

External Examiner's Review

16 September 2024

PhD Thesis

Mira Shved (2024) The role of social capital on the socio-economic development of families with profound and multiple disabled children. Doctoral dissertation. Poznan University

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This thesis aims to explore the impact of APA (Adaptive Physical Ability) games on the role of social capital in the socio-economic development of families with PMD (Profound and Multiple Disabled) children. It employs qualitative research methodology to reach the aim. The theoretical foundation is based on social capital theory and its measurement, and related concepts such as social involvement, social networks, social participation, bottom-up approach. It is assumed that social capital has positive impact of socio-economic development of individuals/families/communities/nations.

The thesis is based on the analysis and review of numerous previous literatures. It is a very rich and very informative study which is must to read to anyone who is interested in the development of PMD children, and welfare provision for children with disabilities in Israel. The thesis also offers a rather broad overview of social capital theories, concepts and measurement issues (Chapter 3). Additionally, it also provides a rather broad information and understanding of welfare state development in Europe, welfare state models, social policy development issues in the state of Israel, and public help offered to the people with disabilities and PMD children (Chapter 2).

The thesis provides a very strong methodological section in which discusses in detail the qualitative methodology and its challenges (Chapter 4). It chooses to employ narrative approach to explore the APA games impact on the role of social capital in the socio-economic development of families with PMD children. The analysis is based on the one years' dialogue journals from 2010. The journals were scanned for entries denoting APA by the PMD families over the weekend. It comprises of about 600 pages of data for the analysis. The author used Open coding and Selective coding for data analysis. The author is also aware of research limitations (retrospective nature of the research; the close personal relationships between the author and the families in the research sample; one year study span) and diligently discusses them. In the methodology section the author also provides information on what the APA means and how it works, which is very useful to the reader who has not prior knowledge on the APA; and also provides information on Rehabilitation and Physical therapy for children with disabilities. The author ends the methodology section by providing information on the CHIT Model which is the model developed by the author of this dissertation for practicing adapted physical activity (APA) among those also with PMD. This model provides the possibility for all participants to be engaged in a physical activity and brings empowerment on a physical, emotional and social level by Giving Choice (GC), Independence (I) and Transferring (T) (pp. 115-120).

In Chapter 5, the author of the dissertation provides an in-depth analysis of the implementation of the APA games by 6 families with PMD children. By analyzing dialogue journals, the author shows how families benefited from playing APA games on the Emotional (engagement, joy, well-being, commitment), Professional (Therapeutic impact) and Social themes (New interactions). In other words, the use of the APA resulted in the creation of more social capital in the three themes – emotional theme, professional theme, and social theme. Positive emotional benefits have been generated within a family as a unit. By playing the game together, they did not feel like a 'PMD family' for the first time, and their bonds were strengthened. The APA games revealed a new therapeutic resource readily available, which reduced expenses on support for PMD children's care in some cases. It expanded social engagements outside the family to different social circles and in this way broadened the family's social resources. Overall, the analysis shows the tremendous positive results from playing the APA games on the social capital (bonding, bridging, and linking) of the families. Thus, the research findings have given a comprehensive understanding of the development of social capital among family units who deal with PMD.

Conclusions are provided by the final section (Chapter 5.3). The conclusions are relevant and strongly supported by the analysis. The conclusions are structured into Individual/family – micro

level, Community – meso level, Society/State – macro level. To my mind, the most important conclusion is that the PMD families have a hidden resource to be more happy, more integrated into the social life and can be more self-reliant in caretaking, but they need a proper tool, adopted to their needs (as the APA is), and more empathy and acceptance in the society (both at the community and the national/state levels). This can unlock their full potential to generate their own social capital.

It is an important work which not only enhances better understanding of how social capital can be self-generated, but also can have a social impact, e.g. to provide recommendations to improve the lives of families with a PMD child.

I enjoyed reading this dissertation, it has a well-balanced mix of theoretical and empirical parts. The weaker part in my opinion is the Chapter 2, especially the literature reviews on the ‘Emergence of social policy’ (2.2), which is too long and the author does not provide a clear explanation why it is needed to provide so much information on the development of welfare state in the theses. I think that this section could have been much shorter and more focused on how it contributes to achieving the major goals of the dissertation. In my view, the emphasis should have been more on how different welfare state models as well as the UN and the EU directions help to reduce the social exclusion of people with disabilities and enhance their autonomy and life satisfaction, instead of giving so much attention to the historical evolution of the welfare state in Europe. Yet, the name of Esping-Andersen (1990) is quoted, but spelled incorrectly - Esping-Anders, see e.g. page 44.

However, I find a further discussion on the Israel welfare state (Section 2.3) very relevant and needed in the study. The Section provides a good understanding of the help provided by the state to the people with disabilities and show how vulnerable the PMD families are due to their special status within the disability classification.

The Concluding section (5.3. Conclusions) also provides a summary of the thesis, which was a surprise to me as the title of the section does not indicate that. In this case, it would have been reasonable to name the section ‘Summary and Conclusions’. I find the conclusions to be very relevant and empirically grounded. However, since this is a qualitative study, I would have expected also to see some of the theoretically driven conclusions such as: How can the author's work enhance a better understanding of the concept of social capital and the development of social capital? Can the author generate any new theories from her study? Or do you have any suggestions for improving the current theories? Is there any evidence of the new forms of social capital?

The dissertation demonstrates that by utilizing appropriate tools (like APA), individuals can enhance their social capital and unlock their potential. We are entering into the era of the Artificial intelligence (AI). How could this impact PMD families and the development of social capital in general?

As a whole, despite some minor criticism that could be debated, this is a great study. The author demonstrates strong research skills. The study provides new knowledge and unlocks new dimensions of the social capital theory. The dissertation is a valuable contribution to the international research literature, it is an original contribution based on new empirical data, the insights of the dissertation can be useful for policy makers and practitioners working with people with disabilities.

This is an original piece of work. The author demonstrates research skills that are appropriate for doctoral-level studies and the ability to conduct independent research. I am confident Mira Shved's doctoral thesis entitled „The role of social capital on the socio-economic development of families with profound and multiple disabled children“ prepared under the scientific supervision of dr. hab. Maciej Lawrynowicz prof. nadzw. UEP at the Poznan University of Economics and Business fully complies with the legal requirements established for doctoral theses, specified in Article 13 of the Act of 14th March 2003 on academic degrees and academic title and degrees and title in art (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 1789). I recommend that the Academic Advancement Board of the Poznan University of Economics and Business approves Mira Shved public defense of the dissertation.

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