Proposing a Model for Measuring Social Class in Iran (Case Study: Heads of families in Isfahan City)

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1- Introduction
Today, the recent sociological studies measuring and giving a more realistic definition of the concept of social class have distanced from the traditional and one-dimensional approach, which has addressed economic capital as one of the main components of measuring social class along with other components of the classified system structure such as social capital and cultural capital. Of the three components of class, cultural capital as one of the most prominent components is placed in a distinct position. In this study, the study tries to propose a new and more realistic and accurate model to measure social class for the society of Iran with an emphasis on the cultural capital component, which seems necessary for the purposes of developing the academic, theoretical, and practical goals of this concept..

2- Theoretical framework
The term of social class is rooted in the views of two pioneers of thoughts on sociology, namely Karl Marx and Max Weber, which has found a more practical sense and direction in the recent studies by Bourdieu's raised concept of cultural capital. Studies of the few past decades have shown that the general nature of social stratification and class is very complex and that its study has found a new and special nature. The present study, which aims at measuring and analyzing the class and socio-economic status (class-status), also emphasizes that traditional measures of social class is not compatible with the existing societies, and that the position of culture (cultural capital) should also be considered. Concerning the concept and measurement of social class, the Bourdieu's valuable work has been highlighted in this study, which has raised three types of economic, social and cultural capitals.

The purpose of capital in Bourdieu's view, is any source and origin in the social arena, which basically consists of three types, economic capital (asset, financial, and material), cultural capital (product, skills, and scarce symbolic titles), and social capital (the benefits of the individual’s membership in the group). The

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variety of capital types in Bourdieu's view does not mean the independence and separation of capital. Although Bourdieu stresses rather more on cultural capital in his theory, he has investigated the link between types of capital entitled ‘the volume and composition of capital’. In this sense, the composition of capital leads to the creation of conflict, inequality, stratification, and social reproduction. Bourdieu believes that the greatest conflict between classes is the interaction between cultural and economic capital. Bearing this in mind, Bourdieu proposes three main principles for sociological stratification and social class, which explain the relationship between culture and social class better than other perspectives.

• There are various classes and different sectors representing a diverse combination of economic and cultural capital.
• Although economic capital is largely involved in determining social class, cultural capital is the main factor causing the class components.
• Although classes and social strata have different cultural styles, cultural patterns are relatively homogenous in each category. This is largely due to common tastes. However, the present study stresses on a few main factors in measuring social class more realistically:
  1) Traditional and common measures of social class are not compatible with the conditions of current communities and are too far from the reality.
  2) The involvement and impact of cultural capital, which is linked to the concepts such as consumption, leisure, and lifestyle as well, is a definitive and essential factor in measuring social class.
  3) In order to combine both objective and subjective assessment of class along with economic capital, cultural and social capital should be considered while studying social class.

3- Methodology
This study was carried out using a survey and a questionnaire. 383 questionnaires were distributed among the heads of family in Isfahan using multistage cluster sampling. To measure the validity of the research instrument, the method of factor analysis. In addition, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess the reliability of the research instruments.

4- Results
The results of this paper show that the people of low social class have scores lower than average in all three components of economic, social, and cultural capital, whereas they have scores much lower than average in social capital. In contrast, the people of upper class have higher scores in all components, especially in cultural capital. In short, a significant difference between social classes is clearly evident in cultural capital.
5- Conclusion
In traditional sociological thoughts, the concept of class began to shape with Marx's ideas. It then became practical by Max Weber, and its practical mechanisms with particular emphasis on the design of the different types of capital, especially the cultural one have been ultimately studied and investigated by Bourdieu. In this study, the concepts of social and cultural capital as the two major components of social class along with the vital component of economic capital has been addressed as a suggested model. In this sense, the five general categories offered to measure social class include lower, low, middle, high, and higher class are offered. Overall, in low and lower social class all three capital components, including economic, social, and cultural capital have scores less than average, and especially cultural capital reduction is clearly evident in this class. As Bourdieu (1979) puts forward, the decisive role of cultural capital in class distinctions (high classes), is one of the decisive factors in reconceptualizing the concept of class and measuring it in modern era.

Keywords: Class-status, Economic capital, social capital, cultural capital

Reference (In Persian)


Reference (In English)
