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Impact and Discriminating Ability of Life Style Factors on Social Capital of Individuals

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ABSTRACT

Life style factors are robust in influencing the behavior of individuals across the globe. Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. This study examines the role and discriminant ability of life style factors in predicting the social capital variations of educators. The population study includes the college level educators in the state of Kerala in India. Sample sizes of 434 educators were surveyed with validated instruments to generate information pertaining to life style and social capital. The result suggests that, three life style factors are significant in predicting the social capital and these factors have the discriminant ability to predict the variations in social capital of educators. Lifestyle of respondents was measured with the help of AIO (Activities, Interest and Opinions) inventory. The tool used to measure social capital is extracted from the Social Capital Assessment Tool (SOCAT) developed by World Bank. The result suggests that, three life style factors are significant in predicting the social capital and these factors have the discriminant ability to predict the variations in social capital of educators.

Key words: Life style, social capital, educators, discriminant ability

INTRODUCTION

Social capital measures the involvement of an individual within society. This concept was studied at multiple levels, including the individual (Burt, 1992), organization (Dasgupta and Maler, 2001) and society (Putnam and Helliwell, 1995). At individual level social capital is defined as the relationship one builds with others. The emphasis in this case is on the actual or potential benefits that one accrues from his/her network of formal and informal ties with others (Burt, 1992). Every individual possesses a stock of social capital which is accumulated by his/her separate pair-wise connections with people either of the same ethnic group or of different ethnic groups (Fafchamps and Minten, 2002). This is supported by arguments that, an individual's stock of neighborhood social capital is directly related to the fraction of the neighbors who are of the same race (Charles and Kline, 2006). A further addition to this line of a thought suggests that the volume of social capital possessed by a person depends on size of the network of connections that he or she can mobilize and on the volume of capital-economic, cultural and symbolic-possessed by each person to whom he or she is connected (Ihlen, 2005). Thus, Bourdieu's social capital is decomposable into two elements: First, the social relationship that allows the individual to claim

resources possessed by him collectively and second by the quantity and quality of those resources (Portes, 1998). Thus these studies create a pathway to investigate the impact and discriminating ability of life style factors on social capital of individuals.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design: This study generally focuses on the impact of life style factors in discriminating the social capital level of educators in the state of Kerala in India. In order to attain the objectives, causal research design is applied which determine the nature of the relationship between casual variables and the effect to be predicted (Malhotra and Dash, 2010). Kerala is a state in India which stands first in Human Development Index (HDI) (Government of India, 2012). The state of Kerala acquired the so called high HDI as a result of several social reformations taking place for the past several years initiated by great educators, political leaders and social reformers (KCHR, 2006). Since educators play an important role in social capital contribution in all most all the economy (Ying *et al.*, 2011), the educators of government, aided and self financing colleges were taken as the subjects for this study.

The researcher applied a descriptive research design for carrying out the present study. Educators from Government College, aided college and self financing college were considered for the study. The respondents for the study were identified by using quota sampling from the data collected from Board of Technical Education, Kerala. Quota sampling is an alternative to random sampling commonly used in opinion polls by creating quotas of fixed numbers of people having specified characteristics, chosen to be representative of the population of interest. Quotas are fixed according to the relative weight age prepared by considering the number of educators in each district of Kerala. Each type of college included in the study is calculated on the basis of number of such type of colleges in the population. College and educators in each quota are randomly selected by using lottery method.

Participants and sampling: Educators who had completed one year of their service in government, government-aided and self financing professional colleges of Kerala were included for the study. To make the results more accurate, all the fourteen districts of the state were included in the study. The statistical approach of respondent-driven sample size estimation is applied in this study which improves the ability to study hidden populations by allowing researchers to make unbiased estimates of the prevalence of certain traits in these populations (Salganik, 2006). In the light of respondent-driven sample size estimation, sample size for the study was fixed to be 434 based on the mean and standard deviation of the key variables after the pilot study. The respondents were selected randomly from the list available from government, government aided and self financing colleges and the allocation of samples were based on the proportional strength of government, aided and self-financing college educators.

Instruments: As a result of the World Bank's extensive social capital research, the social capital thematic group has accumulated many insights into how to measure social capital. Based on those insights, World Bank has developed two measurement tools for assessing social capital namely, the SOCAT and the Social Capital Integrated Questionnaire called SOCAP IQ (World Bank, 2011). The questionnaire for this study was molded based on SOCAT for measuring social capital and the levels were determined based on the mean and deviation of social capital score. The reliability (Cronbach alpha) for the instrument was found to be 0.86 which was high.

The life style of educators were measured based on AIO questionnaire (Wells and Tigert, 1971) which is a validated instrument to measure the life style (Cronbach alpha 0.89). Thirteen life style factors namely Fashion Conscious, Community Minded, Child oriented, Compulsive House keeper, Self Confidence, Price conscious, Home body, Self Designated Opinion Leader, Information Seeker, Dislikes Housekeeping, Canned Food User, Dieter and Financial Optimist of educators were generated by AIO questionnaire.

Procedure: The purpose of this study was to examine how lifestyle changes affect the social capital of educators. The first attempt was to find out those life style factors which are highly correlated with the social capital. Those factors which are not correlated with social capital were removed from further analysis.

The second step was to apply discriminant function analysis to find out the discriminating ability of those highly correlated factors on predicting the social capital level of educators.

Statistical analysis: The first effort was to do a correlation analysis to find out how; various types of lifestyle factors are related to social capital. Even though life style is measured on 13 different factors, only three factors seemed to be highly correlated (correlation above 0.5) with social capital. Data analysis involves the use of statistical techniques to identify patterns that may be hidden in a group of numbers. One of these techniques is the “box plot” which is used to visually summarize and compare groups of data (Williamson *et al.*, 1989). IBM SPSS was used to perform the analytical operations.

One of the statistical tools used is discriminant function analysis. ‘Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients’ indicate the unstandardized scores concerning the independent variables (IDRE, 2012). It is the list of coefficients of the unstandardized discriminant equation which can be formulated for the prediction of social capital level.

RESULTS

The result shows that there is positive correlation between Social capital and the three types of lifestyle factors. Life style factors like Community Minded, Self Designated Opinion Leader and Self Confidence were found to be positively correlated with social capital (Table 1).

The distributions of the variables are explained by using a box plot diagram (Fig. 1). This represents a sorted diagrammatic presentation of social capital of the respondents. The black line in the box-and-whisker plot shows the median. The upper quartile shows the respondents with high social capital and lower quartile shows the respondents with low social capital.

The box plot diagram (Fig. 1) shows that there are no outliers in any of the variables examined here and all these variables appeared to be distributed normally.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of three variables independent variables and the dependant variable social capital.

The mean score of social capital was found to be 61.31 with a standard deviation of 10.80. The score was then divided into two namely high and low social capitals. The score above

Table 1: Correlations

Pearson correlation	Community minded	Self confidence	Self designated opinion leader
Social capital	0.708**	0.690**	0.617**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), Survey data

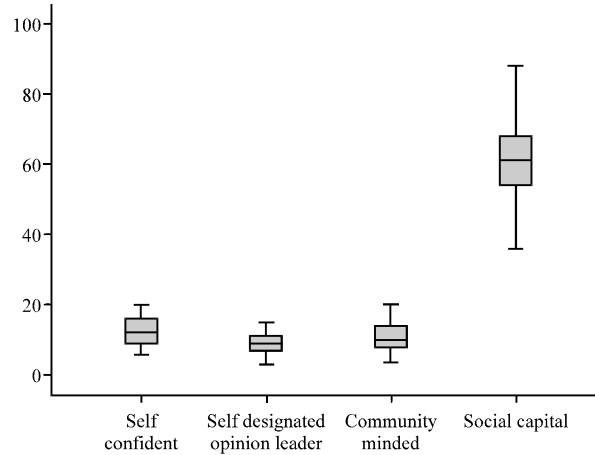


Fig. 1: Box plot of variables

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of life style factors and social capital

Parameters	Community minded	Self confidence	Self designated opinion leader	Social capital
Mean	11.00690	12.55680	8.98620	61.31870
Std. deviation	3.82196	3.88807	2.64702	10.80145

Survey data

Table 3: Group statistics-social capital level

Social capital level	Mean	Std. deviation
Social capital-low		
Community minded	8.4133	1.80099
Self confidence	9.7867	2.18942
Self designated opinion leader	7.5911	1.82295
Social capital-high		
Community minded	13.7816	3.41958
Self confidence	15.5825	2.97477
Self designated opinion leader	10.5000	2.59220

All means significantly differs ($p < 0.05$), Survey data

the mean can be termed as high and a score below the mean of 61.3 can be termed as low social capital. This bifurcation of social capital was used as the categorical dependent variable for further analysis.

Impact and discriminating effect of life style factors on social capital: Levels of social capital were classified into high and low as explained earlier. The group statistics was computed (Table 3) to find out how the various types of lifestyle differ in the group with low level of social capital and in the group with high level of social capital. It is clear that the life style score of people with low social capital was found to be low when compared with people with high social capital. From tests of equality of group means it was found that the means significantly differences ($p < 0.05$) among the two categories for all the factors.

Subsequent to this the independent variables were identified to be Community Minded, Self Confidence and Self Designated Opinion Leader and the dependent variable to be social capital

Table 4: Function coefficients

Parameters	Standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients	Canonical discriminant function coefficients
Community minded	0.556*	0.206*
Self confidence	0.650*	0.251*
Self designated opinion leader	0.128*	0.051*
Constant		-5.925*
Canonical correlation	0.807*	
Wilks' Lambda	0.349	
Chi-square	449.581	

*Significant at the 0.05 level, Survey data

Table 5: Functions at group centroids

Parameters	Function
Social capital level	1.000
Social capital-low	-1.303
Social capital-high	1.423

Unstandardized canonical discriminant functions evaluated at group means

level. This part of this study is oriented to analyze the discriminant ability of independent variables to discriminate the dependent variable. Table 4 exhibits the details of Eigen value.

The Canonical Correlation (0.807) is the correlation between the discriminant scores and the levels of the dependent variable which was found to be positively correlated (Table 4). The square of the canonical correlation is 0.651 and hence, 65% of the variance in the discriminating model is due to changes in the three factors. The statistical test of significance for Wilks Lambda was carried out with a chi square transformed statistic which in this case is 449.581 and was found to be significant. Hence the hypothesis is rejected and can conclude that, the three life style factors considered here do have the discriminating ability to distinguish high social capital contributors to a low social capital contributor. Hence the discriminant function can be further used for explanations.

Standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients and structure matrix are exhibited in Table 4. Each standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients in absolute values reflects the relative contribution of each of the predictor variable on the discriminant function (IDRE, 2012). Here it was found that Self Confidence (0.650) is exerting more influence in discriminating between high social capital contributors to low social capital contributor. It is followed by community mindedness (0.556) and self designated opinion leader (0.128).

A further way of interpreting discriminant analysis results is to describe each group in terms of its profile, using the group means of the predictor variables (Table 5). These group means are called Centroids. 'Functions at Group Centroids' indicates the average discriminant score in the two groups (Agresti, 1996).

The functions at group centroids (Table 5) can be interpreted in a way that, low social capital contributors produce mean of -1.303, against high social capital contributors produce a mean of 1.423. Cases with scores near to a centroid are predicted as belonging to that group.

Finally, there is the classification phase. The classification table (Table 6) is simply a table in which the rows are the observed categories of the dependent and the columns are the predicted categories.

The discriminant function was able to classify 91% of original grouped cases correctly which in fact shows the relative strength of the discriminant function generated here.

Table 6: Classification results

Parameters		Social capital level	Predicted group membership		Total
			Social capital-low	Social capital-high	
Original	Count	Social Capital-low	215.0	11.0	226.0
		Social Capital-high	28.0	180.0	208.0
	%	Social Capital-low	95.1	4.9	100.0
		Social Capital-high	13.5	86.5	100.0

91.0% of original grouped cases correctly classified

DISCUSSION

Social capital refers to the social relationships between people that enable productive outcomes; it refers to those stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw upon to solve widespread tribulations. To facilitate productive outcomes persons should have the community oriented mind which will lead a person to work for society and working together with others to accomplish social objectives. Such an attitude by educators can be an admirable endeavor. Each person has different skills and abilities to offer, recommend and share. By executing the same, it will be constructive to society and they would be considered as creditable persons.

Community mindedness of a person involves his active involvement in the community projects, volunteer works for hospitals and other service organizations and his/her participation in the election campaigns or residents association programmes or NGO's and other constitutional elections. The community mind of an individual will escort to his involvement in the activities of society that will positively show the way to his social capital (Bowles and Gintis, 2002). A similar result was obtained during the analysis. When an individual exhibits community minded lifestyle, he will be involved more into matters of society thus increasing social capital.

Everyone has strengths and talents of their own, by looking in to the fact sheet of strengths will lead to self confidence. Self confidence has been directly connected to an individual's social network, the activities they take part in and what they hear about themselves from others will lead him to the active participation in the society.

The self confidence of an individual contains his personal ability, he likes to be considered as a leader, he has more confidence than most of the people he meets and he thinks that he is independent than most of the people, these factors also will enable him to lead from the front (Scheufele and Shah, 2000). One who can lead from the front can contribute praiseworthy contributions to the society too.

Self designated opinion leadership is reflected in one's strength of personality. Personality strength is conceived as a feature of individual's basic social orientation. Self designated opinion leadership of educators is the reflection their leadership ability and quality, aptitude of shaping others opinion and their perceived impact on social situation. Self designated opinion leaders come in to contact with many people through their activities in various voluntary associations, they speak at meetings, participate in discussions and take part in many social events. Educators have the extensive reach to associate with voluntary associations in their work place and constant contact with people and can address the students. An amalgam of self confidence, community minded and opinion leadership plays a role in the civic empowerment or participation that will lead to social capital.

An individual becomes self designated opinion leader only when his friends, neighbors or relatives often solicit for advice regarding their issues of concern. Similarly, if some of them are approaching him for the information or for the advice then also they can termed as self designated opinion leaders. Mechanically that individual will have direct involvement and social involvement in the society.

An individual is said to be an active member of the society when he has the interest to join social groups whenever he has an opportunity to do so. When such intense involvement is found among individuals such persons are said to have high social capital. When they have the willingness to help others, have the trust in other populace, have confidence in institutions where they are associated with, always positive views on the material and political environment even though it is not up to their expectation, have no trepidation of felony in their area where they are living, enjoying their lives in the zone where they are living, always satisfied with the facilities of their vicinity or else they will make an effort to get better amenities in their locality (World Bank, 2011). Hence this study is giving evidence that, the life style of an individual exerts influence on the social capital particularly educators whose social capital contributions are much valuable.

CONCLUSION

The life style factors like community minded, self confidence and self designated opinion leadership will lead to social capital contribution of educators. It is found that those who have high involvement in the community activities, self confidence and those who have the quality of opinion leaders have high social capital and thus becoming an inspiration for the future generations to contribute more to the society in its functioning.

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