of sociology, Shiraz, Iran.

²Ph. D. student in Sociology, Shiraz University, Department of Sociology, Shiraz, Iran.

***Corresponding Author:**

Roodabe Dehghani

Email: roodabeh.dehghani1990@gmail.com

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to examine if there is any significant relationship between social capital and adolescences' delinquency. This study uses survey, as a method, and its statistical population is all of undergraduate students of high schools in Shiraz city (a city of Iran). Using Cochran formula, 600 students were selected. Data were analyzed using SPSS software. The factors influencing adolescences' delinquency in the research are variables such as social involvement, trust in teachers, parental trust, teachers' support, parental support, and participation in household chores. To see how much these dimensions of social capital can explain delinquency multivariate logistic regression is used. The independent variables in the regression analysis were able to explain 44% (Cox and Snell's square) to 58% (Nagel kerksquare) of the variability in the dependent variable.

Keywords: Social Capital; Delinquency; Adolescence; Shiraz City.

INTRODUCTION

As is the case in virtually every other country, youth delinquency in Iran is the result of a wide range of factors. For example, juvenile delinquency in Iran began to rise gradually because of industrialization and transition from traditional to modern society after the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and throughout the twentieth century [5]. In the 1980s, during the early phase of the revolution and in a time of war, economic and social problems were aggravated, even though correctional Institutions did not have a large number of inmates (and most of them were males). In 1986 when the Iran–Iraq war ended, 790 cases of murder reported; out of these, persons less than 19 years old had committed 140 cases (18%). Then juvenile delinquency has been increasing due to the rapid urban development specifically after the war between Iraq and Iran, and currently it is considered as a major social challenge [5].

The whole population of prisoners in the same year has been 146,134 with 1.63% being below 19 years old. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, offenses committed by children/juveniles ranged from addiction and other drug-related crimes to theft and rape [5]. The statistics indicate directly under 18-aged offences are increasing. Notwithstanding many attempts to control and decrease the delinquency, they are still one of the main concerns of governments and communities. Offences destroy not only human and social sources of communities, but also impose high costs on the

governments. Such problems are twice as many in young countries such as Iran with about one third population of teenagers and young people. The statistics indicate the offence age has decreased to 14[1].

Historically, female juvenile delinquency has been “ignored, trivialized or denied” [9], while girls in the juvenile justice system were once “dubbed” the “forgotten few” [7]. This response has gradually changed, as statistics consistently illustrate the increasing involvement of female youths in the juvenile justice system [8]. Throughout the past two decades, an increasing amount of literature has focused on the etiology, prevalence, and treatment of female juvenile delinquency [6], [9], and has highlighted the unique patterns of female juvenile offending.

A noteworthy point about Iran is that crimes committed by girls have reached almost the same rate as that of boys. In 1998, the ratio had been 13.5 boys to 1 girl, but in the following year, the ratio was 9.5 to 1 [26].

In addition, prevention-based theories have inspired Iranian authorities in adopting regulations compelling the government to provide education and medical treatment for all citizens concerned; the Iranian Constitution has already emphasized the role of the government in this regard. The role of the family in particular has been emphasized; the protection of the family as “the fundamental unit of Islamic society” is

considered as a major duty of the government [20]. All these aspects can be construed as major indications for government responsibility in preventing crimes from happening [5]. Simultaneously, the concept of social capital has been increasingly used by criminologists in the study of crime and delinquency [25]. Criticizing the narrow view of family and youth friendships in criminology, McCarthy et al. (2002) argue that the social capital approach offers a broader view and a better understanding of factors that cause crime and delinquency [12], [19].

The concept is both interpreted and used in various ways by different writers. Social capital can be divided into two main components: relationships and resources (such as information, trust and norms). The significance of different dimensions of relationships and resources varies greatly depending on the researcher's interests [19]. In addition, scholars' approaches differ in the extent to which they emphasize the role of social environments as sources of social capital. Coleman (1988) emphasizes the role of home and school, whereas Putnam (1995) concentrates on voter turnouts and associational memberships, although acknowledging the role of family too [23], [11].

Social control and social ties, key elements of social capital, are essential elements in social bonding theory. Hirschi (1969) holds that 'delinquent acts result when an individual's bond to society is weak or broken'. There are four types of bonds: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. When the bonds are strong, an individual will refrain from criminal activity. These four bonding elements work as a set of external restraining forces that when are weak or absent allow the natural human tendency toward deviance to come into play. In Hirschi's social bonding theory (1969), attachment refers to the degree of emotional ties to significant others (e.g., parents, teachers, and institutions). Commitment represents investment in conventional activities and expectations. For example, an individual who is committed to a particular career is likely to be controlled or restrained by his or her stake or investment (what he or she is and/or what he or she wishes to be). Belief reflects the extent that an individual embraces values, rules, and norms of the society. The connection between social bonds and crime and deviance is the most frequently tested proposition derived from Hirschi's social bonds theory.

In short, Hirschi (1969) asserted that when youths are strongly attached to parents, peers, and school; committed to customary lines of action; engaged in conventional activities; and believe in the validity of the moral values of society (normative beliefs), there will be less likelihood of delinquency. In other words, when social bonds to conventional society are strong, individuals will be prevented from becoming delinquent, deviant, or criminal [22]. In line with the

theories discussed, it is expected that elements of social capital may be significantly related to juvenile delinquency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Aliverdinia & Simin (2014) studied the role of family, school and in delinquency of students in Mashhad city (a city of Iran). Hirschi's social bonding theory, Akers' social learning theory and labeling theory build the theoretical framework of the study. The sample size consisted of 400 high school students. The most important variable which significantly can explain and predict the changes of the destruction of property, state offences, theft, and substance abuse, is the variable of belief. In addition, the differential association has more power to predict violence than other variables. Margaret A. Zahn's study summarizes some of the literature reviewed by the Girls Study Group, which is a federally funded project aimed at assessing the causes of girls' delinquency as well as evaluating programs to address it. The literature reveals that a number of factors such as family dysfunction, involvement with antisocial peers, and living in disadvantaged neighborhoods are correlated with delinquency for both boys and girls. Some factors, however, are gender sensitive, meaning that girls either are more exposed to a given risk factor than boys or react somewhat differently to a given risk factor. Girls have higher rates of exposure to sexual assault, which is associated with delinquency and, although more research is needed, they are more affected by the impacts of early puberty, when it is coupled with harsh parenting and disadvantaged neighborhoods.

The research of Ahmadi and Iman (2005) investigated the effects of the culture of poverty indices on youth tendency to delinquent behavior. Population is those who were living in the Dehpeleh as an asylum area in Shiraz city during the study. Results show significant relations between asylum and the culture of poverty components like disinclination to saving, tendency to isolation, and tendency to delinquent behavior in the interaction between asylum and the culture of poverty components. Zmanai (2013) investigated if there is a relationship between women's familial factors (family condition, social surroundings, and leisure time) and delinquency. This Research studied women in Ewin prison and welfare office in Tehran province in 2000's. Results of the study show that there is a significant positive relationship between familial factors and delinquency.

Khajenoori & HashemiNia (2011) investigated the importance of parent's conflict, the way they deal with their children and the juvenile deviance behaviors. The hypotheses which form the basic theoretical perspective of this survey have been developed from social control and social interaction theories. The results show significant relationship between familial conflict

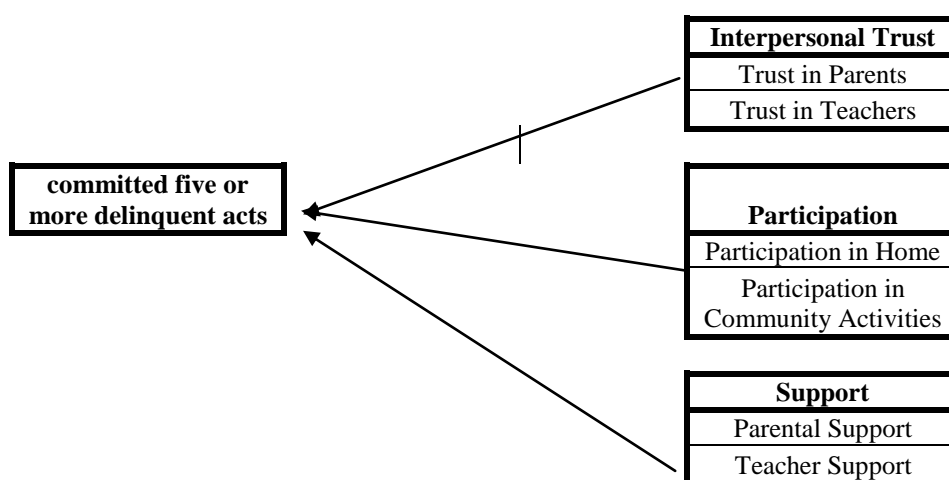
(parental and parent-child conflicts) and juvenile delinquency. In addition, there is a negative significant relationship between children's attachment to family members and juvenile delinquency. Hosseini & Yekkehkar (2011) performed a research for recognition of family factors which affect female adolescent delinquency of Tehran. Factors which are investigated consist of parent-kid attachment, confidence and surveillance, parental control, social-economic base and existence of delinquency experience. The results of this research show that there is a meaningful difference between two groups in terms of the amount of parent-kid attachment, parental control, social-economic base and existence of delinquency experience in parents but no meaningful difference in terms of parental confidence surveillance was observed.

Ahmadi, Khajeh Nouri & Mousavi (2009) investigated the relationship between the socio-

economic factors and high school students' delinquency in Abadeh County (a county in Shiraz, which is a city of Iran). The findings show that attachment to friends, religiosity and mass media use overall can explain 31 percent of variations of Juvenile delinquency. These findings demonstrate that as friend ties become stronger and attachment to friend's increases, severity of acts of delinquency increase; also religious beliefs prevent delinquency and reinforcement of religiosity identity can decrease delinquency rates. Also, reducing the aggressive content of mass media programs decreases delinquent acts in youth.

After reviewing the literature of juvenile delinquency, it became obvious that no specific research has been done about social capital and juvenile delinquency. This matter can somehow show the significance of this study.

Research Model



MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study has been done through survey method. The tools for data collection were self-reported questionnaires. As Zhang et al explain, in self-reported method, respondents have personal place and space to remember their past events [30]. In this study the tendency toward delinquency of the female and male students of high schools in Shiraz was considered as the dependent variable, and the social capital of the students as the independent variable. Participants consisted of 400 students (boys 264 and girls 136). The method was multi-stage random sampling. According to the population of each area, a part of the sample was devoted to it. Then in each area, several schools were chosen randomly and in proportion to the population of each school, the questionnaires were distributed. In order to determine the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, the two kinds of content validity and face validity were used. For content validity, the

questionnaire was given to some experts and for face validity; it was given to some female and male high school students as well as freshmen and sophomores.

Delinquency

Delinquency was measured via questionnaire made by the researchers. This instrument was originally developed from the questionnaire used in the international self-report delinquency study [16]. The instrument fulfills the standard criteria in this field of research: a broad repertoire of offences, the inclusion of relatively serious incidents, an unstructured enquiry into the number of offences in the previous year. The dependent variable of active delinquent behavior was based on 13 offence items: destruction of property at school, destruction of property outside school, shoplifting, stealing at school, stealing at home, buying stolen goods, auto theft, taking part in a fight, beating somebody up, use of soft drugs, misuse of legal

medicine, use of other than soft drugs, and drinking alcohol. The answers were used to compute the total number of incidents of delinquency.

It is important to know which factors are associated with the risk of relatively frequent delinquency; we therefore dichotomized the volume measure of delinquency to indicate whether the respondent was a frequent offender. The respondent was defined as a frequent offender if he or she had committed five or more criminal acts within the previous year.

Parental support

A scale was used to measure parental support. Respondents were asked how often parents ‘support and encourage me’, ‘follow my school achievements’, ‘talk to me to see if there is any problem’ and ‘attend parents’ meetings at school’. The Likert response scale (1 = never to 5 = always) was used in all social capital measures.

Teacher support

Teachers’ support was measured with questions such as how often the teacher ‘supports and encourages me’ and ‘is interested in my well-being’, how much he ‘knows about my life’ and ‘participates in activities handled by students’.

Trust

The scale to measure trust in parents and teachers contained three items: ‘I can trust my

parents/teachers’, ‘I can usually be certain that my parents/teachers want what’s best for me’ and ‘If I am not careful, others (my parents/teachers) may take advantage of me’.

Participation

To measure participation in community activities these items were used: ‘participation in different households’, ‘being a member of libraries’, ‘being a member of charity centers’, ‘participation in local communities’ and ‘participation in extracurricular classes’.

RESULTS

Bivariate analysis

All social capital variables were significantly related to active delinquent behavior (Figure 1): the lower the level of social capital, the greater the proportion of students participating in frequent-offending behavior. Parental support had the strongest bivariate association with delinquent behavior. The proportion who had committed five or more criminal acts within the previous year was 7 percent among those who reported that their parents gave them plenty of support, 19 percent among those with average parental support, and 33 percent among those with the lowest parental support. Of all the social capital dimensions measured, participating in home activities seemed least important. However, the association with delinquency was significant.

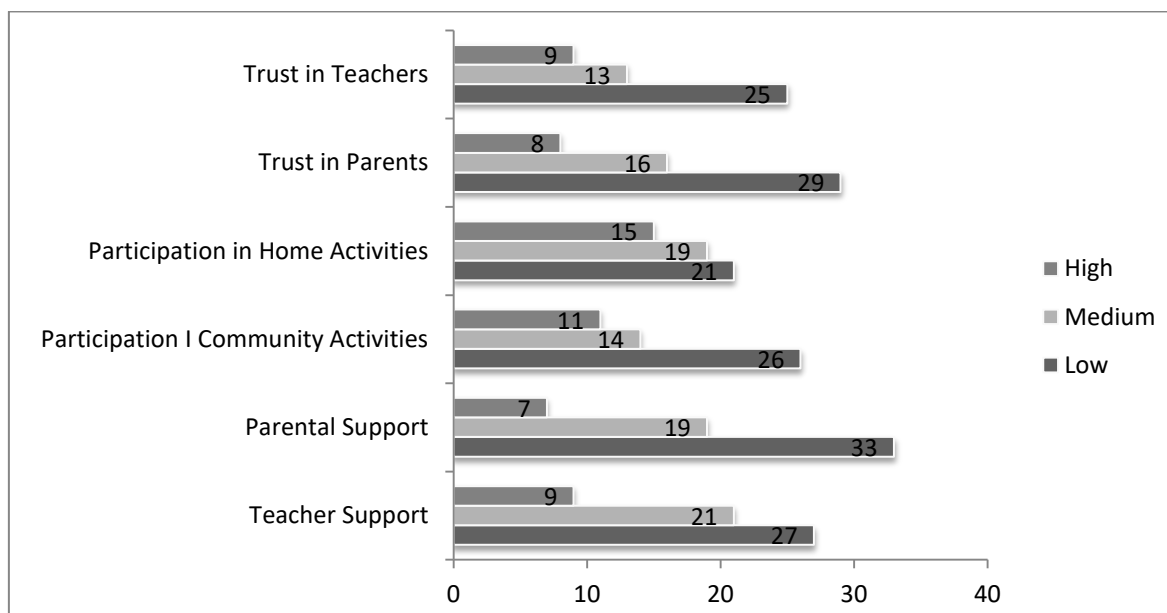


Fig-1: Committed at least five crimes in previous year (percent)

Percentage of respondents who committed five or more delinquent acts within the previous year.

Note 1: All associations significant (χ^2) at $p \leq .05$.

Note 2: It should be noted that there was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls.

The results of binary logistic regression analysis to predict committing at least five delinquencies

According to Table-2, the examination of coefficients of predictor variables in logistic regression equation to predict the probability of committing at least five delinquencies shows that the Parenting Test for the six variables including participation in household chores, social involvement, parental trust, trust in teachers, parents’ support, and teachers’ support are statistically significant and these variables significantly contribute to the predictive ability of the model and the odds ratio of committing at least five delinquencies. Other factors did not have a significant contribution in predicting the model.

In this model, the variable of parental trust has an odds ratio of 1.968 indicating that by reducing the variable of parental trust, the odds ratio of committing at least five delinquencies doubles. As well, the odds ratio for the variable of parental support is 1.541 and suggests that the lower the level of parental support, the probability to commit delinquencies increases more than one and a half times. The variable of social involvement has an odds ratio of 1.061 that shows a reduction in social contributions and the chances of

committing the crime increases by 1.06 times. Also, reducing the average score of trust in teachers leads to a rise in the odds ratio of 1.219 times to commit a crime. Furthermore, the chance of committing the delinquency is less than half with increased parental support. Reducing adolescents’ involvement in household chores also augments the odds ratio of committing the delinquency increase about 1.2 times.

As seen in the Table, the strongest predictor of the odds ratio of committing delinquencies in this model is the factor of diploma as a level of education with an odds ratio of 2.104. This suggests that controlling other factors in the model and considering increased parental support, the odds ratio of committing delinquencies by individuals will be doubled. After this variable, parental trust, teachers’ support, trust in teachers, social involvement, and participation in household chores were respectively the strongest predictors and significantly predicted the chance of committing a delinquency. The complete model includes all significant predictors indicating that the model is capable to distinguish between all the individuals who committed less than five crimes and other individuals.

Table 2. Estimated values of coefficients for each variable and significance testing to predict committing at least five delinquencies

Variables entered into the model	Beta	Standard Error	Parent	Significance Level	Odds Ratio
Social Involvement	-1.56	0.814	5.95	0.015	1.061
Parental Trust	-1.952	0.762	21.492	0.000	1.968
Trust in Teachers	-1.61	1.754	12.768	0.000	1.219
Teachers’ Support	-1.814	0.549	21.524	0.000	1.541
Parental Support	-1.043	0.814	9.124	0.004	3.104
Participation in Household Chores	-1.24	0.663	8.69	0.09	1.21

$X^2=142.326, \text{Significance Level}=0.000$

Fit index testing of the logistic regression model

According to Table 3, following the examination of the coefficients of predictor variables; the fit index of Hosmer–Leme show in this model has a chi-square value equal to 10.03 and its significance level is 0.263 which is higher than 0.05 (the cut-off point for the fit of the model) and showed good agreement of the model. Also; Nagelkerk, Cox and Snell square values which are

of the other fit indices to test the logistic regression model indicate the explained amounts for the variability of the dependent variable (committing at least five delinquencies) whose values in this model are respectively 0.58 and 0.44 indicating that 44% (Cox and Snell’s square) to 58% (Nagelkerk square) of the variability in the dependent variable in this set are explained by independent variables.

Table3. Validation of Logistic Regression Model

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test			The abstract of the model	
χ^2	Degrees of Freedom	Sig.	Cox & Snell coefficient	Nagelkerke coefficient
10.03	8	0.263	0.44	0.58

CONCLUSION

Social capital is a concept that can go beyond micro to macro-dimensions. It can also include links at the levels of micro- to macro-organizations. This

concept can include links within the family and interpreted as trust in these organizations; moreover, it can indicate the presence of individuals’ trust in macro-organizations in a society. Given that people’s behavior

can be explained by the effect of social organizations, the social capital as a concept having operational capacity at the organizational level is a good variable to explain individuals' behavior.

This study was to operationalize social capital in a way that includes different organizational levels; such as trust in parents and teachers, social involvement, and participation in household chores. The results of this study demonstrated that all the dimensions of social capital are able to explain delinquent behavior by individuals. Social participation was considered as one of the dimensions of social capital. The causal relationship between this variable and committing a delinquency shows that social involvement can deter people from delinquent behavior. But it contains some points that are significant. Social participation is by itself one of the social reflections with different social, economic, and political dimensions. In fact, these dimensions of social capital highlighted, reveal the role of macro-organizations and especially government. When the possibility of the formation of organization increases in society and the backgrounds for individuals' participation are provided, it is expected that deviant behavior (according to the theory of social bonds) is reduced through individuals' increased participation and social interaction with each other which is followed by increased sense of belonging and attachment to these organizations and their norms.

But the issue which needs to be stressed is that adolescents' needs and interests should be of importance in establishing different organizations for their participation. The presence of legal organizations in society wherein teenagers could participate in them, develop their talents, and meet their needs, in their minds can lead to the idea that they can meet their requirements through a legal framework and have a good and exciting life. This can increase their trust and belief in norms and laws available and prevent them from committing delinquent acts and deviations.

Schools and families constitute an important part of adolescents' lives. Thus, the type of relationships that exist between people in these contexts is of utmost importance; accordingly, relationship between parents and adolescents and trust in them was considered as one of the dimensions of social capital which contributed to the explanation of delinquency. These findings also emphasize the crucial role of organizations in society and their determining role in individuals' behavior. Efforts for the formation of the relationships as well as positive and trustworthy interactions between teachers and students are effective in reducing delinquent behavior. When teachers are able to gain the trust of their students, the deviant behavior will be reduced. One of the most important ways to increase trust is that teachers play their roles in compliance with regulations. When students are faced

with a teacher who does not follow the rules; ultimately, the students may also doubt about the legitimacy of the laws and lose their faith in their rightness.

Furthermore, supports by teachers and parents also contributed to the explanation of delinquent behavior among individuals. Parents' and teachers' supports can create trust and lead to a sense of belonging and attachment among teenagers to their parents and teachers. This issue plays an important role in accepting approved norms by adolescents. Support also is a concept which has lots in common with control; that is, increased juvenile support will mean increased control over their behavior and thus reduces deviant behavior.

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