Social Capital and Gender Inequality in Contemporary China: A Quantitative Analysis from Structure-Cognition Paradigm

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Abstract

The dilemma of gender inequality is embodied not only in the potential confrontation under patriarchal disciplines in both household and workplace, but also the pursuit of work-family balance. This paper argues how social capital contributes to or constrains gender equality from a structural-cognitive paradigm. Three sub-concepts of social capital, namely social trust, network strength, and social exchange are included. Gender inequality is categorized as gender inequality in the family, gender inequality in the workplace, and female work-family balance. The findings suggest that social trust significantly contributes to individual support for household gender equality and female work-family balance. Besides, higher levels of network strength will lead to perception of indiscrimination between male and female in terms of working capacities. However, the practice of social exchange brings patriarchal regularities back to all three dimensions of gender inequalities, coming from the compromise and practice of gender subordination, objectification, or discrimination in exchanging favors. The article's conclusions demonstrate the necessity of bringing a typological argument of gender inequality and a structural-cognitive paradigm of social capital altogether.

Keywords

work-family balance, gender inequality, social trust, network strength, social exchange

1.   Introduction

The structure-cognition paradigm properly links objective and subjective spheres by providing a comprehensive analytical lens for inter-disciplinary concepts. As a heated debate of social issues, gender inequality is well suited to this framework, for being gradually reinforced and solidified by the interaction of cultural perceptions and objective structures (Bjerén, 2021). Research toolkits at cognitive level include gender stereotype, objectification, and intersection, in which discussions have properly explained how female subordination leads to the conceptualized inferiority of their identities. On the other hand, research on social capital has already adopted a structural-cognitive paradigm (Muniady et al., 2015). Scholars argue that social capital is manifested in the form of trust and emotional bonding in social networks at the cognitive level on the one hand, and in instrumental exchanges, as well as in the embedded resources of social networks at the structural level on the other hand. As a common feature of both concepts of gender inequality and social capital, the discussion of structure and cognition is interactive rather than being isolated.

Since current research mainly adopts a stand-alone rather than a convergent perspective, this paper initiates an analysis of how social capital affects gender inequality from a structural-cognitive paradigm.

Social capital is categorized into three sub-concepts: social trust, network strength, and social exchange. They each carry different levels of cognitive or structural factors. Another dimension of an expanded view is a broader inquiry into gender inequality, which is categorized into gender inequality at the household and workplace levels, and the focus on female work-family balance. These aspects are tested to be influenced by the interaction of both cognitive and structural dimensions. In other words, this paper establishes an all-encompassing exploration into the attributional mechanisms of the relationship between social capital and gender inequality. The article uses multiple linear regression models with data from the Chinese General Social Survey in 2021 (CGSS2021).

2.   Gender inequality: Structuralist perspective and constructed cognition

Tracking back to the transition of the primary societies from matrilineal clans to patriarchal systems, gender inequality has its origins from the biological differences between men and women (Brown, 2014; Gimenez, 2001). Since the beginning of private ownership and productive activities, women have been progressively placed at a disadvantage in labor and the household (Cohen, 2004). As a result of gender differences in the social division of labor, men have gradually assumed a dominant position, while women were considered being subordinated (Coulson et al, 1975). Such an objective structure leads to the construction of gender identity at the socio-cultural level (Lorber, 2018). Stereotypes and intersections are products of gender inequality in cognition (Browne & Misra, 2003; Ellemers, 2018; Heilman, 2012; Holvino, 2010; Kroger, 1997; Talbot, 2003). Women are constructed as being unfit for career pursuit and should be tied to reproductive and domestic activities. Such perceptions in turn influence social activities in the mechanism termed cultural reproduction (Talbot, 2003). Even in contemporary societies, women still bear the brunt of labor in household field, being subordinate in the workplace with lower incomes, inferior positions, and socio-economic status than male. Besides, gender intersection as a combination between lower-income or domestic roles with women is also shaped and consolidated in a socio-cultural interaction. On the other hand, the dominant structural position of men feeds the ideology of patriarchy (Baloyi, 2008; Kuhn, 2013). Women are placed in an objectifying position (Bartak, 2015; Brunner, 2013). Such a structural statement is cognitively represented as discrimination and sexual harassment towards female in the workplace.

A brief review of literature on gender inequality illustrates that it is a typical concept that can be analyzed by the structural-cognitive paradigm. On the one hand, gender inequality is constructed in public discourse, cultural concepts and identities (Tanner, 1994). On the other hand, gender inequality is embedded in structured hierarchical orders and logical operations of socio-economic practices (Risman, 2018). In current gender studies, the analytical focus on gender inequality is divided in the field of household and workplace, respectively (Bondi, 1998). In cognition, patriarchal disciplines emphasize on women's disadvantaged competence in workplace and norms of undertaking domestic labor, while masculinity vocally always asserts its decoupling from domestic labor activities to avoid compromising the construction of self-confidence (Chopra, 2006; Mshweshwe, 2020). At the structural level, women are in a position of inferiority to men in both private and public spheres, and dependent on male leadership (Heilman, 2012). It has been argued that female occupy fewer economic resources and less social capital (Timberlake, 2005). Domestic labor in the private sphere becomes a gendered practice for women, while productive activities in the public sphere are attributed to men as a reaffirmation of their status. As a therapy, feminism is born from constructivism. As social ontology, constructivism proposes questions and initiatives the subjective perception of the social reality (Adler, 1997). Actors are embedded in pools of shared collective consciousness (Elste, 1989). Social reality is not as solid and constant as given. It cannot exist independently of the social environment and its collectively shared meanings, which is broadly defined as culture. Cognitive subjects continuously construct and reproduce their understanding of entities, the social construction of reality, through the social behavior of everyday practice (Berger & Luckmann, 2023). Feminism makes specific claims to social reality, questioning the constructed rather than materially existent differences of identity through dialogues with culturally biased scripts. Feminism constructs such practices as doing gender (Lorber, 2018; Priola, 2007). In other words, gender originates from biological sexual difference, while gendered behaviors and identities come from constructed socialization (Stockard, 2006). As a result, the culture of male supremacy put women under the male aesthetic standard, treating female as dependent and subordinated roles (Eldridge 2003; Johnson & Lacerenza, 2018; Zhang Jamil 2015).

3. A structure-recognition analysis of social capital

Ontological debates on social capital are popular in academic field. Different schools of thought define it as resources, networks, capabilities, or relationships (Huber, 2009; Lin, 2017; Reimer, et al., 2008; Villalonga-Olives & Kawachi, 2015). Outstanding contribution has been made on its theoretical and empirical studies (Zhang, 2007; Zhang & Zhang, 2015). Based on the research focus, the attempt of this paper to restate the framework of social capital encompasses a wide range of perspectives. Based on objective networking structures and subjective connections, the measurement of social capital is diverse. It is not a concept that exists independently from either the structural or cognitive paradigm. In fact, it is rooted in both dimensions (Grootaert & Bastelaer, 2002). Some studies have focused solely on the structural dimension of social capital from an economics perspective, or the cognitive dimension from a psychology perspective. In this paper, it develops a broader discussion of social capital, which is therefore typified through the structural-cognitive paradigm into three sub-concepts that have been widely discussed by scholars, namely social trust, network strength, and social exchange.

It is important to state at the outset that none of the above three concepts can be separated from being tied to social networks. The conceptualization of social trust comes from the emphasis of the cognitive paradigm (Falcone, R., & Castelfranchi, 2001). Social trust derives from informal norms as well as values, and its attribution can come from both socio-cultural factors at the macro level or psycho-social factors at the micro perspective (Kanagaretnam, 2009; Oskarsson et al., 2012). In the study of social capital, Fukuyama (1996) defines trust as routine, honest, cooperative behavior that arises within a community without extensive contractual and legal regulation of relationships. Such trust needs to be rooted in social reality and behavioral practices, which means trust arises from shared values, common goals and cooperation (Grootaert & Bastelaer, 2002). Across all cultural perceptions, social trust represents the positive side and is primarily constructed in virtue (Fukuyama, 1996; Quddus et al., 2000). Through cooperation and negotiation, the cultural value of unity is celebrated, while the implicit antagonism of pluralistic differences is ignored. This is the basis on which social trust is constructed (Hildebrand et al., 2023). Network strength refers to the frequency with which an individual communicates about different connections in a social network and types of such connection (Bian et al., 2012). Social connections can be categorized into strong and weak ties. In general, the social intensity of strong ties is higher than that of weak ties. As the typology of ties involves indicators of affective concentration and different social ties appear in research in a topological structure, a structural-cognitive paradigm analysis of social networking strength is feasible (Claridge, 2018; Muniady, 2015; Rhodes & Keefe, 2007). The practice of socialization varies significantly across societies. In China, strong ties, both formal and informal, are the subjects at the ego core social circle, which is also defined as a differential narrative pattern (Fei et al., 1992). The most central circle tends to have the highest intensity of communication and usually involves stronger ties bound by beneficial interests or kinship. Unlike in Western societies, institutional relationships in China often lead to strong ties, such as the intermingling of work and family brought about by the work unit and the exchange of private and work resources through guanxi (Barbalet, 2018, 2021). Social exchange, on the other hand, refers to the flow of favors and repayments. Such flows are usually asymmetric in order to encompass emotional factors, when the value of favors is not exactly equal to its rewards (Bian, 2017). The content of exchange can be both economic or societal. Some of the social exchanges that have been studied include cash, non-public information, opportunities for promotion, or building bridges to another interpersonal link (Lin, 2001; Lin & Smith, 2001). In addition, social exchange in contemporary China can also involve unethical or even illegal abuse of political power (Ruan, 2017, 2021; Yang, 1994). In terms of the structural-cognitive paradigm, studies of social exchange involve the structuralist paradigm and the cultural interaction paradigm, respectively (Bian & Zhang, 2023; Fuhse, 2009; Pachucki & Breiger, 2010, 2023; White, 2008). Overall, social exchanges in Chinese relations are both sentimental and instrumental. However, they are not necessarily endorsed by the dominant culture; the sentimental elements may involve illegal trampling on the bottom line of institutions and rules, while the instrumental element can be sexual bribery and transactions for favors in workplaces (Yang, 1994).

4. Research framing and hypothesis

How does the possession and practice of social capital contribute to the widening of gender inequality? Scholars in the field of gender studies have taken note of this proposition. Most previous studies have

focused on gender inequality in the workplace, such as gender discrimination in job search or promotion. Some scholars have also focused on the role of social capital in promoting women's employment environment. However, discussing employment alone is not sufficient to cover all areas of inequality. Whether it is the constraints of patriarchy at the macro level or the emphasis on masculinity at the micro level, women's disadvantaged position is replicated from the workplace to the domestic area. Overall, the possession and functioning of social capital affects the status of gender inequality. Therefore, this paper proposes the following hypotheses:

A Hypothesis 1: Different dimensions of social capital would influence individuals' perceptions of gender equality in Chinese society.

This paper explores gender inequality in the following ways, including the public sphere, the private sphere, and the balance between the two spheres. The paper typifies gender inequality into three sub-concepts, gender inequality in the household, gender inequality in the workplace, and female work-family balance. Feminist scholars have argued that the regulation of women's domestic roles curtails their pursuit of professional and career advancement, placing the individual behind the male career or motherhood. The article seeks to explore whether different types of social capital have different effects on the three dimensions of gender inequality. Social trust comes from an individual's trust in social networks. This trust supports making perceptions of equalizing tendencies rather than oppressing or masking them. Moreover, social trust is highly correlated with positive emotional support. Therefore, the article hypothesizes that the impact of social trust on gender equality exists mainly in the private sphere and individual perceptions. The article makes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: Social trust promotes individual support for gender equality in Chinese society.

Hypothesis 2a: Social trust promotes individual support for gender equality in the household in Chinese society.

Hypothesis 2b: Social trust promotes individual support for female work-family balance in Chinese society.

The emotional and value tendencies of network strength can be either positive or negative. Positive values come from the emotional support of the social network, which helps to shape an individual's self-confidence. Negative value tendencies are linked to unethical benefit transfers. Since strong ties are significantly more intense than weak ties, actors in Chinese society obtain more instrumental help through strong ties, such as non-public information in job search, promotion support and personal influence. Therefore, the article makes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: Network strength promotes individual support for gender equality at the workplace in Chinese society

Criminologists have argued that the instrumental benefit character of social exchange is hidden in its moralized transfer of illegitimate benefits (Ruan, 2017). Anthropological studies also point out that forced sexual transactions in the workplace as a result of social exchange cannot be avoided in objectified identities (Yang, 1994). Thus, the social exchange between the flow of favors and repayment is genderized compared to the de-gendered help that lies behind network strength. Such an exchange is sexualized and oppressive for women, coming from male superiors who offer favors in workplace. On the other hand, the promotion of women in the workplace might be stigmatized as a transactional outcome of inappropriate sexual relationships with male superiors. The negative values of social exchange at the level of cultural perceptions can be seen. Therefore, the article makes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Social exchange inhibits individual support for gender equality in Chinese society.

Hypothesis 4a: Social exchange inhibits individuals' support for household gender equality in Chinese society.

Hypothesis 4b: Social exchange inhibits individuals' support for gender equality at workplace in Chinese society.

Hypothesis 4c: Social exchange inhibits individuals' support for female work-family balance in Chinese society.

5. Method and data

5.1 Research equation and data sources

To test the hypotheses of this article, the statistical framework of multiple linear regression is applied. The multiple linear regression model is able to test the covariation of different variables that do not have covariance characteristics on the dependent variable. The research objective of the article is to discuss the impact of different types of social capital on the perception of multi-dimensional gender equality. Gender equality is categorized into three dimensions: (1) gender equality in the household (GE1), (2) gender equality in the workplace (GE2), and (3) female work-family balance (GE3). Social capital is also discussed in terms of three dimensions. These concepts are social trust (ST), network strength (NS), and social exchange (SE). The article also considers potential influences and includes these factors as control variables, including perceived socioeconomic status (PSES), types of occupation (OT), educational background (EB), annual income (AI), gender (G), political identity (PI), and marital condition (MC). The article discusses the effects of the independent and control variables on each of the three types of gender equality.

The data for this paper comes from the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS2021) from the China Center for Surveys and Renmin University of China.CGSS2021 covers a total of 19 provinces or municipalities and 8,148 data samples. This data contains question items that enable the recoding of the variables studied in the article. After dealing with missing and invalid samples for related debates, the sample size is 6,462 after preserving the global filter.

5.2 Coding and analysis

The article recoded the data from CGSS2021 to obtain the required research variables and control variables. First, for the dependent variables, the article used three scales to measure gender equality at the household level and at the work level, as well as attitudes toward women's work-family balance. For gender equality at the household level, the CGSS2021 asked respondents about their attitudes toward the proposition that "men should share household labor with women on an equal footing." The option with the most gender-equal attitudes in the household is coded 5, and the option with the most gender-inequal attitudes in the household is coded 1. For gender equality at the workplace, the CGSS asked respondents about their attitudes toward the proposition that "Men are more capable than women in workplace". The most favorable option for gender equality in the workplace is coded 5, and the most favorable option for gender inequality in the workplace is coded 1. In addition, the survey asked respondents about their attitudes toward the proposition that "the quality of women's marriages is more important than her career achievement". The most favorable attitude toward women's work-family balance is coded as 5, and the most favorable attitude toward women's family-dominated roles is coded as 1.

The independent variable of the article is social capital. This concept is categorized into three sub-concepts, namely social trust, network strength, and social exchange. For social trust, the CGSS asks respondents if they believed that most members of society are trustworthy. The lowest level of trust is coded as 1 and the highest level of trust is coded as 5. For network strength, the CGSS asks respondents how often they socialized during the prior year with one's social network. The lowest level of socializing frequency is coded as 1 and the highest as 5. For social exchanges, the survey asks respondents about activities in providing favors to others for job convenience. The highest frequency of social exchange is coded as 5 with the lowest as 1.

To ensure the accuracy of the theoretical framework, the article also included other control variables in the analysis. Subjective status and objective status are considered to have an impact on perceived fairness (Bala, 2010; Chen & Fan, 2019; Das & Pathak, 2012; Manstead, 2018; Ren et al., 2022). Therefore, this paper constructs the concept of perceived socioeconomic status according to the survey items. The highest perceived socioeconomic status is coded as 5 and the lowest perceived socioeconomic status is coded as 1. Occupation type, educational background, and income are often discussed by scholars as measures of real socio-economic status (Oakes & Andrade, 2017; Yang & Gustafsson, 2004). Therefore, the article includes each of these three indicators as control variables in the discussion. First, the article follows the localized treatment of professional reputation in the Chinese literature as the basis of the study (Li, 2005). Based on the interview items, the article categorizes the respondents' occupational types into lower occupational prestige job types (55.8% of the total), middle occupational prestige job types (28.4% of the total). and higher occupational prestige job types (with a share of 0.5%). Next, for educational background, the article categorizes the respondents' educational background into lowest educational attainment (52.97%); lower

educational attainment) (20.75%); medium educational attainment (16.37%), and high educational attainment (9.91%), following previous scholars' practice. Finally, for income, the article refers to the way previous scholars have measured income levels in China and reprocesses the responses into five items: income of 10,000 RMB and below as 1, income of 10,001-20,000 RMB as 2, income of 20,001-30,000 RMB as 3, income of 30,001-50,000 RMB as 4, and income of 50,001 RMB and above as 5 (Zhang, 2020). In addition, for gender, males are coded as 1 and females are coded as 2. For political status, members of the Communist Party are coded as 1 and non-members are coded as 0. Finally, for marital status, the article codes unmarried as 0 and married as 1. The meaning of each variable and the description of the coding are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: research variables and coding information

Variable		Coding instructions
Dependent variable	Gender equality in household (GE_1)	Least equal=1 Most equal=5
	Gender equality in workplace (GE_2)	Least equal=1 Most equal=5
	Female work-family balance (GE_3)	Least supportive=1 Most supportive=5
Independent variable	Social trust (ST)	Highest ST=5 Lowest ST=1
	Network strength(NS)	Highest NS=5 Lowest NS=1
	Social exchange (SE)	Highest SE=5 Lowest SE=1
Control variables	Perceived socio-economic status	Highest PSES=5 Lowest PSES=1
	Occupation types	Highest job reputation=2 Middle job reputation=1 Lowest job reputation=0
	Educational background (EB)	Highest educational background=3 Medium educational background=2 Lower educational background=1 Lowest educational background=0
	Annual income	Lower than 10000 RMB=1 10001-20000 RMB=2 20001-30000 RMB=3 30001-50000 RMB=4 More than 50001RMB=5
	Gender	Female=0；Male=1
	Political Identity	Non-CCP members=0； CCP members=1
	Marriage condition	Not married=0；Married=1

6. Results and findings

This paper uses multivariate analysis to analyze the research variables. First, Table 2 shows the meanings and descriptive characteristics of each research variable and control variables. The mean score for gender equality in the family is 4.041 (sd=1.037), the mean score for gender equality in the workplace is 3.198 (sd=1.037), and the mean score for work-family balance is 3.063 (sd=1.333). It can be seen that gender equality in the household has the highest mean score among three categories of gender equality, indicating

that equal division of labor between women and men for household labor is most agreeable to the interviewees. The mean score for social trust is 3.641 (sd=0.991). The mean score for social intensity is 2.668 (sd=1.127) and it is highly discrete. Besides, the mean score for social exchange is 2.173 (sd=0.671). This indicates that social trust has the highest mean score among the concepts of social capital. The score for perceived socioeconomic status is 2.272 (sd=0.907), which indicates that individuals do not perceive their subjective status as being high in Chinese society. The mean scores for occupation type, education level, and income are 0.354 (sd=0.491), 0.603 (sd=0.941), and 2.992 (sd=1.688), respectively. The degree of dispersion is high for income. The mean score for gender is 0.467 (sd=0.499), indicating that there are slightly more females than males among the respondents. The mean score for political status is 0.120 (sd=0.325), indicating that most respondents are not members of the Communist Party. Finally, the mean score for marital status is 0.755 (sd=0.430), indicating that the majority of respondents are married.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of variables

Variables	sample	mean	sd
GE_1	n=6462	4.041	1.037
GEI_2		3.198	1.037
GE_3		3.063	1.333
ST		3.641	0.991
NS		2.668	1.127
SE		2.173	0.671
PSES		2.272	0.907
OT		0.354	0.491
EB		0.603	0.941
AI		2.992	1.688
G		0.467	0.499
PI		0.120	0.325
MC		0.755	0.430

Before performing multiple linear regression on the study variables, the paper first performs the Pearsons correlation test on the variables and the results are shown in Table 3. This analysis discusses the correlation of the three types of gender equality with the independent and control variables respectively. The first is gender equality at the household level. Social trust is positively associated with gender equality at the household level at the level of p<0.01 with a correlation coefficient of 0.031. Social exchange is negatively associated with gender equality at the household level at the level of p<0.01 with a correlation coefficient of -0.038. In addition, gender is negatively associated with gender equality at the household level at the level of p<0.05 with a correlation coefficient of -0.022. This suggests that women are more supportive of the notion that men and women should have the same responsibilities in household chores. The second column of data shows the correlation between gender equality in the workplace and each variable. Social trust is negatively correlated with support for gender equality at the workplace level at the p<0.05 level with a correlation coefficient of -0.029. Network strength is positively correlated with support for gender equality in the workplace at the p<0.01 level with a correlation coefficient of 0.037. Social exchange is negatively correlated with support for gender equality in the workplace at the p<0.01 level with a correlation coefficient of -0.047. Occupational type is positively correlated with support for gender equality at the p<0.01 level with a correlation coefficient of 0.045. Political identity is positively associated with support for gender equality in the workplace at a level of p<0.01 with a correlation coefficient of 0.033, indicating that members of the Communist Party and respondents in more prestigious types of work are more likely to agree that there is no difference in the ability to work between women and men. The third column of data shows the attitudes towards work-family balance and the correlation of each variable. Network strength is positively correlated with support for work-family balance at the p<0.05 level with a correlation coefficient of 0.026. Social exchange is negatively correlated with support for work-family balance at the p<0.01 level with a correlation coefficient of -0.044. Perceived socio-economic status is positively correlated with support for work-family balance at the p<0.01 level with a correlation coefficient of 0.059. Educational attainment is positively correlated with support for work-family balance at the level of p<0.01 with a correlation coefficient of 0.031 political status is positively correlated with support for work-family balance at the level of p<0.05 with a correlation coefficient of 0.028 The data suggests that Party members, higher educational backgrounds, and respondents with higher perceived socio-economic status are more supportive of work-family balance for

women. Overall, the data shows degrees of correlation between the dependent and independent variables as a whole.

Table 3: Pearsons correlations of variables

	GI_1	GI_2	GI_3
ST	0.031**	-0.029*	0.016
NS	0.020	0.037**	0.026*
SE	-0.038**	-0.047**	-0.044**
PSES	-0.012	0.007	0.059**
OT	0.001	0.045**	0.059**
EB	-0.011	0.019	0.031**
AI	-0.014	0.019	0.012
G	-0.022*	-0.003	-0.004
PI	0.010	0.033**	0.028*
MC	-0.007	0.019	0.003
*p<0.05 ** p<0.01*			

Based on the hypotheses, the paper launches a multiple linear analysis of the variables. The paper analyzes gender equality at the household level, gender equality at the workplace level, and women's work-family balance in multiple linear regressions. Table 4 demonstrates the analysis of gender equality at the household level. The VIF of each study variable with the control variables is less than 5, and the D-W value of the model is 1.983, which is similar to 2. This indicates that there is no problem of covariance between the variables. It can be seen that social trust significantly contributes to individual support for gender equality in the household at the p<0.05 level with a correlation coefficient of 0.029. This indicates that members who hold overall trust in society are more likely to support women in performing the same amount of labor as men at the household level. However, social exchange significantly inhibited individuals' support for gender equality in the household at the level of p<0.01 with a correlation coefficient of -0.051. The results suggest that individuals who commonly use their position to exchange favors and reported benefits with other actors hold disapproval results for men and women performing the same amount of work at the household level. In addition, political identity significantly contributes to individual support for gender equality in the household at the p<0.05 level with a correlation coefficient of 0.083, suggesting that party members are more likely to identify with gender equality at the household level.

Table 4: Multiple linear regression of Gender inequality in household

	B	*t*	VIF
Constant	4.108**	50.619	
ST	0.029*	2.227	1.004
NS	0.018	1.580	1.006
SE	-0.051**	-2.677	1.002
PSES	-0.021	-1.464	1.071
OT	-0.008	-0.243	1.457
EB	-0.001	-0.080	1.591
AI	-0.004	-0.417	1.321
G	-0.029	-1.113	1.070
PI	0.083*	1.980	1.122
MC	-0.056	-1.850	1.024
D-W	1.983		
*p<0.05 ** p<0.01*			

The second model tested the multivariate linear analysis in support of gender equality with each variable and the results are shown in Table 5. The VIF of each study variable with the control variables is less than 5, and the D-W value of the model is 1.901, which is similar to 2, which indicates that there is no problem of collinearity between the variables. It can be seen that network strength is significantly and positively correlated with workplace gender equality in the workplace at the level of p<0.05 and the correlation coefficient is 0.031. This suggests that individuals with a higher frequency of socializing behaviors with one's social relationships are more inclined to recognize that there is no difference in the competence of

males in the workplace with that of females. Social exchange is significantly and negatively correlated with workplace gender equality in the workplace at the p<0.01 level with a correlation coefficient of -0.078. This suggests that individuals who commonly utilize their position to exchange favors and reported benefits with other actors hold the view that men are more competent than women in the workplace. Finally, political identity significantly contributes to individuals' support for gender equality in the workplace at the p<0.01 level with a correlation coefficient of 0.137, suggesting that Party members are more likely to agree that there is no difference in men's competence in the workplace compared to that of women.

Table 5: Multiple linear regression of Gender inequality in workplace

	B	t	VIF
Constant	3.319**	32.504	
ST	-0.028	-1.738	1.004
NS	0.031*	2.182	1.006
SE	-0.078**	-3.245	1002
PSES	-0.011	-0.596	1.072
OT	0.073	1.843	1.454
EB	0.025	-1.158	1.587
AI	0.006	-0.417	1.320
G	-0.046	-1.113	1.070
PI	0.137**	1.980	1.124
MC	0.047	-1.850	1.024
D-W	1.901		
*p<0.05 ** p<0.01			

The third model tested the multivariate linear analysis of the perspectives on women's work-family balance and the results are shown in Table 6. The VIF of each study variable with the control variables is less than 5 and the D-W value of the model is 1.953, which is similar to 2, which indicates that there is no problem of covariance between the variables. It can be seen that social trust is significantly and positively correlated with attitudes towards women's work-family balance at the p<0.05 level and the correlation coefficient is 0.034. This indicates that individuals with higher frequency of social behaviors are more inclined to recognize that women's roles in the workplace are just as important as their roles at home. Social exchange was significantly and negatively correlated with perceptions of women's work-family balance at the p<0.01 level with a correlation coefficient of -0.070. this suggests that individuals who commonly utilize their position to exchange favors with other actors for favors and reported benefits hold the view that women's family roles are more important as compared to their positions in workplace. In addition, occupation type significantly contributes to the idea of work-family balance for women at the p<0.01 level with a correlation coefficient of 0.114, and educational attainment significantly contributes to the idea of work-family balance for women at the p<0.01 level with a correlation coefficient of 0.059, suggesting that the subjects who have a high level of educational attainment and occupational reputation do not support the idea of prioritization of women's family roles over their workplace roles.

Table 6: Multiple linear regression of Female work-family balance

	B	t	VIF
Constant	3.062**	29.415	
ST	0.034*	2.069	1.004
NS	0.018	1.248	1.006
SE	-0.070**	-2.863	1.002
PSES	-0.025	-1.321	1.072
OT	0.114**	2.829	1.456
EB	0.059**	2.678	1.589
AI	-0.015	-1.360	1.323
G	-0.026	-0.756	1.071
PI	0.069	1.278	1.123
MC	-0.006	0.168	1.024
D-W	1.953		
*p<0.05 ** p<0.01			

The findings of the paper show how different types of social capital influence individuals' perceptions of gender equality. Firstly, stronger social trust tends to lead to support for gender equality at the household

level and support for women's work-family balance. Higher network strength leads individuals to hold supportive attitudes toward gender equality in workplace. However, higher frequency of social exchanges elicits individuals' opposition to gender equality in the workplace and at home, as well as to the emphasis on women's professional roles. In other words, the multidimensional effects of social capital on gender equality are differential.

7. Conclusion

Analyzing the research findings is necessary. As a premise, although treated differently in some of the literature, the social trust discussed in this paper is part of social capital, as the concept is based on specific trust in social networks rather than a macro perception of society. From the results, trust in social networks focuses on the role of gender equality at the household level as well as women's dilemmas. Social trust demonstrates the reflexive nature of reliance on and support from social networks, suggesting that both men and women (gender did not play a significant role in the statistical analysis) tend to advocate for a more equitable conception of private sphere culture from the trust and support of social networks. The social culture of the private sphere comes from the contributions of emotional support. These contributions serve to break down macro-perceived unfair preferences and stereotypes, and allow individuals to gain the courage to draw from their surroundings for making independent and free orientations. Specifically, masculinity's insistence on not participating in domestic labor is not extended by the high level of trust from which women gain the courage to say no to prejudice and discipline. On the other hand, perceptions of being encouraged to pursue personal fulfillment and aspirations are boosted. Women can ignore the path of returning to the family, which has long pressured them into making altruistic choices, and turn to the workplace, where they can significantly improve their social status.

Social trust in social networks brings about the courage to say no to patriarchal precepts in the private sphere, while the intensity of social network communication significantly contributes to perceptions of gender equality in the public sphere. Prior literature has concluded that higher densities and intensities of social connections can have positive effects on workplace behaviors, including promotions from personal influence, non-public job postings, and emotional support for staff (Bian, 1997). As can be seen, the role of social capital on the workplace is not influenced by the differential mechanisms of the gender paradigm, but rather acts directly on the individual's workplace role. Even if women do not pay more attention to and possess more social capital than men, such a difference does not directly interact with the socio-cultural gender paradigm. In other words, there is no essential difference between men's and women's holdings of social capital. When focusing on the strength of network and the specific ways in which social capital is held, we can see the socio-political influence of an individual, the availability of non-public information, and the necessary help for career advancement. These helps are not exactly de-gendered, but do not involve the reinforcement of female subordination or oppression of workplace identity.

Finally, the idea of gender inequality is brought back to the field of social exchange. Social exchange in the Chinese context is not bright and positive, and is often understood as synonymous with corruption, abuse of power, and personal favors. A number of discussions have examined how social exchange trades below the moral and legal bottom line in the name of moralizing (glorification of pseudo-kinship) behaviors (Barbalet, 2021; Ruan, 2017; Yang, 1994). Prior literature has been implicit about sexism and oppression in social exchange. However, the reality is that women's objectified position in social exchange is re-emphasized. In other words, women are not considered to be exclusively favor providers or debriefing providers, but rather objectified material for the transaction itself. The presence of transactional sex in the workplace has been captured by an anthropological perspective. This is reflected at the level of cultural perceptions in the neglect of women's workplace roles and the emphasis on their objectified and gendered identities. As a result, women's participation in social exchange reinforces their overall inferior position in the hierarchy. Another issue is stigmatization. This refers to the fact that women's independent career achievements are perceived to be associated with dirty and unethical sex trade or sexual bribery. This serious accusation will affect the private sphere of the individual as well as the public arena. In severe cases, it may even lead to domestic violence because it challenges masculinity at the family level. This relationship can also, in turn, lead to the perception that women are defective (Stennis & Aly, 2019), and can even reinforce

women's survivor stigma (Taccini & Mannarini, 2023).

In conclusion, current studies on gender issues have already paid attention to how social capital affects female employment, yet it is far from sufficient. The dilemma of gender inequality is embodied not only in the potential confrontation under patriarchal disciplines in both household and workplace, but also the pursuit of work-family balance. Based on nation-wide statistics conducted in Chinese societies, this paper addresses three dimensions of perceptions on gender equalities from a social capital perspective, namely gender equality in both household and workplace, as well as female work-family balance. Social capital is categorized into social trust, network strength, and social exchange from structure-cognition paradigm The results initiative a comprehensive focus on female dilemma and illustrate the necessity of the structural-cognitive paradigm for this research, as the attribution of causal mechanisms cannot be explained by one paradigm alone.

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