Capital Inequality in Urban Women of Fars Province

Mahrokh Rajabi[1], Esfandiar Ghafarinasab[2]

Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine factors that create capital (cultural, economic, and social) inequality for women in Fars province, Iran. Based on Bourdieu's theory as the theoretical frame and using survey as our research method, we developed a questionnaire to collect data. The sample consists of 1340 women in the urban areas of Fars province. We examined residence place, birthplace, age, marriage status, employment status, women's ethnicity as well as the ethnicity of their husbands and parents, and, finally, their parents' and husbands' education to study capital inequality. Findings show that there is no significant difference between social capital of women by birthplace and parents' education. Also, there is no significant difference between economic and cultural capitals of women according to residence place, ethnicity of women and their husbands.

Introduction

All issues in the various disciplines of social sciences involve, directly or indirectly, matters of inequality ultimately (Marger, 2002). Inequality is one of the most important issues which are considered by philosophers, social reformists (Chalabi, 2011). Social inequality has been one of the central concerns of sociology from its very beginnings (Marger, 2002).

---

[1]. Assistant professor, Department of Sociology & Social Planning, Shiraz University
[2]. Assistant professor, Department of Sociology & Social Planning, Shiraz University

Inequality has three aspects: (1) a number of forms, (2) a set of population categories that differ, with respect to those forms, and (3) a series of distributions of the various forms among individuals and categories. The forms of inequality include the various goods with respect to which categories differ (Granovetter & Tilly, 1988, p. 185).

This concept is simple and complicated. Inequality is not more than a mathematical phrase. Equality is referred to a situation where two or a few quantities have similar values and inequality clearly explains differences between these quantities (Zakerhanjani, 2007, p. 85).

Equality and inequality are not merely subjects of scholarly interest; they are also matters of everyday concern. There are inequalities between nations, classes, races, and between men and women (Beteille, 1983, p. 1). Social resources are things that people strive for; things, material and nonmaterial, that are valued and scarce. The uneven distributions of social resources produce inequality of condition (Marger, 2002, p. 16).

Inequality is surely one of the most primary, if not the most basic, issues of sociology. As a result, "it is a phenomenon that has been dealt with extensively by the major sociological theorists. Marx and Weber, two of the most prolific and influential, have left a gigantic legacy of thought on issues of social inequality" (Marger, 2002, p. 2). Weber writes that we are unequal in three areas: economic, social, and political areas. We can classify it into class (economic area), race, job, education, gender, and membership of ethnic group (social area); and political condition (Charon, 2000).

The oldest forms of social inequalities have to search in age and sex differences (Zahedi, 2003). Societies may comprise any number of hierarchies based on various social characteristics (income, occupation, ethnicity, gender, age, and so on) (Marger, 2002, p. 16). One of the most important, and challenging issues of women studies, has been the need to recognize, describe and explain the extent to which there are differences between women and men (McDowell & Pringle, 1992).

In this paper, our concern is capital inequality of women. It seems that there is significant inequality among women's capitals. We look at how age, marriage status, residence place, employment status, women's ethnicity as well as the ethnicity of their husbands and parents, and, finally, their parents' and husbands' education may affect capital inequality.

Review of Literature

Zandvakili (1999) investigated factors that might have influenced earnings inequality among female heads of households over an extended period. The study used the generalized entropy measures of inequality in short-run as well as long-run income for the period 1978˚86. The results suggest that short-run inequality has generally increased. The measured long-run inequality shows a decline in the early years because of the smoothing of the transitory components. Race in accompany with age, education and marital status is used to investigate their effects. Race and education are shown to be the most influential factors.

Ghasemiardahaee et al. (2010) found that most effective factor on socioeconomic status of high school girl students in Ahar city was their residence place. Findings show that the mean score of socioeconomic status of urban girls is more than rural girls.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, we used Bourdieu theory. Although Bourdiue has explored many topics, the conceptual core of his sociology is social classes and the cultural forms associated with these classes. In essence, he combines Marxian and Weberian theories. The key of the reconciliation of Marx's and Weber's viewpoints of stratification is the expanded conceptualization of capital (Turner, 1998, p. 512).

To understand Bourdieu's view of classes, it is necessary to recognize a distinction between different kinds of capitals (Turner, 1998). Capital appears in three basic forms: 1) economic capital that is transformable to money and property's rights (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 136); 2) Cultural capital that can be transformed to economic capital and may appear in educational credential. For Bourdieu, cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e. in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state meaning in the form of cultural goods; and in the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, "it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee" (Bourdieu, 1983); and 3) Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationship of mutual acquaintance and recognition, or

in other words, to membership in a group. The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent, thus, depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (Bourdieu, 1983). These forms of capitals can be converted into one another but only to a certain extent (Turner, 1998, p. 512).

Bourdieu (1983) asserts that achievement of varying resources determines an individual's situation in a social system. Women have not different capitals, cannot achieve power and are ascribed dissimilar positions in comparison to men.

In general, resources for social dominance are distributed unequally between men and women. But, we can observe inequality of capital among women themselves. Lack of equal capital generates sub-stratification systems among women.

Data and Method

The method used in this study was survey. Research population consisted of 16-64 years old urban women in Fars province. Sample size, based on Lin's table (1972), was equal to 1340 cases obtained through multi-stage clustering sampling. In the first stage, 3 cities (Shiraz, Abadeh, and Firouzabad) were selected and then, in the second stage, we chose members of our sample randomly in selected areas of these cities. Data were collected via a questionnaire. Face validity of the questionnaire was determined through experts' viewpoint. For measuring the reliability of the scales, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated.

Variables

Capital inequality: The Uneven distribution of the capitals.

Economic capital: Possession of money and material objects.

Social capital: The aggregate of the actual or potential resources, which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationship of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu, 1983).

In this research, social capital comprises the components of trust and connection to specific individuals. The sum of these two sub-scales (trust and connection to specific individuals) consist social capital scale. Higher

scores show higher social capital of women. Cronbach's alpha for sub-scales of trust, and connection are 0.73, and 0.93.

Cultural capital: Cultural capital has three dimensions including embodied cultural capital (information and skills), objectified cultural capital (ownership of cultural goods and artistic works), and institutionalized cultural capital (education). In other words, cultural capital has three dimensions. Higher scores show higher cultural capital of women.

Results

As Table 1 shows, 44.8 percent of our sample live in Shiraz (center of Fars province), 85.5 percent of women born in urban areas, approximately 66.6 percent of women are married and more than 75 percent of women are unemployed.

The mean age of women is 33.15 years. The average education years of these women and their parents, respectively, are 5.68 and 4.31 years, while the education mean of married women's husbands is more than 10 years. The means scores of economic, social and cultural capitals are, respectively, 10.1, 31.6, and 17.9.

Table 1. Characteristics of women

Residence place	Percent
Shiraz	44.8
Other cities	55.2
Birthplace	Percent
City	85.5
Village	14.5
Marriage status	Percent
Single	31.0
Married	66.6
Divorced and widowed	2.2
Employment status	Percent
Employed	17.5
Previously employed	4.0
Unemployed	75.4
Retired	3.1
Ethnicity of women	Percent
Fars	83.3
Other ethnics	16.7
Ethnicity of women's husband	Percent

Fars	81.1
Other ethnics	18.9
Other	**Mean**
Age of women	33.15
Education of women's fathers	5.68
Education of women's mothers	4.31
Education of women's husbands	10.17
Economic capital	10.07
Social capital	31.57
Cultural capital	17.87

Information in Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference between economic and cultural capitals of women who reside in Shiraz city in comparison to women of other cities of Fars province. However, the difference between mean scores of these women's social capital is significant. Women of small cities have more social capital than other women.

Table 2. Mean differences of capital scores by place of residence

Capital	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
Economic capital Shiraz Other cities	599 740	9.98 10.14	14.03 14.70	-.208	.835
Social capital Shiraz Other cities	587 700	26.13 36.13	13.70 19.81	-10.65	.000
Cultural capital Shiraz Other cities	600 738	17.83 17.90	7.26 7.99	-.184	.854

Table 3 indicates that the mean scores of economic and cultural capitals are significantly different between women born in different areas. The most differences are seen in the means of cultural capital.

Table 3: Mean differences of capital scores by birthplace

Capital	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
Economic capital City Village	1142 194	10.46 7.84	14.57 13.21	-2.349	.019
Social capital City Village	1105 179	31.95 29.26	18.11 17.20	-1.861	.063

Capital	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
Cultural capital City Village	1141 194	18.78 12.49	7.30 7.62	-11.034	.000

All societies differentiate people on the basis of age. Table 4 indicates that old women have higher economic capital score than young women. Social and cultural capitals of young women are more than old women. Findings show significant differences between capitals of young and old women.

Table 4: Mean differences of capital scores by age

Capital	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
Economic capital Young Old	625 711	8.57 11.42	13.97 14.67	3.632	.000
Social capital Young Old	602 682	33.10 30.25	18.19 17.74	-2.837	.005
Cultural capital Young Old	625 710	20.28 15.71	6.73 7.79	-11.486	.000

Table 5 shows that mean score of economic capital of married women is higher than that of single women. But, in social and cultural capitals, single women obtained the highest mean scores. Marriage status causes access to different kinds of capitals and the differences are significant.

Table 5: Mean differences of capital scores by marriage status

Capital	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
Economic capital Single Married	418 921	8.33 10.86	13.50 14.82	3.081	.002
Social capital Single Married	406 881	34.93 30.02	18.56 17.59	-4.490	.000
Cultural capital Single Married	418 920	21.52 16.21	6.34 7.64	-13.315	.000

Information in Table 6 shows that there are significant differences between mean scores of women's capital based on their employment.

Retired and unemployed women have, respectively, the highest and lowest economic capitals. Having a job is a way through which women can get money and other financial resources. The mean score of social capital of employed women is higher than women with different status of employment. Employed and retired women gain the highest scores of cultural capital. Unemployed women have the lowest score in the three capital types.

This result is reasonable, because employment helps women to access money and to extent their relational networks. Women with higher education (a component of cultural capital) have more chances of getting a job. For the three capitals, significant differences observed among women with different employment status.

Table 6: Mean differences of capital scores by employment status

	Employment Status	Employment Status	Mean Difference	Sig
Economic Capital	Employed	Previously employed	-.20	.925
		Unemployed	6.13	.000
		Retired	-8.81	.000
	Previously employed	Unemployed	6.33	.001
		Retired	-8.61	.003
	Unemploye	Retired	-14.94	.000
Social Capital	Employed	Previously employed	8.22	.002
		Unemployed	11.59	.000
		Retired	9.11	.002
	Previously employed	Unemployed	3.37	.180
		Retired	.90	.806
	Unemployed	Retired	-2.47	.369
Cultural Capital	Employed	Previously employed	.88	.429
		Unemployed	5.43	.000
		Retired	.02	.987
	Previously employed	Unemployed	4.54	.000
		Retired	-.86	.569
	Unemployed	Retired	-5.41	.000

Findings indicate that mean scores of economic capital of employed and previously employed women is not significantly different. Social capital scores of previously employed is not different from unemployed and retired women. The same result was observed between retired and

unemployed women. Cultural capital of employed women is not significantly different from previously employed and retired women. Previously employed and retired women have no difference with regard to cultural capital.

Ethnicity is an important factor of social inequality. The ethnicity factor plays a significant social role in determining opportunities for acquiring valued resources such as cultural, economic and social capital. Table 7 indicates that only in social capital, women from ethnicities of Fars province show significant difference with women from other ethnicities.

Table 7: Mean differences of capital scores by ethnicity

Capital	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
Economic capital					
Fars	1115	9.90	13.53	-.824	.411
Other ethnics	223	10.95	18.15		
Social capital					
Fars	1074	31.0	17.77	-2.477	.014
Other ethnics	212	34.48	18.87		
Cultural capital					
Fars	1114	17.91	7.29	.401	.689
Other ethnics	223	17.64	9.32		

Information of table 8 shows that just the mean scores of social capital of married women with husbands from ethnicities from Fars province have significant differences with those of other women.

Table 8: Mean differences of capital scores by ethnicity of husband

Capital	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
Economic capital					
Fars	719	10.28	13.46	-1.818	.071
Other ethnics	167	13.13	19.23		
Social capital					
Fars	687	29.31	17.13	-2.504	.013
Other ethnics	160	33.40	18.95		
Cultural capital					
Fars	718	16.54	7.25	1.804	.073
Other ethnics	167	15.19	9.03		

Information in table 9 indicates that the mean scores of social capital do not show significant differences according to mother's education. Women who have educated mothers more literate allocate higher economic and

cultural capitals to themselves.

Table 9: Mean differences of capital scores by mother's education

Capital	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
Economic capital Less than 13 years 13 years and higher	1298 23	9.81 26.35	13.74 32.62	2.427	.024
Social capital Less than 13 years 13 years and higher	1250 22	31.44 37.73	17.94 18.21	1.629	.104
Cultural capital Less than 13 years 13 years and higher	1297 23	17.84 21.96	7.68 6.42	2.557	.011

Table 10 shows that the economic and cultural capitals of women whose fathers' education years are 13 and higher are more than those of other women. Mean differences of women's social capital show no significant difference.

Table10: Mean differences of capital scores by father's education

Capital	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
Economic capital Less than 13 years 13 years and higher	1225 97	9.63 16.21	13.49 22.58	2.829	.006
Social capital Less than 13years 13 years and higher	1180 93	31.36 34.96	17.91 19.23	1.854	.064
Cultural capital Less than 13 years 13 years and higher	1224 97	17.50 22.86	7.67 5.92	8.371	.000

Table 11 shows that the economic, social, and cultural capitals of women whose husbands have education years of 13 and higher show significant differences with those of other women.

Table 11: Mean differences of capital scores of married women by husband's education

Capital	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
Economic capital Less than 13 years 13 years and higher	716 200	9.22 16.95	13.35 17.71	5.733	.000

Capital	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
Social capital Less than 13 years 13 years and higher	685 191	28.28 36.38	16.21 20.55	5.034	.000
Cultural capital Less than 13 years 13 years and higher	405 510	14.72 21.35	6.86 7.95	11.673	.000

Discussion and Conclusion

Most people ask questions about inequality and almost recognize it as the basis of injustice. In all societies, people receive different shares of valued and scarce resources. Unequal distribution of resources creates social stratification. All societies rank their members on the basis of their characteristics. One of the most important factors which create differentiation and stratification is sex. Although gender discrimination and inequality have been researched greatly in last decades, there are few researches about inequality within each sex. Besides of women's inequality with men, they have differences within themselves too, and this is a neglected area in women's studies. Due to the changes that have occurred in the condition of women and the consequences of such changes, it is necessary to study the factors that affect women's inequality.

According to Bourdieu, people with different capitals may occupy superior or inferior positions. Having access to different resources, women are able to attain better conditions. In spite of males' domination, women with higher capitals are able to escape this hegemony and attain autonomy. In this situation, women acquire an independent identity. They can be involved in deciding for their own lives. Women who have higher capitals are able to confront restrictions that the society and culture impose on them.

Findings show that significant differences exist between capitals of women with different characteristics. Place of residence influence only social capital of women. The same result was obtained for women's and their husbands' ethnic backgrounds. On the other hand, birthplace and fathers' and mothers' education have no effect on social capital of women. Higher education of women's mothers and fathers causes women to achieve higher economic and cultural capitals. Other variables have

significant effects on all three capitals of women. There are significant difference in economic, social, and cultural capitals by variables such age, marriage status, employment status, and husbands' education. Although young women have lower economic capital, they have higher social and cultural capitals. Employed women in comparison to others have higher capitals. The role of birthplace is in line with findings by Ghasemiardahaee et al. (2010). The effect of ethnicity and education is in direct with Zandvakili's (1999) results.

References:

Beteille, A. (1983). Equality and Inequality: Theory and practice. Delhi: *Oxford University Press*.

Bourdieu, P. (1983). The forms of capital. Translated by R. Nice. 1983. [Online].

Chalabi, M. (2011). Theoretical analysis of origin, and relationship between social norms, and inequalities. *Journal of social analysis*, 59(4), 1-26.

Charon, J. M. (2000). Ten questions: A sociological perspective. (M. Sabouri, Trans.). Tehran: *Ney Publication*.

Ghasemiardahaee, A., Heidarabadi, A., & Nayer, R. (2010). Familial background in the inequality of educational opportunities: Case study of high school girl students in Ahar City. *Journal of Specialized Sociology*, 1(1), 125-147.

Granovetter, M. & Charles, T. (1988). Inequality and labor processes. In Handbook of sociology. Editted by N. J. Smelser. *SAGE Publications*.

Lin, N. (1972). Foundations of social research. New York: *McGraw Hill Inc*.

Marger, M. N. (2002). Social inequality: Patterns and processes. UK: McGraw Hill Higher Education.

McDowell, L. & Pringle, R. (1992). Recognizing differences in defining women. *Polity Press and the Open University*.

Turner, J. H. (1998). The structure of sociological theory. *Wadsworth Publishing Company*.

Zahedi, M. (2003). Development and inequality. Tehran: *Maziar Publications*.

Zakerhanjani, H. (2007). Income inequality in Iran. *Social welfare quarterly*, 24(6), 83-103.

Zandvakili, S. (1999). Income inequality among female heads of households: Racial Inequality Reconsidered. *Economica*, 66, 119-133.