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## **A sociological Analysis of the Factors Affecting social Inequality and the Feeling of Inequality in Isfahan**

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### **Abstract**

Inequality is originally based on the differences that the society considers in treating individuals, and the reasons for making such differences lie in factors such as social class, race, ethnicity, sex and religion which are socially defined. The abstract and mental feelings of the members of the society and their perception of inequality are more important than the concrete and objective inequality and the important condition for its emergence is social comparison which brings relative deprivation and the feeling of inequality. This research aims to analyze the amount of social inequality and the feeling of inequality as well as the factors affecting them. The present paper is a survey (with regard to controlling the conditions of the research) and also is an explanatory study. The research population includes all citizens of Isfahan who are 15 years old or above at the time of the research and the sample includes 696 cases. The data was collected using a questionnaire. For data analysis, multi- variable regression and structural equations modeling were used. The results indicate that the coefficient of determination for social inequalities is  $R=.61$ . In addition, based on  $\beta$  value, luxury, need satisfaction, age, religion, rationality, propaganda and generalized trust affected social inequality respectively. Also, the coefficient of determination for the feeling of inequality was  $R=.69$  and based on  $\beta$  value, materialistic values, individualism, formal trust, religion, rationality, need satisfaction, social closure, feeling of belonging, luxury affected the feeling of inequality respectively. In sum, the results indicated that the actual level of social inequality is average (2.7) and the feeling of inequality is high (3.2) among the participants.

**Key words:** social inequality, feeling of inequality, social comparison, social class, feeling of relative deprivation.

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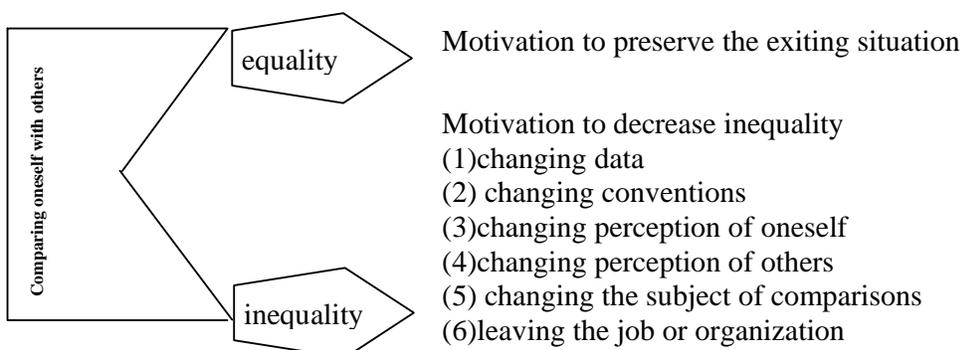
### Statement of the problem

Conceptually, inequality means lack of equality and equality is defined as the situation in which specific characteristics are distributed fairly among the units. These units can be groups, individuals, countries, etc (Firebaugh, 2003). Historically, the theory of equality focuses on perceived justice in the rewards distributed among individuals (Robins, 2001, p.170). Although economic and social equality and decreasing class differences are among the essential and central values of democratic, socialistic, and Islamic systems, the social structure is such that the inequalities are transmitted as heritage from one generation to another. The studies by Tilly indicate a reciprocal relation between effectiveness and equality and confirm that redistribution under various conditions not only does not stop the growth of inequality but also empowers it (Tilly, 2004, Tilly and Albelda, 1995). In addition, social status and enjoying political advantages and other economic privileges related to the whole society (and government) are distributed unequally among different groups and generations. It can be said that social distance along with injustice can turn the inequalities into a chronic and important social problem. As a result, it not only leads to great differences in income and the distribution of wealth and other life facilities among different levels of the society but also leads to differences in the amount of life facilities and necessities like cars, houses, education of children, optimal health services, and the way of spending leisure time, both qualitatively and quantitatively (Ansari, 1378: 3). Social inequality has different dimensions such as financial (income) inequality, political inequality, educational inequality, sex inequality, job inequality and race inequality; and each of these

plays an important role in forming social inequalities. The phenomenon of social inequality like many other social phenomena is a social problem which requires the generalized attention of the members of society and general awareness of people. Indeed, mental picture of people and their perceptions of inequality is even more important than real and concrete inequality which has emerged because of collective discouragement and decreases collective tolerance. In other words, social isolation decreases social tolerance and makes the grounds for feeling and perceiving inequality (because differences are not accepted as real and natural phenomena) (Chalabi and Kafi, 2004: 11)

Each feeling rests on a thinking background and has positive and negative evaluation of that background which leads to satisfaction or dissatisfaction, happiness or unhappiness (Budd, 2009). Therefore, if people as the members of the society perceive inequality, they should first evaluate this inequality. This evaluation is based on existing social values. Therefore, the next important factor is that whether the members of a social system consider inequality as a natural or even necessary and functional matter or they feel dissatisfied with it. If people evaluate inequality negatively, they feel relative injustice or relative deprivation. The most important condition for the emergence of this feeling is that people compare themselves with others (Festinger, 1954; Olson, 1986). Actually, if people feel relative deprivation after perceived inequality, the situation is intolerable for the person and it has been caused by comparison (Kashi, 1373: 97).

Probable reactions of the person to the feeling of equality or inequality



Following this feeling of deprivation, members of a society will try to find facilities and ways to remove this feeling. If their attempts or efforts to change the situation and accessing valuable social factors is not successful (for instance, because of people's mentality that blacks the ways of progress and socio – economic promotion), then based on the principle of deprivation – aggression, dissatisfaction and then social contrasts emerge dissatisfaction and then social contrasts and created. It is clear that following these conditions, comparing the amount of one's income to others' (relative income) brings a feeling of inequality which greatly influences the health of the person (Lynch, 2004). Regarding the significance of this issue, this study tries to determine the factors affecting equality and inequality by comparing the feeling of social equality and inequality.

#### **Literature Review:**

Previous research on this issue can be a valuable resource for giving direction to this study and providing theories for the testing and interpretation of the data. So, literature review is important. Therefore, in this section we will review the most important studies and their results about social inequalities and feeling of inequality.

#### **Studies of social inequalities in Iran:**

Some studies have examined social inequality, its reasons and its consequences (Rafipour, 2001). In another study on poverty and inequality in Iran, statistics show that from 1996 to 2004, inflation in urban places has been twice that of the rural places. (Raiis Dana, 2004: 154). Another study has assessed the policies of the government in confronting poverty and social inequality in Iran and has evaluated the institutional capacity of the country for administering the poverty – removing program in future (Hadizanour, 2005: 165). Other studies are about social inequality regarding sex inequality in Iran (Hajivand ,2004).

Regarding job inequality of woman in the society, cultural, financial, and social barriers to employment of women have been mentioned and the only solution proposed is the participation of women in social affairs (Safiri, 2004: 197).

In a comparative – longitudinal study on political development, economic development and social inequality, Chalabi and Akbari attempted to investigate the effects of the levels of political and economic development on social inequalities (Chalabi and Akbari,2004: 28). Qozntez(1953/ 1955), the economic historian, on the basis of data

of history of industrial societies found a paraboloid (reversed U) relation between economic development and inequality in distribution of income. Based on this pattern, in the process of industrialization in the long –term, at first, inequality increases and then decreases (Chalabi and Akbari,2005: 29).

#### **Research on social inequalities outside of Iran**

The report of World Bank (2003) says that 5 percent of the richest people of the world earn 114 times more than 5 percent of the poorest. According to world Economic forum at Davos, the middle class in all the world except China and India is going to disappear (Moosavi, 2006: 16). David Anker (2001) studied the job differences and discrimination in the payment of salary because of gender (male and female). Other studies have investigated gender inequality (in education and employment) and its effects on growth and development. The results indicated that inequality in education has direct influence on economic growth due to decreases in human resources (Klasen, 1999 , Villarreal ,2002). Studies undertaken by Lobao on inequality in rural society are distinguished from other studies because of their focus on the effects of “space” on stratification (Lobao, 2004. Deaton presented a mechanism to study the effects of inequality in income on the health of individuals. The results of his study indicated that fair distribution of wealth among the poor class leads to an increase in the mean of health (Deaton, 2002) Another study investigated the effects of the decrease in the relation of the United States with developing countries, which provided cheap products for the U. S., on the shopping cart of rich and poor families. The results indicated that the differences in the goods bought by rich and poor families are not significant and this has led to a developing of

inequality in American society (Broda, 2008) In another study on racial discrimination in the United states, it was revealed that since black people on average have lower levels of education compared with white people, this attitude of the employers makes them to have jobs which require little education(Waldinger and Lichter, 2003).

#### **Studies on the feeling of equality and inequality:**

The results of the national survey of Iranians’ values and views towards their feeling of social justice (administered biannually by the office of national plans of the ministry of Islamic culture and guidance) reveals that generally, the amount of feeling of inequality and social injustice is rather high among the citizens (Moniri, 2004: 63).In another study on the growth of inequality in Iran, and the feeling of inequality in Iran, and the feeling of inequality in Tehran, it was revealed that the mean of feeling of inequality is 3.84 which shows high level of Feeling of inequality among the population (Samadi, 2001). Another research studied the effects of the feeling of gender inequality on encouraging social activities in female university students (Dehnavi, 2005). Another study has investigated the sociological factors affecting the feeling of injustice among the teachers in Zanjan. The results show that seven variables (organizational justice, feeling of deprivation, expected needs, place of living, perception of justice, feeling of belonging, and education) had the most effects on the feeling of injustice (Mardani, 2007).

#### **The Theoretical Framework of the Study:**

Inequality is the most unpleasant phenomenon of social life and is the most inhumane regarding its effects and consequences. At the same time, no doubt, it is the most familiar phenomenon of social life. All the times in all civilizations,

inequality has been actively present in social life and it should be said that the survival of civilizations and social life depends on inequality; which is the most unpleasant and inhumane phenomenon of social life. The theoretical framework of this study is based on the ideas of the theoreticians of social inequalities and feeling of inequality such as Parsons, Marx and Weber (social inequality), Gordon and Barbalet, feeling, Staffer, and Merton (Feeling of relative deprivation), Adams, Adfer (feeling of inequality), Festinger (social comparison). Parsons believes that social systems have different dimensions, one of which is stratification. He believes social stratification is a general aspect of social systems an essential element of social organization found in all societies. His ideas about social stratification can be summarized as follows: because social interactions have goals, therefore, selection is at work, People evaluate the interactions, so, selection leads to evaluation. Therefore, Parsons defines stratification as the classification of units based on the criteria of a system of shared values in a social system. Marx's methodology in describing social inequalities can be considered easy and clear. In Marx's view, man is the creation of labor and labor itself is realized through modes of production. In the framework of each mode of production, relations are formed based on ownership which guarantee class inequalities. Contradiction and quarrel is according to Marx the feature of these relations which is the indispensable consequence of inequality. The basis of Marxian method is to understand inequality from the vantage point of class contrast and quarrel and understanding principles and forms of ownership. According to Marx, private ownership is the main factor for the emergence of the gap (inequality) among people, and this gap has always been there

between owners (the rich) and non-owners (not rich). (Gereb, 1994: 30). Weber's views are an explanation and complementary to Marx's views regarding social inequalities. Weber's views about social inequalities expand Marx's views on this subject. But this expansion has found broader, more sociological and theoretical horizons. According to Giddens, although Weber's approach to social stratification is based on Marx's analysis, there are two major differences between the two:

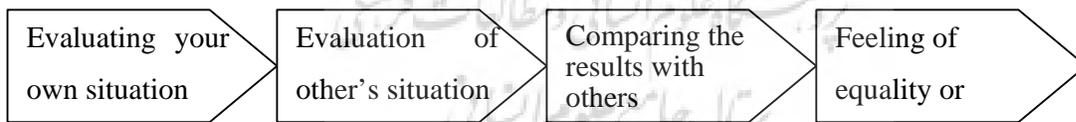
First, although Weber accepts Marx's view that class is based on economic conditions that are really determined, he identifies more economic factors than what Marx has identified. According to Weber, class divisions not only result from the lack of control of the means of production, but also result from economic differences which have no direct relations with property. These resources include skills, educational certificates and conditions which influence the kinds of jobs people can get. Second, Weber detects two other essential aspects of stratification besides class. One is status and the other is group. Indeed, he has taken the concept of high class from middle ages and has used the word "stand" which has two meanings in German (Giddens, 1999: 225). Generally, the most typical feature of Weber's analysis of class structure is pluralism. Despite different portrayals of stratification, Weber follows the Marxian pattern for social stratification when he talks about class structures of different periods and about social stratification and class (Weber, 1947: 424- 429; cited in Zahedi, 2006: 205).

Along this line, the mental feelings of members of the society and their perception of inequality is also very important. Tilly does not consider inequality as the consequence of relations but considers it as the relations. Therefore, inequality

is among individuals or groups of people among whom interactions lead to more profits for one person or one group compared with other (Tilly, 2000). The most important condition for the emergence of this feeling after inequality is that people compare themselves with others and then feel relative deprivation and if it is accompanied by negative evaluation, they will feel the inequality. Regarding the feeling of injustice, Hegtvedt and Markovsky believe that people complain about injustice when the profits they receive are less than what they had expected. They divided justice into two levels of personal and social injustice. At the personal level, people complain about injustice when the profits they receive are not what they expected or are less than what they expected or deserve. Expectations result from “knowledge of the norms of distribution” or “modes of distribution” , “perceiving and understanding the situation” , and “comparing that situation with past experiences or with other people or with reference groups”. For instance, people may naturally feel to be treated unfairly

when their wages are lower than their colleagues with equal experience and work hours. Or women may feel to be treated unfairly when they have full – time jobs besides doing house work while their husbands just do the jobs they receive money for and they do not participate in house work as much. At the social level, mental evaluations are greatly influenced by things that are considered to be fair (political and social); for instance, the democratic party in the U.S., whose members are traditionally come from the labor farce and the minorities, has many times emphasized that the government should provide the minimum necessities of life for the people while the republican party, whose members are mostly the rich and the business community, believes that market should provide the minimum necessities of living. Differences in the standards of living is generally related to “income and wealth among classes with economic justice or justice in stratification systems (Hegtvedt and Markovsky, 2008).

**The four – staged process through which the perception of inequality is formed:**



**Comparison of income in the form of proportions:**



In sociology, the causes of the emergence of feelings have been investigated from different viewpoints: in Exchange theory, feeling is considered as the mental reaction to social stimulations. According to this theory, social

structure causes feeling (Gordon 1985, cited in Rafipoor, 2001: 12). In addition, Barbalet believes that the relations of social structures at macro – level can produce feelings and this includes not only the feelings of contrast and social inequality

but also cultural patterns and provides the basis of social behavior (Barbalet, 2002). The theory of relative deprivation was formed by A. S Staffer, et al. (1949) and expanded by Morton (1957). Morton says that people generally feel deprived when they compare their own situation with other individuals' or groups' with a negative perspective. These comparisons can be made with people to whom they have interactions or with those with whom they have no interactions. The point is that the person who compares actually selects which group to use as reference. (Abercrombie, 1994: 318). In Gurr's view, the density and depth of relative deprivation is related to the individuals' mental perception of the distance between expectations and the possibilities of need satisfaction. The more the distance between expectations (or the feeling of need) and the possibilities of need satisfaction (inequality in finding access to facilities), the more the feeling of relative deprivation and injustice (Gurr, 1967). Harvi believes that the meaning of relative deprivation which is mainly similar to the concept of feeling of need is generally combined with the concept of reference group (Harvi, 1997: 102-3). On this basis, then, S. T. C. Adaffer says that the employees are willing to be treated fairly. This means that the person first evaluates the behavior of the organization with himself and then evaluates the behavior of the organization with others. Then, he compares the two behaviors and finally compares the results of evaluations and of course situations are compared as well. The result of such comparisons is feeling of equality and inequality. The feeling of Inequality appears either in the form of negative feeling of inequality or positive feeling of inequality. Negative feeling of inequality appears when the person feels that he receives less rewards for his efforts compared with others.

Contrary, positive feeling of inequality appears when the person feels that he receives more rewards for his strivings compared with others, and both feelings of inequality lead to motivation (Ghasemi and Najafi, 2007: 8). Festinger's social comparison states that when the exhibition of wealth to others starts in a society and on the other hand, different kinds of needs are created for people, an epidemic disease spreads throughout the society. All groups, rich or poor want the things that usually the rich have or have been turned into values in the society. From this point on, then social comparisons start. People compare themselves with others of the same rank or with people who are a little higher than them and if they feel inferior, they feel injustice and deprivation. In such situations, material things such as car, clothing, jewelry, etc. turn into values (become valuable) for the middle class. Willingness to be superior than others and gaining value and respect lead to comparison and feeling of relative deprivation and make them to prepare such things. The results of a research (Rafipoor, 2001: 208) indicate that 83.7% of people who have the feeling of inequality, have compared by themselves with others

### Research Hypotheses

Since this study has investigated the relations between social inequalities and the feeling of inequality or different groups, in the formulation of hypotheses, the relations of independent variables with social inequalities as well as feeling of inequality have been assessed. The hypotheses are as follows:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a relationship between social capital of residents and social inequalities (feeling of inequality)

**Hypothesis 2:** There is a relationship between need satisfaction of residents and social inequalities (feeling of inequality)

**Hypothesis 3:** There is a relationship between religious attitudes of residents and social inequalities (feeling of inequality)

**Hypothesis 4:** There is a relationship between luxury of residents and social inequalities (feeling of inequality).

**Hypothesis 5:** there is a relationship between individualism and social inequalities (feeling of inequality).

**Hypothesis 6:** There is a relationship between being impressed by propaganda and social inequalities (feeling of inequality)

**Hypothesis 7:** There is a relationship between social closure and social inequalities (feeling of inequality)

**Hypothesis 8:** There is a relationship between materialistic values of residents and social inequalities (feeling of inequality)

**Hypothesis 9:** There is a relationship between rationality of residents and social inequalities (feeling of inequality).

**Hypothesis 10:** there is a relationship between background variables (such as ..... )and social inequalities (feeling of inequality)

#### **Definition of concepts (variables):**

##### **- Social capital**

Social capital is the structural resources in the social network and social relations which facilitates specific interactions in the social structure and includes such dimensions as trust (formal, informal, generalized), participation (civil, social), and feeling of belonging (Coleman, 1988).

##### **-Luxury**

Luxury is made up of two parts. “luxury” which means “decorating”, and “ity” which means “having the tendency” or “willingness”. (Moein, 1984: 1032). In other words, luxury means willingness towards artificial beauties.

##### **- Religious attitude**

Religion is the main factor of inter – group contrast and intra – group unity which brings common values and these common values lead to unity within the society. Therefore, religious life is the key to similarity (Tiriakin, 1373).

##### **-Individualism**

Individualism is “the epidemic dream of the modern society”. This dream is a society made up of independent individuals who try for achieving independent goals and achieve these goals by themselves. The function of this social system is a combination of attempts of these independent individuals (Coleman, 1999).

##### **- Propaganda:**

Propaganda means advertising, publishing or making something known. In propaganda, we try to make an opinion or behavior or a person to be accepted by others (Biroo, 2001: 306).

##### **- Social closure**

Parkin used this expression to determine the relationship between “power” and “social inequality” and inferred that power is the inherent attribute of every social closure and implies the extent of individual’s achievement to resources and chances. He considers two forms for social closure. First, sanction which is the primary tool used by the dominant party to prevent individuals that are under their hegemony from achieving power. Second, usurpation which is the key tool

of the people under hegemony to recapture part of their missed power (Gereb, 1994)

#### **-Materialistic values**

Materialistic values are the optimality and necessity of the standards and principles of immunity and physiological needs. In operational definition, giving importance to immunity matters in society and material issues in personal life is considered as materialistic value (Ghaneirad and Hoseini, 2005: 110).

#### **- Rationality**

Rationality is a concept used by Weber to refer to a process through which the methods of accurate calculation and organizing like abstract rules and methods increasingly dominate the society, and making rational means to reconcile with the rules of wisdom. In the realm of operation, rationality means wise, deliberate, right and efficient accommodation of means with objectives (Saboori, 2005: 17).

#### **Need satisfaction**

“Satisfaction” means giving something to somebody to make him/her satisfied and “need” is the feeling of lack or deprivation experienced by a living creature (especially a human being) in the way of achieving his/her objectives (Biroo, 2001: 242). Therefore, need satisfaction is the removal of this feeling of lacking and finding satisfaction in the way of achieving objectives.

#### **- Background Variables**

Age, sex, job, socio – economic status are among the background variables. Socio- economic status is the person’s position in the social structure (Afroogh, 1998: 284).

#### **Research Method**

Different methods are used in sociological studies. In this study, the method of research is survey and a questionnaire was used that included closed questions and likert-type questions in order to measure dependent and independent variables. For the measurement of each factor, first different variables were considered. Then, using a pilot study and various statistical methods (correlation and alpha coefficient). The population of this study included all citizens of Isfahan who resided in this city at the time of the research. This population was attained by reference to the office of Research and Statistics of central municipality of Isfahan. Based on the census of 2006 conducted by the census center of Iran, the population of Isfahan was 1621263. The sample was selected from this population using Cochran formula and based on the dispersion of the main variables of the research. The sample included 696 cases regarding the highest dispersion. quota sampling based on the three variable of geographical place, place of residence and age range was used., measurement validity which is one of the techniques of construct validity was used for the determination of the validity of the dependent and independent variables. For reliability, Cronbach alpha was employed. The alpha coefficient calculated was 0.60 – 0.90. descriptive statistics were used to have a clear picture of the variables. For testing the hypotheses, different tests were employed based on the level of assessment of the variables. In addition, a multi – variable regression was used to consider the factors and variables collectively. Then, Lisrel model was used as the analytical model of the study.

#### **Findings:**

#### **amount of social inequality**

for assessing social classes of the people based on their properties, three variables were used: facilities of house hold, prices of their cars and their income. In this regard, people from the lower class who had less property were considered as class 1, those whose properties were at the medium level were considered as class 2, and those who possessed the highest properties were considered as class 3.

Based on the means of a 5- point scale, Table 1. indicates that the mean of inequality for class 1 is 3.2; for class 2 is 2.8 and for class 3 is 2.0 and the total mean is 2.7. This shows that the mean of social inequality in class 1 is higher than class 2 and 3. It seems that the chances of mobility can well explain the differences in the means of class 1 (3.2) and class 3 (2.0). Although most people believe that nowadays, in societies, there are many chances of social mobility and people can achieve the highest positions by hardwork, according to Giddens, even in a completely dynamic society in which all members have completely equal chances for achieving the highest positions, only a small minority can take advantage of such chances and only those who

have wealth and power can find access to different ways for promoting their credits and transferring them to their children. Accordingly, the people of class 3 can provide their children with the best education and it leads them to good jobs. Meanwhile, the rich have found the ways of transferring their properties to their children in spite of different taxes and supervising systems. Studies about the rich reveal that few of them have started from the scratch. In fact, most of the rich have started by the heritage reached them or at least by the suitable amount of money given to them at the beginning, and by using this they have succeeded to gain more money and reach a position and keep it for themselves. For this reason, social inequality in class 3 is lower than class 2 and it is lower is class 2 than class 1. However, about the feeling of inequality, it differs that we will explain it later. Collectively, considering the amount of F(86.31) and the degree of significance (0.000), with .95% confidence, we can predict the increase of social inequality in class 1 compared to the other two classes.

**Table 1. The dispersion of participants based on the amount of their social inequality**

Classes social inequality	Class 1		Class 2		Class 3		Class 4	
	number	Percent of class						
Very low	0	0	21	4.6	12	15.2	33	4.7
Low	25	15.4	168	36.9	53	67.1	246	35.3
Average	81	50.0	209	45.9	13	16.5	303	43.5
High	47	29.0	53	11.6	1	1.3	101	14.5
Very high	9	5.6	4	0.9	0	0	13	1.9
Total	162	100	455	100	79	100	696	100
Mean of a five – grade scale	3.2		2.8		2.0		2.7	

F= 86.31

sig= 0.000

**Feeling of inequality**

In the first evaluation based on the achieved percents of table 2, it can be said about feeling of inequality that the direction of this feeling is upward and the highest frequency relates to the choice “nowadays, the right of anyone who does not have money and connections is violated”, with 74.3 percent “agreed” and “completely agreed” answers .The distribution of the scores of the

participants about the feeling of inequality in society is not normal and it has negative skewedness with at least 95% confidence. In addition, the comparison of the two hypothetical means on the range of evaluating feeling of inequality reveals a significant difference with the mean of 40.33 and the total of 36. Generally speaking, it can be said that in the population under study, the feeling of inequality is high.

**Table2. Distribution of participants feeling of inequality**

Choice Answer	Completely disagreed	disagreed	So -so	agreed	Completely agreed	mean	Standard deviation	No answer
every years, In our society the rich become richer and the poor become poorer.	2.3	11.5	13.5	35.3	36.6	3.39	1.08	0.7
Nowadays, the rights of anyone who does not have money and connections are violated.	1.6	10.1	13.5	39.5	34.8	3.96	1.02	0.6
Nowadays, the government treats all people equally.	26.6	23.0	28.9	13.1	7.0	2.50	1.22	1.4
The difference between the incomes of the poor and the rich is necessary for the progress of society.	25.6	23.3	25.9	17.2	6.5	2.55	1.23	1.6
in administrative jobs.Women perform weakly compared with men	29.9	33.5	17.7	13.2	5.2	2.30	1.18	0.6
It is a risk to give the surgical knife to women	31.6	32.3	20.5	9.5	4.7	2.22	1.14	1.3
Nothing is in its place in our country.	3.6	7.8	24.7	27.0	35.9	3.85	1.11	1.0
Resources and income are fairly distributed among different groups in our society.	46.6	33.3	13.4	4.6	1.3	1.80	0.93	0.9
The grounds for activity are prepared for women besides men in our society.	8.3	16.4	20.1	45.0	8.8	3.30	1.11	1.4
The social status of women is dependent on the authority of their husbands.	5.5	19.0	33.0	30.5	10.2	3.21	1.05	1.9
Nowadays, if the rights of a person are violated, he/ she can retain it through the law.	14.8	24.9	31.0	22.1	6.3	2.80	1.14	0.9
In our society, more facilities are given to those who are more qualified.	35.6	29.5	20.5	9.8	3.6	2.15	1.12	1.0
Feeling of inequality	Very low	Low	average	High	Very high	Mean- median	Standard deviation	Total
Frequency	13	66	209	286	122	40.33	5.62	696
Percent	1.7	9.4	29.9	41.1	17.3	41	-	100

### The amount of feeling of inequality

Answers to all questions (choices) used for evaluating the variable of feeling of inequality in the three classes indicate that feeling of inequality among the three groups and throughout the sample is high. As Table 2. indicates “very low” feeling of inequality is not observed among the participants of class 3 and the highest frequency among the people of the three groups is average and high. In fact, feeling of inequality among 78.4 percent of participants of class 1 and among 73.8 percent of participants of class 2 and among 92.4 percent of participants of class 3 is average and high. Of course, it should be noted that feeling of inequality is not the same among the three groups and class3 feel inequality more than the other two classes which is predictable for the whole population under study based on the amount of F (5.54) and level of significance (0.004). According to Plato, human’s natural tendency to have need and greed is the main reason of inequality. Of course, it does not mean that it is

right by nature. Plato believes that people’s voracity, amusement and luxury is the reason of many problems. They do not suffice a simple life and become profiteer and jealous. They become exhausted with what they have and feel sorry for what they do not have and feeling of inequality an class discrimination arises here. Therefore, among the people of class three who favor more facilities and enjoyed these facilities, this feeling forms more. On the other hand, due to the development of social relations and increase of mass media, the ground for more comparisons is provided. Analysis of Table 3 indicates that feeling of inequality is more important than inequality itself. It is because a society in which there is feeling of inequality, there is inequality too. Of course, there may be inequality but people do not perceive it because of lack of awareness or getting accustomed to these circumstances; however, when there is the feeling of inequality, it confirms that there is inequality as well.

**Table 3. Dispersion of participants based on the amount of feeling of inequality among them within the social classes**

Feeling of inequality	Class 1		Class 2		Class 3		Total	
	number	Percent	number	Percent	number	Percent	number	Percent
Very low	3	1.9	15	3.3	0	0	18	2.6
Low	27	16.7	86	18.9	4	5.1	117	16.8
Average	79	48.8	188	41.3	25	31.6	292	42.6
High	48	29.6	148	32.5	48	60.8	244	35.1
Very high	5	3.1	18	4.0	2	2.5	25	3.6
Total	162	100	455	100	79	100	696	100
Mean of a five – grade scale	3.1		3.1		3.6		3.2	

F=5.54

sig= 0.004

**Comparison of social inequality and feeling of inequality**

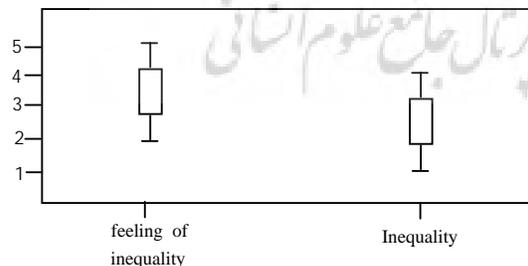
The mean of comparison of social inequality and feeling of inequality indicates that feeling of inequality (3.2) in society is more than real inequality (2.7). In the modern life, the relation of man with the environment is basically changed and has led to this belief that we can change life and this belief has stimulated him and made him self – aware. Therefore, in the modern world, people become more sensitive and their self –

awareness increases and social matters develop. On this basis, it is detectable that feeling of inequality is more than real inequality itself . As Table 5 reveals, The highest concentration of feeling of inequality relates to high and average levels. However, this concentration about social inequality relates to low and average levels. Collectively, regarding the amount of t(-21.74) and the level of significance (0.000), this difference in the two means can be generalized to the whole population with 95% confidence.

**Table 5. comparing social inequality and the feeling of social inequality**

Inequality Level of answers	Social inequality		Feeling of social inequality	
	number	Percent	number	Percent
Very low	33	4.7	18	216
Low	246	35.3	117	16.8
Average	303	43.5	292	42.0
High	101	14.5	244	35.1
Very high	13	1.9	25	3.6
Total	696	100	696	100
Mean of a five – grade scale	2.7		3.2	

t= -21.74 P= 0.000



**Comparing social inequality and feeling of inequality**

**Hypotheses testing:**

As table 6 indicates, the results of hypotheses testing are as follows:

**Individualism:** This variable has positive correlation with social inequality and this correlation is meaningful. The correlation

coefficient with social inequality is ( $r=0.152$  ++)  
and with feeling of inequality is ( $r= 0.294$ ++).

**Luxurity:** There was no significant relationship between this variable and social inequality. However, there was direct, significant relationship between luxury and feeling of inequality ( $r = 0.206$ ++).

**Social closure:** there was no meaningful relationship between social closure and social inequality but there is direct, significant relationship between this variable and feeling of inequality ( $r =0.330$ ++).

**Religious attitude:** There is no meaningful relationship between religious attitude and social inequality. But, the results reveal meaningful relationship between religious attitude and feeling of inequality. This relation is indirect and ( $r = - 0.235$ ++).

**Propaganda:** There is direct, significant relationship between being influenced by propaganda and social inequality ( $r= 0.147$ ++). In addition, There is indirect significant relationship between being influenced by propaganda and feeling of inequality. The amount of this correlation is ( $r = 0.097$ ++).

**Rationality:** There is indirect relationship between rationality and social inequality ( $r= - 0.190$ ++). There is no significant relationship between rationality and feeling of inequality.

**Social capital:** There are significant, indirect relationships between social capital and social inequality and also between social capital and feeling of inequality. This means that if the amount of social capital increases among the

citizens, the amount of social inequalities and feeling of inequality decreases. As the table indicates, the correlation coefficient between social capital and social inequalities is ( $r= - 0.105$ ++) and between social capital and feeling of inequality si ( $r= -0.392$  ++).

**Materialistic values:** There is direct, significant relationship between materialistic values and social inequality ( $r= 0.170$ ++). Also, there is direct, significant relationship between materialistic values and feeling of inequality ( $r= 0.167$ ++).

**Need satisfaction:** As Table 6. indicates, the correlation coefficient of need satisfaction with social inequality is ( $r = -0.276$ ++). It also has indirect, significant relationship with feeling of inequality ( $r= -0.332$ ++).

**Age:** There was no significant relationship between age and social inequality but as Table 6 reveals, there is significant relationship between age of participants and feeling of inequality. The coefficient is  $r= 0.125$  at 0.001 level of significance.

**Sex:** Feeling of inequality has a significant difference among men and women participating in this study. In other words, Sex affects feeling of inequality. Comparing the means, it can be concluded that feeling of inequality among men (mean = 41.16) is higher than this feeling among women (mean= 37.86).

**Job status:** There was no significant difference in social inequality between employed and non – employed participants but there was significant difference between job status and feeling of inequality. As Table 6. shows, feeling of

inequality among employed participants (mean= 40.71) is higher compared with non – employed participants (mean =39.01).

**Table 6. social inequality and feeling of inequality and the variables influencing them**

Variables influencing social inequality and feeling of inequality	Social inequality		Feeling of social inequality	
	Level of significance(SIG)	Correlation r	Level of significance(SIG)	Correlation r
Individualism	0.001	0.294	0.001	0.152
Luxury	0.001	0.206	-	-
Social closure	0.001	0.330	-	-
Religious attitude	0.001	- 0.235	-	-
Propaganda	0.001	-0.097	0.001	0.147
rationality	-	-	0.001	- 0.190
Social capital	0.001	-0.392	0.001	-0.105
Materialistic values	0.001	0.167	0.001	0.170
Need satisfaction	0.001	-0.332	0.001	-0.276

**Table 7. Age of participants and feeling of social inequality**

Variable	(r)	Level of significance (SIG)
Feeling of inequality	0.125	0.001

**Table 8. sex of participants and social inequality and its dimensions**

	Sex	Number (N)	Mean	t- value	Level of significance(SIG)
Social inequality	Male	521	15.65	- 0.092	0.36
	Female	171	15.84		
Feeling of inequality	Male	521	41.16	6. 88	0.000
	Female	171	37.86		

**Table 9. Job status of participants and social inequality and its dimensions**

Dimensions of inequality	Job status of participants	N	Mean	t- value	Level of significance
Social inequality	Employed	546	15.64	- 1.17	0.24
	Non – employed	137	15.91		
Feeling of inequality	Employed	546	40.71	3.18	0.002
	Non - employed	137	39.01		

### Analysis of multi – variable regression

As the results of regression in Table 10 indicates, multi – variable correlation between social inequality and the factors influencing it is 0.76. Coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) shows that 0.61 of variance of social inequality is determined by the independent variables of the regression

equation which are significant as indicated in Table 11. Among the variables shown in Table 11, based on the level of significance of  $t$  and the amount of  $\beta$  ( beta coefficients), luxury, need satisfaction, age, religious attitude, rationality, propaganda, generalized trust determined social inequality respectively.

**Table 10. multi – variable regression for explanation social inequality**

Multiple R (correlation coefficient)	$R^2$ determination coefficient	$R^2$ adjusted determination coefficient	Standard deviation	F equation	Level of significance
0.76	0.61	0.60	843.3724	121.8615	0.000

**Table 11. Multi – variable regression coefficients for social inequality**

Statistics variables	Standard $\beta$ coefficients	T value	Level of significance	Collinearity Statistics	
				Tolerance	VIF
Constant		-5.099	0.000		
Age	0.305	5.824	0.000	0.068	14.727
Individualism	-0.154	-0.628	0.530	0.024	40.904
Luxury	0.362	5.763	0.000	0.051	19.583
Social closure	0.033	0.765	0.445	0.134	7.476
Religious attitude	-0.192	-0.755	0.010	0.038	26.360
Propaganda	-0.157	-1.811	0.000	0.128	7.813
Rationality	0.180	4.422	0.026	0.032	31.529
Formal trust	-0.102	-1.614	0.107	0.034	29.096
Informal trust	0.103	0.842	0.400	0.031	31.757
Generalized trust	-0.138	-1.619	0.047	0.043	23.228
Civil participation	-0.036	-0.114	0.909	0.440	2.272
Social participation	0.089	-0.657	0.512	0.073	13.717
Feeling of belonging	0.023	0.756	0.450	0.149	6.854
Materialistic values	0.165	-1.841	0.066	0.026	38.862
Need satisfaction	-0.343	4.564	0.000	0.042	23.720

Based on results Table 12, multi – variable correlation coefficient for feeling of inequality and the factors influencing it is 0.81 which is quite significant considering the amount of F (1032. 1525) and level of significance (0.000). The determination coefficient ( $R^2$ ) indicates that 0.69 of variance of feeling of inequality is determined by materialistic values, individualism,

informal trust, formal trust, religious attitude, rationality, need satisfaction, age, social closure, feeling of belonging, luxury respectively considering level of significance and beta coefficients of the variables. 0.31 ( $K^2$ ) of remaining variance is determined by other variables.

**Table 12. multi – variable regression for explanation social inequality**

Multiple R (correlation coefficient)	$R^2$ determination coefficient	$R^2$ adjusted determination coefficient	Standard deviation	F equation	Level of significance
0.81	0.69	0.68	4.77582	1032.1525	0.000

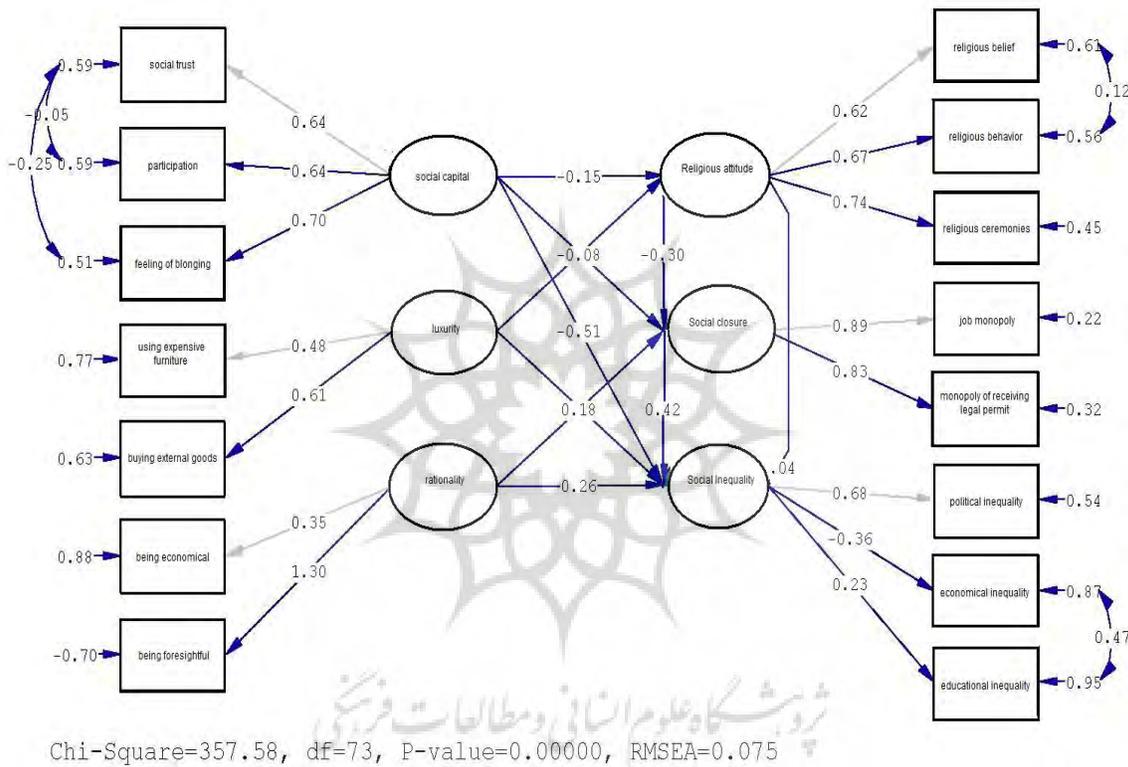
**Table 13. Multi – Variable regression coefficients for feeling of inequality**

Statistics variables	Standard $\beta$ coefficients	T value	Level of significance	Collinearity Statistics	
				Tolerance	VIF
Constant		12.340	0.000		
Age	0.078	3.447	0.101	0.068	14.731
Individualism	0.224	6.113	0.013	0.024	40.904
Luxury	0.057	2.272	0.000	0.051	19.583
Social closure	0.076	5.918	0.000	0.134	7.476
Religious attitude	0.143	5.251	0.144	0.038	26.360
Propaganda	-0.021	-1.221	0.000	0.128	7.813
Rationality	0.131	4.266	0.000	0.032	31.529
Formal trust	-0.145	5.832	0.000	0.034	29.096
Informal trust	0.148	5.902	0.073	0.031	31.757
Generalized trust	0.045	1.159	0.300	0.043	23.228
Civil participation	-0.008	-1.290	0.091	0.440	2.272
Social participation	-0.032	1.188	0.000	0.073	13.717
Feeling of belonging	-0.058	4.424	0.000	0.146	6.862
Materialistic values	0.267	8.803	0.002	0.026	38.862
Need satisfaction	-0.079	-3.127	0.001	0.042	23.720

**Modelling structural equations:**

In this section, we are going to measure construct validity and goodness of fit index using Lisrel software (Ghasemi, 2005). In this model of measurement, the coefficients relating overt variables to covert variables are manifested by  $\lambda$  and the coefficients showing the influence of

external covert variables on internal covert variables are manifested by  $\gamma$  and the coefficients showing the influence of internal covert variables on internal covert variables are manifested by  $\beta$ . After conducting the program and doing the necessary changes, the following model for the hypotheses and the relations appeared:



**Model 1. structural model of social inequality**

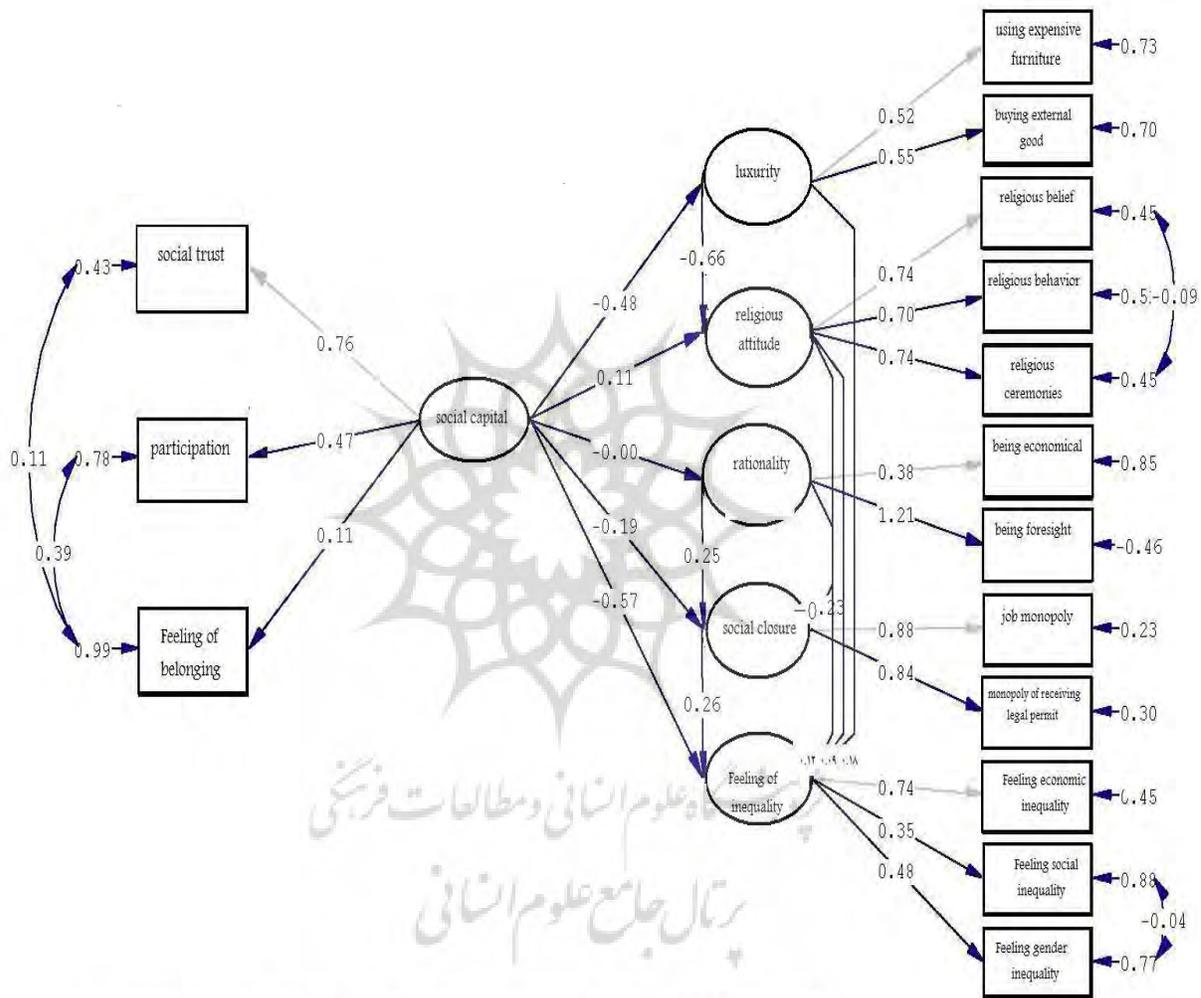
Model 1. has investigated construct validity of social inequality and goodness of fit index (GFI). In the measurement section as the model indicates, most covert variables have been appropriately loaded and the variables which suffered lower frequencies were ignored. The structural part of the model indicates that social capital (-0.51) and social closure (0.42) determined the highest variance of social inequality. The model shows the goodness of fit index of the mentioned

structural theory and the construct validity used for measurement.

Since GFI= 0.92 and AGFI = 0.89 are both near to 1, it can be concluded that the model is highly fitted and RMSEA= 0.075 indicates that the remaining variables of the model are weak (of course, since  $\chi^2$  is highly influenced by the size of the sample, and the sample of this study is large, significance or non - significance  $\chi^2$  is not an

appropriate criterion for judgment about the model). As  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  coefficients indicate, social capital has the highest effect on social inequality ( $\gamma = -0.51$ ). This means that if social capital

increases in a society, social inequality decreases in that society. In addition, if social closure increases in a society, social inequality increases in that society as well ( $\beta = 0.42$ ).



Chi-Square=292.43, df=74, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.065

### Model 2. Structural mode of feeling of inequality

Model 2. has investigated construct validity of feeling of inequality and goodness of fit index (GFI) of its structure.

In the measurement section as the model indicates, most covert variables have been appropriately loaded just like Model 1. The structural part of the model indicates that social capital (-0.57) and

social closure (0.26) determined the highest variance of feeling of inequality. As indicated, since GFI=0.95 and AGFI=0.91 are both near to 1, it can be inferred that the model is highly fitted, RMSEA= 0.065 indicates that the remaining variables of the model are weak. As mentioned before,  $\chi^2$  is not an appropriate criterion for judgment about the model. As  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  coefficients show, social capital has the greatest influence on feeling of inequality ( $\gamma = -0.57$ ). This means that if social capital increase in a society, feeling of inequality decrease in that society. Moreover, if social closure increased, feeling of inequality increase as well ( $\beta = 0.26$ ).

#### **Summary and conclusion:**

The present study had two aims: first, to determine the amount of social inequality and feeling of inequality among the citizens of Isfahan, and second, to investigate the factors influencing social inequality and feeling of inequality and comparing them. In theoretical and empirical investigation, such variables as social capital, need satisfaction, religious attitude, social closure, luxury, being influenced by propaganda, rationality, materialistic values, individualism, age, sex, job status were considered in research questions. In general, this study was an attempt to find acceptable and documented answers to research questions.

#### **The most important results of data analysis are as follows:**

- collectively, the amount of social inequality among participants is low towards average.
- sex inequality among the participants is high and very high.
- Educational inequality among the participants is average.

- political inequality among the participants is high and very high.
- Job inequality among the participants is at average level.
- feeling of inequality which was investigated besides other variables, was at the average to high level.
- the amount of need satisfaction of participants was average to high.
- The amount of religious attitudes of participants in this survey was average and a little high.
- The amount of luxury among the participants was average to high.
- Individualism among the participants was average to high.
- About the question "being influenced by propaganda", cautiously, it can be said that this variable is at the low to average level.
- The amount of social closure among the participants is average to high.
- As the answers indicate, the amount of rationality among the participants is at average to high levels. Collectively, as the results of data analysis show, feeling of inequality with the mean of 3.2 is higher than social inequalities with the mean of 2.7.
- In addition, in multi – variable analysis of data, the determination coefficient ( $R^2$ ) indicates that 0.61 of variance of social inequality has been determined by independent variables existing in the regression equation (Table 11) which are at the significance level. Based on the data (Table 13), multi – variable correlation coefficient between feeling of inequality and the factors influencing it is 81%.
- Also, the determination coefficient ( $R^2$ ) indicates that 0.69 of variance of feeling of inequality has

been determined by independent variables existing in regression equation (Table 13) which are at the level of significance and based on the amount of F (19.85) and the level of significance (0.000), this relation is very meaningful. Generally, the results indicate that social inequality is at the average level and feeling of inequality is at the high level among the participants. Based on the findings, the amount of social closure, political inequality, feeling of inequality, rationality and luxury, and informal trust have been higher among the participants of class 3. However. The amount of civil participation among the members of this class (class 3) has been considerably lower than the other two classes. The higher rationality and awareness in the well – off class of the society (class 3) as well as the availability of conditions for social closure among them (monopolizing the facilities for themselves) have increased feeling of inequality and political inequality among them. In addition, the greed to accumulation of money and the establishment of feeling of ambition lead them to more luxury, and because of financial pressures on this class which are caused by false needs, civil participation decreases among them. Among the participant of class 2, the amount of feeling of belonging and participation is higher than the participants of the other classes while individualism and materialistic values among them are lower than the other classes. Therefore, if social capital increases, individualism decreases and ultra – materialistic of post – materialistic values develop among people. In addition, the results indicate that the amount of social inequality, religious attitudes and being

influenced by propaganda is higher among the participants of class 1 compared with the other classes. Meanwhile, feeling of belonging, social participation, and need satisfaction are lower in this class compared with the other classes. Lack of the ability (money) to buy, lower level of awareness, extremist traditional and superstitious attitudes increase social inequality and plasticity to propaganda and also face them more with problems in satisfying their needs. Helping those who favor facilities is society is justifiable only when this affluent class devote part of their wealth and profits to improving the life conditions of the dispossessed class of society. Only in this way and with assistance of what Ravells calls “the infrastructure of justice”, can all the members of society find access to “fundamental well – being”. (Ravells, 2002, 26).

#### **Implications and suggestions of the study:**

- Endeavor of authorities for decreasing poverty and social inequality.
- Endeavor of the government for decreasing discrimination and injustice (feeling of inequality).
- Increasing social capital in the society
- Providing equal conditions for satisfying the needs of citizens
- Decreasing luxury in society through giving awareness and providing right patters for using
- Right supervision and direction of mass media in order to decrease the negative effect of propaganda
- Attention of authorities to developing the role of religion in society
- Increasing the level of rationality and awareness of members of society

- Developing the culture of popularism
- Developing post – materialistic values
- Facilitating the access of individuals to resources and opportunities in order to provide justice and equality

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