

## SOCIAL CAPITAL OF THE FAMILY AND AVAILABILITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM

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**Abstract:** The possibility of access to higher education depends on the social capital of the family and has an important significance for access to higher education by the individuals or various social groups. Social capital includes the presence of social ties both within the family and outside it and allows applicants acquiring more opportunities at admission to the universities. It is the basis of an informal network of contacts between people and forms the basis of social transfers. The theoretical basis of the study was the papers of P. Bourdieu, J. Coleman, as well as Vietnamese sociologists, who paid attention to this problem. It is noted that the influence of social capital is relevant for the Vietnamese entrants, however, there are no studies characterizing this aspect of social interaction in sociological science. Therefore, this work is a kind of innovative study. The authors distinguish the structure of social capital and show, based on the empirical material, the influence of each of the elements on the possibilities of obtaining higher education. The empirical basis of the study is the survey data, conducted by the author among 1,000 Vietnamese students (Danang University) in 2016. These studies showed that the social capital of the family had a significant impact on the possibility of obtaining higher education for the Vietnamese applicants. It is noted that the relationships of children with parents, the place of family residence; the professional status of parents (the position of parents); the composition and number of family members have a decisive impact on admission to the universities as the constituent structural components of social capital. We give recommendations to parents, relatives of the Vietnamese families in terms of vocational guidance of their children.

**Key words:** social capital, higher education, access to higher education, social inequality, professional orientation, entrants.

### 1 Introduction

The availability of higher education implies the equality of opportunities for the receipt of higher education by the representatives of different social strata and groups, which differ in terms of socioeconomic status, cultural capital of the family, territorial, ethnic and gender belonging. However, in practice, there is a low level of opportunity to receive higher education for the representatives of various groups in Vietnam. According to the Vietnamese Statistical Service, the proportion of individuals with the completed higher education over the age of 15 years was 6.9% in 2015. This reflects the low level of higher education of the population, despite the needs of the information society (Dyachenko & Tsymbal, 2013; Brown, 2017).

Moreover, social inequality in the accessibility of higher education becomes the current issue in Vietnam. The education inequality index is 37.76 in Vietnam. This shows the differentiation between different groups of the population in access to social resources, including higher education in the developing countries (including in Vietnam). At the same time, the statistical service data show that 20.1% of the richest sections of the population have higher education, and only 0.4% - of the poor ones. Higher education remains less accessible to poor groups of the population in Vietnam. This is confirmed by the postulate that with increasing access to wealth, the chance of getting education increases, and social stratification (in this case, the differentiation of the economic status) creates inequality in access to higher education for people from different social strata. Thus, the differences in the education accessibility are determined not only by religion, class status, gender, race, financial, psychological features of children; contextual factors depending on the social environment; but by the socio-economic origin as well (Mobbalegh Naseri et al, 2018). At the same time, the social capital of the family is one of the important resources affecting the chance of receipt of higher education for the individuals from various social groups.

Hanifan L.J. analyzes the role of social capital in improving the education accessibility. The theory of social capital is studied

deeper by P. Bourdieu in his work "Types of Capital." He regards social capital as a collection of real or potential resources that are associated with the possession of a stable network of more or less institutionalized relations of mutual acquaintance and recognition, in other words, with the inclusion in a particular group (Villalobos Antunez, 2018). This theory is developed by J. Coleman in the monograph "Social and Human Capital". According to Coleman, the child gets access to the human capital of adults due to the social capital of the family. Social capital depends both on the physical presence of adults in the family, and on the measure of attention they give to the child. The physical absence of adults can be considered as the absence of structural elements in the family social capital. The most vivid example of the absence of the structure element in modern families is the existence of incomplete families. However, the complete families in which one or both parents are engaged outside their home can be considered as families with a broken structure lacking social capital. This is directly related to the presence of parents or other close relatives (grandparents, aunts and uncles) throughout the day within the household. Even when the adults are physically present, there may still be a lack of social capital in the family, if there is no strong relationships between children and parents. The absence of close relationships can arise from the child's ties to youth associations, from the parents' ties to other adults who do not contribute to the intersection of generations, or for other reasons. Regardless of the reason, this means: whatever the human capital of the parents is, the child does not benefit from this because there is no social capital.

The greater the relationships between parents and children, the degree of mutual contact, the involvement in joint activities, the children's interest in learning, the leisure activities are, the greater is the level of social capital in the family, the greater are the opportunities for learning and the subsequent career of family members.

The Vietnamese sociologists study the problem of social inequality in the system of higher education: the causes of social inequality in education, the education inequality in modern Vietnam, gender inequality in education (Kinsey, 1948; Maurice & Bowman, 2013; Fabrikant & Magun, 2014; Ocheretko, 2017; Marinkin, 2015).

Vu Hoang Linh, Le Viet Thuy and Giang Thanh Long, Phung Thi Kim Anh focus their attention on the demographic, socio-economic factors, parents' education and family income level (Kartseva, 2012).

Tran Thi Thai Ha and Ngo Thi Thanh Tung analyze the situation of rural youth in the aspect of orientation toward higher education (Gorodnyanskaya, 2016).

An analysis of the scientific literature on the study subject shows that there are no researches studying the influence of social capital parameters on the accessibility of higher education in Vietnam.

What is the role of social capital in the accessibility of higher education in Vietnam? What parameters of social capital do make influence on the accessibility of higher education for different social strata in Vietnam? All these and other questions will be answered in this paper.

### 2 Methodology

The study was conducted in 2016, using such methods as a questionnaire survey and an interview in Danang. Danang is one of the largest cities in Vietnam, the city's population amounts to more than a million. There are more than 10 universities in Danang, while the Danang University (DU) is the largest, in

which 55,000 students study in 212 specialties. In 2017 DU ranked 9th place among all universities in Vietnam and top 100 of all the universities (98th) in Southeast Asia.

The questionnaire survey of 1,000 Danang first-year students (Vietnam, Danang). It was supposed to investigate the students of those universities in which there are different faculties and specialties. The survey was conducted in 10 institutes of each university, where 100 students of both genders were randomly selected in an equal number. The sampling error does not exceed 5%. The data processing was performed in SPSS Statistics Version 20.

The number of interviewees was 15 first-year students of DU. One respondent was selected from each faculty of 15 profile specialties.

### 3 Results and Discussion

Social capital is embodied in the relationship existing between the family members, group members, and society and is inextricably linked with them. In this article, we consider the social capital of the family as consisting of the following main components:

the relationships of children with parents, which are the main source of information and vocational guidance for their children;

the place of family residence;

the professional status of parents (the position of parents);

the composition and number of family members that reflect the links between generations in the family, as well as affect the possibility of admission to higher education and the successful training completion.

When enrolling in the university, an orientation toward children having an important role. According to the research, children receive information not only from the websites of the universities (48.2%), but also from such such information sources as "parents, relatives, acquaintances" (45.4%), "teachers" (35.4%), "friends, peers" (31.8%). While the information channels from the media (newspapers, television, and broadcast) and from the events held in the universities and schools take a non-specific place in the children's orientation at admission to the institution. Thus, parents and teachers who have more inseparable relationships are the main information source when targeting children to the higher education (see Fig. 1).

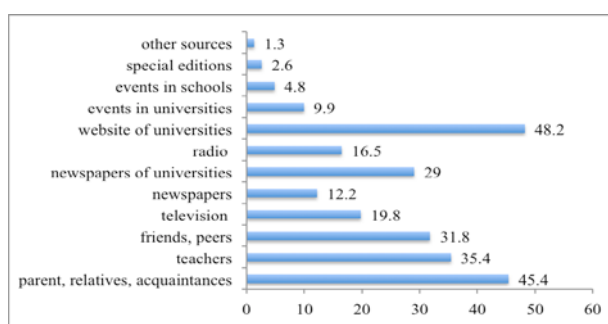


Fig1. The source of information obtained during the admission to the university, in %

However, the place of family residence is one of the factors that have a significant influence on the choice of the information source (see Table 1).

Table 1. Influences of information origin on admission to the university depending on the residential locations of the family, in %

The sources of information	provincial center	mean city	small city	town	rural, village
parent, relatives, acquaintances	46,7	48	39,5	43,4	36,7
teachers	36,4	33,7	43,4	30,1	36,7
friends, peers	30,1	34,4	30,3	29,2	35,4
television	15,8	17,6	20,3	22,1	22,6
newspapers	12,7	12,4	7,9	16,5	7,9
newspapers of universities	25,9	28,8	28,9	38,1	32,9
radio	7,6	15,6	17,7	18,3	21,1
website of universities	68,4	47,4	47,1	44,2	43
events in universities	16,8	10,5	9,3	5,3	3,8
events in schools	5,4	3,4	6,6	6,2	3,8
special editions	2	3,4	2,6	1,8	3,8
other sources	0,7	1,9	2,6	0	2,5

The analysis of dependence of the information source on the place of family residence of the students shows that, among the differences in obtaining information from children from different settlements, the biggest gap is observed between the regional centers and villages. Children who come from the rural areas used the information from the "websites of the universities" more often (difference of 25.4 percentage points); they took part in the "university events" less often than the students from the regional center (the gap was 13 percentage points). However, there is little difference in receiving information from parents, relatives, acquaintances, teachers, friends between children from different localities, especially between children from the regional centers, large cities and children from the villages and settlements. This means that the information receipt from the family members is of the greatest importance for children in

terms of vocational guidance and does not depend on the place of children residence.

One of the important factors of social capital is the family composition. According to the study, 87.6% of respondents from the complete families (father and mother), and only 12.4% of respondents from the families with no father or mother entered the university. Thus, the absence of one of the parents reduces the total volume of the family capital, including social capital, which significantly affects the educational opportunities of children.

The position of parents and the number of family members also reveal a certain social connection. (see Table 2).

Table 2. Correlation between the professional status of parents and the motives for access to higher education

		family decision	your friends in university	solving the problem of employment	to make a professional career	guarantee of material prosperity and position in society	self-development and self-improvement
the professional status of mother	Pearson Correlation	-.055	.030	-.008	.004	.005	-.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.084	.337	.788	.894	.884	.481
	N	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
the professional status of father	Pearson Correlation	.012	-.024	.035	.062*	-.035	.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.709	.444	.271	.049	.272	.363
	N	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000

\* Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05 (2-tailed).

According to the research, the professional status of the father (sig. = 0.049, r = 0.062) and the number of family members (sig. = 0.034, r = 0.067) correlate with the motives for obtaining higher education for children (solving the employment problem).

At the same time, the study materials show that the students who entered the university are more likely to come from families with the specialist parents (42.8% of respondents from the families with a specialist father). In addition, these studies show that 28% of students come from the families with a worker father. These data correlate with the interview results. To the question "How does the occupation of parents affect the accessibility of higher education for the applicants?", the student notes that it does not matter, but makes a reservation: "However, if parents work in the intellectual profession, they orient their children to their speciality". However, the worker and peasant parents also try to

orient their children to the higher education so that their children can live better and earn more. This is a typical setting for Vietnamese culture, suggesting that children, especially those belonging to the low-income families, should study diligently to end the status of the poor. On the other hand, the occupation of parents reflects the links between the parents and their children in a professional orientation, which is especially relevant for the families with high professional status.

The number of members in the family is seen as one of the significant factors of social capital that affect the children's enrollment in the university. The study results show that the average number of family members of the students enrolled is 4.54 people, including the spread of the number of family members from one (1%) to fourteen people (0.8%) (see Fig. 2).

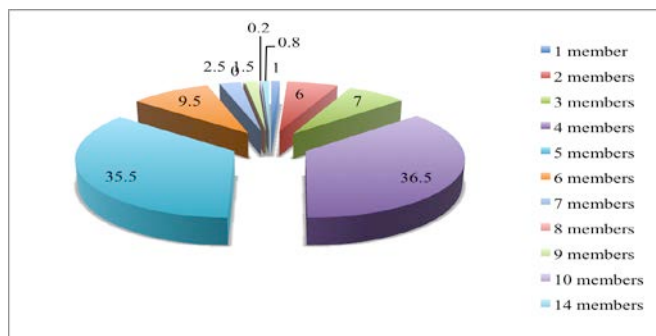


Fig 2. The proportion of students enrolled in the university, depending on the number of family members, in %

These studies show that mainly children from the families consisting of 4-5 people entered the university. So, the smaller the number of family members, the higher are the chances of enrolling the university. This is due to the fact that the parents are more able to communicate with their children in the small families and transfer their knowledge, experience, that is, social capital.

Moreover, when enrolling in the university, the entrant faces many difficulties, such as: lack of opportunity to have additional classes, lack of information, lack of necessary educational literature, lack of money (for paying tutors, preparatory courses, etc.), etc. According to the survey, 8.3% of respondents come from the families of 7 people, which indicates a lack of money in these families, but only 4% of respondents from the families with 4 people have this difficulty; 20% of respondents from the families of 7 people do not have a computer, while only 8% of respondents from the families of 3 people have this difficulty. Thus, the students from the small families (the number of family members) have less difficulties than the students from the families with a large number of members. The less the number of family members is, the less difficulties face the students. Therefore, there are more opportunities to obtain higher

education in the families with fewer children. This determines, in particular, the choice of the forms of additional courses and the amount of costs for them.

The study materials show that if the children from large families (more than 7 people) attend classes in the schools (64% of respondents), then the children from small families choose additional courses with a tutor. For example, the share of respondents from the families of 4 people (14.3%) who took lessons with a tutor from a university was greater than the children from large families (0% of respondents from the families of 7 people). This is also reflected in the interview results. The student gives the following answer to the question "Does the number of your family members influence the accessibility of higher education?": "There are 8 people in my family, (including me), I have been taken extra courses at the school 3 times a week, which have been inexpensive. However, I have had such a problem. We live in the village, my parents are peasants, and I have helped them in the field works except for studying at school". That is, parents have enough money only for inexpensive courses for their children in large families.

The study showed that the number of family members correlates with the cost of additional courses in preparing children to enter

the university (see Table 3).

Table 3. The spend of additional courses, depending on the number of family members, in%

The size of spend (VND)	The number of family members										Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10	14	
no spend	0	0.5	0	0.5	2.3	0	0	0.1	0	0	3.4
less than 1 million.	0	0	0	1	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	1.5
from 1.1 to 5 million.	0	1	0	5.5	7.4	0	0	0	0	0	13.9
from 5.1 to 10 million.	0.5	1.5	3.5	16.4	12.7	4.1	2	0.7	0.2	0.4	42
from 10.1 to 15 million.	0.5	2.	3	9.6	8.9	3.4	0.5	1	0	4	28.4
from 15.1 to 20 million.	0	0	0	0.2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0.5
more than 20 million.	0	0	0	0.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.3
difficult to answer	0	1	0.5	3	3	2	0	0.5	0	0	10
Total	1	6	7	36.5	35	9.5	2.5	1.5	2	8	100

The analysis data make it possible to judge that families of 4 to 5 members (16.4% of respondents and 12.7% of respondents) spend from 5.1 to 10 million for the additional courses more than other types of families, especially the families with a large number of children (0.7% of respondents from the family of 9 people). Thus, the smaller the number of family members is, the better are the conditions for providing children with the education (this concerns the costs for educational services). The parents can both influence the children in terms of career guidance, and invest in them to ensure preparation for exams. In this case, we believe that the economic capital of the family is converted into social capital and vice versa. Thus, it can be assumed that the less the number of family members is, the deeper are the relationships between the family members. In this case, the social capital of the family has a significant place in the strengthening of economic capital in the children's enrollment to the universities.

#### 4 Conclusions and Summary

Thus, the social capital of the family, namely the education level of parents, the existence of close relationships with them is a significant factor at the stage of admission to the university. There is an inequality in access to the higher education between different social groups, depending on the educational status of parents (education level of parents, place of residence, number of family members). The higher the social capital of the family is, the greater is the possibility of entering the university.

The territorial differences are directly interrelated with the family status, its economic capital, but there is no difference in the degree of influence of parents on the professional orientation of entrants in terms of information resources.

The educational result in the secondary school, the father's occupation, the level of the mother's education, the number of family members, the income and place of family residence, the settlement type of the students are significant factors that have the greatest impact on the professional orientation of entrants, since they are the integral elements of social capital.

The families of students can contribute to ensuring the accessibility of higher education. To increase the chances of obtaining a higher education, the following can be recommended to parents and close relatives of applicants:

- To guarantee the financing of all learning processes at the school and university. You should be prepared for the fact that the costs of receiving educational services themselves, as well as related expenses, will become one of the main articles of the family budget.
- To actively look for the information about the universities, faculties, where children decide to enroll. This means that parents should formulate their opinion, which will be decisive for many entrants.
- To be interested in the child's difficulties arising in the learning process, in order to develop rational ways of

influencing children, which will help to improve school and university performance.

- It is necessary to refrain from forcing children to choose a specialty, since this will significantly reduce the possibility of successful and effective socialization of the personalities of future students, and will also reduce the quality of higher education.

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