

Reflections of Social and Cultural Capital To the scientific Formation:A Field Study on Doctoral Students in Kasdi Merbah University - as a model

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Abstract:

This study comes to understand the reflections of both social and cultural capital to the scientific formation among doctoral students; the research applies a qualitative approach by semi-structured interviews with 15 students. The study found a series of findings; it is observed that families with lower educational backgrounds possess moral cultural capital, while families with higher educational backgrounds possess both moral and material cultural capital, especially in the early stages of their educational journey. This support in their academic formation reflects on their scholarly capital. The first social group of students strives to elevate their academic standing to match the level of the second social group, characterized by high cultural capital and proficiency in research skills within the academic field regarding their social capital, the two groups demonstrate a broader network of social relationships compared to their virtual ones

Keywords: Social Capital, Cultural Capital, scientific Formation, Doctoral Student, University

1. Introduction

The concept of social and cultural capital stands as a fundamental notion within the social sciences and has, in recent decades, garnered considerable attention from sociologists and researchers. Social capital, distinct from other forms of capital, is realized through active participation in social communities and the utilization of the resources, whether they be cognitive or cultural. In this context, Pierre Bourdieu highlights the significance of social capital, or, more precisely, the importance of social relationships within the framework of social construction and their impact on social actors.

On the other hand, cultural capital, as defined «encompasses the aggregate of mental capabilities, skills, and all forms of knowledge and experiences that an individual accrues either as a result of their connections within a particular family or groups» (Sheikh Rachida, 2021, p. 572)

It is not acquired or inherited without personal efforts, but rather requires a prolonged and continuous commitment to learning and acculturation. This cumulative endeavor begins with the individual's family and continues until they become responsible for their own actions and decisions, which often manifest in their university years. The university, therefore, is one of the social institutions perpetually endeavoring to create social and cultural capital that serves the community and strives for its development and prosperity. It does so by fostering social relationships and establishing real and virtual connections that equip teachers and students with scientific knowledge and experience.

University students, especially in the postgraduate phase, become more aware of the development of their intellectual capabilities and research skills through their interactions with the academic community and the utilization of the university resources, both real and virtual. These interactions contribute to their personal growth and

enhance their academic expertise in their respective fields, which, in turn, may strengthen their academic identity.

Studies, conducted in languages other than Arabic, underscore the significance of social and cultural capital for university students, as exemplified in a study by Cooper that highlights «the importance of social capital in enhancing the academic success of students in the postgraduate phase, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic that began in March 2020». (Cooper, 2021, P. 02). This crisis amplified the value of these forms of capital, prompting a global shift towards strengthening social relationships within the academic field to elevate research levels.

In this sociological context, this article aims to shed light on the contributions of both social and cultural capital that university students possess in their academic formation during the doctoral phase at the University of Kasdi Merbah, Ouargla.

This will be accomplished through the exploration of the central question:

- How do social and cultural capital, both inherited and acquired, influence the scientific formation of doctoral students at the University of Ouargla through a network of real and virtual social relationships?

From this central question, the study branches into the following inquiries:

- How does social capital contribute, through a network of social relationships and the resources it carries, to the scientific formation of doctoral students?
- How does cultural capital, in its inherited and acquired forms, contribute to the scientific formation of doctoral students at the University of Ouargla?

2.1. The Theoretical Framework of the Study.

2.1.1. The Concept of Social Capital in Sociology

The concept of social capital has a long history of recognition that traces its roots back to Classical Social Thought. According Razika «It was emphasized by Alexis de Tocqueville as points out, attributing the success of democracy in the United States to the ability of Americans to establish associations and engage in collective action» (Razika, 2018, p 201). Moreover, Marcel Mauss delved into the social exchange forms and their underlying reasons in primitive societies in his essay "The Gift," published in 1923. He asserted that reciprocal giving among individuals and groups ensured the maintenance and reproduction of social relationships (Asma, 2019, p.315). This reciprocity comprises three commitments: the gift, acceptance of the gift, and reciprocation of the gift. These commitments are both obligatory and voluntary simultaneously, and result in a dual relationship between the giver and the recipient. It embodies complementarity and solidarity since the giver shares what they possess with the recipient. Moreover, the interconnections between individuals help alleviate conflict.

Nevertheless, the most widely accepted view is that the emergence of social capital, as indicated by (Amina & Fayçal, 2017, p.04), can be traced back to Karl Marx through his four-volume work "Capital," published in 1867. It is from this comprehensive view of capital that the concept of social capital emerged, among other forms of capital such as cultural, human, and religious. Another group of researchers attributes the development of social capital to Émile Durkheim's ideas (1897) in his study of suicide. He emphasized the role of social .networks and their importance for an individual's mental well-being

By Fouzi Points out that social capital, according to Hillary Putnam, gained widespread recognition following his concise paper on social capital published in 1995. In this paper, Putnam underscored the importance of increasing the size of social capital in improving the

quality of life, fostering growth, and enhancing public health, among other benefits. He refers to social capital as features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust. (Fouzi, 2013, p.144)

As for Zahra, she refers to social capital according to James Coleman as the capacity of individuals to collectively achieve common goals as groups and organizations. This capital is embodied in an inherited stock of values, ethics, and experiences that are acquired and transmitted within the family and society. However, Coleman departs from the principle advocated by neoclassical economists, which is that human behavior is not arbitrary but rather rational driven by self-interest, with each individual seeking their own benefit wherever and whenever they can. (Zahra, 2018, p. 149)

Furthermore, Brenda & Jennifer clarify that the term social capital was first coined by Bourdieu, who introduced two distinctive elements: (1) the social relationships that enable individuals to access resources from other group members, and (2) the quantity and quality of those resources. In this regard, Paxton (1999) also emphasizes two quantitative elements that indicate the objective relationships between individuals and the qualitative aspects that refer to the type of associations, which should be reciprocal and trustworthy. (Brenda & Jennifer, 2020, pp .901- 902)

2.1.2. The Concept of Social Capital in Sociology

Origins and Evolution of the Concept of Cultural Capital

The concept of cultural capital, as explained by Khaled. It underscores the importance of culture in all its manifestations. Cultural capital represents a moral value that can transform from its implicit form into something explicit. It serves as a source of status and power embedded in social theory, particularly in the realm of class theories. Max Weber addressed this aspect when he discussed status groups, referring to individuals united by a shared culture of status. They share common values, aesthetic tastes, clothing, language, and more. For them, it symbolizes honor and distinction.

From Durkheim's thought, Bourdieu derived the idea of culture with social centrality and high status, signifying that it stands apart from the everyday real world. Moreover, it constitutes a set of cultural symbols that represent the community's strength in a material, attractive, and persuasive manner. (Khaled ,2019, p .326)

Pierre Bourdieu as pointed out according (Scott& Osman) was the first to introduce the term cultural capital to theorize the role of knowledge and cultural tastes in the formation of social classes. According to Bourdieu, parental cultural capital means that children value school and university,

and that they are in a position that allows them to grasp the unwritten rules of the game, enabling them to graduate with qualifications that can secure them good jobs. It was then that Bourdieu initially believed that cultural capital is important in transferring power and privileges across generations. (Scott& Osman, 2009, pp. 227-228)

Passeron & Bourdieu highlight the importance of cultural capital, arguing that the inequality in the possession of cultural capital leads to social and cultural inequality within the school environment. Learners do not possess the same cultural capital, and it differs according to their social backgrounds (e.g., rich, middle-class, or poor). Passeron relates in his field study that there is a connection between social background and artistic genres (theater, music, and painting).

(Bourdieu &Passeron, 1964, p.28) Consequently, learners' academic success is linked to their cultural capital, which they acquire from their family environment. Each family possesses a specific cultural capital and follows a unique strategy for its reproduction.

3. Methodological Procedures of the Study.

3. 1. Research Methodology.

The study relied on the qualitative methodology, characterized as a type of scientific social research that assumes the existence of facts and phenomena obtained from participants involved in the research.

3. 2. Research Instruments

3.2.1. Observation:

As defined by (Dzwigol& Piotr ,2020, p.143) «observation is a research activity that gathers information through observing. It entails recording facts and events through a complex and methodologically controlled monitoring process involving the research community». This instrument allowed us to gain a general understanding of the topic and the study's sample. Conversations were also held with participants at various points through the observation grid.

3.2.2 Interviews:

(BilelBouteraa 2018, p. 90) defines interviews as «one of the most common qualitative methods, designed to evoke a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic during the interviews ». The interviews were semi-structured and conducted with a group of doctoral students at the University of Kasdi Merbah,Ouargla. The goal of these interviews was to provide a clear understanding of how cultural capital and social capital contribute to their scientific achievement. The interview guide was developed by the researcher, and consent was obtained for recording. Interviews took place in face-to-face settings and remotely through social media platforms using video call technology via Messenger, especially for those who were difficult to meet due to their busy schedules and social commitments. The interview duration ranged from 30 to 40 minutes, conducted in a relaxed atmosphere, allowing participants to express their social experiences during specific periods of their lives.

3.2.3. Thematic Analysis of Interviews

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used by researchers to organize a complex set of data systematically. It involves the exploration of the themes that are embedded in participants' stories. This method also includes identifying themes through careful reading and re-reading of the written data. It goes through several stages according to what (Sara, Watidawadi, 2020, pp 62-70) «Brown and Clark in 2006 proposed six phases , which include identifying the

data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes to be defined and named, and writing the report».

3.3. Study Sample

A non-probability purposive sampling method was used due to the difficulty of statistically determining the entire population. This approach allows for the selection of a representative sample with the dimensions of the problem and its variables, representing the contributions of cultural and social capital to scientific achievement among doctoral students at the University of Ouargla. The final number of participants was 15 researchers, stopping at this number when reaching saturation.

4. Discussion of Study Results

Social capital contribute, through a network of social

relationships and the resources: The majority of the participants affirmed the existence of a network of real-life social relationships, which represents the larger part of their network. This network primarily comprised their academic supervisors and fellow students. Interactions with these individuals occurred during supervision sessions, which varied from student to student and from one specialty to another. Some participants had very strong relationships with their academic supervisors and assistant professors, which facilitated many aspects of their research projects, including administrative procedures, and references. This contributed to the development of mutual trust between them, corroborating the findings of MahaAl Makhamreh and Benjamin Kutsyuruba (2021, pp. 132-133) concerning the «Role of Trust between Doctoral Students and Supervisors in Canadian Universities: Students' Lived Experiences and Expectations».

According to their research, the supervising professor, responsible for laying the foundation, is crucial in building trust, fostering students' trust development, thus impacting their performance and academic excellence. A successful doctoral program begins when students and supervisors develop mutual trust and respect. When students believe their supervisors consider their academic interests, they become more receptive to their feedback, even when marked with red ink.

In contrast, their virtual relationships represented a smaller percentage of face-to-face interactions, which included some teachers within and outside the university, facilitated by the social networking nature of platforms such as Facebook and Whatsapp. The majority of members in this category were fellow students who communicated primarily through chat rooms on these platforms. This virtual space served as a hub for daily interactions, allowing them to grow closer, to the point where they discussed their social circumstances and developed a strong sense of trust.

Concerning the resources derived from their real and virtual social capital, the participants emphasized their importance in terms of idea exchange, overcoming research obstacles, and the significant emotional support, especially from their colleagues. This aligns with the findings of studies such as JasperinaBrouwer et al. (2016, p. 109) in their scientific article, « The Influence of Social Capital on Self-Efficacy and Academic Success». This study was conducted on 407 first-year university students, concluding the indirect, positive impact of social capital, represented by peers or colleagues, on students' success through friendship or self-efficacy. The participants' responses emphasized the significance of their relationships with colleagues in overcoming various research difficulties, such as collaboration and cooperation. This finding is also corroborated by the study conducted by Monica Yvonne Herndon, underscoring the importance of the virtual relationship network for doctoral students present online. This research highlights the significance of using social networks to overcome isolation, enhance perseverance in completing their theses, facilitate learning, and collaborating with others, while receiving emotional and social support in a safe environment.

Cultural capital, in its inherited and acquired forms, contributes to the scientific formation of doctoral students:

From the information provided by the study participants, we have categorized them into two groups:

The First Category: Comprising parents with lower educational levels, including those with limited formal education such as Quranic or

primary and secondary education. This group constituted a significant portion of the participants, as previously noted. Despite their low educational attainment, these parents possessed a profound awareness of the significance of their children's education. They displayed a strong commitment to ensuring their children's academic success. This was reflected in their rigorous educational practices and strict parenting, driven by the harsh conditions their families faced, which acted as a barrier to achieving educational aspirations. This can be interpreted through the lens of symbolic capital, as defined by Pierre Bourdieu «as the reputation of competence, honor, and respect. All forms of capital, when internalized through perception in a specific area, become self-referential and distinctive from other forms of capital». (OyvvinIhlen, Ferdriksson, 2020, p. 21), This understanding underscored the importance of education in the minds of the majority of the participants. They saw education as the key to success, the vehicle for capitalizing on their previous experiences, and the means to transition from a disadvantaged social class to an elite one. In this context, the family played a pivotal role in shaping their perceptions and academic preparedness. It facilitated the development of religious values that enhanced their determination for excellence and success.

The Second Category: This category included participants with higher or advanced educational levels. It was relatively small in size. They emphasized the moral and material support they received from their fathers. This support involved providing books, assisting with understanding complex subjects, removing academic obstacles and difficulties, and providing both psychological and financial motivation. The significance of this support aligns with several non-Arabic studies, including the study conducted on the impact of students' cultural capital on their educational experiences. The study concluded that « the active transfer of cultural capital occurs through significant family participation in transmitting knowledge, competencies, and skills. Cultural capital serves as an educational resource that enhances academic performance by offering exceptional

experiences and tools highly valued in educational contexts. » (Turki & Althubaiti ,2021, p. 80)

Pierre Bourdieu perceives educational activity (Kaltoum, 2017, pp. 138-137) as an imposition by a particular entity, which could be educated individuals or family members. This imposition aims to fulfill specific roles, such as the task of reproducing a particular cultural model specific to dominant social classes. The educational references underpin the symbolic strength.

The study results have revealed the presence of home libraries, a fact affirmed by seven of the study participants. The habit of reading varies from one family to another, depending on the value attached to knowledge and education within these households. Thus, some participants confirmed that they engaged in occasional reading, while others expressed their love for reading and often involved one of their parents in this activity. This highlights the role of reading in cultivating a sense of intellectual curiosity in children. In these families, it is considered the primary nucleus for educating and enlightening children through material cultural capital, encompassing books, novels, stories, and more. This aligns with the findings of researcher Ahmed Hadjadj)2017(, who emphasized that family support and encouragement lead to the early development of children's aspirations and the achievement of academic excellence, especially in higher education. This achievement depends on the social, economic, and cultural determinants of the family environment, which significantly contribute to motivating students to pursue higher education and engage in academic competition.

In contrast, the second category of participants claimed to lack home libraries. Nevertheless, this did not deter many of them from possessing a small collection of books in a modest box. Despite limited material resources for cultural capital, this constraint did not hinder their pursuit of academic goals. It is noteworthy that these doctoral students stressed the importance of having their own personal libraries during their doctoral studies to strengthen their academic knowledge and enhance their scholarly pursuits.

The specificity of Algerian society differs from other societies due to economic hardship and the Algerian family's acute awareness of the importance of knowledge and education. This awareness is directly reflected in shaping their children's upbringing.

The study results have also demonstrated the remarkable achievements of a significant portion of the participants, many of whom earned undergraduate and master's degrees with high honors. Their ambitions extend to attaining a PhD, a desire stemming from their social environment, as we have seen previously. Additionally, their personal decisions to seek excellence and move towards becoming elite intellectuals in society are strong motivational factors. In this regard, (Redouane, 2021, p. 196) discussed understanding the individual's strategy concerning Raymond Boudon's statement: «An educated individual within the educational realm is directly responsible for their success or failure. This is based on the individual's choices, which have a strong connection to their social family origin without neglecting their personal ambitions and individual decisions. » Raymond Boudon also touched upon the concept of methodological individualism, explaining that it interprets comprehensive social phenomena as a result of individual behaviors. These behaviors, in turn, result from the reasons and motivations of these individuals. To fully comprehend these reasons and motivations, it is crucial to reference the individual's primary social context, which is rooted in their family environment (Jardi, 2014, p. 424)

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be deduced that educational attainment can be divided into two categories: a group with low educational levels and another with high educational levels. However, low educational levels do not necessarily imply a lack of awareness regarding the significance of education and learning. Despite their limited educational background, individuals in the first category exhibit a profound moral and cultural capital. This is largely influenced by religious motivations, which emphasize the importance of knowledge and education. Furthermore, the Algerian family's awareness of global

developments, fueled by a scientific revolution in Europe and their direct engagement with European society during various visits, reinforced their commitment to pursuing the studies of the participants, even in the face of economic challenges and adverse social conditions. The role of symbolic cultural capital was significant for individuals in this category.

Conversely, the second social category, characterized by higher educational levels, expressed no concerns regarding their children's education. They provided abundant cultural and moral resources, actively contributing to the reproduction of the same social class. This phenomenon aligns with Pierre Bourdieu's notion, as presented in "The Inheritors," that families with high cultural capital implant a legitimate culture recognized by society.

The results also show that the research participants in their university phase had acquired academic capital, represented by their academic qualifications and scholarly accomplishments. This was similarly divided into two categories. The first category consisted of individuals with low inherited cultural capital, constituting the majority of the participants, who fervently sought to enhance their academic achievements. They aimed to elevate their academic work, boost their research skills, and improve their foreign language proficiency. In contrast, the second category of participants, with high-inherited cultural capital, excelled in their academic fields, equipped with the necessary skills, and produced outstanding scientific research.

Regarding their social capital, the participants' social networks proved to be more influential than their virtual connections. They benefited extensively from both forms of social capital, whether academically, socially, or psychologically. Their interactions increased mutual trust, especially on social media platforms such as Facebook. These interactions also enhanced their motivation to complete their research projects, overcome cognitive and social obstacles, and bolster their self-confidence.

Table (1): Demographic characteristics of the sample.

Sample participants	Gender	Academic specialty
1 st participant	Female	Sociology of the family
2 nd participant	Female	Political science
3 rd participant	Female	Process engineering
4 th participant	Female	Sociology of work and organizations
5 th participant	Male	Anthropology of immigration
6 th participant	Female	Sociology of education
7 th participant	Female	Information and communication studies
8 th participant	Male	Computer science
9 th participant	Male	English
10 participant	Female	Agronomy
11 th participant	Female	Biology
12 th participant	Male	Physics
13 th participant	Female	Flora and fauna
14 th participant	Female	Environment and animals
15 th participant	Male	Ecology and oceanography
Total	15	15

Source: Prepared by the researcher

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