

## **Relationship between Social Capital and Crime (Case study: Prisoners of Tehran Prisons)**

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### ***Abstract***

Social capital, due to its content lies in the social damage's realm. Considering the mutual effects therein, the objective here is to assess the correlation between social capital with identifying the correlation between social capital and crimes among convicted young prisoners in Greater Tehran prison. The method adopted in this study is of survey type by applying a random sample of 190 prisoners. To analyze the data, two-dimensional tables and Pearson Correlation Coefficient are applied. It is revealed that there exists a statistically significant correlation between social capital and youth crime rate, indicating that the higher the social capital level, the lower the crime rate among the youth. The young who commit crimes are grown in social conditions with low social capital. Hence, by planning and capitalizing social capital, the misdemeanor and crime rate of the subjects here would be decreased.

***Keywords:*** Social capital, Youth crime, Social integrity, Misdemeanor.

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## 1. Introduction

The social capital is defined as the capital and resources yield from institutions, relations and norms which shape the social interaction in quantitative and qualitative terms. This concept, due to its content, is applied in theoretical analyses in different realms like that of social damages, where the social capital as a fundamental instrument has great capacity and efficiency in interpreting the problems like social damages. Thus, it can be considered as a solution to social problems. Fukuyama (1995) refers to the correlation between social capital and social problems (deviancy) in a direct manner. According to him, one of the methods in measuring the social capital is applying the social deviancy statistics like that of crime, divorce, drug consumption, litigations in courts, suicidal and economic crimes like tax evasion, etc. Accordingly, social problems indicate the absence and their implicit increase indicates the diminished social correlations. In presence of this capital or an appropriate level of it, the social interactions would enhance the social structure (Biscaia, 2012). Cohen (2001), in similar interpretations, follows the subject of relativity in deviancy and applies the social capital concept to interpret the nature of this phenomenon, in a sense that, in a society different norms which shape different patterns and often opposing behaviors related to subcultures may be encountered, while the methods of compatibility with a specific norm may differ in a fundamental manner (Bauer, 2016).

The evidence indicates that in the last two decades in Iran, the youths' social capital has been exposed to erosion inside and outside the family. Lately, inside the family, the human capital is growing, in a sense that the education rate is on a constant increase, while parallel to the increase in the social capital, the outstanding index of which is the presence of adults in the household and the rate of communication with the youth about social, cultural, scientific, economic and political issues. The social capital erosion or destruction rate is high (Asayesh, 2017).

One of the reasons that promotes social problems' rate thereof, is the decrease in the society's or specific groups' social capital.

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Hence, the main question addressed in this study is what is the correlation between social capital and deviancy in Greater Tehran prisons' prisoners?

## **2. Problem statement**

The concept of deviancy is defined as the nonconformity with definite norms accepted by the majority in a society. The contribution of social capital in providing the social security is important because it prevents the abnormalities and different social crimes and promotes the idea of positive and active participation of the youth in social structure. What makes the social capital seem appealing is its effect on practice and its functionality in the social arena. The main idea in social capital is that family, friends, partners and coworkers constitute an important capital which in case of crisis would act to the benefit of all. There exist different theories about social capital which can be provided and applied in social deviancy issues. By considering Putnam's viewpoints, it is deduced that the social capital indexes like trust, social media and positive norms lead to the better functionality of individuals (Lederman et al., 2015). With respect to this viewpoint and by considering the main hypothesis of this study, the correlation between social capital and youth crime rate is assessed.

## **3. Theoretical Background**

A society with high capital has more products, high competency and high revenue. Social capital is a type of capital, the definition of which, like any other social concept is somewhat troublesome, consequently, there exist many definitions therein. According to Colman (2018) social capital consists of the capital and resources that individuals and groups obtain through cooperation in accordance with the type of communications thereof. Social capital is referred to as the available resources within the social structures like trust, interaction norms and mutual objective (Putnam, 2014). There exists a consensus among most sociologists concerning the indexes of social capital like trust between people and the society, sense of belonging and sense of identity.

According to Colman (2019), the social capital should be defined based on its merits. He defines social capital as a set of resources which exist within the family relations and local social organizations and are beneficial in the social

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and cognitive growth of the youth. Social capital is generated where the relations among individuals change towards facilitating the actions. Hence, the social capital is not a unit object, but involves different aspects of the social construct which promote individual and collective actions (Colman, 2018). His focus is on the potential benefits of social capital for the individual actors and considers them as productive like in other types of capital. Social capital contributes in obtaining definite objectives which would not be obtained otherwise. He implies that the relations among individuals are valuable for the engaged actors, because they may be applied as resources in adopting efficient actions and accomplishing the objective. He defines these relations as beneficial capital resources for individuals (Colman, 2018).

### **3.1. Commitments and Expectations**

For this form of social capital there exist two essential elements: the trust rate of social environment which guarantees the commitments' refund and the expansion of the commitments' real rate. In general, the confrontation of commitments and expectations reflects the senses of common value and common identity. The real expansion of commitments are affected by some factors like real demand for assisting people and other resources of assistance like government and the degree of frequency and cultural differences.

### **3.2. Potential Capacity of Information**

An important form of social capital is the potential capacity of information which is an innate and inseparable component of social relations. Information is essential in establishing a foundation for action. The least necessity in acquiring information is attention, which is always the lowest.

### **3.3. Effective Implementation of Norms and Guarantees**

The effective norms that are supported by inside and outside performances guarantees may generate a strong form of social capital. These norms regulate people's behavior and contribute to the social institutions in this process. The imperative norm that forms the most important form of social capital in a

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collective indicates that the individual should leave the individual benefits and act upon to the benefit of the society.

### **3.4. Adaptable Social Organization**

This form of social capital is related to the voluntary organizations which are established for accomplishing more than one objective. These organizations may serve as places for gatherings where the relations are applied for other objectives.

### **3.5. Purposeful Organization**

Colman believes that social capital acts like a resource, because it is accompanied with expectation exchange and exceeds the individual level to engage in more expanded networks, the relations of which is managed and guided by high trust and common values.

According to Putnam (2017), social capital refers to the features of social organizations like the trust, norms and networks which are capable of improving the social efficiency by facilitating the cooperative actions. He considers social capital as a set of concepts like trust, norms and networks which generate optimized relation and optimal participation in a society which eventually provides the mutual resources thereof. He introduces the following items as the social organization features:

#### **3.5.1. Networks**

The social relations and interactions constitute the most fundamental component of social capital where the networks as the origin of the other two components of social capital, that is, the trust norms and cooperation, are of concern. A network is referred as the official and nonofficial relations and interactions which exist in any society be it modern, traditional, feudal, capitalist, etc. These networks are of horizontal and vertical types. In the horizontal networks the citizens have equal power and condition in the society, where all are engaged in correlated actions and the provided information is transparent. The opposite holds true in vertical networks (Putnam, 2000).

### **3.6. Cooperation or Mutual Transaction**

Putnam (1995) proposes a specific type of cooperation norms as the most productive component of social capital and considers it as the main social capital criterion; that is, doing something for someone unknown without expecting something in return, with the certainty that along the way someone else would return this favor. This fact generates a great social capital and reinforces the collaboration.

#### **3.6.1. Trust**

According to Putnam (2017), with respect to its range, the personal and social trust, where the second type is considered as generalized trust in social capital literature, is more beneficial for the society. According to him, this trust goes beyond the range the people that we know and trust.

## **4. Methodology**

The statistical population in this study consists of all the prisoners in Greater Tehran prison, through the Cochran's formula, 190 prisoners are selected on a random basis. To run the general measurement of crime rate, the Chalbi and Mubaraki (2016), the standard questionnaire is applied with some modifications. This questionnaire consists of seven sections, where the social capital contains 89 categories. Sections 1-7 consist of: 1) membership and connection with civil networks, 2) social participation, 3) communication and participation, 4) social trust (personal, individual, groups, non-personal and institutional), 5) subjective viewpoint to cooperation, 6) functional aspect of cooperation and 7) information exchange criteria. The first section of this questionnaire consists of the categories related to crime. The data analysis in this study is run through the 2D tables and appropriate statistical tests. To calculate the reliability of this instrument, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is applied which calculates the internal consistency thereof. Due to not having direct access to the subjects, to measure the reliability of this questionnaire, after completing the data collection process, 40 questionnaires are assessed through the SPSS software from the output of which the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is obtained.

**Table 1. Indexes' general consistency**

Variable	Categories' count	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient
Social participation	4	0.77
Non-personal trust	2	0.72
Trust in institutions	20	0.94
Subjective viewpoint of the individuals on cooperation	5	0.74
The objective aspect and functionality of cooperation	4	0.70
Direct social trust	12	0.83
Indirect social trust	7	0.80
Communication and participation rate	14	0.78
Membership and connection with networks	11	0.89
Information exchange	5	0.77

The validity of this questionnaire is obtained through face validity; that is, this questionnaire is handed to the experts in this realm and after collecting their viewpoints, the final questionnaire is designed.

**Table 2. Descriptive levels of the prisoners' social capital rate**

Social capital condition	Frequency	Frequency percentage	Cumulative frequency
High	20	10	100
Average	130	68	90
Low	40	22	22
Total	190	100	--

As to the general social capital index rate, as observed in Table 2, this index is considered average, because 68% of the respondents are of the average social capital category, followed by 10% and 20% as to high and low social capital, respectively. To measure the crime rate index obtained from the data, eight questions based on Likert scale are applied in this questionnaire. The lowest and highest scales are 8 and 40, respectively; consequently, the variation range of this index is 32. By dividing this range into three equal sections, the descriptive levels of the crime rate variable may be obtained in Table 3.

**Table 3. Descriptive levels of prisoners' crime rate**

Social capital condition	Frequency	Frequency percentage	Cumulative frequency
High	30	15.8	100
Average	70	38.3	84.2
Low	90	45.9	45.9
Total	190	100	--

As observed in Table 3, the crime rate is at low and average levels and only 16% of the prisoners committed high crime.

The main hypotheses in this study are analyzed through the Pearson correlation test. Among the seven main hypotheses in this study that assess the correlation among the social capital variables and the crime rate, the correlation of the communications and social participation, social trust, norms and viewpoint to the norms and cooperative participation variables are significant at 95% confidence level, while the same correlation between connection and membership in civil networks with crime rate is not significant at this level as illustrated in Table 4.

**Table 4. Hypotheses assessment**

Hypothesis	Correlation coefficient	Significance level	Type of correlation
Correlation between connection and membership in civil networks with crime rate	0.025	0.364	Positive
Correlation between communications and crime rate	0.188	0.004	Negative
Correlation between social participation and crime rate	0.163	0.005	Negative
Correlation between social trust and crime rate	0.151	0.017	Negative
Correlation between cooperation norms and crime rate	0.242	0.000	Negative
Correlation between subjective viewpoint and crime rate	0.231	0.010	Negative
Correlation between objective cooperation viewpoint and crime rate	0.189	0.012	Negative

Because the social trust and crime rate variables are at two distance levels, to interpret these two variables, the Pearson test is applied. According to the



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results tabulated in Table 4, the correlation coefficient of connection and membership in civil networks with crime rate is not significant ( $p \geq 0.05$ ); hence, the study hypothesis concerning the existence of correlation is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted.

The correlation coefficient obtained between communications and social participation with crime rate is significant ( $P \leq 0.05$ ); hence, the null hypothesis concerning the lack of correlation is rejected and the study hypothesis is accepted, that is, there exists a significant correlation between communications and social participation with crime rate. This coefficient is 0.118 and 0.163 for communications and social participation; respectively, though a low significance.

Regarding the correlation between social trust and crime rate, the correlation coefficient less than 0.05 is 0.017; that is, the null hypothesis concerning the lack of correlation between these independent and dependent variables is rejected, while the study hypothesis is accepted, indicating that there exists a negative correlation (0.151) between the social trust and crime rate variables. By increasing the social trust among the individuals, the crime rate would decrease, at (0.151) with low intensity.

To interpret the correlation between cooperation norms and crime rate, the Pearson test is applied. According to the results tabulated in Table 4, the correlation coefficient is 0.242, with a significance level of less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis concerning the lack of correlation between these independent and dependent variables is rejected and the study hypothesis is accepted, that is, there exists a negative correlation between the cooperation norms and crime rate variables. By increasing the cooperation among the individuals, the crime rate would decrease.

It is revealed that the correlation between objective and subjective norms and crime rate is significant at 0.001 level. Hence, the null hypothesis concerning the lack of correlation is rejected and the study hypothesis is accepted. The main hypothesis in this study is concerned with assessing the correlation between social capital and crime rate among the youth, whereby considering the distance of measurement level of these two variables, the Pearson test is applied and the results are tabulated in Table 5.

**Table 5. Social capital and crime rate according to Pearson correlation test results**

Statistical test	Social capital score/ crime commitment rate
Pearson correlation coefficient	0.165
Significance level	0.01
Valid count	190

According to the results tabulated in Table 5, the significance level of the correlation between social capital and crime rate is 0.01, which is less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis concerning the lack of correlation between these independent and dependent variables is rejected and the study hypothesis is accepted; that is, there exists an indirect correlation between the social capital and crime rate variables. By increasing the social capital among the individuals, the crime rate would decrease though in low correlation with low intensity.

## 5. Conclusion

The correlation between connection and membership in civil networks with crime rate is one of the marginal hypotheses in this study, which is assessed and analyzed through the statistical test and is not accepted. There exists no significant correlation between the connection and membership in civil networks and the young prisoners' crime rate.

The second hypothesis concerning the correlation between communications and social participation with youth crime rate is accepted through a statistical test. By increasing the connections of the individuals with friends and relatives together with increasing their participation in family, neighborhood etc. affairs, the crime and deviation rate would decrease. This fact is directly related to the core of social capital concept. Communications and interactions with friends and relatives generate a psychological space that protects the individual in short or long time, while lack of communications and social participation generate personal and social hazards and leave the individual alone against many threats thereof. This fact provides the context for the youth to draw on misdemeanor and crime.

The third hypothesis assesses the correlation between social trust and crime rate and is approved based on a statistical test. It can be stated that there exists a direct correlation between social trust and crime rate. Social trust which is one of the fundamental structures in social capital generates the context for personal and social flourishing and health, which affects the public health in a positive manner. In a society where there exists trust, thus a high social capital, correlation, sympathy and conscience would prevail. Hence, social capital can facilitate the relations among individuals in the form of social trust.

The fourth hypothesis concerns the correlation between cooperative norms and crime rate, which is assessed through a statistical test and reveals that there exists a negative and indirect correlation between these variables. By increasing the cooperation among individuals, the crime rate would decrease. By observing the cooperative norms (objective and subjective), in individuals with a positive viewpoint on cooperating and keen on cooperation and assistance in addition to their conduits as to being helpful and contributive to other, the crime and deviation rates would decrease. To assess the social capital rate, the connection and membership in civil networks, communications, social participation, social trust, cooperation norms and information exchange indexes are applied. The Pearson coefficient test results indicate that in general, the correlation between social capital and crime rate among youth in Greater Tehran Prison within 18-30 age range is significant. The higher the social capital, the lower the crime rate would be.

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