

The changing patterns in indian society sociology essay



Every human depends upon others for their social survival and growth.

Intellectual development of a baby to interaction skills of a full grown human depends upon social environment into which he or she grows up. Sociology has rightly described human as a social animal, whose survival depends on social interactions. In modern times all career experts and business gurus have emphasized on social and corporate networking, the success of an individual's endeavors depends upon the strength of his or her networks. A weaker network may result in lost opportunities and lack of resources.

L. J. Hanifan's 1916 article regarding local support for rural schools is one of the first occurrences of the term "social capital" in reference to social cohesion and personal investment in the community. Social capital is a sociological concept, which refers to connections within and between social networks. Though there are a variety of related definitions, which have been described as "something of a cure-all" for the problems of modern society, they tend to share the core idea "that social networks have value. Just as a screwdriver (physical capital) or a college education (human capital) can increase productivity (both individual and collective), so do social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups".

From the time when Loury (1977) established it into modern social science research and Coleman's (1988) determining study placed it at the forefront of research in sociology, the term social capital has stretched throughout the social sciences and has generated a huge literature that runs across disciplines. Notwithstanding the immense amount of research on it, however, the definition of social capital has hanged about elusive. From a historical perspective, one could argue that social capital is not a concept but praxis, a <https://assignbuster.com/the-changing-patterns-in-indian-society-sociology-essay/>

code word used to federate disparate but interrelated research interests and to facilitate the cross-fertilization of ideas across disciplinary boundaries.

(Steven N. Durlauf and Marcel Fafchamps 2004)

Social capital describes circumstances in which individuals can use membership in groups and networks to secure benefits. This formulation follows the definition offered by Pierre Bourdieu (1986): “ Social capital is an attribute of an individual in a social context. One can acquire social capital through purposeful actions and can transform social capital into conventional economic gains. The ability to do so, however, depends on the nature of the social obligations, connections, and networks available to you.”

Bourdieu (1986) offered the first systematic contemporary analysis of social capital defining the concept as the cumulative of the actual or potential resources, which are connected to ownership or relatedness and possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance, associates or recognition. The concept of social capital has recently been studied in depth by various scholars (Lin, 2001; Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu, 1986). Each scholar, however, approached the phenomenon from his own respected discipline. As a result, in the literature, there have been various definitions and implications of the theory reflecting this variance.

This essay endeavors to provide an in-depth review of the theory of social capital as a multi-dimensional phenomenon in our day to day professional life. Indeed most successful individual takes an overview of their social capital account at expected hiatus and establish their relationship strategies.

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The essay presents the inferences along with implications and the utility of the social capital theory plus social alliances framework for the field of human resource professionals as well for the others who may be interested in knowing and understanding the associated implications of the social capital.

The notion of social capital is a functional way of entering into deliberations about civil society - the concept of social networks and interactions is central to the arguments of Robert Putnam and other thinkers or theorists who wanted to 'reclaim public life'. It is also used by the World Bank in consideration to economic and societal development and by management experts and connoisseurs of differential view as a way of thinking about organizational development and societal growth and agility.

Social capital is regularly termed either as an off-shoot of existing social relations or as a direct product of new structures of social interaction created by organizations or needs to meet specific objectives. The other name for the same is social network or public relations. The extent to which an individual has access to resources through social capital depends on the person's connections (whom they know, but also connections through common group membership), the strength of these connections, and the resources available to their connections. Individual choice can to some extent determine the strength and extent of connections, although not all of these connections are subject to choice.

For John Field (2003: 1-2) the vital hypothesis of social capital theory is that 'relationships matter'. The fundamental idea is that 'social networks are a

valuable asset'. Interaction, communication moreover availability of continuous interface enables people to put together communities, to entrust or commit themselves to each other, and to knit the social fabric. A sagacity of belonging and the concrete experience of social networks (and the relationships of trust and tolerance that can be involved) can, it is argued, bring immense benefits to the people.

' Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions... Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society - it is the glue that holds them together' (The World Bank 1999). Another supporting statement can be found as, ' increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable' (The World Bank 1999).

Impact of Social Capital – An Indian Perspective

Let us evaluate the changes taking place in Indian society and the impact of these changes on social capital and social life. We will try to trace how the social patterns have changed over a period of time as well as how changes like globalization, modernization and industrialization have molded Indian social fabric moreover the strength of Indian social networks. The arguments generated and the discussion put forth is based upon the research carried out by Robert D. Putnam (1993; 2000) and the societal trends studied by various social scientist and sociologist within and outside India.

Putnam – why social capital is important

Robert D. Putnam (1993; 2000) that instigated social capital as an admired focus for research and policy discussion suggested first, social capital consents citizens to resolve collective problems more easily... People frequently might be better off if they cooperate, collaborate and share resources with each other while doing their share. ...

Second, social capital lubricates the wheels that allow communities to move ahead effectively and effortlessly. Where people are trusting and trustworthy furthermore where they are subject to repeated interactions with fellow citizens, everyday business and social transactions become less costly in terms of social costs, resources and time involved....

Third way in which social capital advances our circumstance plus conditions is by expanding and enhancing our awareness of the many ways in which our fates are associated... When people do not have connection to others, or they are not well networked, they are unable to test the veracity of their own
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views, whether in the give or take of casual conversation or in more formal deliberation. Without such an opportunity, people are more likely to be swayed by their worse impulses.... Lack of connectedness creates bitterness in personal, social and work life, the balance needed to support an individual for contributing productively towards society or for industrial growth is vanished.

The networks, systems or associations that compose social capital also serve as conduits for the flow of helpful plus supporting information that facilitates individuals to achieve their goals.... Social capital also operates through psychological and biological processes to improve as well as advance an individual's lives. Community connectedness, anywhere either in society or at workplace is not only about warm fuzzy tales of civic triumph or sharing entertaining tales or fables. In assessable, measurable and well-documented ways, social capital makes an enormous difference to our lives. It improves living standards, it supports learning and provides more resources at the disposal of an individual, than what he or she may be able to generate of their own. In short social capital facilitates symbiotic and synergistic life within social or work domain.

Supporting Putnam Michael Woolcock, a social scientist with the World Bank (and Harvard) has favorably argued that many of the imperative contributions preceding Robert D. Putnam's famous book ' Bowling Alone' were unsuccessful to make an appropriate distinction between different types of social capital. He distinguished between three different types:

Bonding social capital which denotes ties between people in similar situations, such as immediate family, close friends and neighbours.

Bridging social capital, which encompasses more distant ties of like persons, such as loose friendships and workmates.

Linking social capital, which reaches out to unlike people in dissimilar situations, such as those who are entirely outside of the community, thus enabling members to leverage a far wider range of resources than are available in the community.

To bring out overall advantages of social capital within work and social setting we can quote Becker & Murphy as they simply presented multidimensional advantages of supporting and sustaining social capital. The common idea that social capital increases organizational performance, enables employees to get better jobs, better pay, and faster promotions through the social capital that they build is the driving force attracting the business to further investigate and explore the opportunities and possibilities that social capital may present. Social capital directly enters preferences and is a complement in preferences with various goods (Becker and Murphy, 2000).

The decline of social capital in INDIA

The social research carried out in several organizations public, private alike demonstrated the big change in social structures and social networks as they use to exist. The shift is towards individualism though organizations promote and prompt the team spirit as well as group memberships. The formation of social groups and social interaction is on decline the focus is more on I and <https://assignbuster.com/the-changing-patterns-in-indian-society-sociology-essay/>

my family, even within the organization the environment is more competitive rather than being cooperative. All the above mentioned features suggest depletion in existing social capital rather than indicating negative growth trend in formation of new social capital.

The big worry is that in the INDIA, for example, there has been a momentous decline in the active membership of groups, social activity clubs, sports clubs, fan clubs and associations (like PTAs, football teams and community groups) and a corresponding as well as analogous increase in personalized or individualized leisure activities (most especially watching television). The result is that social capital is weakened rather the social ties have been wrecked.

The study demonstrated that on a range of indicators as well as parameters of civic engagement including voting at the time of elections, political discussions and participation, newspaper readership, supporting a favourite team or player in a particular sporting event and participation in local associations that there is a serious decline. The scores on all mentioned indicators create serious grounds for concern. It appeared that India's social capital was on decline. First in the area or domain of civic engagement and social connectedness it was demonstrated that, over the last three decades of the twentieth century there had been a fundamental shift in:

Political and civic engagement. Voting, political knowledge, political trust, and grassroots political activism are all down. Indians sign 40 per cent fewer petitions and are 65 per cent less likely to join a consumer boycott, as compared to just a decade or two ago.

The declines are uniformly visible in non-political community life: membership and activity in all sorts of local clubs and civic and religious organizations have been falling at an accelerating pace.

In the mid-1970s the average Indian attended some club meeting every month, by 1998 that rate of attendance had been cut by nearly 48 per cent.

Informal social ties. In 1975 the average Indian had visitors, friends and relatives at home 26 times per year; the equivalent figure (1999-2000) is now just about half that. Virtually all leisure as well as relaxation activities that involve doing something with someone else, from playing chess, volleyball to planning outings and picnics, are declining that too at a tremendous rate.

Tolerance and trust. Although Indians are more tolerant of one another as well of others belonging to different countries than were previous generations or even when compared to other societies of the world but today they trust one another less. Survey data provide one determinant of the growth of dishonesty and distrust, but there are other indicators as well measures present as well.

To examine the possible reasons for this decline, significantly, the study was able to demonstrate that some favourite candidates for blame could not be regarded as significant contributors. Residential mobility had actually been declining for the last quarter of the century. Time pressure, especially on two-career families, could only be a marginal candidate. Some familiar themes remained though:

Changes in family structure or growth in nuclear families (i. e. with more and more people living alone), are a possible element as conventional avenues to civic involvement are not well-designed for single and childless people plus parents who are not interested in taking out their kids has no means of leaving their children safely with someone so as to attend club meetings or social gatherings.

Suburban sprawl has fractured the spatial integrity of people's. Cities have grown and residential sectors have been separated from commercial sector. People travel much further to work, shop and enjoy leisure opportunities. As a result there is less time available (and less inclination) to become involved in groups. Suburban sprawl is a very significant contributor. (See, for example, Duany et. al. 2000)

Electronic entertainment, especially television, has profoundly privatized leisure time. The time we spend watching television is a direct drain upon involvement in groups and social capital building activities. It may contribute up to 40 per cent of the decline in involvement in groups. The impact of television is maximum on females and then on children. These two groups have reduced their social interaction by 52 percent as compared to studies conducted in 1985.

Subsequently, there has been some evidence appearing linked to working patterns – with only one third of corporate employed workers, for example, working ‘ normal hours’. The majority of work force employed works almost 10-12 hours a day, against internationally accepted norms of 40-45 hours working hours per week (5 days a week), an average Indian works approximately 60-72 hours (7 days a week). Government jobs are still better in work-timings as their work times are 45 hours per working week (5 days) but majority of population can not get into a government job.

Next point of contestation is as Halpern (2009) comments, ‘ A consequence of our modern service economy appears to be that the majority of young people now work part-time or do shift work, especially late night or early morning shifts leading to a ‘ de-synchronization’ of our leisure and social activities’. Rise of call-centers and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO Activities) has made youth more self oriented as well created a crevice between inherent work culture of their organizations and that of Indian society.

Another significant contribution has come from those theorists exploring the realities and experiences of family and work life. Here, the work of Ann Bookman (2004) is of interest. She argues that we need to broaden our positive reception of what comprise community participation – especially if we are interested in knowing what women do. Bookman has drawn attention to the informal connections formed to help with family care – and which do not register with many social capital commentators.

Increase in Dual role of women in today's society has created more demand or time pressure as she needs to meet challenges both at office and home front. The demands of dual pressure leaves less time for socializing. Bookman suggests the ways in which working families reach out to each other and to community-based programmes to address the issues they face – especially around caring for children and relatives (ibid.: 25). In addition she draws attention to the impact of what she describes as the ‘ stalled gender revolution’ – and the extent to which women are still expected to shoulder disproportionate responsibilities for care, community engagement and domestic functioning.

The concrete benefits associated with social capital

While the jury may be out over characteristics of the point of view woven around decline, Putnam's assessment of the benefits of what he defines as social capital remains an important reference point. He is able to demonstrate that:

Child development is powerfully shaped by social capital. Trust, networks, and norms of reciprocity within a child's family, school, peer group, and larger community have far reaching effects on their opportunities and choices, educational achievement, and hence on their behavior and development (ibid.: 296-306).

In high social-capital areas public spaces are cleaner, people are friendlier, and the streets are safer. Traditional neighborhood “ risk factors” such as high poverty and residential mobility are not as significant as most people assume. Places have higher crime rates in large part because people don't participate in community organizations, don't supervise younger people, and

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aren't linked through networks of friends (ibid.: 307-318). As Sampson and his associates have also shown those communities with 'collective efficacy' - the confidence to intervene born of higher rates of social capital - are characterized by lower crime rates.

A growing body of research suggests that where trust and social networks flourish, individuals, firms, neighborhoods, and even nations prosper economically. Social capital can help to mitigate as well control the dangerous effects of socioeconomic disadvantage (ibid.: 319-325).

There appears to be a strong relationship between the possession of social capital and better health. 'As a rough rule of thumb, if you belong to no groups but decide to join one, you cut your risk of dying over the next year in half. Regular club attendance, volunteering, entertaining, or going to religious places to offer prayers, playing golf or any other sport of choice is the happiness equivalent of getting a college degree or more than doubling your income (ibid.: 333). (See, also, Wilkinson and Pickett 2009).

Many of these findings have been underlined by subsequent sudden increase in studies approximating happiness and well-being (see, for example, Haidt 2006, Offer 2006).

The World Bank (1999) has also brought together a range of statistics to make the case for the social and economic benefits of social capital. For example they argue that there is evidence that schools are more effective when parents and local citizens are actively involved. 'Teachers are more committed, students achieve higher test scores, and better use is made of school facilities in those communities where parents and citizens take an

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active interest in children's educational well-being'. They also indicate some negative impacts, for example, when disgruntled local elites joined together to close health clinics in Uttar Pradesh. Child mortality rates soared as a result (The World Bank). The negative impact should not undermine the constructive impact and the multiplier effect of breeding and harnessing the social capital. It should be remembered that generation of social capital is good for strengthening the fabric of the society plus it also creates positive impact on social health of individuals and the community.

Social capital in organizations

The idea of looking at social capital in firms and organizations was, as Cohen and Prusak (2001: 6) said, relatively new. This may be because of the way in which the supremacy plus dominance of more mechanistic and system-oriented outset and conception of organizational activity has masked their deeply social nature. A number of those anxious as well as concerned with organizational development, like Cohen and Prusak, have become all the time more suspicious of the 'people, processes, technology' mantra, 'ceaselessly chanted as a précis of the sources of organizational effectiveness' (ibid.: 8).

There has been, of course, a considerable furthermore significant embracing of the concept of human capital - but those writing about it rarely come within reach of the social nature of organizations - and often fall prey to a predisposition to draw upon theories and metaphors that derive financial, materialistic, process oriented and physical notions of capital.

The case or the argument of those concerned with social capital is that when harnessed or exploited in true-sense it generates economic returns, wealth augmentation, and prosperity as well as over-all growth. More predominantly, the benefits declared include:

Better knowledge sharing, due to established trust relationships, common frames of reference, and shared goals.

Lower transaction costs, due to a high level of trust and a cooperative spirit (both within the organization and between the organization and its customers and partners).

Low turnover rates, reducing severance costs and hiring and training expenses, avoiding discontinuities associated with frequent personnel changes, and maintaining valuable organizational knowledge.

Greater coherence of action due to organizational stability and shared understanding. (Cohen and Prusak 2001: 10)

Given the early years of being and relative infancy of the application plus relevance of social capital to organizational life there is little sustained or substantial research that can support plus sustain attention to the concept within organizations. It certainly isn't the key to success (ibid.: 11), but it is part of the fabric of organizational life - and the need to engage with it is, arguably, growing. The increasing complexity of organizations and the scale of informational activity; globalization; external and internal volatility; and what Cohen and Prusak (2001: 155-181) call ' the challenge of virtuality'

(work carried out over a distance of time and space) all contribute here and make work setting more dynamic as well as challenging.

In organizational setting the key issue or the major area of focus is performance. The performance should not be compromised rather every action undertaken should strengthen it. Social capital promises to yield new insights, and more rigorous and stable models, describing why certain people and organizations perform better than others. The process of formation or accumulation of social capital requires cooperation, coordination, creativity, innovation, initiation, entrepreneurship, leadership, learning and teamwork along with complete dedication of individual resources for organizational growth.

Generating Social Capital Growth

The social capital acts as lynchpin of modern day corporate society and it makes functioning of modern technically advanced corporations easy and animated. The impetus provided by social capital and its successful utilization within an organization leads to growth as collective pool of resources are created and garnered for common objective realization of super-ordinate goals. The Figure 1 presented below represents the common factors that help in harnessing as well as in the growth of open communication, trust that leads to generation and enlargement of social capital within an organization.

Each human being is completely unidentical in complete sense, people are individual entities with their separate identities having varied characteristics and orientations but there always exist some points of common orientation

and points of interaction due to existence of some common key ingredients of personality. They are brought together by some common dimensions which they share with others in a given environment. Being a separate identity each individual look towards the others for social need fulfillment.

Values

Dependency

Social

Structure

Trust

Growth

Productivity

Information

Figure 1 – Sustaining and Generating Social Capital Growth

In a foreign land if you see some one speaking your own language or being dressed up like people of your native land automatically a connection will be created as there will be common feature that both individual identities share. The existence of common feature or orientation will bring two entities, which are not identical in complete sense but may share some mutually inclusive traits together and thus results in generation of social capital. Social elements like trust upon each other (may be as a family member or may be as employed by same organization), dependency upon each other to attain

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common goals or at least to fulfill necessities, existing social structures or acceptable structure within an organization and widespread values of the society or of the working unit will bind everyone closer.

The factors in the middle represent those binding forces which creates a force-field so as to keep everyone within the organization and department tied with each other or in a well stabilized cohort relationship. Three boxes outside the circle and within the triangle represent the outcomes of internal factors. If internal factors are existing for a prolonged period then the relationship between the groups or organization members gets consolidated and this strengthening of ties or bonds will result in formation or accumulation of social capital. The process of social capital accumulation or formulation will result in generation of more data and information rather availability of timely information. Timely information turns out to be useful in business decision-making as the principle of value of perfect information works and will result in growth plus development of an organization.

Productivity increases as people are very satisfied and they form more productive groups and association which are cooperative and conducive for working environment and fulfillment of corporate objectives. Capacity of a human being to work increases once they are provided with optimal challenging work accompanied by required support tools as well as resources, resultant is favorable environment that is created. The positive and sustainable environment is one where co-existence of varied individual units can be supported along with mutual dependence and over all growth of the complete unit is in focus not the growth of an individual unit.

Presence of favorable environment, satisfied work-force along with availability of suitable data and needed information will help top management or the organization to make better, well structured and justified decisions and will result in heightened organizational growth.

(Amrita D, L. M. Takahashi and A. Naranong, 2002)

Growth as it is attained also because of existence of other two given factors of information and productivity. Growth in long-term can only be attained as well sustained based upon factors of enhanced productivity and availability of timely as well as appropriate information which results in ease as well as promptness of decision making.

The Diagram given above very purposefully shows growth at the top of the pyramid as the business or organizational growth is the top most priority for an organization and the attained or desired growth is not exclusively attainable with out the support of increased productivity as well as timely availability of information. Both productivity and information acts as competitive edge providers or tools to beat competition. The competitive advantage created based upon productivity and information is all conclusive and sustainable for long term and will result in over all growth of the organization.

From the discussion so far drawing the conclusion that social capital formation and accumulation can be advantageous for an organization as well it can be used as a tool for generating competitive advantage is not an overstatement. Social capital if can be enriched, sustained, protected and helped to develop on incremental basis will help an organization to attain far-

reaching consequences. The social capital will be beneficial in generating far-reaching and inimitable competitive advantage for the company.

Work-Family Philosophy

Organizational department or team or may be entire organization can be viewed or considered as a close knitted family unit which works together like any social concept of family as every member has a pre-assigned role and all individuals are associated in a well-defined relationship. The common objectives are pre-assigned to be attained, everyone is supposed to be supportive of other's cause and cohesive co-existence is needed.

When an employee starts considering the workplace as home and the colleagues as family the organizations starts to accumulate social capital though this stage of social affiliation and connectedness with the organization and its members is only possible by proper management of social capital. The perceived change in attitude towards work will result in reduction of absenteeism, work productivity enhancement and collaborative efforts for organizational betterment.

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Top Management

Executives & Supports

Employees at floor level

**Families of organizational members & Society &
Community**
**Figure 2 – Social Capital Building – Corporate
Efforts**

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Building Social Capital

It is easier said than done. Building social capital needs lot of time and effort as it is an initiative which requires a lot of coordinated collaborated attempt. The process involves and necessitates the complete integration of work and family life of all employees. Here in all the members of one's family get in touch with family members of other employees, where they share their knowledge, pass-times and other valuable social details with one-another. The process will involve society, community, family me