

Women's Employment and Children's Cultural Capital: A Study Based on Bourdieu's Theory

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to analyze the effect of women's employment on children's cultural capital. Survey method and the questionnaire were utilized. The sample included 276 employed women with 12-17 year old children who lived in Tehran. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient and multivariate regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses. The results showed significant relationships between the components of cultural capital (embodied, objectified, and institutionalized) and women's employment among working women's children.

Keywords: *women's employment, cultural capital, children, family studies.*

1. Introduction and Literature review

Into the 21st century, women play significant roles especially in families. Of these roles, one may refer to upbringing wise and knowledgeable children, providing a calm and peaceful atmosphere at home, and carrying responsibilities in social, cultural, economic, and political arenas. In this way, women cooperated with men to achieve society's goals. Nevertheless, since the time when women got employed and left home, traditional family life and associated power structure across the family changed (Tavassoli and Saeidi, 2012).

Nowadays, women's employment and their engagement in all cultural, economic and political arenas are well recognized by those societies who used to ignore those for centuries.

Women's self-confidence and financial independence have changed their relations with men, building up a new system based on both parties' participation in making decisions for the family. The children tend to learn this type of behavior and are likely to establish democratic relationships in their future family, making a cultural reform in future generations.

The new world and increasing industrialization along centuries have changed the role of Iranian women. Women's economic participation and constant and strong presence in various jobs (comparable to men) have been among the important factors contributing into the country's development. In recent years, factors such as activities of international organizations, increased education level, and increased urban population have affected public attitude toward women's right and independence in Iran. Women's employment has contributed into solution of problems and challenges such as illiteracy, uncontrolled increase in population, and more awareness. However, similar to any other social phenomena, women's employment has had some negative aspects beside the positive ones.

Family is the fundamental unit of a society. As such, a good family serves as the origin of a good society. On the other hand, any challenge or problem in this small unit and its performance should be discussed

and analyzed. Any disorder in the family would act as a threat to its survival. Many challenges in families are because of conjugal problems. Marriage is a social relationship between two completely different persons with presumably different social, economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, so that the deeper these differences, the more challenges the family is likely to encounter.

Women's employment would have positive mental effect on the woman herself, her children, and the family as a whole. Based on available information, employed women who can have socially acceptable and important activities would have more self-esteem. If mental demands such as security, constancy, and peace are satisfied, besides earning some income, the women can contribute further into economic affairs. The steadiness of home atmosphere and repetitive tiresome housework can cause depression and anxiety among women; these can further develop into disputes and challenges in the family. Women's employment can reduce the problems related to the tiresome housework and depression.

Vakili (1988) performed a research under the title of "Analysis of the factors affecting employed women's satisfaction with conjugal life".

The research surveyed a sample of 450 women working at seven Iranian ministries and two public organizations. Based on the results, the following factors would lead to conjugal life satisfaction among the employed women: respect from husband, agreement in discussion, expression of husband's love, husband's assistance in upbringing the children, no intervention by relatives, and mutual agreement about women's employment.

Asadkhani (1999) undertook a research titled as "Analyzing the relation between marital life satisfaction and gender role among married employed women in Tehran, Iran". The results showed that, this satisfaction was higher than average and most of the surveyed employed women had both male and female characteristics. The level of marital life satisfaction among the employed women was related to gender role. On average, the level of satisfaction with marital life among the women having both male and female characteristics was not significantly associated with the satisfaction level of the women who had female characteristics only. Moreover, women's employment made husbands help more in housework, children upbringing, and supporting them. The greater the deals of this help and support, the further the women were satisfied with their marital life.

Hosseini Khansari (2001) did a research entitled as "Analyzing and comparing marital life satisfaction among female teachers working at high school under a part-time or full-time scheme". According to the results, part-time teachers were generally more satisfied with their family relations. Also, they had greater free times and more realistic attitudes toward challenges and solutions.

In the survey titled as "Analyzing employed women's marital life satisfaction", Allaedini (1993) drew the following four conclusions: 1) compared to employed women, housewives were further satisfied with their marital life; 2) compared to housewives, employed women tended to obey their husbands less due to their financial independence; 3) employed women tended to pay less attention to their husbands, as compared to housewives; and 4) employed women had less time for doing housework, reducing their husbands' satisfaction with marital life.

In their book "Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture", Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) asserted that, children's educational success in high-class families and failure of those in low-class ones are not due to their talents only. The success stems from make-up classes and exams of which the children in low-class families are deprived.

Undertaking a research on women's employment, marital satisfaction and divorce, Schoen *et al.* (2002) studied the ways through which the quality of marital life and women's employment can lead to divorce. However, previous studies also proved that there is a relationship between quality of human relationships at workplace and staffs' career success (Ebrahimi and Tavassoli, 2015). They further noted that some

special parameters tend to affect these relationships. The results could not confirm the hypothesis of male/female role specialism, i.e. there was no evidence indicating that women's employment increases the risk of divorce significantly. The results showed that, the employment may bring to an end a previously unsuccessful marriage, but it has virtually no influence on a successful marriage. Women's employment does not increase the risk of divorce between the couples who both satisfy with women's employment. In case of dissatisfaction, the risk of divorce was found to be higher when the woman was employed rather than unemployed. The final result was that, women's employment would not break down the marriage.

Hoffman (1989) showed that, compared to other children, the children of employed mothers get more attention from foreigners, take more responsibilities, develop more social and personal compatibilities, and have moderate attitudes towards the concept of gender.

Previous research showed that, those women who start working at their children's early ages tend to contribute to their children's educational success more positively. Further, the children whose mothers have flexible work shifts have less problems in their education. The jobs with more flexible timing affect children's education success positively.

This short paper specifically intends to examine the correlation between women's employment and cultural capital in their children in Tehran, Iran.

2. Theoretical framework

In Bourdieu's view (1986), cultural capital is the outcome of economic capital and customs, as the cognitive capacity is constructed socially. The economic capital leads to monetary capital through facilitating services or goods. Ritzer explains Bourdieu's cultural capital theory as follows:

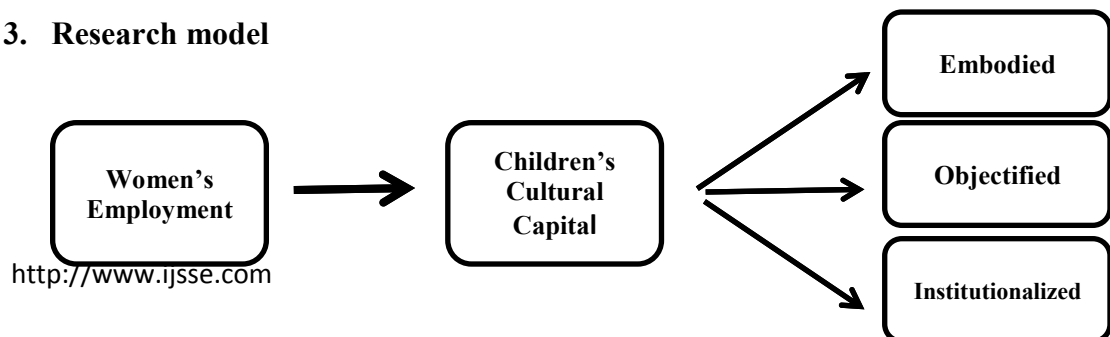
"This capital roots into people's social class and their educational experiences. In this market, people collect their capital to spend it on improving their social class; however, they may lose their position which can worsen their position within the cultural economic framework" (Ritzer, 1994).

According to Bourdieu's theory, the cultural capital here includes awareness, skill and education, language cultural code and using the correct terms, cognition and ability to use suitable cultural goods, commitment toward education, the academic success, and high values, norms and ideas in society.

To do so, employed women were analyzed according to cultural consequences of their employment and the effect it imposes on the children's cultural capital including embodied, objectified, and institutionalized capitals.

In this research, the cultural capital is divided into three forms based on Bourdieu's viewpoint: 1) embodied, including any matter related to the mind and body; 2) objectified, including cultural goods such as pictures, books, computer and art; and 3) institutionalized, revealing through real document and other cultural evidence.

3. Research model



4. Methodology

A questionnaire was designed based on the operational definitions and measurement levels of the research variables, so as to measure the variables and gather the required quantitative information. The questionnaire was composed of both open and closed items and presented to the respondents in the form of Likert scale.

The data gathered through the questionnaires was subsequently analyzed and the components were inferred based on the theoretical framework of the study; five experts were asked to analyze the validity of the questionnaire. Reliability of the questionnaire was studied through performing a test on a small sample of the population. The results taken from the Likert type scale were analyzed.

In this method, several options are designed by the team to infer the respondent's idea and classify the components. The respondent would choose one of the followings:

Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

SPSS software was used to provide the statistical report. The statistical sample in the present research was composed of married employed women who had at least one 12-17 year old child and resided in Tehran.

This was a survey research where samples were selected through cluster sampling from five districts in Tehran, Iran. To estimate the sample size, the researchers needed to determine the precision and margin of error (interval half width, d), confidence interval (t , 0.95), and population proportion (p). Estimating a confidence interval of 10%, the interval half width (d) would be equal to 0.05. Also, according to the prevailing confidence level in social research, it was set to 0.95 in this study. The sample size was calculated as 276 according to Cochran's Sample Size Table. In this research, an employed woman was defined as a woman who works outside the home and received some income in return of her service.

5. Concepts and analysis

Theoretical and operational definitions of cultural capital are presented in the following

Bourdieu enumerated three forms of cultural capital as follows: 1) embodied cultural capital, 2) objectified cultural capital, and 3) institutionalized cultural capital.

- Embodied cultural capital: it measures the person's artistic and cultural skills and the amount of time she/he spends on cultural activities.
- Objectified cultural capital: the collection of cultural heritages such as masterpieces, machine technology and scientific rules in books, documents and things, which are kept with families.
- Institutionalized cultural capital: It was measured according to respondents' and their parents' and spouses' education levels.
- Education: the years a person passed at the university successfully.

Table 1: Operational definition and analysis of children's cultural capital.

Concepts	Dimensions	Components
Cultural capital	Institutionalized	- Commitment to education - Respect to high values of society
	Objectified	- Awareness, skill, education

		- Using suitable definable lingual terms
	Embodied	- Ability to use cultural goods

Table 2: Operational definition and analysis of parents' cultural capital.

Concepts	Dimensions	Components
Cultural capital	Institutionalized	- Commitment toward education
	Objectified	- Awareness, skill, education
	Embodied	- Ability to use cultural goods

6. Research findings & conclusion

Table 3: Pearson's Correlation Coefficient between women's employment and children's cultural capital and its dimensions.

		Institutionalized	Objectified	Embodied	Children's cultural capital
Woman's employment	R	.330**	.330**	.202**	.343
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	276	276	276	276

The correlation coefficients in the above table show that women's employment is significantly correlated to their spouses' cultural capital (Sig. =0.00, p=0.01).

As a result, the research hypothesis is confirmed. According to the Matrix Table, as the absolute value of the correlation coefficient is $r = 0.23$, the strength of this relationship was evaluated as average. And this marks a positive value of coefficient, which indicates the positive relationship between women's employment and their children's cultural capital.

Indeed, employment status was found to be directly related to three dimensions of children's cultural capital, and the intensity of this relation is average for all of the three aspects.

In this research, the effect of women's employment on family's cultural state was examined by particularly considering Bourdieu's theory. Based on this theory, cultural capital is classified into three forms: 1) the embodied cultural capital, including suitable definable language terms, awareness, skills and education, 2) objectified cultural capital, presented as cultural goods such as pictures, books, computer and art, and 3) institutionalized cultural capital that defines the commitment to education and respect to high values of the society. Women's employment was analyzed considering its cultural consequences and influence on family's cultural capital including the embodied, objectified, and institutionalized capitals.

A significant relationship was found between employment status and spouses' cultural capital and its dimensions. Since measurement scales of the two variables were interval, the Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to test their correlation. The results showed that women's employment (Sig. = 0.00, $p = 0.01$) is significantly related to spouses' cultural capital. Therefore, the research hypothesis was confirmed and the relationship was estimated to be of average intensity ($r = 0.34$). Obtaining a positive correlation coefficient, women's employment was found to be directly (positively) related to spouses' cultural capital. The variable of employment status exhibited positive relationships with three dimensions of spouses' cultural capital; with the relationships has been average in intensity.

A significant relationship was also found between women's employment status and children's cultural capital and its dimensions. Since the measurement scales of the two variables were interval, the Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to test the intensity. The obtained correlation coefficients show that women's employment (Sig. = 0.00; $p = 0.01$) had a significant relationship with children's cultural capital. Therefore, the research hypothesis was confirmed and the relationship intensity was estimated as average ($r = 0.23$). Positive value of this coefficient shows the direct nature of the relationship between women's employment and children's cultural capital. The variable of employment status had a positive relationship with three dimensions of children's cultural capital, with the intensity of this relationship been average.

7. Conclusion

Findings from this study indicated that both women's employment and cultural capital in children were significant social factors that influence the Iranian educational system in the future. This study was based on a random sample and correlational statistics, and therefore the findings cannot support causal reports. Future studies should also investigate whether the findings are consistent with other Middle Eastern populations. Although there may be cultural differences in how mothers' employment affect in their children's cultural capital in the Middle East countries. By implication, this short paper provides a vision on public policies toward supporting women's employment efforts and children's cultural capital and community education development in the Middle East region.

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