

# SOCIAL PUBLIC POLICIES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF STATE- COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP: TOWARDS DEVELOPING SOCIAL CAPITAL

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## **Abstract:**

*Social public policies reflect a space for continuous interaction between the state and society within a balanced context, emphasizing the importance of shifting toward concerted efforts and joint production. A strong state can engage with society, organize social relations, and make political and economic decisions in the interest of its citizens. Conversely, a robust society characterized by horizontal ties—such as pressure groups and civil society organizations—can assemble and articulate interests, complementing the state and supporting it in achieving its designated goals. The evolution of the concept of social policies encompasses a synthesis of intersecting issues between social structures and the state structure aimed at achieving social cohesion and comprehensive social security. This development underscores the necessity of highlighting the significance of the state-society dichotomy, wherein the state interacts with existing social forces to identify the roots of social, economic, and political challenges and the methods for addressing them and formulating appropriate standards.*

*Keywords -policies, Horizontal, Designated, comprehensive*

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Social public policies have become a central focus of modern political discourse due to their critical role in ensuring societal stability. These policies often represent a proactive attempt to transform specific social systems, especially in the context of accelerating globalization and the complexities of global crises. Their primary objective is to mitigate the effects of an increasingly diverse and growing array of risks, social exclusions, and deprivations or to provide protection against these issues. Social policies serve as a testament to the state's ability to safeguard its citizens and respond to their demands, facilitating an understanding of how complex modern societies function, endure, and evolve.

These policies act as a bridge through which successful societies explore all means of protecting their members from the risks associated with childhood, old age, and illness while also addressing their needs for income, shelter, and essential services such as education and healthcare. Furthermore, social policies facilitate discussions regarding the nature of redistribution processes and the investigation of social balance, considering the community's distinct social, economic, and political statuses.

This study aims to underscore the significance of social policies as a safety valve for stability and social cohesion, fostering a sense of belonging within society and enhancing its standards and values. By examining the interplay between the state and society, the research highlights the state's authority in social control and the need for collaboration in addressing social, economic, and political challenges. Additionally, it aims to explore how to address these challenges and establish appropriate standards effectively.

In this context, the study will investigate strategies for overcoming the zero-sum relationship inherent in the state-society dynamic, advocating for the reinforcement of the state's structural authority through the active participation of diverse social actors in alignment with its goals of ensuring stability and social justice.

The study will be organized around three main axes:

1. The development of the concept of social policies and their importance.

2. The state-society duality: a participatory approach in policy-making.
3. Incorporating social structure into social policy: towards the development of social capital.

### **First: The Development of the Concept of Social Policies and Their Importance**

The evolution of the concept of social policy reveals that it encompasses various meanings across different research frameworks, such as social management, social services, and social care. A review of the experiences of several countries regarding social policy indicates a divergence in the assessment of the justifications for social policy and how it is distributed. Generally, prevailing perceptions of social policy can be categorized into two major trends. The first trend views social policy as a science or field of study, founded on the belief that society can be transformed in a planned and purposeful manner to enhance individual welfare through knowledge and research. In contrast, the second trend perceives social policy as a collective set of outputs, encompassing policies, arrangements, and regulations to achieve specific social goals.

Social policy has gained increasing prominence within the academic field, attracting significant interest since the end of World War II, particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries, including Britain. The rapid expansion of public services has fostered interest in the concept of "national well-being" or "social care," defined as a deliberate intervention by the state to redistribute resources among its citizens to achieve the welfare objective. This perspective aligns with the proposals by William Beveridge, a key figure in establishing the Welfare State in Britain. In his report on the welfare of the British state after the war, Beveridge suggested that social policy fundamentally represents a redistribution of resources among different classes, transferring support from the employed to the unemployed, from individuals of working age to retirees, and from the healthy to the sick.

Social policy development in the early twentieth century emerged as a complementary effort to the so-called studies of "social activity." In this context, state social policies provide a framework within which individuals navigate their lives. According to this perspective, individuals face risks ranging from natural dependencies, such as childhood and old age, to risks generated by human actions, such as unemployment and underemployment. Richard Titmuss, Britain's first professor of social policy, argued that unless social insurance and the guarantees provided by the welfare state and social policy were enhanced, individuals' lives would become akin to a lottery.

The social policy field has expanded due to its intersection with various disciplines, including sociology, economics, and business administration. It can be defined as follows:

- **Financial and Administrative Arrangements:** The most common metric for measuring the extent of social policy in any society is the amount of financial resources allocated to it, often referred to as "social policy financing methods" or public social spending on benefits and services, such as pensions, unemployment benefits, maternity benefits, and health and social care services.
- **Social Management:** To achieve the objectives underlying social policies in organized and predictable ways, most countries have established large government bureaucracies tasked with delivering social security, health, welfare, education, and housing policies.
- **Objectives of Social Policy:** Typically, social policy encompasses three primary objectives: redistribution, risk management, and the reduction of social exclusion.

### **Second: The State-Society Duality: A Participatory Logic in Policy-Making**

The relationship between the state and society has garnered significant attention within the literature of comparative politics, leading to substantial theoretical debate. This discourse has evolved particularly after the rise of the state-centric perspective, which emphasizes the importance of the state and its independence from society. In his seminal work "The State in Society: An Approach to the Study of the Struggle for Control," Joel Migdal presents a new theoretical and historical framework for understanding the nature and patterns of the relationship between state power and society. He raises critical questions regarding this relationship: What enables the state to establish a solid political authority? How does it succeed in defining and determining the prevailing moral system or social relationships? How does the state construct its communities' economic and social agenda using appropriate resources? Moreover, what factors contribute to the weakening of state projects, and what are the limits of social forces in



influencing effective symbolic systems and modeling social behavior and patterns in both social and economic life?

Thus, the discussion shifts toward a more balanced framework that acknowledges the necessity of society for the state to fulfill its functions and goals. The role of social forces and non-state actors within society is crucial, as the state's power is increasingly linked to its ability to interact with various societal classes and groups.

Conversely, the state's connection to or separation from society has become a criterion for assessing the strength or weakness of the state. Joel Migdal's study illustrates this point by advocating for a "state-in-society" perspective instead of the traditional "state versus society" framework. In this context, scholars have utilized terms such as "synthesis," "synergy," or "co-production" to describe how interaction with and engagement of social agents can strengthen state institutions while enhancing their effectiveness in fostering an environment conducive to prosperity and growth.

The development of the social environment involving non-state actors, such as civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations, can effectively link social demands to state power, thereby bolstering the state's institutional capacity to recognize and fulfill its goals and promote broader social objectives.

Through what Joel Migdal calls the "strong state-strong society" dualism, he contrasts this with the notion of a "weak state-weak society." He emphasizes that a strong state can penetrate society, organize social relations, and make political and economic decisions that benefit its citizens. This state embodies values such as citizenship, solidarity, and trust within its society. A strong society is characterized by the emergence of horizontal ties, such as political parties that can gather and articulate interests, along with pressure groups that complement these efforts to implement policies in the broader community's interest. Such a strong society aids the state in achieving its designated goals and contributes to the survival and integration of the community.

A singular indicative criterion does not govern the relationship between the state and society; instead, it is characterized by multiple patterns corresponding to the diverse interactions among the parties involved. In his work "State Power and Social Forces," Migdal posits the primary hypothesis that the state is but a part of society. He bases this interpretation on several foundational assertions:

- The efficacy of each state varies according to the ties that bind it to its society. Migdal notes that it is rare for states to be the principal actors within societies; instead, there are inherent limitations to the power of any state, and the notion of the state's independence from society is often a false construct.
- When analyzing a state, it is imperative to consider its social forces. This perspective encompasses organizations affiliated with the state and various social groups.
- The interaction between the state and the social forces may result in mutual empowerment for both parties, contradicting the view that their relationship is a zero-sum dynamic that leads to a total loss for one party and a complete victory for the other. This interaction can culminate in alliances between the state and specific social forces against others.

In this context, the nature of the mutual empowerment between the state and other community actors can be further understood by distinguishing between two types of state power: structural power and tyrannical authority. The former refers to the state's capacity to support and strengthen its role by engaging various formal and informal actors. In contrast, the latter reflects a zero-sum conflict with community actors striving for dominance. Thus, the core of the debate centers on fundamental assumptions regarding how power is distributed among different actors.

### **Third: Including Social Structure in Social Policy: Towards Developing Social Capital**

There is a consensus among researchers that the concept of social capital has been significantly influenced by the work of Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam. Putnam defines social capital as "the set of horizontal connections among people that impacts the productivity of society," which includes networks of civic engagement and social norms. This definition suggests

that social capital embodies components of social organization represented by trust, cooperation, and networking, all of which contribute to individual, group, and institutional development.

James Coleman further elucidates social capital by measuring its importance and functions across three levels: the individual, the group, and society. At the individual level, social capital allows individuals to expand their social circles and build reliable connections beneficial in the future, especially in contexts characterized by mutual obligations and expectations. A climate of trust and a willingness to assist one another also facilitate the flow of necessary information. At the community level, social capital fosters group cohesion and integration, enabling groups to interact harmoniously and consistently with other groups. This is particularly significant for civil society institutions, including political parties and unions, as well as community functions that promote civic awareness, which is essential for the success of political systems.

In essence, social capital refers to the social ties and relationships embodying values and moral standards formed within a specific social structure. These connections allow individuals to collaborate within a network of shared relationships, maximizing the value of teamwork, achieving social cohesion, and fostering the ability to communicate, integrate, and trust others.

The practical embodiment of social capital within state functions can be realized through social policy, which serves several vital roles:

- **Developmental Role:** Social policy is implemented to empower citizens to participate actively in the development process. It prepares individuals to adapt to society's economic, political, and social changes.
- **Preventive Role:** Social policy is crucial in preempting social unrest by addressing its root causes rather than merely responding to its consequences. This is accomplished by establishing advanced mechanisms to manage the negative repercussions of social unrest and to contain them before they materialize, thereby mitigating their impact on the political and social systems of the state.
- **Therapeutic Role:** This role specifically targets marginalized groups within society, such as the deprived, children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. The aim is to enhance the public services they require, including educational and health services.
- **Integrative Role:** This emphasizes the need to consider the social implications of policies adopted during national development planning. It entails adhering to principles of human rights, justice, equality, and participation in the formulation of social policies.

In addition to analyzing these functions, it is essential to measure the impact of social policy on social capital, evaluating the extent to which it strengthens social capital and maximizes its benefits or potentially undermines it. To address the question of how social policies contribute to the enhancement of social capital, several key considerations must be taken into account:

### 1. Types of Social Capital

Within the discourse surrounding social capital, it is acknowledged that there are various types, levels, or dimensions of social capital, each associated with distinct performance outcomes relevant to different groups. In communities, individuals interact through diverse associations, forming various types of networks characterized by unique norms, levels of trust, and expectations of reciprocity. Thus, distinguishing between these different types of associations is crucial, as they relate to the different stages in the histories of individuals and communities that address their social, cultural, health, and economic needs.

### 2. Is Social Capital a Public Interest or an Individual Interest?

Most theoretical and conceptual frameworks concerning social capital encompass social networks, norms, and positive values that motivate political participation to collaborate effectively and efficiently. These frameworks emphasize the importance of collective action to achieve and accomplish shared goals.

### 3. Positive and Negative Outcomes of Social Capital

Social capital can yield positive outcomes, which are perceived as investments in social relationships with expected returns that enhance the following relative advantages:

- **Information Flow:** Social networks facilitate the flow of information, enabling individuals and institutions to identify societal needs while reducing ambiguity and uncertainty.
  - **Impact on Decision-Making:** Social ties in modern societies allow for the aggregation and expression of members' interests, playing diverse roles in accountability and enhancing cultural awareness.
  - **Supportive Value System:** Social capital fosters a value system characterized by trust, transparency, rationality, and other modern values.
  - **Psychological Support:** Membership in civil associations and institutions gives individuals a sense of belonging to a social safety net where they share interests and concerns with others.
- However, social capital can also lead to negative consequences. For example, Halpern suggests that organized crime networks or gangs embody social networks governed by standard norms that do not contribute positively to society. The same applies to social capital in sectarian societies.

In addressing how social policy can enhance social capital, it is essential to recognize the role of social policy in community development and the necessity of investing in social capital. This can be achieved through what is known as the "dual strategy," which balances both "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches. This approach underscores the importance of dialogue among community members, service providers, and policymakers. The "top-down" approach often overlooks or undervalues knowledge derived from the lived experiences of individuals; thus, community groups must have the capacity and opportunity to contribute to social policy-making without succumbing to subjectivity or overestimating individual contributions.

One of the defining characteristics of social capital is its facilitation of coordination and cooperation for the mutual benefit of society's members. Its value lies in its capacity to influence development outcomes, including economic growth and poverty alleviation, through the following mechanisms:

- **Informal Framework for Coordination:** Associations provide an informal framework for sharing information, coordinating activities, and making collective decisions, which helps to prevent social policy failures arising from insufficient or inaccurate information.
- **Reduction of Opportunistic Behavior:** The connections fostered by social capital diminish opportunistic behavior by establishing a framework where individuals interact consistently, cultivating trust among members.

Conversely, social policy can sometimes undermine or conflict with enhancing social capital. Hodgson refers to this phenomenon as the "manufactured civil society," wherein the perceived needs of society are aligned with state-imposed standards. In such cases, local groups operate according to government agendas that may not be locally determined.

### CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, social policies are decisive in achieving integration and fostering a sense of belonging within society. They act as a safety valve for social stability amidst the transformations that can periodically occur within political systems, which may threaten their continuity. This highlights the critical role of governments and various actors in disseminating values and maintaining social control that enhances trust between citizens and governing entities.

Social capital in political science and sociology refers to the norms, networks, and resources through which individuals access power and essential resources. This concept is vital in facilitating decision-making and policy formulation, emphasizing the significance of social trust, norms, and networks that individuals can leverage to address common challenges.

Therefore, the development of social policy must consider its potential impact on the social capital of societies, which is crucial for building bridges that connect the diverse elements of a nation's social fabric. The following recommendations can be suggested:

- **Integrate Social Capital and Power Dynamics:** Social capital should be utilized in conjunction with an understanding of power dynamics within and among communities, organizations, and policymakers.



- **Evaluate Policy Modifications:** Local and national governments must reconsider any policy modifications that may adversely affect social capital and seek more effective methods for program delivery.
- **Nurture Conditions for Social Capital:** It is essential to explore ways to create conditions that foster social capital, shifting the focus from individual skills and qualifications to the relationships, nature, and purpose of interactions between individuals and groups.
- **Recognize Societal Resources:** Social policy must acknowledge that societies possess inherent resources. Therefore, the terminology should shift from "release," "enhance," or "develop" social capital to recognizing its existence, which can aid communities in understanding their unique challenges and improving social policy performance.

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