

## Evaluating the Effect of Social Capital on the Quality of Life of Young People in Azadshahr

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### *Abstract*

Social capital and quality of life are one of the most important growing concepts in society. Social capital is productive as any other capital and it is considered as a suitable ground to take advantage of economic and cultural capitals as well as a way for the success of a society. This study aimed at evaluating the effect of social capital on the quality of life of Azadshahr's citizens. This research was done in a survey method. For this research, the group of men and women over 18 years old were selected from people living in Azadshahr. Random sampling method was used to collect data from 375 samples from the population of Azadshahr. Results showed that there was a significant relationship between the variables of social capital, social trust, mental health, nutrition and the quality of life while no significant relationship was observed between social participation and the quality of life, as the married people enjoys a better quality of life. The Pearson correlation coefficient and regression were used for statistical analysis and SPSS software is used for path analysis. Finally, it is also recognized that there is a relationship between social capital and dependent variable with 99% confidence and 99% correlation coefficient, and among the examined variables, the social trust variable with maximum correlation has a growing impact on individuals' quality of life.

**Keywords:** Quality of Life, Social capital, Social trust, Mental health, Social participation.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, social development plans are aimed at improving the quality of life and well-being of humans. Since the comfort and prosperity of humans has been considered as the main objectives of development, it can be said that improved quality of life is as a result of development. There are various views about the quality of life. Views of all experts in social capital imply that social capital provides some opportunities for people to be able to follow their individual and group benefits, including economic and social benefits through facilitating the social relationships. Social capital is productive as any other capital and it is considered as a suitable ground to take advantage of economic and cultural capitals as well as a way for the success of a society.

It would be possible to achieve a high level of life quality by stocking more social capital. Accordingly, this research is used various views of Bourdieu, Putnam, Coleman, etc. to measure social capital. Bourdieu defines social capital as a set of material or spiritual resources that allows an individual or a group to have a stable network of more or less institutionalized relationships for mutual familiarity and acquaintance (Field, 2009, p. 28-38).

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Each type of capital can be applied to achieve one of the dimensions and measures of the quality of life. However, social capital is the most important and influential capital among all.

Quality of life has been considered by researchers in various fields. The quality of life has become a concern for all governments and most international organizations and there is a general consensus among scholars, policy makers and planners about the need to study the quality of life (Rezvaani *et al.*, 2009, p.88). In fact, one of the most important objectives of public policy is improving the quality of life (Lotfi, 2009, p. 65).

Since the comfort and prosperity of humans have been considered as the main objectives of development, it can be said that improved quality of life is as a result of development. There are various theories that have considered social capital as the missing link in the recent decades. There will be a generation gap and families will be damaged and collapsed by declining social capital (Khalghiaan, 2008, p. 43).

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## 2. Social Capital

Pierre Bourdieu identified three types of capital, including social, economic and cultural. He viewed social capital as a form of capital that focuses on communication and participation of the members of an organization and it can be a means to achieve economic capital along with cultural capital (Rezvaani and Toghraabi, 2011).

According to Bourdieu, social capital will be useless if it fails to increase economic capital. Contrary to Bourdieu, James Coleman utilized the role and application of social capital to define it and he presented a functional definition (not merely intellectual and theoretical) of the social capital. Thus, social capital is the value of that aspect of social structure, which is available as a resource to help members achieve their goals and interests. Thus, unlike Bourdieu, who was considered the "economic capital" as the ultimate goal, Coleman has paid more attention to "human capital" and has used the social capital as a means for achieving human capital (Rezvaani & Toghraabi, 2011).

Also, another recent researcher studying social capital is Putnam, who considers it as a set of concepts such as trust, norms and networks causing optimal communication and participation of members of a society and it eventually will provide their mutual benefits. He considered social capital as a means to achieve political and social development in different systems and his major emphasis was on the concept of trust (Putnam, 2013).

According to Pierre Bourdieu, social capital is the sum of the actual and potential resources that is a result of owning a stable network of more or less institutionalized relationships for mutual familiarity and acquaintance between individuals i.e. membership in a group. A network that provides collective investment support for each of its members and it makes them eligible for credit. However, social capital requires a condition much more than the mere existence of a network of links. Indeed, network links must be of a certain type, i.e. positive and based on trust (Bourdieu, 2001).

In general, the level of social capital in each group or society reflects the level of individuals' trust toward each other. Also, a reasonable degree of social capital will facilitate social interactions so that it can be used to solve problems as the main source of solving problems and modifying existing processes. So, it is so important to identify factors affecting strengthen or weaken social capital (Fine, 2006).

Generally, if humans know more people and have more in common with them, then they will have more social capital, but the type and scope of this capital vary in each society.

### **3. The Quality of Life**

Although the concept of quality of life has many applications, it is difficult to provide a clear definition for it. Since it has been used in various fields and applications. Nowadays, improving the quality of life is the ultimate objective of all developments. According to the WHO, quality of life is an individual perception of living condition within the context of cultural and value system of society and about objectives, expectations, standards, interests and concerns of individuals (WHOQOL group, 1993). King believes that various dimension effects on the quality of life and these dimensions include socio-economic, mental, emotional and professional status. He also believes that quality of life consists of items such as family dimension, family interactions, the amount of family support, effects that job has on members' role playing and the role of family member in the overall impression (King, 1994).

Quality of life is a multidimensional concept:

1. Each individual has a biological, social and psychological, which is in continuous interaction with his environment.
2. Quality of life is raised from the complexity of the person's interaction with the environment.
3. Dimensions of quality of life along with the ability or inability of people is identical for all.
4. Although the dimensions of quality of life are the same for all, quality of life with different degrees varies in different people (Ouh, 2005, p.32).

### **4. Theoretical Framework of Research**

This study has used several theories as the theoretical framework. But, among these theories, some of them are used entitled theoretical framework as a basis for the hypotheses, which are outlined below.

Lee *et al.*, (1976) has also presented a model associated with the quality of life. According to this model, the concept of quality of life must include at least four dimensions or wide fields of life and two objectives and subjective bases. In his theory, life satisfaction is identified with living conditions, social performance status, psychological health status and physical health status. Therefore, theories of Maslow, France and Lee are theoretical basis of the quality of life in this study. According to the above theories, quality of life is divided into three dimensions of physical, mental and social.

According to the model, the quality of life is affected by personal backgrounds, health, socioeconomic factors, culture, environment and age (Agha Molaiee, 2005, p.

74 quoted by Ghasemipour, 2008, p.77). Putnam believed that the general quality of life and performance of social institutions is strongly influenced by the norms of social trust and civil and social participation networks (Manning, 2010, p. 256). These networks reinforce the strong norms of the mutual transaction, facilitate communications and improve the flow of information about the trust worthiness (Naateghpour and Firouzabadi, 2005, p.62). In order to measure the quality of life, the present study has used WHO's dimensions about the quality of life. In recent years, social capital has become a very popular and effective concept in many areas of society, and in addition to facilitating access to benefits, it strengthens and supports social networks by increasing the level of communication with others due to the trust (Harirchi et al, 2009, p. 95-96).

## 5. Methodology

This research was done in a survey method. The population of about 14000 young people living in Azaadshahr, who were between 18 to 29 years old. 375 samples were selected from the population by using Morgan table. Sampling was done by using random sampling method. This study was used a self-made questionnaire. SPSS software was used to analyze the data and its Cronbach's alpha was obtained more than 0.8, which indicates its proper reliability. Pearson correlation coefficient and regression were used to evaluate the relationship between variables.

**Table 1. The calculated Alpha coefficients of research variables**

Variable	Alpha Coefficients
Social Trust	0/930
Quality of Life	0/995
Social Capital	0/885
Mental Health	0/868
Social Participation	0/989
Nutrition	0/865

### 5.1. Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses examined in this study are as follows:

1. There is a significant relationship between social trust and quality of life.
2. There is a significant relationship between social capital and quality of life.
3. There is a significant relationship between social participation and quality of life.
4. There is a significant relationship between mental health and quality of life.
5. There is a significant relationship between nutrition and quality of life.

### Hypothesis 1

There is a significant relationship between social trust and quality of life.

**Table 2. The correlation coefficient of social trust and quality of life**

Examined Variable	The Correlation Value	Confidence Level	Number of Subjects	Test Result
Social Trust and Quality of Life	0/765**	0/001	375	The relationship is significant at 99% confidence

### Hypothesis 2

There is a significant relationship between social capital and quality of life.

**Table 3. The correlation coefficient of social capital and quality of life**

Examined Variable	The Correlation Value	Confidence Level	Number of Subjects	Test Result
Social Capital and Quality of Life	0/619**	0/000	375	The relationship is significant at 99% confidence

### Hypothesis 3

There is a significant relationship between social participation and quality of life.

**Table 4. The correlation coefficient of social participation and quality of life**

Examined Variable	The Correlation Value	Confidence Level	Number of Subjects	Test Result
Social Participation and Quality of Life	0/476**	0/179	375	There is no relationship between two variables and the hypothesis is rejected.

### Hypothesis 4

There is a significant relationship between mental health and quality of life.

**Table 5. The correlation coefficient of mental health and quality of life**

Examined Variable	The Correlation Value	Confidence Level	Number of Subjects	Test Result
Mental Health and Quality of Life	0/984**	0/000	375	The relationship is significant at 99% confidence

### Hypothesis 5

There is a significant relationship between nutrition and quality of life.

**Table 6. The correlation coefficient of nutrition and quality of life**

Examined Variable	The Correlation Value	Confidence Level	Number of Subjects	Test Result
Nutrition and Quality of Life	0/568**	0/010	375	The relationship is significant at 99% confidence

## 6. Regression Model and Path Analysis of Variables

**Table 7. Calculation of regression analysis between variables**

Model	R	R2	Adjust R	Standard Deviation
1	0.739	0.652	0.537	2.87210

**Table 8. Calculation of variance analysis related to the regression analysis between variables**

Model	Total Square	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	Value of F	Confidence
Regression	3430.375	7	490.043	59.407	.000
Residual	2845.893	345	8.249		
Total	6276.193	352			

**Table 9. Calculation of regression analysis between variables**

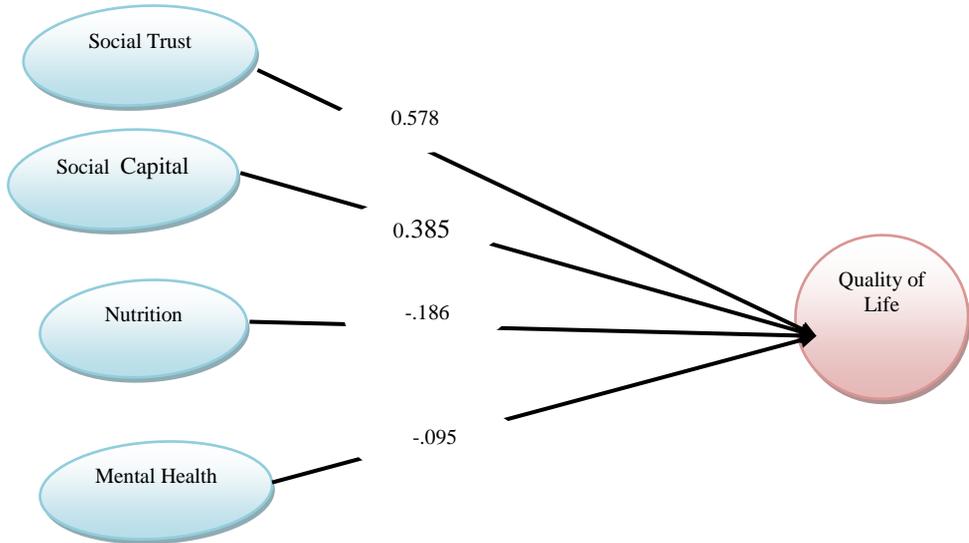
Model	Not Standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	Value of t	Confidence Level
	B	Error			
Constant	5.056	0.956		5.288	0.000
Number					
Social Trust	1.487	0.151	0.578	9.855	0.000
Social Capital	0.942	0.129	0.385	7.325	0.000
Nutrition	-.123	0.207	-.186	-.594	0.003
Social Participation	0.897	0.086	0.985	2.618	0.795
Mental Health	-.156	0.114	-.095	-1.371	0.001

This means that the independent variables were explained, the dependent variable changed up to 0.65. Significant F indicates that regression line has the ability to predict the dependent variable. Thus, we return to regression.

Regression: independent variables, quality of life, social trust, social capital, quality of life and mental health are significant this means that sig is smaller than 0.05 and the level of effectiveness of social trust is more than other variables.

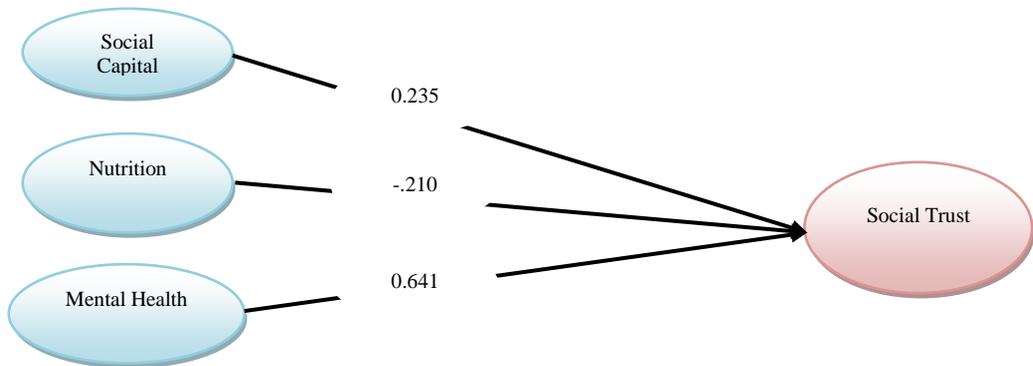
Yet, there is no relationship between social participation and quality of life.

**Model 1**



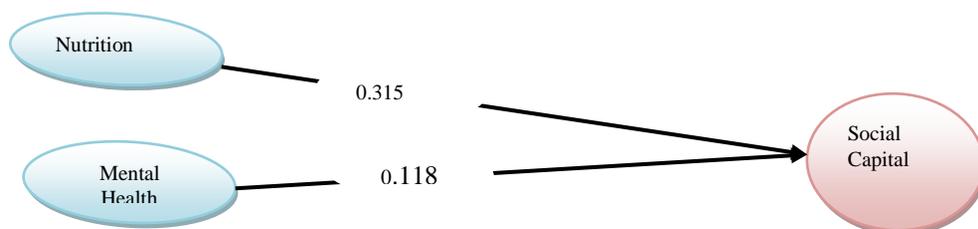
**Model 2**

Model	Not Standardized Coefficient B	Error	Standardized Coefficient Beta Coefficient	Value of t	Confidence Level
Constant	1.418	0.332		4.271	0.000
Number					
Social Capital	0.273	0.043	0.235	6.292	0.000
Nutrition	-0.003	0.074	-0.210	-0.039	0.969
Mental Health	0.287	0.038	0.641	7.636	0.000



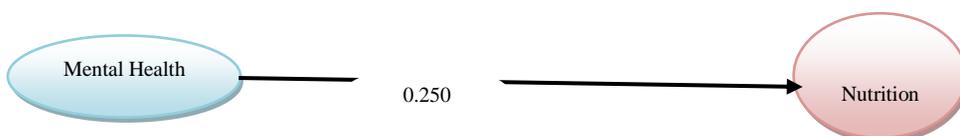
**Model 3**

Model	Not Standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	Value of t	Confidence Level
	B	Error			
Constant	-0.356	0.474		-0.751	0.453
Number					
Nutrition	0.278	0.060	0.315	4.613	0.000
Mental Health	0.194	0.043	0.118	4.537	0.000



**Model 4**

Model	Not Standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	Value of t	Confidence Level
	B	Error			
Constant	-0.356	0.474		-0.751	0.453
Number					
Mental Health	0.403	0.103	0.250	3.897	0.000



**7. Conclusion**

This study is about social capital and quality of life, which is a relatively new interdisciplinary field and also it has used the studies conducted in sociology. The field consists of five areas that overlap, including a) Research on social indicators, b) Study about happiness, c) Successful entry to the various age stages of individuals' life, d) Health psychology, and e) Research concerning health-related quality of life.

Sociologists' efforts, especially in the first two areas are very important. Social capital and quality of life are major issues in the fields of sociology of work and sociology of the family. Lifestyle is a way to define the values, attitudes, behaviors and identity of individuals, which some social researchers can draw a plan from them.

At the end of the last decade whether in cultural or structural fields, it has led to plurality and diversity and sometimes to the conflicts of identity maker resources.

Under these conditions, it would be possible to reveal the effects of these variables on the lifestyle and shaping identity by studying the effects of fundamental factors, including family, variety of consumer products, consumer culture, competition, mass media, etc. Thus, selecting the quality of life is largely due to the interpretation of youths and adolescents from their social world and the way of communicating with it.

Individual, family and social values, proximity and contact with the achievements of technology and modern identification results from using them alongside existing barriers or manufacturing facilities and it determines the interests and orientations of young people in their life (Zakae, 2011, p.141). Social approach to the quality of life is one the multi-dimensional methods in the study of this concept. Studies that have been conducted on the quality of life according to this approach indicate the vast content changes in studies on the quality of life. The combined approach of quality of life has caused that this concept being considered from physical, mental, social relationships as well as social and cultural components. So, in order to organize the situation, improve the lifestyle, enhance the quality of life and make satisfaction of life in individuals, the following suggestion can be made:

- Physical and psychological care, adequate nutrition and doing social activities are considered important priorities in individuals to increase social capital and the quality of life.

- Participation of people of various ages in social and cultural activities, public relations, cooperation, and transfer of knowledge and experience to other generations is considered as the most important duties of individuals towards the society and their environment to increase the quality of life.

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