

Social capital and participatory actions among aged population of Ahwáz, IranA. Asadollahi¹, A. H. Hoseinzadeh², N. Ahmad³¹ Department of Social Work, University of Applied Science and Technology (UAST), Ahwáz, Iran² Department of Sociology, Shahid Chamran University of Ahwáz, Ahwáz, Iran³ Department of Development Studies & Deputy Dean, Institute for Social Sciences, Ahwáz, Iranasadollahi1389@gmail.com

Abstract: The importance of social capital and its variables including participatory actions and voluntarily behaviors can be considered for higher age ranges and elderly. Using randomized stratified sampling, 194 elderly in Ahwáz participated in the study. They were randomly assigned to groups of experiment and control groups. It was demonstrated that the two conceptual fields of participation; interaction structures (networks) and the quality of relationships (norms) have significant statistical correlation with voluntarily actions of the elderly in the experiment group. The findings were along with that of other research in the elderly study field decreased social participation, and reduction in elements of social capital is associated with literacy and social awareness. Nevertheless, investment in establishment and development of anticipatory variables of social capital for the elderly will surely affect their attitude toward an effective end for their individual social life.

[A. Asadollahi, A. H. Hoseinzadeh, N. Ahmad. **Social capital and participatory actions among aged population of Ahwáz.** Journal of American Science 2011;7(10):432-441]. (ISSN: 1545-1003). <http://www.americanscience.org>.

Keywords: Elderly Population of Khuzestan; social capital; participatory actions; social participation

1. Introduction

Due to the historical anarchy and autocracy, the Iranian society did not have enough opportunity to practice democracy and develop social fields; thus accumulation of social capital and altruistically and voluntarily citizenship actions encounter many problems. In fact, in some sections of Iranian history there were some opportunities for development and function of these actions. However, considering the temporary nature of these opportunities, continuous accumulation of this capital which leads to an effective and permanent accumulation of development in the society can hardly be recognized. Currently, Iranian society faces vast negative and irrational individualism. The signs of such catastrophe can be obviously detected in traffic jams, tax frauds, and growth of anti-social capital indices (Khandouri 2003). Recent studies regarding the capacity of social capital and participatory values in Iranian community comprises this hypothesis (Motevaseli and Biniiaz 2003, Tajbakhsh et al. 2003, Sharepour 2001).

The ethical attitudes of future generations are associated with the establishment of a balance between self and other's benefits and the ethical growth of the community is made possible by shifting from individualism to Altruism and the appropriate understanding of citizenship. Thus, individualism, inclination for autonomy, separation of essence, non-linearity of the transition trend, change in priorities and the importance of its elements, and the amount of social capital that Iranians, as a social group, possess plays an

important role in dissociation of their private and social domain and consequently their social action (Zakaei 2003).

The aim of this study is to establish a conceptual reasoning framework on the basis of theoretical subjects of social capital. This framework will be based upon the differentiation of voluntarily concept and social capital and explains the effect and role of this capital in regard to voluntarily actions and attitude of the Ahwáz elderly. Furthermore, it will address the issue if having higher levels of social capital can explain the differences in voluntarily attitudes and behaviors of the elderly.

For the Athenian young, the most important issues were finding the answers of what virtue is and what the most appropriate form of government is. Sophists had affected their beliefs about Mount Olympus' gods. Thus, regarding ethics, their beliefs were weakened. Because a major portion of the guarantee for following ethical codes were their fear from numerous omnipresent gods. Biasing in favor of individual benefits had weakened the Athenian morality, and finally the city was devastated by vigour and coarse Spartans (Durant, Will, 1939).

The modern foundations of community's ethics were of the considerations of Socrates, and were also followed by his students. Plato proposed "the Republic", in which the dualism of individual and government ethics was ruled out. He believed that government is similar to its people, and concluded that investigating ethics as an element of social structure is better than studying ethics as an individual characteristic; "if we can describe an ideal

society, then it will be simpler to describe an ideal individual” (ibid, ...). In the 16th century Florence, which was a reflection of instability of ancient republic governments and the renaissance Italy, Niccolò Machiavelli and some of his contemporaries concluded that success or failure of liberal institutes are dependent on the characteristics and their virtue (Putnam, R. D.).

This humanistic civic republican movement was later defeated by thoughts of Hobbes, Locke, and their liberal successors. While republicans have emphasized the society and citizens’ commitment, liberals have focused on individualism and individual rights. Putnam believes that in the civic republican view, to be able to objectively encounter with other individualistic demands, citizens should be able to adequately differentiate their individual demands with that of others. Sharing the common identity of citizenship is different from the individual identity of people as members of other ethical or racial groups. Hence, Miller (1989) considers interest in social issues and objectives as the main indicator of civic virtue and knows commitment to further the good of all as a prerequisite for citizenship (Zakaei, 2001).

These debates among political philosophers were influenced by the novel approaches in empirical political sciences which were established according to the works of Almond and Verba (Almond and Verba, 1963) to understand the current differences among the performances of democratic governments. This trend also considered the citizens’ virtue. The approach inspired Robert Putnam to carry out a 20-year experimental study, which led to the development of social capital theory in its current form that is still developing.

The development of capital theory owes most to experimental works of Robert Putnam. His early research topic was investigating the performance of local governmental institutes in different parts of Italy. To find the answer of the question “what leads to the differences of successful north regions and unsuccessful south regions, or even the differences of less successful regions of each sector.” He proposed two theories: the effect of socioeconomic modernity and the presence of civic community; i.e., the civic participation models and social solidarity. The findings approved the former theory. However, further study demonstrated the limitations of this interpretation: “in poor area, governments continuously have low level performance. But the evident differences in the performance within each sector are not explainable in terms of economic development. Therefore, it should be noted that wealth and economic development is not all the story” (Putnam, R. D.).

The second hypothesis explained that the success of a democratic government depends on the degree of closeness of its environment to the ideal civic community. This relationship is so powerful such that while “civic” issue of a region is added to the calculations, the above-mentioned relationship between economic development and organizational performance will be vanished (ibid). As it was determined that the major factor in explaining the good government is the degree of closeness of socioeconomic life of a region to the ideal civic community, the next question will be “why some regions are more modern?” to answer the question, Putnam first addressed the history and carried out civic community pedigree studies in Italian community. His studies demonstrated that civic community deeply roots in history (ibid).

But why is history that powerful? Why do people think that they are disappointedly entangled in the framework of particular customs and traditions? In the north, which positive factors have saved the civic participation traditions through centuries among severe social, economic, and political changes? In the south, which negative factors have reproduced and brought about the dependence on the traditions? In order to find the answer of these questions, he considered the concept of collective actions and social capital. After that, his research did not only follow the study of Italy, rather the approach linked historical and rational selection viewpoints, such that it can expand our understanding of the public life and organizational performance in many other countries (ibid).

By proposing the aforementioned questions, Putnam dealt with an issue rooted in history, that is an attempt to accord individual will (individual benefits) to public benefits. In a civic community, citizenship is mainly defined by active participation in public issues. Lack of civic virtue is projected in “unethical familism”, which was considered to be the prevalent ethics of Montegrano city in southern Italy. In this regard, he considered that: “the aim is to maximize the short-term material benefits of the nuclear family, since it is supposed that others do that so” (Banfield, 1958: 85).

In this approach, the citizens of the civic community are not obliged to have humanism sense; but the citizens follow the thing, called appropriately recognized individual benefit by Francis Tuckvill, i.e., individual benefit is defined in the more extensive context of public needs; an individual benefit which is intellectual rather than short-sighted benefit. The survival of this individual benefit depends on the benefits of others. By criticizing the classical solutions, Putnam emphasizes that the complex problem of uncooperativeness is not

resulted from misanthropy. However, such feelings can be intensified by the bad results of uncooperativeness (Putnam, R. D.).

Using the game theory, he demonstrated that in cases such as lack of reliable guarantee, the uncooperativeness is not irrational, and perjury (in the game theory terms) is a stable balance strategy. After providing an introduction of the proposed solutions in the game theory and the works of some of the new institutionalists such as Strum (1990) and Williamson (1994), he referred to subtle solutions of Robert Bartz (e.g., community and trust). He concluded that success in defeating collective action and opportunism, which will finally end in the loss of the individuals, is dependent on the vast social context the game take place in. Thus, voluntarily cooperation is occurred in a better way in the society inherited a great social capital in the form of mutual action norms and civic cooperation networks (ibid).

It can be concluded that continuous accumulation of social capital is an important part of the story of rings of Italian civic virtue (ibid). The social capital noted by Putnam is the different aspects of social organization such as trust, norms, and networks, which can improve the community effectiveness by facilitating harmonious actions (ibid). Therefore, Putnam seeks the solution of public cooperation in social capital. Moreover, by evaluating various reports and studies from periodic fund societies as an example of extensive voluntarily cooperation, Putnam demonstrated that the problems of public action can be overcome by extraction of external resources of social capital; since these societies use the pre-existed relationship among the individuals to facilitate lack of knowledge and performance (ibid). Investigating this case and other similar ones reached him to the conclusion that all types of voluntarily cooperation are fed by the main resource of social capital (ibid).

A major portion of the literature of social capital is oriented toward the voluntarily effect and voluntarily actions, including voluntarily societies and spirit, and civic voluntarism on social capital and its ethical and value-related consequences. Pita Noris (2001) believed that the Putnam's theory is developed on the basis of linking the idea of social capital with the idea of necessity of civic organizations and voluntarily organizations to achieve democracy, political participation, and the governments' effectiveness. Some contemporary sociologists have adopted some ideas from Putnam's works regarding the role playing of social capital in ethical actions. Eric Uslaner (1999) stated that the social capital approach is emphasizing commitment to others beyond focusing our own benefits and includes some a set of ideas and points on social

values and relationships and civic commitments (Uslaner, 1999, 4-5).

Uslaner believed that social capital helps people to solve the problem of public action, which is one of the main elements of ethical action, and behave more ethically, and forgive their benefits in favors of public good. According the study carried out on the data of world values survey in the USA in 1981, Uslaner concluded that ethical actions mostly rely on ethical values and social trust. This viewpoint differentiates the values and networks and believes that in spite of the importance of social networks, public action issues are mostly dependent on the main values of trusting in others. He stated that the values do not come into existence in a vacuum, as described by the social capital viewpoint. Thus, the other important issue is social network or social relationships. Simple cases such as being a member of an association or getting married makes the people related. Social links and relationships bring about a public sense, which reinforce the values promoting cooperation (ibid, 1999, 7).

Uslaner studies in the USA demonstrated that there is a significant support of the effect of social capital network and values (trust) and social relationships are the main determinants approving the powerful ethical standards of action. The study carried out by Joshua Galper was designed on the basis of the theories of Putnam et al. their objective was to evaluate whether or not social capital is determinant in charity and voluntarily actions. Galper confirms the need for correlation studies between charity helps and social capital, similar to what Putnam put in action. In the study, the voluntarily variable was considered to be unreliable, since charity variable is inseparable from it, and significantly associate with it. In a recent study, Putnam (2001) evaluated the relationship between social capital and altruism in the USA. The results demonstrated that the trend of performing humanism action in the course of study (1929-1998) follows a significant pattern in relation to the amount of social capital and is not random (Putnam, 2001).

Putnam wrote "in our viewpoint, altruism (i.e., doing good for people) is not a part of the social capital definition. But at least in the US and perhaps in other places, experimental studies confirmed that altruism is a very strong predictor of social links." His results showed that "those who donate blood or money, or support the charity are the people with more social relationships" (ibid).

By drawing the map of domains of social capital in the USA, he demonstrated that the states which had slavery in the past century have lower social capital, and stale immigration pattern is related with the amount of social capital. Then, he compared

social capital with economic and social consequences and found an absolute relationship between the educational level and social capital. Low level of social capital can predict higher rates of crimes. Moreover, social health status is predictable considering the social relationship. In communities with higher level of social capital, civic inequality and differences in revenues is smaller. In such case, the causal relationships are bilateral. Taking theoretical discussions and the above-mentioned findings into account, we evaluated the effect of social capital and other background variables in the two levels of actions and voluntarily attitudes. Furthermore, inspired by the theoretical model of Stone and Hogs (2002), voluntarily actions and attitudes were considered as consequences of social capital and were analyzed in the theoretical model (Diagram 1), which addressed the effect of background variable in three levels of individual, group, and spatial parameters.

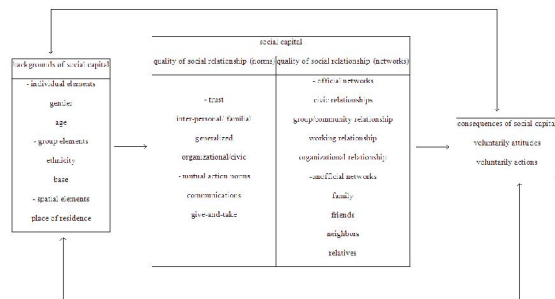


Diagram 1: Theoretical scheme of the study

2. Research methodology

The study has a quantitative and experimental approach and was based upon the rationale of testing hypotheses through statistical analysis, in which the phenomena are defined by the relationship they have with other variables. The methodological strategy of the study was based upon the combination study design using causal-comparative methods to evaluate the voluntarily variable at the action level and the cross-sectional survey to identify and evaluate the voluntarily attitudes of individuals as well as the effect of background variables on the two levels. The study population was all the elderly of Ahwaz in spring 2010. The study participants were 97 elderly, who were selected for the study by stratified random sampling method (Delavar, 2001). Moreover, at the action level, 97 elderly, who were active in civic-religious charity institutes, were identified by the chain method and were compared with the involuntary elderly, who were selected by random method, in terms of having various levels of social

capital. The overall sample size of the study was 194 (ibid).

The voluntarily variable (at the mental level) was assessed by a combination structure of 7 and 11 items on a Likert's scale of 5 points. To identify and determine the appropriate and stable items (Rafipour, F., 2001) on the Likert's scale, internal criteria are usually used for stable appropriateness of the items. Herein, we used calculation of Cronbach alpha coefficient of validity. For the former and latter groups, the number of items were determined to be 81 and 86, respectively. After gathering the data, various aspects of the items were identified and assessed by heuristic factor analysis technique (Sarmad et al. 2005).

3. Findings

Typology of voluntarily attitudes among the Ahwaz elderly

To evaluate the voluntarily attitudes of the participants, two categories of items were designed and then their aspects were analyzed using heuristic factor analysis technique. Table 1 is related to the first category of the items and focuses on the concepts of helping, spending time in public and group activities. Applying factor analysis test to the items, the eight items were grouped into three categories.

Considering the above-mentioned table, the variables which are placed in same groups according to their factor weight are determined and then regarding the statistical findings and theoretical considerations, the first group of the variables were conceptualized as the citizenship voluntarily attitudes. The second and third groups were considered as ideal or value-oriented attitudes and specific voluntarily attitudes, respectively. These three factors comprise 68.45% of the overall variance. The second category includes the items emphasizing voluntarily attitudes, most of which have personal basis, but having public-oriented objectives (production of public good and participatory common-wealth actions). The distribution of answers to elements is shown in Table 2.

The items of the first and second categories were conceptualized as objection or radical voluntarily attitudes and altruistic voluntarily attitudes. These two factors comprise 69.521% of the overall variance of the test.

Social capital and voluntarily attitudes

The statistical tests confirm a significant statistical relationship between voluntarily attitudes and social capital.

Table 1: The transposed matrix of elements in factor analysis of items of voluntarily attitudes

Voluntarily attitudes (group-centered)		Elements		
		1	2	3
citizenship voluntarily attitudes	Helping a group or organization that is active in city beautification.	0.817		
	Helping a group or organization that is active in upgrading traffic culture.	0.817		
	Helping a group or organization that is active for environmental protection.	0.867		
	Helping a group or organization that is active in cultural and art fields.	0.517		
ideal or value-based voluntarily attitudes	Helping a group or organization that is active in promotion of social justice.		0.845	
	Helping a group or organization that is active in promotion of freedom of speech.		0.782	
	Helping a group or organization that is active in religious issues.		0.621	
	Helping a group or organization that is active in promotion of knowledge.		0.598	
Egoistic voluntarily attitudes	Helping my family members to make advancements in their life.			0.875
	Helping my friends to achieve their goals.			0.805

Table 2: The transposed matrix of elements in factor analysis of items of voluntarily attitudes

Voluntarily attitudes (group-centered)		Elements	
		1	2
Radial-objection voluntarily attitudes	Participation in objective meetings for adjudication of Iranian rights	0.803	
	Participation in objective meetings for adjudication of religious minorities rights	0.789	
	Participation in objective meetings for adjudication of the elderly rights	0.782	
	Participation in objective meetings because of invasion of a country.	0.604	
Altruistic voluntarily attitudes	Helping a group or organization that is active in promotion of social justice.		0.899
	Being volunteer to be sent to an area after flood or earthquake		0.895
	Being volunteer to be sent to an the eastern parts of the country after a severe earthquake		0.763

The relationship with the qualitative aspect of social relationship (norms) is present in all aspects

of voluntarily attitudes, while only value-related, altruistically, and egoistic attitudes are affected by the structure of the relationships. In fact, خاصگر اياته attitudes are promoted only by unofficial networks of family, relatives, and friends (except neighborhood networks), while objection and altruistic attitudes are promoted by expansion of networks of civic and organizational relationships. Other findings indicate that while citizenship voluntarily attitudes are related with trust norms, objection and altruistic attitudes are related with mutual action and not the trust. Furthermore, working relationships have inverse significant relationship with voluntarily citizenship and objection attitudes, i.e., by expansion or increase of working relationships, such attitudes will be decreased.

Social capital and voluntarily actions

Social capital in two aspects of relationship structures (networks) and the quality of relationships (norms) were conceptualized according to the theoretical model of the study, and then the two groups of volunteer elderly and the control group were compared in terms of the amount of social capital.

a) Structure of relationships (networks)

While there was no significant statistical difference between the two groups in terms of any unofficial relationship aspects (family, relative, and friend networks), the mean value of official relationships of the two groups were significantly different in all aspects. Mean value of civic relationship of the experiment group was higher than that of the control group. Of items of this aspect of official relationships of the people, one can mention membership in city and sector non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and non-sector organizations as well as interfering memberships (membership in multiple organizations). Approximately 27% of all the elderly were volunteers to become member of one NGO. Statistical tests demonstrated a significant statistical relationship between being volunteered and membership in NGOs. This comes true for the two other cases.

Regarding the personal civic relationships, the volunteer elderly had higher values compared with non-volunteer participants. One of the studied items of this aspect was participation of people in unions and meetings and the frequency of taking part in elections. The elderly volunteers had higher mean in this regard. Considering the individual's organizational relationships, which included having relationship or interaction with governmental and non-governmental organizations through connecting or writing letters to authorities or participating the

problem analysis sessions, the volunteer elderly had more organizational relationships. In most cases, the activity of volunteers was 50% higher than non-volunteers. Furthermore, if we compare the two groups in terms of number of such activities, it can be observed that the participants of volunteer group have a significant statistical difference with other participants in this regard ($p=0.05$, $df=193$, $t=1.75$). The other variable related to dealing with a governmental organization is solving people's problem in the recent six months. Chi square test confirms the significance of relationship at 95% between being a volunteer and having organizational relationships.

b) Quality of relationships

Considering the quality aspects, the Stone's model (2000 and 2001) emphasizes trust and give-and-take norms. Also, different aspects are evaluated in this model. While the two groups of participants did not have significant statistical difference in terms of inter-persona trust, the volunteer elderly had higher mean score for generalized mean trust. Moreover, organizational trust was assessed in three fields after carrying out factor analysis on the 13 items and identifying its aspects. The volunteer elderly and control group participants had significantly different mean values only in terms of their trust in the governmental organizations, such that the volunteer elderly had lower mean values for trust in the governmental organizations. Although the mean score for mutual action (give-and-take) norm was higher in the volunteer group, the difference was not statistically significant, according to t-test. This is while the two groups were significantly different in terms of the norms opposite to mutual actions (norms against the concepts of give-and-take). The aim of differentiating these two aspects of give-and-take norm was to simultaneously measure the closeness of participants to norms of mutual action and their distance from norms opposite to give-and-take to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the closeness of individuals to give-and-take norms. The findings indicate that the volunteer elderly were farther from anti-mutual actions. Finally, by linear combination of any of these aspects, we will reach the main aspects of social capital, which will be provided in the following tables.

The results of t-test presented in Table 3 showed that the two groups were significantly different in terms of their official networks, such that the mean score obtained for the volunteer elderly were higher than the control group. This implies that social capital is higher in the elderly volunteer group and the difference is statistically significant ($p=0.060$). This is consistent with the proposed hypothesis that the volunteer elderly have higher

levels of social capital, which plays a role in occurrence of voluntarily action in individuals.

Table 3: Mean comparison of main aspects of social capital between the experiment and control groups

Aspects of social capital		mean value of social capital				t value		significance level P:0.00	
		volunteer		non-volunteer					
relationship structure (networks)	unofficial networks	82.92	69.71	77.32	69.64	1.952	0.031	0.05	0.976
	official networks		13.12		10.72		3.44		0.001
quality of relationships (norms)	trust norm		40.46		42.58		-1.46		0.156
	give-and-take norm	82.92	21.08	77.32	20.87	1.952	0.276	0.05	0.79

Table 4: Comparison of the mean participatory tendency in different dimensions between test and control groups

Aspects of voluntarily attitudes		mean scores				t value	significance level
		volunteer elderly		non-volunteer elderly			
voluntarily attitudes	value-based voluntarily attitudes	85	12.71	85	12.65	0.104	0.917
	citizenship voluntarily attitudes	84	12.04	85	12.84	1.331	0.185
	Altruistic voluntarily attitudes	85	10.62	85	9.35	2.361	0.019
	objective voluntarily attitudes	84	11.95	84	10.17	2.868	0.005
	Egoistic voluntarily attitudes	86	7.39	86	7.63	0.908	0.365

Comparing the mean of different dimensions of participatory tendencies between the two groups. The elderly population in the two groups under study has significant difference concerning the mean of their participatory tendency towards altruistic and protesting activities, such that the elder population in test group (volunteers) in both of these cases are assigned higher mean tendency compared to elder population in control group (non-volunteers).

The five obtained tendency provided in Table 4 can be made combined in two ways due to some conceptual and theoretical considerations in order to gain a better understanding of the problem. In the first way, based upon type of the favorite participatory tendency, i.e. whether participation in these activities is personal or public, they can be divided into base group activities and person-oriented ones. On the other hand, based on universality of the activity type, the first three types of these tendencies can be discriminated from particularistic tendencies

and radical ones. Analysis of the results of these two new conceptualizations indicates that mean participatory tendencies of the elderly population under study in test and control groups has significant difference concerning the participatory activity being group- or person-oriented, whereas there is no significant difference regarding the activity being universal or particularistic ($p = 0.07$; $t = 2.416$).

Relationship between being participated and background variables

a) Gender

Investigation of the relation between gender of sample elderly population (independent variable) and participation status reveals a significant relation between these two variables ($\chi^2 = 8.321$; $p = 0.002$; $\Phi = -2.233$). In this population, men have participated more than women. It should be noted that this result has been yielded at action level, while the studies pertaining to the relation between gender and tendency towards taking part in participatory activities, including the research by Flangen et al. (1998) which has been accomplished among more than five thousand teenagers with age of 12 to 18 in 7 industrial and transient countries, show that in average, compared to men, women exhibit higher tendency towards participatory activities (Zakaei, 2003:11).

In the present study, investigation of participatory tendencies based on gender indicates that there is a significant difference between women and men, concerning group-oriented tendencies, especially the tendency towards citizenship participatory activities, and elderly women have shown higher tendency to activities in both cases ($p = 0.025$), whereas the comparison of mean scores of women and men in different dimensions of social capital indicates that elderly men have acquired higher mean scores regarding relationships in formal groups including group- or person-oriented civic relations, institutional, and occupational relations ($p = 0.006$; $t = -2.77$). This difference at action level and tendencies is maybe attributed to other effective factors and probable obstacles against the expression of these tendencies. A feministic explanation can look for the difference between subjectivity and action in society's structural background and its cultural traditions, which provide more opportunities for men and in this regard discriminates between men and women.

b) Age

Numerous studies have indicated that there is a correlation between increase in age and interest in policy and participation (Zakaei, 2003: 2). In the population under study in this research, increase in age is parallel to decrease in citizenship and value-

based tendencies, such that the age range of 55-60 years old were assigned higher score in these two groups..

c) Residency type

Relative independence resulted from living separate from children causes the elderly to rely on their own more in their decision makings and thus encounter with the consequences more objectively. This evolution influences the formation of attitudes, action bias, and individual relationships, according to the weak relationships proposed by Grano Voter, weak relationships with networks (versus strong relationships with for instance family members or closed groups) will result in an increase in social capital. Although, our finding could not confirm any significant relationship between the residency type of the elderly and the state of being volunteer, mean comparison of overall voluntarily and group-centered attitudes showed a significant difference between the two groups. It means that the elderly who live separately from their children had higher mean scores for voluntarily attitudes ($p=1.69$, $df=193$, $x^2=1.24$).

d) Ethnicity

The ethnicity variable can affect the voluntarily attitudes and actions of the elderly from different aspects. One the one hand, the existence of social gap and the feeling of not being played with and treating with bias by the dominant ethnicity affects the identity finding of people of other attitudes and ethnicity groups. On the other hand, the historical experiences with the current elements of an ethnicity culture may provide the basis for such attitudes. Evaluating the data showed a significant relationship between ethnicity and voluntarily state. Almost 58% of the elderly who had voluntarily activities belonged to Fars ethnicity, while the Fars elderly comprised 57% of the participants. Explain this issue can be based upon theoretical discussions which addresses the formation of political and social opportunities for an ethnicity group and his cultural content in a multi-ethnic community. Further evaluation suggests the hypothesis that besides the particular ethnical relationships that are constructed in favor of Fars ethnicity, the effect of this variable can be explained by the organizational trust in government. As was explained earlier, national studies have shown that Fars ethnical group has the lowest level of trust in governmental organizations, compared with other Iranian ethnical groups. Turks have the highest scores in this regard. This is while participation in voluntarily activities has a completely different relationship. Our findings are consistent with those of Yusofi (Yusofi, 2001) on the organizational trust and secession of ethnical groups.

e) Literacy and official education

Education and official education is an important background for construction and continuation of voluntary actions and relationship with official and unofficial organizations producing and reforming social capital. A background variable which was considered to have hypothetical effect on production and continuation of voluntarily actions was literacy and official education. It is interesting to note that in the study population, an increase in the educational level resulted in lower attitude toward citizenship activities and voluntarily values and actions. It was observed that based on the results of significance t-test, the two groups were not significantly different in terms of literacy in voluntarily actions ($p=0.128$, $t=0.007$). However, participants with lower levels of literacy and then those with primary school certificates had higher scores compared with participants having higher educational level or academic certificates. These findings are in agreement with those obtained by Assadollahi, which stated the lower rate of adult social participation is greatly along with higher levels of education and literacy (Assadolahi, 2007).

f) Chronic diseases and the elderly health status

Old ages are accompanied by reduction of physical power, such that the idea of relationship between old ages and diseases is a cliché in human communities. Regardless of being true or false, chronic diseases have a high prevalence in the elderly, which led to establishment of a subspecialty in medicine; geriatric medicine. Although this medical field and the variables effective on it have been largely neglected in few Iranian geriatrics studies, this variable was evaluated as an independent background variable. The results obtained from significance t-test for non-correlated groups indicate that the two group were not significantly different in terms of relationship between chronic disease and voluntary actions ($p=0.128$, $t=0.007$). However, the elderly with better physical and mental health status obtained mean higher scores in voluntary actions. This is in agreement with the findings of the study carried out by Assadollahi, which indicated higher rate of chronic disease in the elderly is associated with reduction in social participation (Assadolahi, 2007).

Investigating the role of independent variables with diagnostic analysis test

By adding the independent variables of gender, literacy, chronic disease, age, ethnicity, residency status, social class, as well as the social capital variable (according to different aspects of the Stone's model) in the diagnostic analysis test and using stepwise method and selection of Wilkins Lambda criteria for inclusion and exclusion of variables, an appropriate diagnostic function for

determination of the role of variables of the theoretical model in explaining voluntary actions is obtained. The equations obtained from diagnostic analysis of these two models which were resulted from linear combination of independent variables are $Z = 39.646 + 0.215X_1 - 9.488X_2$ (X_1 : social capital, X_2 : gender) and $z = 68.07 - 10.22 X_1$ (X_1 : place of residence) for the volunteer elderly and the control group, respectively. In general, it can be observed that the obtained equation from diagnostic analysis, which explains the probability of membership in one group in terms of dependent variable, have shown that by the four variables remained in the model; i.e., gender, generalized trust, trust in government, and the official relationship network, one can predict the grouping (being volunteer) variable up to 43.4% of the variance.

4. Results and discussion

The encountering of Iranian society with the phenomenon of western modernity and its established form in the global system, capitalism, in the past century and its social and identical consequences has led to relative expansion of individualism, atomization of community, personification of discourses and life projects. On the other hand, in the dialectic of construction and deterioration, the traditions remained from a chaotic and dictatorial history have brought insecurity and instability, and lack of formation of civic and citizenship ethics for the community. This consequently led to distrust and weakness in accumulation and preservation of social capital for the community. Moreover, all these have forced social relationship to narrow frameworks of private and family domains and caused relative weakness of civic community.

The experience of separation from the social environment due to old age and physical weakness is accompanied with the experience of separation from the children together with individualization and relative independence for many old people. These provide a context for re-socialization and new identification, which in turn are affected by various background variables and in general leads to a change in attitudes, action priorities, and their tendencies (Assadolahi, 1386).

The study was oriented toward voluntarily actions and attitudes of the elderly. According to the findings, in five fields at the level of mental evaluation (attitudes) conceptualization was carried out; voluntarily activities of citizenship, ideal, value-oriented, radical-objection, altruistically, and agostically. According to the Stone's model (2001) and his conceptualization of the relationship structures (networks) and the quality of relationships (norms), the relationship of these five variables with

social capital were evaluated. There were significant relationships between each of the voluntarily attitudes and social capital. These attitudes are also influenced by background variables. The relationship of social capital with voluntarily actions was also evaluated at the action level using a causal-comparative model. The findings confirm that social capital influences the presence of voluntarily actions. Further evaluation showed that it is the structural aspect of social relationships that correlate with voluntarily action. The volunteer group obtained higher scores both in civic and organizational relationships, which is compatible with effectiveness of such relationships in the incidence of voluntarily behaviors. It is interesting to note that in the norm aspect, there was a significant difference between the two groups in terms of trust in governmental organizations, such that the volunteer elderly had less trust to governmental organizations.

Moreover, voluntarily actions are affected by background variable. Comparison of the two levels of action and attitude showed that the elderly who participated in voluntarily affairs are those with more radical-objection attitudes and lower trust in governmental organizations. Also, the two groups were significantly different in terms of altruistic attitudes, and volunteer group participants were more altruistic. The volunteer elderly had a significant difference with the other group in the history of membership in civic and local organizations. Also, the findings confirms that having higher level of social capital in norm aspects is opposite of voluntarily attitudes. In the structural aspect, its occurrence context is facilitated by voluntarily actions. It should be noted that volunteer is an easy and difficult concept, since it includes some comparatives and sometimes opposite concepts as well as a general and common meaning it may bring to mind. In this study, being volunteer was considered to be an individual or group characteristic that can be produced in attitudes and actions of individuals in civic community. Also, being volunteer can provide psychological or economic explanations as well as structural variability (social relationship structure). Thus, one can define the social norms by having a sociological approach in regard to the relations. In such cases, social capital concept, which is a suitable analytical tool in public fields, can be very helpful. Social capital is a particular concept of a social community or group that has the potential for public and voluntarily organizing in solving mutual problems or issues related to public. Nevertheless, the approach of the current study was based upon evaluation of this characteristic in the elderly level.

Immediately after carrying out each experimental study in social capital, one needs to separate the different characteristics of social capital from concepts including altruism, being volunteer, or other similar concepts. In this study, besides the conceptual and theoretical considerations, adoption of Stone's standard analysis model (2001) guarantees this issue to a great extent. At the theoretical level, the findings showed the difference between neutral actions for public activities versus norm actions. As classical thinkers of social capital literature believe, all combinations of dense networks and the actions that organize public actions will not necessarily lead to accumulation of social capital in civic community. A good example of such case is high trust or powerful norms of give-and-take in mafia or racist networks. Therefore, only actions which will lead to promotion of civic and democratic values are considered to increase social capital.

Many social capital studies including those carried out by Putnam emphasis that social capitals are all conservative from the political viewpoint and consider social capital increase to be possible with high levels of public trust, including their high trust in governmental and political organizations. In contrast, our findings are mostly consistent with the ration used by Edwards & Foley (1997) in which democracy is considered as the institutionalization of distrust (Edwards & Foley, 1997). According to them, in complex and large communities in which most citizens are stranger, there is little reason for trusting in elites, governmental authorities and strangers, unless there are organized strategies to prevent the policies or actions which may endanger others. Only, by this approach, a temporary trust can be created.

Finally, it should be noted that this study adopted a particular approach to social capital, in which social capital is considered as a valuable public capital, which facilitates and produces public actions and civic community. It is obvious that this approach is not the only available approach toward social capital. At least, there are two other approaches to social capital and all their criticize form their viewpoints should be considered. One of these approaches has a critical view toward social capital and all the community. Any type of capital can be used in reproduction of the current undesirable state and acts along with the current conflicts of the society. In this approach, social capital is not conceptualized only in civic community field, and the performance of this capital can be evaluated in regard to the organization of the society in terms of justice. The approach is a conservative approach to social capital and considered social capital as an individual good with positive and negative performances. This

approach also mentions conceptualization of social capital in regard to public action and good from another point of view and with skepticism.

Acknowledgements:

In fulfillment of the project, staff of Welfare Bureau of Khuzistān, especially Mrs. Faraji, and the Behzisti Organization of Khuzestan province in the field of the elderly care cooperated greatly. Also, some eager students of Khuzestan University of Applied Science and Technology helped kindly. All these helps are highly appreciated.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. A. Asadollahi
Department of Social Work
University of Applied Science and Technology (UAST)
Ahwāz, Iran
E-mail: asadollahi1389@gmail.com

References

1. Asadollahi, A., Social participation of Khuzestan aged population and effective factor, (2007), Khuzestan University of Applied Science and Technology.
2. Esmaceliyan, M., Master Guidelines for SPSS 14, Dibagarane-e-Tehran Press, Tehran, 2006.
3. Biro, A., Qualitative Dictionary of Social Science, Ettelaa't Press, Tehran, 2003.
4. Patnam, R., Democracy and civilization rules: Italy experience and lessons for under growing countries, Salam Newspaper Press, Tehran, 2001.
5. Tajbakhsh, K., Saghafi, M., Kuhestani, M., Elementary application of social capital theory in analysis of social helps level in Iran, 2003.
6. Khanduri, S. E., Economic thinks based on social capital, Rahbord, Vol. 33, 2004.
7. Delavar, A., Theoretical and practical bases of researches in social and humanities sciences, Roshd Press, Tehran, 2001.
8. Delavar, A., Probabilities and practical statistical, Roshd Press, Tehran, 2005.
9. William James Durant, Civilization History, Amirkabir Press, Tehran, 2001.
10. Nekae, M. S., Going to adult and Young to change, Sociology of Iran, Vol. 4, Issue 3, 2002.
11. Nekae, M. S., Young, citizen and social merge, Elderly Studies Quarterly, Vol. 3&4, 2003.
12. Nekae, M. S., Citizen behavior: Relation between population identification and altruistic values, Sociology of Iran social, Vol. 3, Agah Press, 2001.
13. Rafiee-Poor, F., Research & Experiments, Sahami-Enteshar Company Press, Tehran, 2005.
14. Roshanfekar, P., Zokae, M. S., Young: Social capital and participatory actions, Social Comfortably Quarterly, Vol. 23, University of Behzisti and Tavanbakhshi, Tehran, 2006.
15. Sarukhani, B., Research methods in social sciences, Vol. 3, Diba Press, Tehran, 2003.
16. Sarmad, Z., et al., Research methods in social sciences, Agah Press, Tehran, 2004.
17. M. Share-poor, Social capital wearing and its results, Social of Sociology of Iran, Vol. 1, Issue 3, 2001.
18. Motevasseli, M., Biniyazi A., Evaluation of social capital in Iran economic: a view point, Journal of program and money, Vol. 75, 2003.
19. Usefi, A., Classification of Iranian tribes, National Studies Quarterly, Vol. 3, Issue 9, 2001.
20. Ardener, S (1964) the Comparative Study of Rotting Credit Associations, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, No. 94
21. Banfield, E.C. (1985) the Moral Basic of a Back Ward Society, Chicago: the free press
22. Furlong, A. and Carmel, F. (1997) Young People and Social Capital, Buckingham: Open University press
23. Edwards, B. and Foley, M. W. (1997) Civil Society and Social Capital Beyond Putnam, American Behavioral Scientist, September 1998 vol. 42, No. 1: 124-139,
24. Stone, W. & Hughes, J. (2002) Measuring Social Capital, Australian Institute of families Studies: on the web: www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/stone,2002.pdf, updated: 12.8.2010
25. Stone, W. & Hughes, J. (2002b) Social Capital, Empirical Meaning and Measurement Validity, Australian Institute of families Studies: on the web: www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/stone.pdf, updated: 2.8.2010
26. Uslander, (1999) Trust but Verify, Social Capital and Moral Behavior, Washington: Social Sciences
27. Uslander, J (2001) Social Capital Participation in Everyday Life, London: Rutledge
28. Stone, W. (2001). Measuring Social Capital: Toward Theoretical Informed Measurement Framework for Researching Social Capital in Family and Community Life in Australia (Rep. No. 24). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
29. Stone, W. & Hughes, J. (2002a). Measuring Social Capital: toward a standardized approach. In international australian evaluation society Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

3/5/2011