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Does a socially well integrated university have anything to do with faculty retention? A study on Kerman University of Medical Sciences-2011

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to measure the relationship between organizational social capital and retention of faculty members in Kerman University of Medical Sciences in 2011.

Design/methodology/approach – Using a stratified multistage sampling, 120 faculty members were recruited to fill the questionnaire.

Findings – There were a direct and positive bilateral ($r = 0.65$) relationship between social capital and retention of faculty members.

Originality/value – The university officials and policy makers need to pay closer attention to some issues such as providing welfare facilities, salary and wages, benefits, interests and appreciation for faculty members.

Keywords Social capital, Retention, Faculty members, Path analysis model

Paper type Research paper



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Introduction

The success of today's organizations not only depends on financial, physical and human capital but also on social capital (Safarzadeh *et al.*, 2011), which can complement other capitals (Pennings and Lee, 1998).

Social capital is differently defined by various authors and the definition varies according to the importance attached to structural, relational or cognitive aspects of the actors' network. However, defining social capital for organizations in a socio-economic network has its own peculiarity (Pani, 2008).

While the idea of social capital has a long history in social, economic and political sciences, it has not attracted the attention of organization and management theorists until recent years (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Baker, 2000; Cohen and Prusak, 2001; Leana and Van Buren, 1999; Lesser, 2000; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998).

Social capital is regarded as a feature of social organization, such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Krishna and Shrader, 1999). Social capital is suggested to be a valuable organizational asset as it facilitates the interactions among organizational members who are deemed necessary for successful collective action (Leana and Van Buren, 1999).

The importance and usefulness of social capital as a concept in the study of organizations has been established by a large body of research. Organizational social capital is defined as a resource reflecting the character of social relations within the firm. It is realized through members, levels of collective goal orientation and shared trust which create value by facilitating successful collective action. Organizational social capital is an asset that can benefit both the organization and its members. In describing organizational social capital, the members are defined as individuals who have an employment relationship with the firm (Waldstrom, 2003).

The field of organizational theory offers some of the most interesting development of social capital, as organizations are bounded networks with purposeful interactions between actors and has recently spawned a large body of research. Some research has been done in the areas of organizational social capital (Gummer, 1998; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Burt, 2000; Bolino *et al.*, 2001).

Social capital has been used to describe not only the benefits of social relationships, but also the norms and cultural values inherent there. This leads to the widely accepted division of the various aspects of social capital into the structural dimension (properties of the social network as a whole), the relational dimension (transactional content of what is exchanged in a particular relationship) and the cognitive dimension (shared sets of systems for interpretation and mutual understanding dimensions) (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Bolino *et al.*, 2001).

In this study, the researches followed Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) model. In this model, as mentioned above, social capital has three aspects including structural, cognitive and relational dimensions. At the organizational level, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) argue that social capital is not only a critical resource, but the only factor which can provide decisive and lasting organizational advantages. Therefore it is clear that organizations need to be conscious of their social capital, and of the factors necessary to create and nurture it.

There is a significant lack of research in the interaction of human and social capital at the organizational level. This paper studies the concept of social capital in an organizational context. Because of the importance of medical universities, in this paper we study social capital in the context of a medical university. In Islamic Republic

of Iran, medical universities are responsible for medical education, including all medical fields (e.g. medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, midwifery, nursing, community and occupational health and others), and the provision of health services as well as leading the medical research. The provincial medical universities are representatives of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and are the highest level of authority in the province (Khayatzadeh-Mahani *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, study of social capital among faculty members of medical universities is of great importance.

Theoretically, social capital is one of the internal factors which has been claimed to affect recruitment, retention, performance, compensation and creativity in organizations (Krebs, 2008). It has been also cited that high level of social capital at a workplace will influence a number of factors such as staff turnover, absenteeism, productivity, output quality, customer satisfaction, job satisfaction, and the health and wellbeing of the employees (Hasle *et al.*, 2007). Thus, social capital may influence on retention of faculty members of universities of medical sciences who are not only providing the state of art medical education but also are playing the pivotal role in providing services to the population covered by the university.

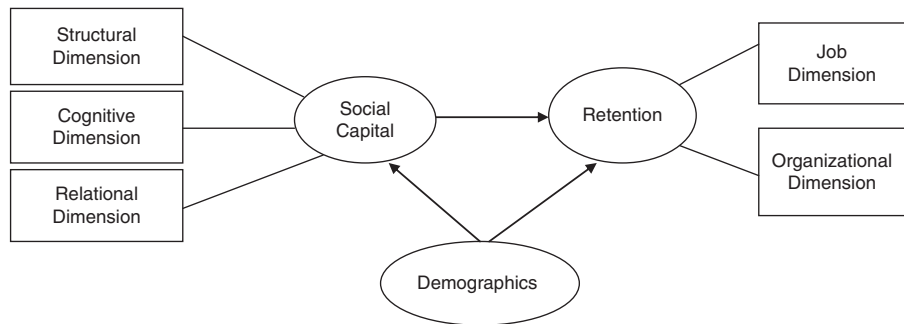
Retaining highly skilled workers who transmit and combine complex information is pivotal for organizations (Holtom *et al.*, 2006). This is more paramount for universities of developing countries. In today's world, although universities are key elements in social, economic, cultural and political development (Mirkamali and Naranjisani, 2008), lack of proper strategies for faculty retention, results in leaving university by their brightest and the best faculty members for better job opportunities (Berry and Haklev, 2005). Therefore, faculty retention is critical to the health of a university both for morale reasons and for economic reasons, as faculty replacement costs tend to be much higher than retention costs (Waltman and Hollenshead, 2005). Hence, it is necessary for universities to use all their means including external motivators, as well as internal ones to keep their competent faculty members (Krebs, 2008).

A study conducted by Tötterman and Widén-Wulff (2007), which focussed on information sharing in a university context within the social capital framework, revealed a fragmented school with different cultures and prerequisites for fruitful social capital. The findings support the hypothesis that social capital is a useful framework in examining information sharing mechanisms.

According to a study conducted by Nesbitt *et al.* (2002), which aimed to explore the role of gender as a factor determining the loss of full-time faculty during the next ten years, 39 percent of female faculties vs 26 percent of male faculties did not expect to be a faculty member in ten years. Female faculty members differed from male faculty members in the resources. They report to have, in professional opportunities, in the degree to which they are informed about career decision-making factors, in perceptions of the organizational climate and in experienced harassment. Based on these findings, suggestions are made concerning changes in the organizational culture in US dental schools and how it may affect the retention of male and female faculty members.

The literature abounds with the studies of social capital in different setting but there are fewer studies on faculty member retention, although each has provided some insights for organizations, to the best of our knowledge, to date no one has investigated the relation of social capital and retention in higher education. Hence, the present study aimed to measure social capital and retention in faculty members of Kerman University of Medical Sciences. The conceptual model of this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Conceptual model



Materials and method

The study was conducted using a cross-sectional approach. The study population consisted of all faculty members of Kerman University of Medical Sciences working in different faculties including Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Public health, Pharmacy, Paramedical and Management and Medical Information. Sample size was estimated to be 120 samples (with $\alpha = 0.05$ and $\beta = 0.8$) (Machin *et al.*, 2011). Since the response rate was not very high we distributed 150 questionnaires among the faculties. To provide a more representative sample of the population, stratified multistage sampling was applied. At the first stage, each school of Kerman Medical University was considered as one strata, then at the second-stage, according to the number of faculty members of each school, the overall sample size for each specific school was determined. In third stage, according to the number of faculty members in each group of specific school, the samples of each group were specified. Faculty members in each group were chosen relying on random sampling.

In this study, the researches followed Nahapiet and Ghoshal's (1998) model. This model consists of three dimensions of structural, cognitive and relational. Structural dimension includes network ties, network configuration and appropriate organization. Cognitive dimension includes shared codes and language and shared narratives, relational dimension includes trust, norms, obligations and identification. Retention includes two dimensions which are job and organizational dimension.

Data were collected by a questionnaire consisting of three parts, the first part contained questions on organizational social capital, the second part had questions on retention, and the third part consisting of seven questions on demographics. The questionnaires were distributed among the faculty members. The organizational social capital section measured three main elements of social capital (structural, cognitive and relational), through 15 questions which were scaled based on five-point Likert scale (completely agree = 5, agree = 4, relatively agree = 3, disagree = 2 and completely disagree = 1). The second section, i.e. retention, measured two dimensions of retention including organizational and job factors using 19 five-point Likert scaled (very low = 1, low = 2, to some extent = 3, much = 4 and very much = 5) questions. In order to compare the mean of social capital and retention in this study, all the means were calculated on a scale of 5. Expert's view were sought to check the validity of the questionnaire. Reliability of questionnaire was checked through a pilot study and conducting test re-test ($r = 0.74$, p -value < 0.001). The results were analyzed using independent *T*-test, ANOVA, multivariate logistic regression analysis and path analysis through SPSS.

Results

Among 120 recruited subjects (response rate = 80 percent), 67.5 percent were male. Most of the faculty members were in 31-40 (28.3 percent) and 41-50 (48.3 percent) age group, had PhD degree (85.8 percent) and were assistant professors (62.5 percent). Most of them (87.5 percent) were married and clinicians (55.8 percent). Among them, 60.8 percent declared that it is possible to find job out of the university.

To answer the research question, Table I shows the significant relationship between all dimensions of social capital and all dimensions of faculty member retention in Kerman University of Medical Sciences. Correlation between total social capital and total retention was 0.65 (p -value < 0.001). Additionally, multivariate logistic regression indicated a significant relationship between social capital, retention and demographic variables including degree and experience of faculty members, as well as a significant relationship between retention, social capital and demographic variables including degree, experiencing and level of faculty (Figure 2).

Mean of social capital and retention among the faculty members was 3.16 (SD = 0.96) and 3.13 (SD = 0.61), respectively. Mean of structural, cognitive and relational social capital was 3.18 (SD = 0.72), 3.19 (SD = 0.81) and 3.14 (SD = 0.77), respectively. A significant difference was observed between the mean of social capital in different faculties (p -value = 0.006; F = 3.17). Post hoc test showed that there was a significant difference between mean of social capital in the school of Nursing and school of Paramedical Sciences (p -value = 0.04). Although the mean of social capital was above the average (3.16), three of them were below the average.

Retention Social capital	Job factors of retention		Organizational factors of retention		Total retention	
	Pearson correlation	p -value	Pearson correlation	p -value	Pearson correlation	p -value
Structural	0.53	≤ 0.001	0.54	≤ 0.001	0.58	≤ 0.001
Cognitive	0.39	≤ 0.001	0.45	≤ 0.001	0.47	≤ 0.001
Relational	0.58	≤ 0.001	0.61	≤ 0.001	0.65	≤ 0.001
Total social capital	0.58	≤ 0.001	0.62	≤ 0.001	0.65	≤ 0.001

Table I.
Relationship between
organizational social
capital dimensions and
retention dimensions of
faculty members of
Kerman University of
Medical Sciences, 2011

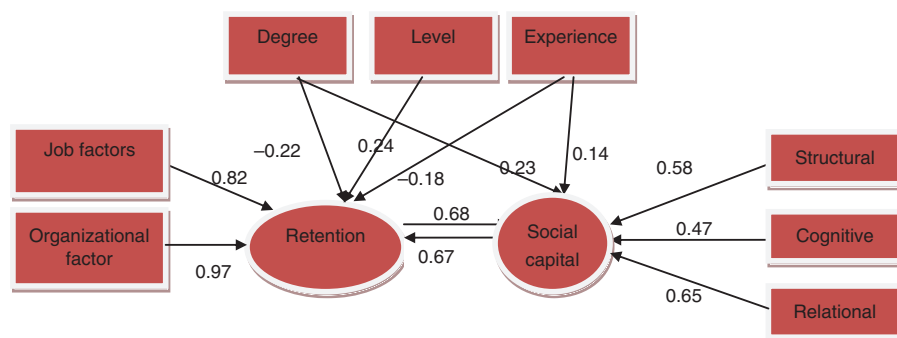


Figure 2.
Path analysis model

Note: Numbers on model shows the slope of the line in multiple regression equation

Mean of job and organizational retention was 3.66 (SD = 0.72) and 2.94 (SD = 0.64), respectively. A significant difference was found in job retention (p -value = 0.04; F = 2.25) (see Table II).

Discussion

The results of this study indicate a direct and positive bilateral relationship between social capital and retention of faculty members. It means that with higher social capital in faculty members, their tendency to remain in the university will increase: in other words, they would not like to leave the university. On the other hand, most of faculties who have the high amount of retention in the university mostly have more social relationships compared to their peers.

As observed, the total mean of social capital in faculty members of this research was above the average. This is one of the strengths of Kerman Medical University and demonstrates that the university has a lot of positive points such as common organizational goals and values, a strong organizational culture, experience and knowledge transferring, relationships based on honesty and mutual trust, and workplace confidence. Additionally, it displays that people work together as a team, accept criticism, prefer the organizational benefits and have an intimate relationship.

Some research has been conducted on social capital whose results are approximately compatible with our findings. For example in Safarzadeh *et al.*'s (2011) study, the mean of social capital among faculty members in Tehran (capital of Iran) public universities has been above the average (> 3) in all aspects except for the public trust. Another example is Ghanadan and Andishmand (2009) study, in which mean of social capital among 175 full-time faculty members of Azad universities in Kerman province was higher than the average.

Despite the high levels of social capital among faculty members in this research, significant differences were observed between the colleges. The mean of social capital in three colleges was less than the average and this issue requires the attention of deans and department chairs of that schools.

Based on research results, the cognitive and the relational social capital had the most and the least amount respectively in faculty members. In Nasr Isfahani *et al.*'s (2010) study, cognitive and structural dimensions had the most and the least amount of social capital in Isfahan service organizations in Iran, consequently, their results are in line with our findings regarding cognitive dimension.

School	Frequency (%)	Mean \pm SD social capital	ANOVA result	Mean \pm SD job dimension of retention	ANOVA result
Management	8 (6.7)	2.98 \pm 0.25	F = 3.17 p = 0.006	3.55 \pm 0.70	F = 2.25 p = 0.04
Public health	7 (5.8)	2.72 \pm 0.41		3.33 \pm 0.70	
Pharmacy	7 (5.8)	3.31 \pm 0.78		3.82 \pm 0.65	
Nursing	8 (6.7)	2.58 \pm 0.71		3.07 \pm 0.94	
Paramedical	6 (5)	3.87 \pm 0.90		4.26 \pm 0.74	
Dentistry	19 (15.8)	3.08 \pm 0.49		3.55 \pm 0.73	
Medicine	65 (54.2)	3.25 \pm 0.70		3.72 \pm 0.64	
Total	120 (100)	3.16 \pm 0.69		3.65 \pm 0.71	

Table II. Comparing the mean of social capital and job dimension of retention in different school of Kerman University of Medical Sciences; 2011

If universities, as social departments, produce social capital, they are capable of doing more fruitful activities. Social capital can help universities in producing and sharing knowledge and organizational advantages (Nasr Isfahanie *et al.*, 2010; Inkpen and Tsang, 2005).

In addition to the amount of social capital, the amount of retention was also above the average among faculty members of Kerman Medical University, except for the organizational dimension of retention. Low rate of the organizational dimension of retention according to the subset of their factors, indicates that university does not have good performance for faculty members in providing possibility of progress, the welfare facilities, administration process, salary and wages, providing benefits, interests and appreciation. Given the importance and place of faculty members at Medical Universities, neglecting above-mentioned factors can have adverse impacts on the performance of the faculties, and also educational system. Thus, officials and policy makers need to pay closer attention to this issue.

Retention of faculty members without consideration of their social needs is impossible. Hence, paying attention to strengthen the social capital among them is crucial for the universities. Motivation is very important for retention of faculty members, and raising salary is a very strong motivator (Warshaw, 2003; Chandler *et al.*, 2009; Rosser, 2004) due to the fact that economic factors are one of the main reasons for leaving the university by faculty members for private activity (Laskin, 2000; Johnsrud and Rosser, 2002).

In this study, a significant relationship was observed between the social capital, retention and demographics including degree and experience in the multivariate regression model. In Nasr Isfahani *et al.*'s study, also there were a significant relationship between social capital, education and experience. In aspect of the relationship between social capital and experience the results of their study matches with this research results. It seems those faculties who are more experienced, are more successful than others in terms of social encounters.

Today, the main sources of competitive advantage of the universities are efficient and capable human resources. Faculty members of the universities are the most important and most valuable assets (Niazi and Nasrabadi, 2009); therefore, support of their retaining is one of the most important roles of medical universities (Joiner *et al.*, 2007; Nesbitt *et al.*, 2002). In Nesbitt *et al.*'s (2002) study, consideration of faculty members' quality of life and job satisfaction are mentioned crucial for the problem of faculty shortage for dental schools.

To promote social capital in the university, some policies are recommended including avoiding of obduracy, accepting opposing views and thinking of them, recovering and restoring trust between faculty members, social and cultural development between faculty members in networks, strengthening the basis of professionalism and group activities in scientific centers, improvement of social and communication skills of faculty members and improving their scientific socialization. It is necessary that leaders of universities always consider the preferred values such as truthfulness, honesty and justice in the universities.

Some policies also are important for Kerman Medical University to improve the professional and personal socialization in order to reach higher retain of faculty members. Some suggestions are offered here such as supporting research collaboration between faculty members, providing partnerships with full professors within and between academic areas, creating and maintaining a department climate that encourages social capital promotion (Ponjuan, 2011), encouraging the establishment of social and professional institutions in the university for the faculty members,

supporting the interdisciplinary collaboration to share knowledge, experiences and skills, promoting spirit and interest of faculty member with creating job security, provision of benefits for them after their retirement, considering their health and providing suitable medical insurance for them . Finally, it is recommended to include the issue of retention of faculty members in strategic planning of Kerman Medical University, which is scheduled for the coming five years. Although these programs are too long to perform, we hope this policy to be made and necessary actions to be taken.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the relationship between organizational social capital and retention of medical faculty members in Kerman University of Medical Sciences. It generated two main insights. First, university authorities can count on social capital, i.e. the bindings and relations of their faculties as a source to increase their valuable faculties retention. Second, because of the reciprocal relation of these two variables as confirmed in this study, universities will benefit from investing on human resources retention in from of cohesive and well-integrated faculty members.

The research finding revealed that the higher the social capital is among faculty members, the more tendency will be for retention. The finding provides policy makers with a number of practical recommendations to improve evidence-based decisions.

The results also highlight the important role of promoting faculty members' salary and welfare to retain in the universities.

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