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# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL CAPITAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

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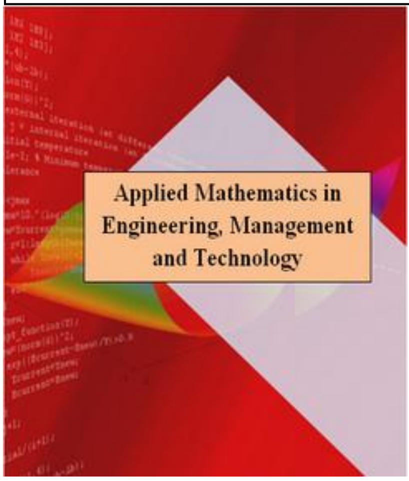


**ABSTRACT:**

Robert Putnam has been a leading scholar in research of social capital since the publication of his groundbreaking work Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy, in 1993. The core of his social capital theory is that activities in informal and formal social interaction settings can create norms of cooperation and generalised trust, leading to positive results for society as whole.
The importance and usefulness of social capital as a concept in the study oforganizations have been established by a large body of research. The aim ofthis study is to review the concept of social capital in an organizationalbackground. Many of organizations, regardless of size and trade rate, have confirmed the importance of social capital as a stable rivalry and excellence resource and a basis for innovation and adjusments. Thus, this study clarified the relationship between the dimensions of social capital and business excellence.

**Key words:** social capital;Organizational Excellence; Dimensions of social capital

## INTRODUCTION:

The professional life of many people has changed significantly in the lastdecades and lifelong employment has almost become a historical concept. The increased focus on knowledge as themain resource of companies and the increasing pace of operations in thenetworked economy have highlighted the importance of a suitableunderstanding and use of the forces inherent in the cooperation betweenindividuals and groups. As a result, developing and using the theoryof social capital appears more important than ever. The literature on social capital accumulation indicates that the accumulation of social capital can be a source of competitive advantage both to individuals and their employing organization (Tymon and Stumpf, 2003).
Social capital thinkers agree that connections across and within social groups have value. In the social enterprise sector, there is a sentiment that social capital is the source of competitive advantage (Laville, 2001) or at best a neutralizing force against arguments that social enterprisescannot compete fairly in markets due to increased transaction costs associated with distributedfinancial agency (Jensen and Meckling, 1974) and the servicing of non-financialobjectives. Social capital is historically fundamental to sociology. Its premise is that embeddedness withinbounded social groups or networks can provide positive mutual reinforcing consequences for
individuals and the groups they associate with (Portes, 1998). Portes describes the work of threescholars as laying the foundation for modern views of social capital: Louray, Coleman, andBourdieu.
Louray was an unintentional pioneer of modern social capital thought. Portes(1998)describes him as a disgruntled economist engaged in the search for a counter thesis to rationalviews of human behavior. Louray (1977) himself found the atomic concepts of individualpreference and utility maximization unsatisfactory, and looked beyond the individual foreconomic theories of human behavior. Specifically, he studied racial issues and found thatgovernment policy alone would be perpetually ineffective in alleviating economic hardship inblack communities due to a lack of social capital. This meant, in his terminology, a lack ofaccess to networks where

flows of financial and nonfinancial capital were available. In thissense, Louray saw social capital, though he only used that term once, as both a potential and abarrier to developing human capital. Bourdieu (1985) asserts that capital of all types, including social capital, represent the"immanent structure of the social world, i.e. the set of constraints inscribed in the very reality ofthe world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success forpractices." Portes (1998) attributes Bordieu with initiating the first attempt at defining thestructure and means of social capital flows. His early works on the topic were in French, so arerarely translated, and were therefore inaccessible to this researcher; however, a later work, TheForms of Capital, represents a synthesis of much of his early work. In it, he provides a precisedefinition of social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linkedto possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutualacquaintance and recognition" (Bordieu, 1985).Portes (1998) argues that this definition wassocio-economically sophisticated as it described, for the first time, social capital as a benefitenduring in stable intangible assets that must be leveraged through investment strategies.

Social capital can be found in different contexts, but also at different levels. Nahapiet &Ghoshal (1998) underlined the multidimensional nature of social capital and that it canoccur at both the individual, organisational, inter organisational and societal level (Fukuyama 1995, Tsai & Ghoshal 1998).Adler and Kwon (2002) provide a list of five qualities that make it appropriate to call social capital a form of capital. First, firms can invest in social capital with the expectation of future benefits (although quantifying the expected benefits of social relations is particularly challenging a priori). Second, capital of the social kind is appropriable and convertible into other forms of capital. For example, a firm can learn from the experiences of its alliance partners and use that knowledge to create products that can be exchanged for financial capital. Third, social capital can substitute or complement other types of resources and capital. Fourth, firms' external relations generally need maintenance or they decay and depreciate (social capital does not decay with use, but only with non-use). Fifth, social capital can be a private good that excludes outsiders, such as those not involved in a specific type of relationship, as well as a public good that benefits a collectivity.

Social capital is one of the new concepts which has been raised in economic and social studies of modern societies. Social capital is mainly based on cultural and societal factors, and recognizing it as an asset, both in macro management and the management of organizations and firms, can create a new understanding of the socio-economic systems, and thus, can assist managers in better management of their organizations. (Fukuyama, 1995).
Given the importance of social capital in helping firms achieve their goals, researchers have studied the factors that drive firms to establish inter-firm ties.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### DEFINING SOCIAL Capital

As understood in this sense, usage of the phrase 'social capital' is nearly a century old. In 1916, L. Judson Hanifan suggested that 'social capital'—which he described as "good-will, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals"—could accumulate, and that after enough social capital had accumulated, the resulting sum could somehow be used to forward "the general improvement of the community well-being"(hanifman,1916). Hanifan's work was not particularly influential, and social capital did not gain any currency as an academically serious concept until the 1980s. During the 1980s, Pierre Bourdieu critically employed the term6 in an attempt to shed light on the ways in which inequalities in social class and varying capacities for social mobility were impacted by hereditary or circumstantial factors(Pierre,198 ). These factors were the social, cultural, and economic bequests of one's family and social networks. A few years later, James Coleman joined Bourdieu in his critical examination of differing social conditions, observing that students with lower-quality social capital were more likely to drop out of high school(Coleman,1988).
The phrase 'social capital' refers to the quantity and quality of relationships a person enjoys in his or her community. Although academic enthusiasm for social capital is recent, valuing human social networks is nothing new: archaeological research indicates that humans (and primates) have sought the benefits of social cooperation for millennia. We have long recognized value in encouraging our children to attend those schools we regard as optimal loci for the formation of durable social networks.We often celebrate those among us who

have accumulated great stores of social capital, and praise them for having been 'socially rich' in a manner distinct from being financially wealthy. Even Euripides is reported as having observed that "it is a good thing to be rich, and a good thing to be strong; but it is a better thing to be beloved of many friends".The term "social capital" refers either to the capacity of an individual toobtain valued material or symbolic goods by virtue of her social relationships andgroup memberships, or to the capacity of a plurality of persons to enjoy thebenefits of collective actions by virtue of their own social participation, trust ininstitutions, or commitment to established ways of doing things.

All academic inquiries pertaining to social capital are complicated by the lack of a universally acceptable definition: social capital is a 'contested' term . As a preliminary definition, the phrase 'social capital' shall refer to the quantity and quality of relationships a person enjoys in his or her community. An understanding of social capital is illuminated by a consideration of the distinction between concepts and conceptions, a distinction recognized by social capital researchers, who characterize social capital "as a genotype with many phenotypic applications"( Adam et al,2003). At the level of a concept, Robert Putnam's lead is programmatic: almost all researchers would agree with Putnam's assertion that "the core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value"( Putnam,2001).Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) define social capital as the actual or potential resources at play in the "field of the social,"Social capital is built from the social relationship that an individual has and that gives access to the resources of these relationships, and the amount and quality of these resources (Bourdieu,1980). Social capital as a resource is integrated in the people a person is connected to and the access to social capital is based on an expected reciprocity in a relationship when the donor expects to receive some return on their investment or through solidarity that derives from ones identification in some group. This could lead to positive outcomes such as access to information or more effective sharing of information.

social capital expresses the idea that ‚it‘s not just what you know but who you know‘ that helps you accomplish your goals. That idea has been theoretically developed by scholars and extended to firms, which have external relationships with many other partners and stakeholders. Formally, social capital refers to resources embedded in a social structure that are accessed [or] mobilized in purposive action (Lin, 2001). This definition contains the two key components of social capital central to all treatments of the subject by leading scholars (Bourdieu, 1985; Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1988; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Portes, 1998): social structure and resources. Resources refer to any kind of assets, tangible or intangible, that can be accessed or shared in a social exchange. Social structure refers to any nontransient, relatively enduring relationship between actors (Zukin & DiMaggio, 1990).
Putnam brought another viewpoint to the research of social capital when he defined social capital as "features of social organizations, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit."( Putnam,1993)

**Different opinions about social capital**

Nahapiet & Ghosahl (1998) and Portes (1998) criticised that much research hasuncritically assumed the positive effects of social capital. Portes underlined, inparticular, the danger of community or group participation creating demands forconformity as social control in closed communities such as small towns or villages would be strong and very restrictive of personal freedom. Similarly, Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998) highlighted that strong norms and mutual identification may limit a group's openness to information and to alternative ways of doing things, thus producing a sort of 'collective blindness', which may have disastrous consequences (Janis 1982). , Individual success stories would undermine such group cohesion as they go against the alleged impossibility of such events. The result is downward levelling norms, which keep certain members in place, but oblige the more successful to leave, which wouldhelp "perpetuate the very situation that it decries" (portes 1998, p. 18). Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998) concluded that social capital inherent in the relationships between and among people could assist some forms of social capital, yet also inhibit others. For an example of the negative effects of social capital and actual loss of capital see Baker· & Faulkner (2004).
Portes (1998) demurs, contending that the intangible political, cultural, and social resources that go into building social capital are not directly transferable because they are informal, unstructured, time uncertain, and subject to lapses in reciprocity. The methods and predictabilityof transfer differ from other, more tangible forms

of capital. Normal economic exchangemechanisms, he argues, are not prone to these same uncertainties due to the explicitness of legalcontracts, and can therefore be quantified and leveraged more reliably. In this sense, the social
capital concept seems at best a qualitative heuristic, rather than a reliable comparator. Coleman (1988) builds on Loury, and attempts to use social capital theory to extend therational actor model into the domain of sociology, seeking a socio-economic synthesis via socialcapital. Recognizing the limitations of either a strictly rational explanation of human behaviour,or a strictly sociological one, he attempts a vague definition of social capital for conjoining thetwo, stating first that, “a person’s actions are shaped, redirected, constrained by the socialcontext; norms, interpersonal trust, social networks, and social organization are important in thefunctioning not only of the society but also of the economy” (Coleman, 1988). Coleman (1988)then defined social capital as having two murky properties, social structures and an enabling ordisabling effect on social actors within those structures. He also says that social capital is “not asingle entity, but a variety of different entities” (1988). This fairly general definition, accordingto Portes (1998), is at least partially responsible for a proliferation of contradictoryterminologies, and perhaps the generalization of the term to the point of near meaninglessnesswithin popular discourse. Coleman (1988), who does not cite Bordieu in his writing, also fails to make the distinction between social capital and the ways and means of transferring it. Consequently, he asserts in one instance that social capital “inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors”, but later defines social capital as reciprocity expectations, group enforcement of norms, and privileged access to information – the means for transferring it. Portes (1998) recognizes this confusion, and argues that any systematic treatment of social capital must make a distinction between those who have social capital, those who are seeking it, and the resources themselves, i.e. the donor, the recipient, and the exchange mechanism. Despite these shortcomings, Coleman (1988) made some significant contributions to the later concepts of bridging and bonding social capital, particularly with the introduction of the concept of closure. Closure is the idea that a social network, or social group, must have a sufficient number and strength of connections to guarantee the observance of social norms – in order for social capital to be meaningfully understood. Portes (1998) also recognizes Coleman for his discussions of bounded solidarity, whereby members of a bounded social group with strong observance of norms are empowered towards altruistic acts, which garner “approval and status in the collectivity,” in exchange for human capital benefits derived from that altruism (1998).

**Dimensions of social capital**

When studying social capital, different dimensions have been introduced in order to better map its benefits and outcomes (Nahapiet ,1998).The aim of the categorisation is to describe the social environment through structural, relational, and content dimensions, and to underline how these different dimensions support knowledge development and the achievement of personal and professional goals (Widén,2008). Social capital consists the of following three demensions  presented in Figure1 below:

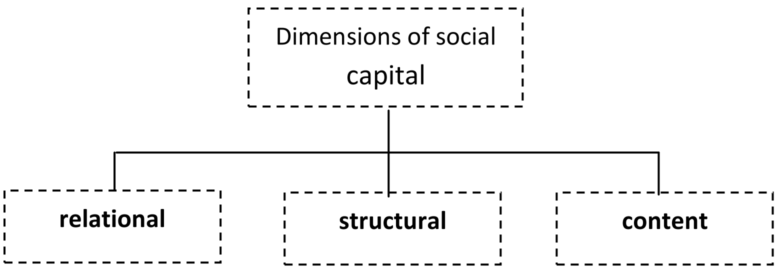


Figure (1) : Dimensions of social capital(Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998)

In other word,Nahapiet & Ghoshal's (1998) identified three different dimensions of social capital: structural, relational and cognitive. Drawing on Burt (1992), the authors defined the structural dimension as the "overall pattern of connections between actors , that is, who you reach and how you reach them". Similarly, Steier (2001) suggested that this dimension is about "the overall configuration of the network or pattern of connections between actors" (Steier, 2001). This contrasts with the relational dimension which refers to "actual relationship or bonds between actors that enable them to make claims on one another (Steier ,200 1). Nahapiet & Goshar s

(1998) added a third dimension, which they labelled cognitive capital, which is characterised by "shared systems of meanings among actors" (Steier ,200 1). Arguably, there is a link between the different dimensions of social capital and Granovetter's embeddeness approach (Granovetter 1973, 1985), which is one of the key concepts in social network theory and Nahapiet & Ghoshhal (1998) suggested that theformer represents a further development of the latter. The structural dimension of social capital is closely related to the concept of structural embeddedness which Granovetter (1992) defined as the extent to which a "dyad's mutual contacts are connected to one another" . It is about the impact the structure of relations can have on an actor's tendency to cooperate with others. As a result, "structural embeddedness is about the properties of the social system and of the network of relations as a whole" (Nahapiet & Ghoshal); it describes the impersonal configuration of linkages between people or units. The relational dimension of social capital can be linked to Granovetter's concept of relational embeddedness (Nahapiet & Ghosahl ,1998) which refers to personal relationships people have developed with each through a history of interactions
(Granovetter ,1992). Thus it covers issues such as tie strength, relational trust, confiding and information sharing (Uzzi, 1997) and the focus is on particular relationship aspects such as respect and friendship that influence behaviour (Nahapiet & Ghoshal ,1998).

**What is Excellence?**

The word “excellence” is now part of the language of business and even the notforprofit and public sectors. While many claims are no doubtfully justified, it can seem that anyone making a claim about their products or services feels they should use it.The Longman English Dictionary defines “excellence” as: "The quality of being excellent". Oxford English Dictionary defines it as: "The quality of being outstanding or extremely good" and it defines the verb “excel” as: “Be exceptionally good at or proficient in an activity or subject”.
EFQM put excellence in organizational context and defines "Organizational Excellence" as: "the overall way of working that results in balanced stakeholder satisfaction (customers, employees, partners, society, and shareholder) to increase the probability of long term success as an organisation".
In the 2003 version of the Model, Excellence is defined as "Outstanding practice in managing the organisation and achieving results based on a set of Fundamental Concepts" (Steed 2003).
In overall, excellence can be defined as the organizations ability to achieve the best quality practices to obtain best results. After the wide spread of quality concepts, businessmen and leaders of organizations looked for a word motivates people more and lead them to quality success. The current meaning of “quality” comprises quality management and results. The central aspect is how to manage an organisation to achieve competitive advantages (Castilla and Ruiz, 2008).
Excellence, as optimal management, means the availability of a system for assuring the quality requisites of products and services. It includes customer satisfaction, process management, and resource optimization following a social responsibility EFQM model and competitive advantage reach to 135 approach. In this sense, social responsibility maybe considered as nuclear value for the organization.
The expression “excellence in management” has replaced the term “quality”. This is a consequence of the evolution of the different meanings of the term “quality” (Castilla and Ruiz, 2008).

**Understanding The EFQM Excellence Model:**

The EFQM Excellence Model recognises that stakeholder needs are met through the process that describes the working of the organisation, hence process improvement is at the heart of any organisational development and it is through processes that the talents of people can be released, which in turn produces better performance (Steed 2003). It also confirms that involving people inside and outside the organization in improvement the performance is necessary to improve the performance.
The EFQM Excellence Model itself (which is a registered trademark) was revised in 1999, and updated slightly in 2003, to take account of current thinking, practices and working environments. The EFQM Excellence Model has been adapted in its 2003 version for non-profit organizations like public institutions (Eskildsen et al., 2004).
The Model described by the EFQM as:”a practical tool to help organisations establish an appropriate management system by measuring where they are on the path to Excellence, helping them to understand the gaps, and then stimulating solutions” (Steed 2003).

The model based on nine criterions, with five 'Enablers' and four 'Results'. The 'Enablers' cover what the organization does, and cause the „Results" that cover the achievements of the organization.

The five enablers assess and question whether there are effective approaches in place to enable the achievement of what the organisation has planned to deliver in terms of its results (Steed 2003). The five Enablers are:

- Leadership.
- Policy & Strategy.
- People.
- Partnership & Resources.
- Processes.

Enablers or agents define what organisations do in order to achieve excellence. Specifically, it is to do with activities related to the leadership of the directors, the management of human and material resources, as well as process management. Moreover, these activities are not independent: they must be implemented together and in a coordinated fashion (Mora, Leal &Roldán, 2006). As (Steed 2003) illustrates the detail of the model can provide a rigorous analysis, which questions whether in each area, the organisation can demonstrate that chosen approaches and strategies:

- Are effective and efficient in delivering results
- Are deployed to their full potential
- Demonstrate continuous improvement

Each criterion broken down into sub criterion and each sub-criterion is explained by supportive point and examples to help the organizations to understand the implementation way of the model.
The Results are last four criterions represents the areas where the organization achieve its objectives. The four results areas question whether there are comprehensive measures in place which can monitor and track performance and assess whether strategic objectives have been met (Steed 2003). The four 'Results' are:

- Customer results.
- People results.
- Society results.
- Key Performance results.

Each Results criterion broken down into sub criteria and each sub-criterion explained by supportive point and examples to help the organizations to understand the implementation way of the model.(see figure 2)

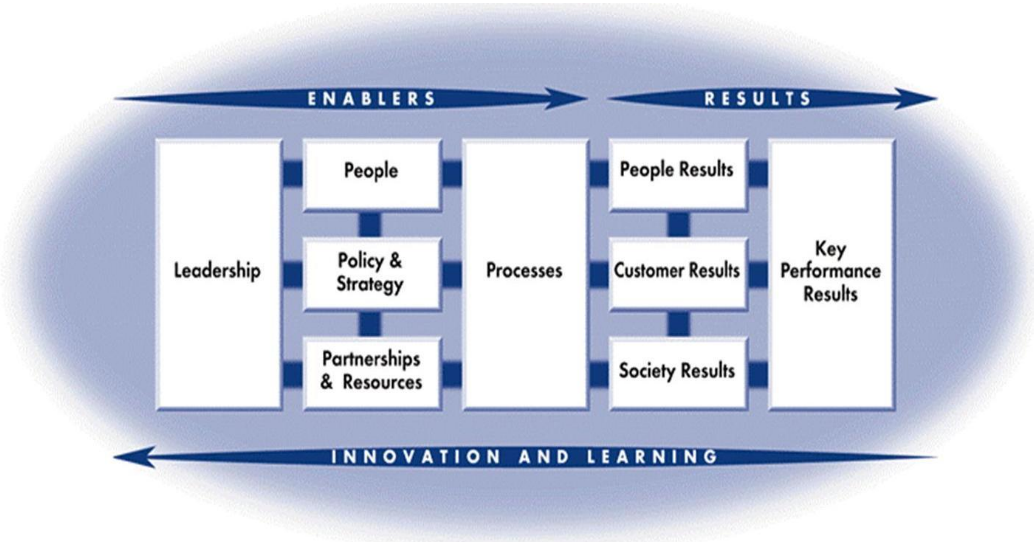


Figure (2) : The EFQM Excellence Model(Steed 2003)

**Relation between social capital and organizational excellence**

Today, individuals in different societies, and hence in different organizations, are suffering from a lack of trust in public officials and organizations, and this lack of trust can reduce the employees' contribution. One of the problems of cultural organizations is the lack of voluntary and informed administrative cooperation, and its absence means low levels of organizational social capital. Another problem within which organizations are involved is the high cost of exchanges and interactions among them, and this is due to the lack of mutual trust. Mutual trust plays a major role in facilitating the procedures and reducing the costs associated with such transactions. Social capital means trust and those interactive networks which by facilitating coordinated action, can improve the efficiency of the group in achieving some of the objectives .
In an organization within which the amount of provided features such as trust, participation encouraging norms and social capital is not enough, cooperation costs will increase and achieving the desired performance will depend on the establishment of costly systems of monitoring and control, and the existence of adequate levels of social capital, on the contrary, will lead to the establishment of social cohesion and mutual trust, and as a result the costs of interaction and cooperation of group work will reduce, and thus will lead to the improvement of the performance of the group. (Prosak, 2000). Another element that adds to the importance and necessity of social capital, is the organizational learning and performance. Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert Sutton argue that through formal knowledge management practices, one cannot obtain organizational learning and performance. According to a survey conducted by the Center for Workforce Development in 1998, 70 percent of the knowledge learned in the workplace is transmitted by casual relationships.
Given the focus of most organizations to achieve organizational excellence and eminence, and to provide customers with high quality products and services, the importance and necessity of this study is revealed, on the other hand the Business Excellence Model, is the most comprehensive and complete assessment model used in organizations. In the latest definitions, an organizations is considered as a social institution, which works consciously, with a clear structure to achieve its predetermined objectives. Therefore, in the knowledge era, and in the changing and dynamic environment, attending to social aspects of an organization seems necessary and required. From among social aspects, we can point out some of them as trust, partnership, networks, norms and religious beliefs and the law, which are the focus of the present study. This study aims to view organizational excellence from the social capital point of view, and investigate on this issue.
According to Cohen and Prosak (2001), social capital will benefit organizations, with the following results:
- Better contribution in acquiring knowledge because of the relationships based on trust, shared frames of reference and shared goals.
- Lower costs of transactions and trades due to the high levels of trust and a spirit of collaboration (both within the organization and among our customers and partners with the organization)
- Low rate of turnover, reduction of staff's maintenance, hiring and training costs, staff stability and maintenance of valuable corporate knowledge.
- More coherent action, due to the organizational stability and shared understanding.
- Conscious investment in social capital can help organizations to overcome the challenges of the modern era and to achieve competitive advantage (Cohen and Prosak, 2001).

Business Excellence Model, emphasizes simultaneously and from several dimensions on the process, the results and the learning and innovation in the organization, which is one of the fundamental requirements of today's successful organizations, and this model focuses on the relationship between social capital and organizational excellence.

**CONCLUSION:**

Social capital is defined as the sum of actual or potential resources individuals have at their disposal via social networks, including material capital, human capital, civic participation, and community cohesion (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995). It is the exchanging of resources that strengthen communities and allows individuals to benefit from group association. Social capital has been widely used to study societal conditions, distribution of resources, and related phenomena in individuals and groups (Portes, 2000). Strong family networks, quality education, financial stability, and stable communities have all been identified as social capital.

Importantly, according to Portes, Bourdieu also made a clear separation between social capital, and the processes used to acquire it; though Bordieu (1985) contributed more to the discussion on forms and characteristics of social capital, than on the various means of transfer. To Bordieu, social capital was reducible and exchangeable for economic capital. Therefore, the sum of an individual agent's social capital stock was roughly equivalent to the size of the agent's network,multiplied by the amount of available social capital residing in each member of that network.
According to this definition of an organization: "organization is a social institution that works consciously and systematically, with a deliberately structured to achieve predetermined objectives effectively and efficiently", achieving organizational excellence and eminence, is the result of different mechanisms and social interactions with other factors.

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