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**The Role of Culture in The Personal and Social Determinants of  
Social Well-Being of Russians:  
Examining the Words *Culture* and *Welfare***

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**Abstract**

Welfare is a social category and is rooted in the cultural and social structures of society. Therefore, the improvement of welfare policies requires knowledge of these structures and cultural and social conditions. It should be noted that the culture in the cultural discourse of welfare is no longer limited to mental and spiritual values and meanings. It is integrated into all varieties of individual and collective life activity as a natural socio-psychological formation, and manifests itself as a functional unit of social and psychosocial development of the world, and influences current social behavior. Based on the data of the all-Russian sociological survey, the social well-being of the population is diagnosed. The characteristics of social well-being were determined based on a subjective assessment of living conditions. The subjective assessment contains a cognitive (rational) aspect and an affective (emotional) one. In the affective aspect of the subjective assessment, there are more negative emotions in women and people of pre-retirement age.

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## 1. Introduction

The category of culture in the discourse of social welfare is not an unknown concept, and at least the role of values in the field of welfare is obvious and clear because any perception of welfare is necessarily accompanied by a kind of value, moral, and normative assessment. This connection is true not only of how people choose to live prosperously but also of values in politics. Social policy analysis and its direct attention to improving living conditions is better (Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, & Derakhshan, 2020). The problem is that there is no agreed-upon approach to what is "better." The answer depends on value judgment. For example, some people believe that it is better for children to grow up with the same parents who are married. Others believe that a child should love only one of his or her parents so that he or she does not witness parental quarrels in the family. Paying attention to the efficiency of schools, running away and juvenile delinquency are also things that can be proven or disproved in a scientific way. Debating what a "good" family and upbringing is like is a normative and valuable perspective. Ultimately, because arguments are based on values, not facts, they cannot be concluded.

The dominant discourse of social welfare until recent decades and before the "cultural turn" in social theory in 1970 was "material discourse". It should be noted that social welfare was defined in the light of development theories. In other words, "it dealt with indicators of economic growth such as national income, gross national product, energy consumption, and such categories" (Geng, 2018, p. 120). Hence, in this discourse, employment and income, and access to material resources of power and wealth were known as indicators of social welfare. The fundamental change in the social welfare discourse began in the 1970s when theories of economic development faced social and cultural challenges, and in particular, the approaches of modernization theory failed to contribute to development in third world countries and dependency theories.

Extensive knowledge and studies in various fields of social sciences and humanities that have been done during the history of these sciences have provided a good basis for

explaining the cultural foundations of welfare. The cultural dimensions of welfare are very clear to researchers, and social theorists, especially anthropologists and sociologists, and their studies have provided much evidence to explain the relationship between culture and welfare. However, the necessary conditions and social context for the dominance of cultural discourse over social and welfare policy were not available until recent decades, and therefore, fewer votes of social theorists could be effective in practice.

Culture in the cultural discourse of welfare is no longer limited to mental and spiritual values and meanings. In other words, culture in this discourse does not only mean paying attention to the moral aspects, the sublime culture, the inner and mental aspects of societies and culture. Rather, the culture here encompasses the entire way of life of people in all emotional, thought, behavioral, material, and spiritual dimensions, as well as positive and negative creative aspects. At the same time, in this discourse, the goal is not to praise and cherish culture. Rather, the destructive role of culture in the development and promotion of welfare is considered along with its constructive and effective role. In this discourse, culture is a double-edged sword that can both hinder the realization of the lofty goal of social welfare development and can help achieve this goal. Another key point is that in the light of new developments and attitudes in the field of anthropology, sociology, and especially cultural studies in understanding the meaning and place and functions of culture in contemporary society, another culture in the cultural discourse of welfare has a tangible, objective, observable and measurable meaning and includes specific factors such as gender, ethnicity, race, social class, patterns of social exclusion and exclusivity, and the role of cultural capital and social capital.

Russian society, like other societies in the last decade, has been influenced by a set of processes that we have listed in the cultural discourse of welfare. Therefore, in Iranian society, social and welfare policy issues have been and are directly or indirectly, willingly or unwillingly or unknowingly and unconsciously affected by these processes. A look at development programs shows that development and prosperity are not limited to economic issues and that culture has been considered in

various forms. Also, in society, people's expectations of life, quality of life, and level of life satisfaction are strongly influenced by these processes. But the cultural discourse of welfare is still not the dominant discourse in politics, in public and media discourse, or in academic discourse. Hence, one of the necessities of welfare issues today is to pay attention to the explanation of the cultural dimensions of welfare in all three levels below:

- Reforming the public discourse of society about the concepts of welfare and culture
- Putting the discussion of culture and social welfare in the academic discourse of social sciences and humanities
- Focusing the social and welfare policy discourse on the cultural dimensions of welfare

## 2. Theoretical Framework

In recent decades, the study of the social well-being of the population has taken a firm place in the sciences of society and man. In Russian science, the study of social well-being is mainly carried out in a broad social context, which allows us to identify a subjective assessment of both the personal social environment and broader social conditions. In Western science, attention is focused on the subjective assessment of one's own well-being (Goodman, Disabato, Kashdan, & Kauffman, 2018; Fernandez, 2020; Mokhtarian, 2019).

The research of Western authors focuses on "subjective well-being", namely life satisfaction and analysis of the emotional state, the background in which a person lives (Diener, 2000). Among these indicators, researchers highlight: assessment of health, financial status, relationships with family, relatives, friends (Allin & Hand, 2017; Oman, 2016), job satisfaction (Calaguas, 2017). Also, attention is paid to assessing life experience and the situation with people's desires and claims (Barazzetta, 2015) and several other parameters. All researchers consider social well-being as a socio-psychological phenomenon that is formed as a result of human interaction with society. This is an integral emotional and cognitive education that characterizes the attitude to the life of the individual and the community. It is integrated into all types of individual and collective life activities as a real

socio-psychological education (Sharma, 2003). This is why it is so important to diagnose social well-being and identify its dynamics.

Indicators of social well-being are subjective self-assessment. Any subjective assessment/self-assessment has a rational and emotional side. Moreover, the emotional side of the assessment prevails over the rational one. Their ratio, according to different measurement methods, is 1.8: 1 or 1.4: 1. Self-esteem is more influenced by a person's specific circumstances than by their personal experience (d'Errico, Grazioli, & Pietrelli, 2018; Heintzelman, 2018). Social inequality has the most significant impact on self-esteem. The more fully the principles of social equality are implemented in the country, the more satisfied with their own lives and the less significant differences in the subjective assessment of life (Ahlborg, Svedberg, Nyholm, Morgan, & Nygren, 2017; Ngamaba, Panagioti, & Armitage, 2018). Subjective self-esteem inevitably involves comparing one's own position in society with that of other people. This leads, according to sociologists, to the fact that a complex psychological mechanism is triggered, including the action of three multidirectional trends. The first trend is the unconscious tendency of most people to overestimate their living conditions. The second trend is that most people suppress their dissatisfaction, do not express it. This leads to a third trend-the formation of new evaluation standards, which is favorable for the appearance of criticism and dissatisfaction (d'Errico, Grazioli, & Pietrelli, 2018; Heintzelman, 2018).

All of the above should be considered when developing tools for the sociological study of social well-being and processing the results obtained. The purpose of this article is to analyze the influence of personal and social determinants on the social well-being of Russians.

## 3. Methodology

Both the words culture and welfare have been and are among the most frequent and important words in the public discourse of contemporary Iranian society. Public discourse refers to the way people talk about themselves, their lives, and their society in everyday conversations, as well as in public media such as the press, radio, and television. It is enough to pay attention to a newspaper, radio, or

television program or conversation and the pain and heart of a few people to easily see the extent and importance of the use of the words culture and welfare in modern Persian. Our daily conversations are full of cultural combinations such as driving culture, apartment culture, public culture, Iranian culture, western culture, rural culture, urban culture, consumer culture, clothing culture, uncultured, with culture, culture-loving, cultural, people culture, and hundreds of other cultures. At the same time, the word welfare with different names and combinations of prosperous, relative welfare, prosperous, welfare store, welfare organization, painless prosperous, people's well-being, prosperity and well-being, public welfare, welfare problems, actions and policies, the welfare of the government and the like is often quoted in circles and conversations. But the words culture of well-being are never or rarely used together in public discourse. The reason for this is related to the existence of some kind of misunderstanding or incomplete interpretation of both of these words. The general perception of the meaning of welfare is generally limited to material and economic categories, such as access to public services such as transportation, more income, and the existence of public tranquility in the collective and individual living environment, and "mental aspects" or qualitative welfare are often overlooked. At the same time, the general perception of culture, unlike welfare, is more focused on spiritual aspects such as knowledge, ethics, culture, and values, and no one uses the word culture to describe and describe the objective social conditions. Moreover, the general public does not have a clear idea that social welfare depends on the culture and, conversely, the culture of society is affected by its well-being. A person with culture is usually a person who is purgatory and washed of material and welfare desires. And from this perspective, welfare sometimes has a negative connotation. Hence, the concepts of painless or prosperous and *nouveau riche* and various other interpretations are used for the wealthy, and simplicity of life and contentment, and dervish as concepts against welfare have a great value burden. Here we are faced with a kind of cultural contradiction in language and public discourse. People do their best to achieve prosperity, but there is always a suspicion

among them that it is not clear where the prosperous have achieved prosperity.

Another problem in the public discourse of welfare is that not only do they consider welfare to be material, but they do not play the role that culture plays in their welfare. Poverty in public discourse often means "poverty" or lack of income, and the lack of cultural capital and insight, skills, and knowledge have essentially no place in the general perception of poverty. In addition, the role of ingrained cultural beliefs, values, and attitudes in people's well-being is often not only unknown, but its expression may be accompanied by resistance and tension. People often tend to attribute their causes of poverty or deficiency to material, external, or political and economic factors. The rhetoric that preserves gender and ethnic discrimination resistance to innovation and technology and poverty may be factors in the lack of access to public welfare.

The empirical material was obtained using a survey method. This method was chosen because it allows you to identify mass trends that are manifested at the level of large communities, including the country (Abdi & Basarati, 2018). The indicators of social well-being are satisfied with the provision of material goods, health, safety, and self-realization. This will allow you to see how the basic human needs are realized: material, security, social, and self-realization. Subjective assessment of these indicators was revealed at the cognitive and emotional levels. Gender, age, and place of residence were considered as personal determinants of social well-being. Social equality and justice, respect for human rights, social security, and job security are identified as social determinants.

#### 4. Results

As mentioned in social welfare policy and planning discussions, there is often no cultural perception of the social welfare category in the sense we have mentioned, and the culture category usually only provides certain cultural services and facilities for specific groups in a specific area. Sometimes in the form of slogans and expressions to justify the programs and the petition, things called culture are presented in the programs. For example, one of the cultural issues is the repetition and emphasis on the attention of managers and policymakers to the importance of culture,

which is often expressed in interviews and public and media speeches. Also, in development programs, sections are dedicated to culture, but these sections are not in the field of welfare, but more in order to strengthen political goals and values, and the issue of equal distribution of cultural capital, recognition of cultural rights for women and men, tribes, the right to freedom of lifestyle and the realization of individuality, and the right to live differently as matters that arise from culture and affect the well-being of individuals, are less seriously included and implemented in development programs. The category of culture is related to various ways that lead to social exclusion or monopoly, rather than to a set of mental factors. Welfare programs and policies can really take the issue of culture seriously when they remove the criteria of social exclusion and monopoly and provide the basis for a fair and democratic distribution of power, wealth, and prestige for all social groups in a broad and general way.

Let us look at the cognitive side of indicators of social well-being. Respondents' assessment of their financial situation was low. Almost a third (32%) could not purchase necessary food; 20% - to purchase clothing and necessities. Comparing their financial situation with what it was two years ago, only 8% of respondents said that it has significantly improved—slightly improved in 20% of respondents. It remained the same in 33% and deteriorated and significantly deteriorated in 38%. Women, people over the age of 40, and rural residents were more dissatisfied with this parameter. It is worth noting that when distributing responses by age group, the sampling error exceeds 5%, and this data is exploratory.

All respondents had low levels of satisfaction with their health. Less than a third (31%) were satisfied with their health, and 50% were not. Low indicators of subjective health assessment among young people and people of the middle generation are alarming. 32% of people aged 18-29 gave a low rating. At the age of 30-39, years-38.5%, and at the age of 40-49, years-53%. Women were more likely than men to give negative health ratings (58% vs. 41%). An important indicator of social well-being is a sense of security. 19% of the survey participants were fully confident in protecting crime, and more than half (55%) gave a low

rating. Low ratings are typical for all age groups. Women (62.5%) were more concerned than men (47%). There was low confidence among respondents that there will be no military conflicts. Women had the lowest scores. The implementation of social needs involves adaptation to existing social conditions. The respondents' answers to whether they have enough ability to live in modern conditions were divided into three roughly equal parts. About a third (30%) were not adapted to life. The same number gave an average rating. 35% of respondents give a positive answer. The number of positive responses decreased with age.

Education plays an important role in modern life. In general, satisfaction with the opportunity to receive a quality education was low. Only 11% were fully satisfied, and 68% were not satisfied. People of pre-retirement age and middle age groups were more dissatisfied. Dissatisfaction indicators for age groups: 50-59 years-80%, 40-49 years-74%, 30-39 years-70%, 18-29 years-53%. The need for unity of all people in the state was high among the population. In the overall sample, 7% of respondents said they had enough of this feeling, while 70% did not. Dissatisfaction was more common among city residents (72%), women (72.5%), and people over 30 years of age (more than 70%). The vast majority of survey participants were more or less concerned about the state of affairs in the country (89%). This concern was more significant among older people (95%) and urban residents than among rural residents (92% and 86%, respectively).

The results of the survey showed a low degree of self-realization of the population. A third of the survey participants said that they did not achieve the implementation of their life plans. Only 11% of life plans made in their youth came true. There is no significant difference in the responses of men and women. Older people (16%) and young people (11%) were more satisfied. Dissatisfaction was higher in people aged 30 to 49 years. It is important to note that most of the population lives "with the meaning", in other words, they think about the meaning of their life. Men and women think about this equally, mostly people aged 30-39 years. In the block of social determinants of social well-being, the indicator of justice and equality occupies a vital place. The majority of

respondents (70%) said that they do not have enough social equality and justice in their life, and only 9% of respondents said that this is enough for them. 77% of respondents aged 50 and over pointed out the lack of social equality and justice, and 56% of young people under 30 pointed out the least.

Several questions were also asked to determine how people assess the manifestations of equality and justice in the public sphere. Sphere of state administration: most respondents (72%) said that they do not have enough leaders who can manage the state fairly; they indicated that only 9% do. Among all age groups, the percentage of respondents who reported a lack of managers was lower among young people under 30 years of age – 63%. In all other age groups, this figure was higher – 74-76%. Urban residents slightly more acutely perceived this question: 74% in the city and 67% in the village answered about the lack of fair leaders.

Scope of assessment of human merits: 58% of respondents said that they do not have a fair assessment of the merits of a person to society; 14% indicated that this is enough for them. Respondents aged 50-59 (66.5%) are most acutely aware of the lack of a fair assessment, and the least – young people (50%). Sphere of the judicial system: 73% of respondents indicated that they do not have enough justice in the courts; only 6% said that they do. The most acute problem of lack of justice is assessed by representatives of the age group of 50-59 years – 82%. In general, the results of a mass survey of Russians revealed the existing demand in society for social justice and equality, manifested primarily in the public sphere. This problem was most acutely felt by middle-aged and older people, especially pre-retirement (50-59 years old). An essential component of social well-being is the assessment of respect for human rights. The majority of respondents (71%) said that they do not have enough respect for human rights in the country, and only 7% said that they do. Respondents aged 50-59 were more likely to point out a lack of respect for human rights (77.5%), while young people, on the contrary, were less likely to speak out – 62%. Women surveyed were more likely than men to indicate a shortage (76% and 66%, respectively). More than half of the respondents (55%) noted that they lacked political freedom (speech,

assembly, etc.). Urban residents were slightly more likely than rural residents to speak out about the lack of political freedom: 56.5% and 49%.

The cognitive assessment of the level of social protection was low. 65% of the survey participants said that they do not have enough of it, and 12% said that they do. Three-quarters (76%) of respondents aged 50-59 years and half of the young people (52%) pointed to the lack of social protection. The social security score in the survey was also measured by confidence in the well-being of their children and grandchildren. Thus, three-quarters of respondents (74%) said that they do not have enough, while only 9% indicated that this was enough for them. Among respondents over 50 years of age, the percentage of those who noted a lack of confidence – 80%, among young people, this percentage was lower – (62%). There was also a noticeable difference in the responses of women and men: women were more likely to express uncertainty than men (81% and 66%, respectively).

The presence of a job, including a well-paid one, also serves as a criterion for assessing social well-being. 65% of respondents indicated that they do not have the opportunity to earn well, and 15% had this opportunity. Women (69%) and people aged 50-59 (73%) were more likely to be unable to earn well, while men (60%) and young people (56%) were less likely to be able to do so.

According to the results of the survey, only half of the respondents (49%) indicated that they have a permanent job, and one in five (19%) has an unstable job or is in search. An important indicator of social well-being is the emotional assessment of life. Within our survey, we had identified several issues related to the measurement of the adequate level—first, an emotional attitude to the state of Affairs in the country. More than half of the surveyed Russians (57%) felt regret and sadness; 14% of respondents felt aggression and anger, 6% - pride, 5.5% - joy, optimism; 12% of respondents were indifferent, and 5% did not answer the question. As we can see, the vast majority of respondents have mostly negative feelings. Manifestations of these feelings are more common in women than in men (64% and 54%, respectively) and in people over 50 years of age. Indifference is

more common among young people (under 30 years) - 21.5%. The second indicator of the affective side of the subjective assessment is confidence in the improvement of the situation in the country. Two-thirds of respondents (67.5%) said that they lack confidence that the situation in the country will improve. Only 11% of respondents feel this confidence. Women are more unsure than men (72% and 62%, respectively). The highest level of uncertainty was found in the age group of 50-59 years (75%) and the lowest in respondents 60 years and older – 61%.

The third dimension of the affective side of subjective evaluation is feelings when evaluating the prospects for your future. More than half of the surveyed Russians (60%) had positive feelings (hope for the best, joy, optimism), a third (32.5%) – negative (fear and uncertainty), 4% - found it difficult to answer, 2% - noted indifference. Women were more pessimistic about their future than men. 40% of women reported feelings of fear and uncertainty, compared to 27% of men. The respondents in the 50-59 age group were the most concerned about their future, while the respondents in the active working-age – 30-39 years – were more optimistic among them, the percentage of those concerned about their future is lower-30%.

## 5. Discussion

The analysis of the results of the empirical study gave the following findings. The cognitive side of the subjective assessment revealed low satisfaction with the financial situation. The lowest rates are among women, people over 40 years of age, and rural residents. The indicators are slightly higher for young people under 30 years of age and citizens. This is explained, in our opinion, for the following reasons. Women, to a greater extent than men, manage the family budget, are engaged in raising children, and arranging everyday life, and solve everyday issues. For people over the age of 40, a significant part of the family budget is spent on the maintenance and education of children. In rural areas, compared to the city, the standard of living is lower, and there are fewer opportunities for purchasing material goods (Diener, 2000).

The state of health of the population, judging by subjective assessments, causes serious concerns. Low subjective ratings are caused, in

our opinion, primarily by the negative emotional background on which most of the country's population lives. This is compounded by low rational assessments of their security in society. The lowest ratings are for women who are obviously worried not only about themselves personally but also about their children (d'Errico, Grazioli, & Pietrelli, 2018; Heintzelman, 2018).

Most of the population, according to cognitive assessments, is adapted to modern conditions. The level of adaptation decreases with age. People of pre-retirement age have the lowest scores. Among the same age group, there are the most negative assessments of access to quality education. Subjective estimates of satisfaction with the realization of non-material social needs and self-realization are lower than estimates of satisfaction with the implementation of material needs. This is also indicated by the high level of concern about what is happening in the country, the attitude to the operation of the principles of social justice and equality in society. To a greater extent, issues of public life affect the social well-being of citizens and people of middle and older age. In the affective aspect of subjective assessment, negative emotions prevail, especially in women and pre-retirement age.

The all-Russian sociological survey on social well-being was based on identifying a subjective assessment of living conditions. The subjective assessment contained a cognitive (rational) aspect and an affective (emotional) one. The goal was to determine the influence of personal and social determinants on the subjective assessment. Data analysis showed that the rational side of subjective assessment is influenced by personal determinants: gender, age, and place of residence of respondents. Satisfaction with material goods, the fulfillment of social needs, self-realization, and security is lower among women, people aged 40-59 years, and residents of rural areas. Social determinants (justice, social equality, political rights, freedom, etc.) have a more significant impact on the social well-being of citizens, women, and people of pre-retirement and retirement age. In the affective aspect of subjective assessment, there are more negative emotions in women and pre-retirement age.

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