Social Capital, Socioeconomic Status and Self-efficacy

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Abstract

This study internalized social capital on the basis of traditional study of the influence of economic factors on self-efficacy, and studied the relationship among the family socio-economic status, social capital and self-efficacy. Based on the theoretical analysis, with first-hand data collection and using multiple regression models, the paper studied the intermediate effect of social capital in the relationship between the socioeconomic status and self-efficacy. We draw on the following conclusions: (1) The family socio-economic status as well as all its dimensions (father's degree of education, mother's degree of education, the total annual income of the family, father's occupation, mother's occupation) is significantly positively related to social capital and all the dimensions of its proxy variable (peer support, kinship support and general support of others); (2) There is a significant positive correlation between the family socio-economic status as well as all its dimensions and self-efficacy; the socio-economic status, with its dimensions, is the predictive variable of self-efficacy; (3) Social capital, with dimensions of its proxy variable, is positively correlated with self-efficacy and has predictive effect on self-efficacy (4) Social capital plays a significant intermediate role between socio-economic status and self-efficacy, and the mediating effect size is about 51.75%.

Keywords: Socio-economic Status; Social Capital; Self-efficacy; Mediate Effect

1. Introduction

Self-efficacy is an individual's anticipation of one's ability to be in control under a particular situation. It plays an intermediate role between cognition and behavior, which reflects an individual's perception and confidence of his ability to complete specific tasks and reach particular goals. In another word, self-efficacy is the belief that an individual has in one's power to plan and take action to reach particular goals. Self-efficacy directly influences an individual's estimate of one's present situation and future ambition. Further, this estimate will be proved through self-prophecy in one's choice and performance in study, work and life.

The concept of social capital, first proposed by French scholar Bourdieu in 1970s and further developed by such scholars as Coleman, Portes, Putnam, Lin. N etc., has become a systematic theory and been applied to many fields. For example, in micro-field it is discovered that social capital can significantly improve economic growth (Knack & Keefer, 1997; Temple & Johnson, 1998; Zak & Knack, 2001), promote financial development (Guiso, Sapienza & Zingales, 2004), promote innovation (Akcomak & Weel, 2009), enhance governmental efficiency (Deng，Y，and Gong, 2012). On the other hand, social capital research in micro-field remains relatively fewer, which, however, provides a new thought for social capital study. For example, social capital contributes to entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Chen & He, 2011; Yang & Hu, 2011, 2013), political self-efficacy (Pei, 2013) and so on.

Socioeconomic Status (SES), a measurement of family members' social and economic status, is a kind of hierarchy made according to the amount of social resources an individual can obtain or control. The social resources usually include such factors as degree of education, income level and occupational reputation. Previous researches indicate that SES is closely correlated with social capital. For example, the researches on the subjects of study as private entrepreneurs (Bian & Qiu, 2000), urban and rural residents (Zhang & Ruan, 1999), trans-national migration (Wang, 2000), senior citizens (He, 2002), flowing farmers (Cao, 2003; Wang & Tong, 2004) have proved the correlation between social capital and social status. In addition, other researches have proved social capital influences the

subjective evaluation of one's SES as well as one's objective SES (Zhang & Chen , 2012).

There are comparatively fewer researches of the relationship between SES and self-efficacy, but, according to the study on the relationship between the three dimensions of SES and self-efficacy, the research conclusion shows no difference: SES is positively correlated with self-efficacy. For example, family SES (Y. Li, 2007; X. Li, 2003), parents' degree of education (Chen, 2011; Yang, 2010) and parents' occupation (Li, 2003) have a positive correlation with children's self-efficacy (Liu, 2009).

In this study, we establish an analytical framework for SES，social capital and self-efficacy to analyze their relationships.

We hypothesize the following:

First, both social capital and SES have some effect on self-efficacy.

Second, SES has some effect on social capital.

Third, social capital is a mediator between SES and self-efficacy.

$$SE = \beta_0 + \sum \lambda_1 SES + \sum \lambda_2 CV + \varepsilon \tag{1}$$

$$SE = \beta_0 + \sum \lambda_3 SC + \sum \lambda_4 CV + \varepsilon \tag{2}$$

$$SC = \beta_0 + \sum \lambda_5 SES + \sum \lambda_6 CV + \varepsilon \tag{3}$$

$$SE = \beta_0 + \sum \lambda'_1 SES + \sum \lambda'_2 SC + \sum \lambda_5 CV + \varepsilon \tag{4}$$

With λ_1 , λ_3 , λ_5 are significant; and compared with λ_1 , the statistical significance level of λ'_1 drops significantly.

Where SE is short for self-efficacy, SES is short for Socioeconomic status，SC is short for social capital, CV is short for control variable.

The hypothesis of this study is shown in figure 1: Socioeconomic status as a kind of environmental factor has both direct and indirect influence on self-efficacy, while the indirect influence works through social capital.
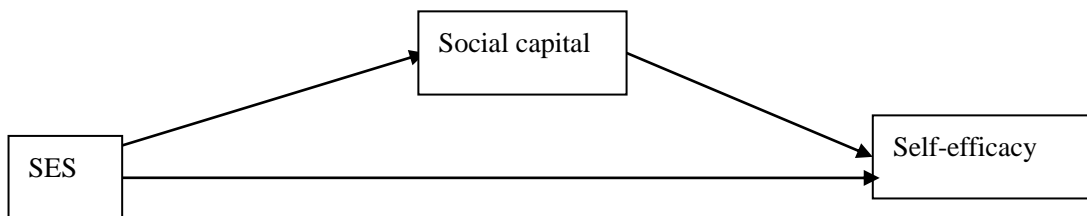

Figure 1. Theoretical Relationship among SES, SC and SE

2. Methodology

2.1 Subjects of Study

Cluster sampling methods were used for the investigation. 600 questionnaires were distributed to high school students aged 12 – 18 from two senior high schools chosen in Beijing, with 541 questionnaires returned and 520 valid (male 226, female 294). The valid response rate is 86.67.

2.2 Research Instrument

The definitions of variables and data sources are shown in table 1. Specific measuring tools are as follow:

SES: the index of family SES is often measured by parents' occupation, degree of education and family income. With reference to previous studies, this research applied a self-designed self-reporting questionnaire which divided parents' occupation into 5 grades, parents' degree of education into 6 grades and family income into 6 grades.

Social Capital: This research used social support appraisals (SS-A) scale (made by Vaux et al., and revised by (Xin, Chi, Geng, Zhao & Wang, 2007) to measure social capital. 20 items in total in this scale respectively measured family or family member support, peer support and general support of others. 0.91 is the coefficient of the whole scale, in which 0.84, 0.81 and 0.83 are respectively the coefficients of family support (7 items), peer support (7 items), general support

of others. [1]

Self-efficacy: Chinese version of General self-efficacy scale (designed by Jerusalem et al. and translated and revised by Wang, Hu & Liu, 2001) was used to measure self-efficacy. This scale consists of 10 items and uses Likert four points scoring, which has good reliability. Its coefficient of internal consistency Cronbach is 0.87, test-retest reliability is 0.83($p<0.001$), split-half reliability is 0.82($p<0.001$). [2]

Table 1. Definitions of Variables and Data Sources

Variable	Name	Operational Definition/ Proxy Variable	scale	dimension
Explained variables	SE	General self-efficacy scale score	Chinese version of General self-efficacy scale	null
Control variables (CV)	Gender	null	null	null
Explanatory variables	SES	SES=(FE +ME +2*FAI +FO+MO)/6	Self-designed questionnaire	FE; ME; FAI; FO;MO
Mediator variable	SC	SS= (FS +PS + GSO)/3	Social support appraisals scale	FS; PS; GSO

SES is short for socioeconomic status; FE is short for father's score of degree of education; ME is short for mother's score of degree of education; FAI is short for score of family annual income; FO is short for father's occupation; MO is short for mother's occupation; SC is short for social capital; SS is short for score of social support; FS is short for score of family support; PS is short for score of peer support; GSO is short for General support of others. the same below

2.3 Research Process

The questionnaires were administrated with the whole class as a group, employing group measurement under unified instructions. And the questionnaires, with no time limitation, were collected on the spot and checked one by one with invalid ones eliminated. This research employed SPSS19.0 for statistical analysis, which includes analysis of variance, correlation analysis and analysis of regression.

3. Results

3.1 Reliability of the Questionnaire

We undertook item analysis to calculate the reliability of the questionnaire/ scale for SES, social capital and SE and the coefficient Conbach α is in table 2 as below:

The data in table 2 shows that all the three questionnaires of SES, social capital and SE are reliable with reliability above 0.8.

3.2 Correlation Analysis and Regression Analysis

Pearson's correlation is applied to calculate the correlation coefficients of the SES as well as its dimensions, SC as well as its dimensions and SE. The result in table 2 shows that there is a significantly positive correlation between SES as well as its dimensions and SC as well as its dimensions, with the correlation coefficients between 0.132 to 0.277 (the correlation coefficient between the SES and SE is 0.277). This means that there is a significantly positive correlation between the SES and SC of the sample group.

There is a significantly positive correlation between SES as well as its dimensions and SE, and the correlation coefficients are between 0.131 to 0.214 (correlation coefficient between the SES and SE is 0.214). This means that SES is significantly positively correlated to SE.

There is a significantly positive correlation between SC with its dimensions and SE, and the correlation coefficients are between 0.287 to 0.400 (correlation coefficient between SC total score and SE is 0.398), which means that SE is significantly positively correlated to SC.

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Table 2. Correlation Coefficients and Cronbach's Alpha of the SES, SC and SE

		SES	FE	ME	FAI	FO	MO	SC	PS	FS	GSO	Cronbach's α	Item No.
SES	SES	_										0.811	5
	FE	.717**	_										
	ME	.754**	.731**	_									
	FAI	.836**	.347**	.395**	_								
	FO	.716**	.506**	.469**	.446**	_							
	MO	.700**	.454**	.549**	.406**	.598**	_						
SC	SC	.277**	.192**	.203**	.224**	.213**	.218**	_				0.932	20
	PS	.271**	.164**	.200**	.225**	.214**	.221**	.883**	_				
	FS	.181**	.142**	.143**	.132**	.144**	.151**	.814**	.505**	_			
	GSO	.260**	.193**	.180**	.219**	.190**	.189**	.903**	.782**	.597**	_		
	SE	.214**	.210**	.198**	.147**	.131**	.158**	.398**	.350**	.287**	.400**	0.896	10

Note: ***, ** and * indicate that the coefficient is significant at the 0.01, 0.05 and 0.1 levels, respectively the same below.

To further explore the relationship among SES, SC and SE, regression analysis is made so as to study the predictability of family SES and SC on SE.

Using simple regression analysis with SC and SE as predicted variable respectively, this research discussed the influence and predictive effect of SES as well as its dimensions on SC and SE. The result is shown in table 3:

It is revealed that SES and its dimensions (father's degree of education, mother's degree of education, family annual income, father's occupation and mother's occupation) are all predictive variables of SE, the explained variables are respectively 4.4%，4.2%，3.7%，2.0%，1.5% and 2.3%. Meanwhile, SES and all its dimensions are the predicative variables of SC, and the explained variables are respectively 7.5%，3.5%，3.9%，4.8%，4.4% and 4.6%, which are higher than the influence of SES and its dimensions on SE, except father's degree of education. It means that SES and its dimensions have less influence on SE than that on SC. In addition, SES total score and its dimensions exert influence on SE and SC in the same direction. In another word, with the improvement of SES, SE as well as SC increases.

Table 3. Simple Regression of SES and Its Dimension on SC and SE

Predicted variable	Predictive variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	β	T
SE	SES	0.046	0.044	0.214	4.997***
	FE	0.044	0.042	0.210	4.884***
	ME	0.039	0.037	0.198	4.588***
	FAI	0.022	0.020	0.147	3.388**
	FO	0.017	0.015	0.131	3.003**
	MO	0.025	0.023	0.158	3.641***
SC	SES	0.076	0.075	0.277	6.537***
	FE	0.037	0.035	0.192	4.439***
	MO	0.041	0.039	0.203	4.711***
	FAI	0.050	0.048	0.224	5.224***
	FO	0.045	0.044	0.213	4.957***
	MO	0.048	0.046	0.218	5.084***

To better reveal the relationship among SES, SC and SE, we took social capital as well as three dimensions of its proxy variable and SE as the dependent variables and dimensions of SES as the independent variable, and conducted a stepwise regression analysis. As can be seen from table 4:

Mother's occupation is a positive predictor of peer support, family support and social capital; family annual income is a positive predictor of peer support, general support of others and social capital. And father's degree of education is the only positive predictor of SE. It means the higher father's degree of education is, the higher his children's SE is.

Table 4. Stepwise Regression Analysis of Dimensions of SES on Dimensions of SC and SE

Predicted variable	Predictive variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	β	T
PS	FAI	0.051	0.049	0.162	3.494**
	MO	0.071	0.067	0.155	3.336**
FS	MO	0.023	0.021	0.151	3.473**
GSO	FAI	0.048	0.046	0.173	3.791***
	FE	0.063	0.060	0.132	2.910**
SC	FAI	0.050	0.048	0.162	3.487**
	MO	0.070	0.066	0.153	3.280**
SE	FE	0.044	0.042	0.210	4.884***

Applying the same analysis method, we conducted a simple regression analysis with SE as predicted variable while SC and dimensions of its proxy variable as predictive variable, and the result is as shown in table 5: SC and dimensions of its proxy variable (peer support, family support and General support of others) all have predictive effect on SE, with respective explained variance 15.6%，12.0%，8.1% and 15.8%. And among the three dimensions, general support of others has the strongest influence. From the perspective of directivity, SC and dimensions of its proxy variable changed along the same direction, in another word, SC and the three dimensions of its proxy variable all have statistically significant enhancement effect on SE.

Table 5. Simple Regression of SC and Dimensions of Its Proxy Variable on SE

Predictive variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	β	T
SC	0.158	0.156	0.398	9.840***
PS	0.122	0.120	0.350	8.482***
FS	0.083	0.081	0.287	6.829***
GSO	0.160	0.158	0.400	9.928***

Applying multiple stepwise regression analysis and taking dimensions of the proxy variable of SC as predictive variables, we explored the influence and predictive effect of dimensions of SC on SE. As can be seen from table 6, only general support of others is effective predictor of SE. And it has a significantly positive predicative effect on SE, with 16% of variance be explained.

Table 6. Stepwise Regression of Dimensions of the Proxy Variable of SC on SE

Predictive variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	β	T
GSO	0.161	0.160	0.402	9.959***

3.3 Pathway Analysis

Multiple regression was employed to study the prediction of SES on SC, and the result is shown in table 7: step 1, simple linear regression was conducted with gender as the control variable and SC as the dependent variable; step 2, multiple regression analysis was conducted with gender as the control variable, SES as the independent variable and SC as the dependent variable. The result shows that SC has a positive predicative effect on SC with the influence of gender in consideration.

Table 7. Multiple Regression Analysis of SC

Variable		First-step			Second-step		
		B	SE	β	B	SE	β
CV	Gender	0.162	0.063	0.112*	0.184	0.061	0.127**
Predictor	SES				0.033	0.005	0.283***

Note: gender is dummy variable, and boy = 1, girl = 2, the same below

In accordance with the mechanism of mediator, we tested the intermediation of SC in the relationship between SES and SE. Step 1, simple linear regression was conducted with gender as the control variable and SE as the dependent variable; step 2, multiple regression analysis was conducted with gender as the control variable, SES as the independent variable and SE as the independent variable; step 3, multiple regression analysis was conducted with SC as the mediate variable on the basis of the control variable, the independent variable and the dependent variable as that of step 2. The result is shown in table 8:

Table 8. Multiple Regression Analysis of SE

Variable		First-step			Second-step			Third-step		
		B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
CV	Gender	-1.097	0.531	-0.090*	-0.956	0.520	-0.079	-1.549	0.489	-0.127**
Predictor	SES				0.208	0.042	0.210***	0.100	0.041	0.101*
Mediator	SC							3.219	0.351	0.384***

With the mediator (social capital) taken in the regression function，the regression coefficient of SES on SE changed from statistical significant in 0.001 level to statistical insignificant in 0.01 level (although still significant in 0.05 level), which reveals that SC is a significant partial mediator between SES and SE, as shown in the figure 2:
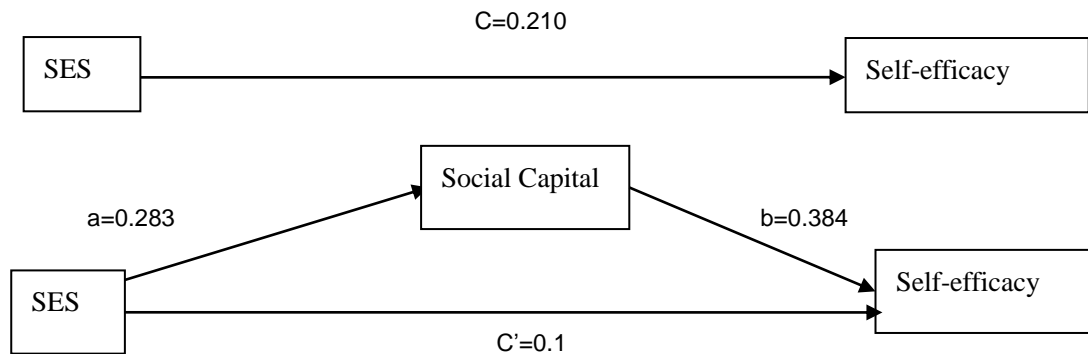
Figure 2. Mediating Effect of SC on SES and SE

The size of mediating effect is: 0.283*0.384/0.210=51.75%

4. Discussion

4.1 The Influence of SES, SC on SE

We find that both SES and SC significantly positively correlated with SE, which provides some proofs for the influence factors of SE from empirical study.

As for the relationship between SC and family SES, the SC an individual can use is influenced by one's family SES: one with higher SES owns more social capital. This can be reflected from support from family, peer and general others. One possible reason is that those with low SES do not have much opportunity for social learning of exchange and acquisition of social capital. Another possible reason is unequal primary allocation of SC to certain extent determined by SES affected the establishment and accumulation of SC thereafter. This conclusion is consistent with previous studies (Lianne & David, 1999; Thomas, 1990; Wight, 2006).

As for SES and SE, An individual's family SES has a significantly positive correlation with one's SE. Thus it is concluded that family SES can influence SE, which is in line with the researches of Chen Xianli (2011), Li Xiaojuan (2003) and so on. Family SES influences SE in the following ways: first, the social resources that the family owns influences SE; second, family SES influences SE through the expectations from people around and subjects themselves; third, family SES influences SE through corresponding social roles. Finally, as what we found in this study, family SES influences SE through the SC that one can make use of. During stepwise regression analysis, it is revealed that only father's education of degree came into the regression equation of SE and had the predicative effect on SE, which means that the higher the father's degree of education is, the higher the subject's SE is. In another word, father's degree of education is very important among the predicative factors of SE.

As for SC and SE, SC and all the dimensions of its proxy variable (peer support, family support and general support of others) have predicative effect on SE. This conclusion is in line with those of Gao Bingcheng (2010), Hu Ping (2009) and so on, and also validates our hypothesis: SE will be higher with more SC. The relationship between SC and SE can be accounted for in the following ways: first, one important influence factor of SE is one's direct experience, which includes experience related to interpersonal communication. The available amount of SC for subjects influences their feedback about themselves and sense of competence. In other words, SC has a direct influence on one's SE, which is significant no matter in family relations, peer relations and general relations with others. Second, verbal persuasion is one of the influence factors of SE. People owning different amount of SC would receive different amount of positive persuasion. Subjects with more SC are more likely to receive encouragement and consent, which will also enhance their SE. Finally, apart from the competence of oneself, one with more social capital, facing problems, are more likely to seek solutions via social network, which enhances the SE to some degree. When stepwise regression is conducted, it is found that only general support from others came into the function with the SE as the predicted variable. And it has significantly positive predicative effect on SE with 16% explanation of variance. Chances are that general support of others is more steady and general than family support or peer support, which can better reflect the SC one owns.

4.2 The Mediating Effect of SC on SES and SE

The mechanism of mediating effect of SC on SES and SE (figure 2) reveals that SES has a direct influence on SE, and

in the meantime, has an indirect influence on SE via social capital. And in the relation between SES and SE, the mediating effect size of SC is up to 51.75%, which means that social capital, as a partial mediator, plays a very important role in the process of SES influencing SE. In another word, family SES influences one's SE, to a large extent, by impacting their amount of social capital. To be specific, subjects from families with better SES are more likely to receive more social capital, so they have higher SE; on the contrary, subjects from families with lower SES are more likely to have lower SE due to their limited amount of social capital. In other words, family SES's promoting effect on SE is not fulfilled entirely in a direct way, but partially depends on the amount of social capital.

4.3 Suggestion

The conclusion of this study validates our hypothesis, i.e. in the course of SES influencing SE, SC plays a mediate role. This finding preliminarily reveals how SES influences SE, i.e. its specific influencing process and mechanism: SES partially influences SE through social capital.

In practice, basing on the conclusion of this research, we should pay more attention to the cultivation and accumulation of SC for those from families with lower SES, provide them with some corresponding assistance, and try to minimize the negative influences caused by low SES.

5. Conclusion

Basing on the above analysis and discussion, a summary of the conclusion are as follows:

(1) Family SES as well as all its dimensions (father's degree of education, mother's degree of education, the total annual income of the family, father's occupation, mother's occupation) is significantly positively related to SC and all the dimensions of its proxy variable (peer support, kinship support and general support of others);

(2) There is a significant positive correlation between the family socio-economic status as well as all its dimensions and SE; the socio-economic status, with its dimensions, is the predictive variable of SE;

(3) Social capital, with dimensions of its proxy variable, is positively correlated with SE and has predictive effect on SE

(4) SC plays a significant mediate role between socio-economic status and SE, and the mediating effect size is about 51.75%.

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