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## Type Of Article (Research Article)

### The Role Of Cultural Capital In Shaping Pro-Environmental Social Behaviors: A Case Study Of Rasht, Talesh, And Ardabil

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#### Abstract

This study investigates the influence of cultural capital on pro-environmental social behaviors in the three cities of Rasht, Talesh, and Ardabil. In this regard, the relationships between the dimensions of cultural capital (embodied, objectified, and institutionalized) and pro-environmental behaviors, as well as the role of ethnic differences, were examined. The research method was descriptive-analytical, and the statistical population consisted of citizens of the aforementioned cities, selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using the Pro-Environmental Behavior Questionnaire (Markle, Cho, & Kang) and Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Questionnaire. Data analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling (SEM) in AMOS. The findings reveal that cultural capital has a significant effect on pro-environmental behaviors. Specifically, cultural capital and its dimensions, with a coefficient of determination of 0.141, were able to explain the dependent variable (pro-environmental behaviors), indicating that 14% of the variance in pro-environmental behaviors is accounted for by cultural capital. More precisely, both objectified and institutionalized cultural capital demonstrated a direct and positive relationship with pro-environmental behaviors. Furthermore, the results highlight ethnic differences in pro-environmental behaviors. The model for the Azerbaijani ethnic group showed a coefficient of determination of 26%, while the figures for Gilak and Talesh ethnic groups were 14% and 12%, respectively.

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## Extended Abstract

### Introduction

Sustainable development has emerged as a critical global challenge, driven by escalating pressures from energy consumption and environmental pollution that threaten natural resources and human well-being. In this context, pro-environmental behaviors are increasingly recognized as key determinants for the preservation and enhancement of the environment. Such behaviors are shaped not only by social and cultural conditions but also influence the state of natural ecosystems. From a sociological perspective, environmental conditions reflect the underlying culture, beliefs, and lifestyle of societies, wherein environmental degradation is often interpreted as a manifestation of cultural deficiencies. Examining the historical and cultural roots of a society can elucidate its patterns of interaction with nature and the environmental responsibility of its members. Cultural capital—comprising knowledge, skills, values, and habitual dispositions acquired through education and socialization—plays a pivotal role in shaping pro-environmental behaviors. At various levels, it influences environmental awareness, individual responsibility, and sustainable practices. In multi-ethnic and culturally diverse societies such as Iran, variations in cultural norms and environmental attitudes have implications for natural resource conservation and may give rise to social challenges. This study focuses on the cities of Rasht, Talesh, and Ardabil, aiming to analyze the role of cultural capital in fostering local pro-environmental behaviors and to provide a basis for effective cultural and educational policy interventions.

### Methodology

A survey-based research design was employed, with data collected via structured questionnaires. The statistical population consisted of citizens aged 18 and above from Rasht, Talesh, and Ardabil, and a total of 391 participants were selected through non-probabilistic convenience sampling. The reliability of the measurement instruments was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83, and construct validity was verified to ensure accuracy. Data analysis was performed using SPSS, while structural equation modeling (SEM) in AMOS 22 accounted for both explanatory power and measurement error. Two primary variables were examined: pro-environmental behaviors and cultural capital. Pro-environmental behaviors were measured across four dimensions—conservation, environmental citizenship, diet, and transportation—using 19 items on a five-point Likert scale. Cultural capital was assessed in three dimensions—embodied, objectified, and institutionalized—comprising 21 items on a similar scale.

### Results And Discussion

Findings indicated that participants demonstrated moderate levels of both pro-environmental behaviors and cultural capital, with notable differences across dimensions and ethnic groups. Average scores suggested a moderate to moderately high engagement in conservation, environmental citizenship, diet, and transportation practices. Correlation analyses and SEM results revealed that cultural capital—particularly its objectified and institutionalized dimensions—was positively and significantly associated with pro-environmental behaviors. Coefficients of determination varied across ethnic groups, highlighting the differential impact of cultural capital in diverse socio-cultural contexts. These findings underscore the reinforcing role of cultural capital in enhancing environmental responsibility and promoting individual behavioral change toward environmental preservation. This study emphasizes the decisive role of cultural capital in shaping and explaining pro-environmental behaviors. By enhancing environmental literacy, ethical sensitivity, and access to social networks, cultural capital can guide individuals toward responsible environmental actions. The findings also indicate that the influence of cultural capital varies across ethnic contexts, suggesting that environmental policies should adopt culturally sensitive and context-specific approaches rather than uniform, top-down strategies. Effective interventions for promoting pro-environmental behaviors should simultaneously strengthen cultural capital and account for local socio-cultural characteristics. Future research could employ qualitative, longitudinal, and comparative analyses to deepen the understanding of the evolution of environmental practices across diverse social groups.