

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Impact of Changes in Dress Social Norms on the Psychological Well-Being of Society During Reza Shah's Era: Insights from Oral Accounts in Isfahan

Abstract

The rapid collapse of Reza Shah's regime, marked by the military's lack of resistance against Allied forces, the ineffectiveness of the government's administrative system (previously viewed as one of its strengths), and the absence of public opposition to the occupying forces, highlighted a significant level of discontent with the government and a fragile social capital. To understand the factors contributing to this decline in social capital, it is essential to conduct a comprehensive examination of Iranian society across political, economic, and cultural dimensions, with a particular focus on cultural satisfaction and the mental health of the populace.

This article argues that specific cultural measures, such as the enactment of the "Uniform Dress Code" law and the "Kashf-e-Hejab" (unveiling), led to a profound decline in the government's social capital because they conflicted with prevailing social norms and were violently enforced by authorities. Consequently, when the moment came to resist the occupying forces, the Pahlavi government lacked public support.

Key words: Iran, Mental Health, Government, *Kashf-e-Hejab*, Reza Shah

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Introduction

The notion of reforming military, political, economic, and social institutions in Iran began in the early Qajar era, prompted by the nation's defeats at the hands of Russia. Advocated by elites, especially Crown Prince Abbas Mirza, these reforms gained significant momentum during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah and intensified with the Constitutional Revolution, which sought to establish a new governance model. The aspirations of the constitutionalists for the modernization of Iran marked a pivotal chapter in reformist activities, pursued through various means and articulated through diverse narratives. However, these efforts ultimately fell short due to several factors, such as colonial powers' interventions to protect their own interests, a lack of a unified understanding of modernism among political actors, insufficient genuine commitment to change, self-serving tendencies among some participants, the onset of World War I, Iran's coerced involvement in the conflict, and widespread insecurity, famine, poverty, and disease within the country.

Following the failure of reformist activists and leaders to implement their agendas effectively, a shift in perspective emerged among social actors. They began to consider reforms outside the constitutional framework—seeking the rise of a supreme autocratic power under the guise of “*Enlightened Despotism instead.*” Leaders from the constitutionalist movement, particularly those associated with the Democrat Party, posited that a powerful dictator at the helm could facilitate administrative reforms, reduce governmental corruption, spur cultural and economic development, and ultimately enhance public welfare. The reinforcement of this idea, coupled with changes in colonial powers' policies—specifically British policy in the Middle East—culminated in significant intellectual support for the coup d'état that occurred on the 3rd of Esfand, the ascent of Reza Khan, the downfall of the Qajar dynasty, and the establishment of Reza Shah's dictatorship.

While the extent to which this perspective was valid and how well it aligned with Iran's historical, climatic, and geographical realities is not the focus of this article, the trajectory of events reveals that many supporters of the new regime, after a brief period, fell victim to their own naivety and were repressed by the dictatorial government, and ultimately vanished from the political landscape. This article aims to explore the impact of certain cultural reform measures instituted by the dictatorial regime on the mental health of individuals and society.

Actions implemented during the latter years of Reza Shah's dictatorship—such as the enforcement of the Uniform Dress Code law, the *Kashf-e-Hejab* (unveiling), and restrictions on specific religious practices and mourning rituals—while superficially fostering a new, uniform identity for Iranian society, had profound implications for the psychological well-being of the population for numerous reasons. Although the repercussions of these measures were not immediately perceptible, they laid the groundwork for significant future events, including the sudden and unexpected downfall of the dictator and the tragic occurrences that followed World War II in the country.

This article seeks to examine the role of social norms in shaping societal mental health, analyze the effects of cultural measures related to changes in dress and the *Kashf-e-Hejab* on the psychological well-being of society, and address how government coercion and violence in enforcing these laws impacted the mental health of the populace. It hypothesizes that the forced and violent imposition of these social norms led to a decline in the



mental health of society, contributing to a significant decrease in the social capital of the Pahlavi regime.

This research adopts an analytical-historical approach, relying on the examination and analysis of sources and archival materials, with a particular focus on oral accounts gathered from the Hosseiniyeh Honar in Isfahan. The target population for this study encompasses the residents of Isfahan, and as of January 4, 2025 (1403/10/14), no prior research on this specific topic has been documented.

Research Concepts

1- Social Norms

A social norm is a rule or standard that individuals within a society are expected to adhere to, with compliance resulting in positive value judgments. In essence, social norms are specific behaviors grounded in social values, which, when followed, contribute to social order (Nik Gohar, 1990, p. 167). Typically, individuals internalize norms from birth, due to their pervasive presence in everyday life. When an individual or group violates accepted social norms, they are viewed as norm-breakers, a label that carries negative connotations. It can be argued that “*mutual expectations within a group are rooted in the existence of norms and values*” (Tavasoli, 1990, p. 197). According to Émile Durkheim's theory, the two fundamental elements of a social norm are “*desire and commitment*” (Chalabi, 1996, p. 251).

Wilbert Moore suggests that there is a correlation between the values supported by family structures and the economic and social needs of individuals. He posits: “*When behavioral patterns become formalized, administrative, or even directive, they may conflict with prevailing values, resulting in specific social tensions that are often more pronounced at the individual or group level*” (Moore, 2002, p. 134).

In this research, the prevailing and accepted type of dress in society is considered a social value that has been transformed into a norm. Although a distinction exists between values, which are derived from individual and social mental perceptions, and norms, which represent the behavioral patterns of individuals and society, it is undeniable that many individual and collective values, through their persistence, become norms (Cooper, 1985, p. 560). This highlights the complex and dynamic interplay between values and norms, where the former can eventually solidify into the latter, shaping the social fabric and influencing individual behavior.

2- Mental Health

The concepts of health and illness have been understood across different times and cultures throughout human history. However, the definition of what constitutes health in any given period is influenced by various factors, and many definitions and examples have emerged since the time of Aristotle. Historically, health primarily focused on physical well-being, while other dimensions were often overlooked. Today, the World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “*a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity*”. This definition is rooted in human rights principles, emphasizing the pursuit of the highest attainable level of health, and is closely linked to the realization of other individual rights, such as access to food, housing, education, and work. Nevertheless, some scholars argue that this defini-



tion should be reevaluated in light of emerging paradigms (Seifoddini, 2017, pp. 155-165).

Health encompasses both physical and mental dimensions, with this research focusing particularly on the mental aspect. Mental health refers to a state in which an individual recognizes their own abilities, effectively copes with the normal stresses of life, engages in productive work, and interacts positively with society. It includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being and is essential for fulfilling social roles. Individuals can function effectively when they feel healthy and are perceived as healthy by their communities (Noorbala, 2011, pp. 151-156). Importantly, the concept of mental health here extends beyond the mere absence of mental illness; it also encompasses the ability to adapt to environmental conditions and respond appropriately to life's challenges and events, which are crucial aspects of mental well-being.

An individual's mental health is significantly influenced by personal and social factors. Notably, one important dimension of mental health is its spiritual aspect. The spiritual dimension of health includes various components, but in essence, it can be described as the capacity to achieve a sense of well-being, comfort, and true peace through reliance on the Creator, hope in divine presence, and adherence to ethical principles (Omidvari, 2008, pp. 5-17)

3- Mental Health of Society

The concept of social health, or the mental health of society, is complex and multidimensional, and there is no overall consensus regarding its definition. *"The health of a society is measured through its health indicators, while the progress of health is assessed based on the trends in these indicators over time. Indicators are variables that depict and represent existing conditions and can therefore be used to measure changes"* (Mohammadi et al., 2013, pp. 484-491).

The relationship between individuals and society is reciprocal; both can significantly influence each other's mental health. Social health encompasses the positive and negative assessments and attitudes that individuals have toward those with whom they interact in their daily lives. An individual is considered to have social health when they perceive society as a meaningful and beneficial entity for personal growth and development, feel a sense of belonging, are accepted by their community, and engage in societal progress. We view a person as socially healthy when they can participate in social activities and fulfill roles within normal parameters while experiencing a connection to society and its norms.

Social health, along with physical and mental health, is crucial because poor social health can undoubtedly jeopardize the physical and mental well-being of individuals

Research Data

Several cultural measures implemented during the reign of Reza Shah had a profound impact on Iranian society, and the various dimensions of this influence, as well as the motivations behind these actions, have been subjects of debate among historians specializing in contemporary history. Two notable measures, namely the establishment of the Uniform Dress Code Law and the subsequent unveiling of women, have been thoroughly examined from different perspectives by researchers across various fields of the humanities, resulting in hundreds of articles, books, screenplays, and similar works. The



abundance of such productions and opinions makes it unnecessary for us to reiterate and elaborate on these laws in detail. It suffices to mention that the Uniform Dress Code Law, consisting of four articles and eight clauses, was approved on December 27, 1928, during the seventh legislative session of the National Assembly. Reza Shah signed this law following its passage in parliament, in accordance with Article 27 of the supplementary constitutional law, on December 30, 1928, and issued an order for its implementation to the government (Makki, 1995, p. 282). One part of this law states: "*All male citizens of Iran who do not have a specific uniform due to their government employment are required to wear the uniform dress within the country*" (*Change of Dress and Unveiling as Documented in Historical Records*, 1999, p. 17). According to this law, eight categories of individuals, including jurists, religious authorities in villages and townships, Sunni scholars, prayer leaders, narrators, instructors of jurisprudence and principles, and Iranian non-Muslim clergy, were exempted. The law was set to be implemented in cities starting from the first of Farvardin 1308 (March 21, 1929) and in villages and townships from the first of Farvardin 1309 (March 21, 1930). Violators of this law who lived in urban areas faced "*fines ranging from one to five tomans or imprisonment from one to seven days*," while those from rural areas were subjected to "*imprisonment from one to seven days at the discretion of the court*" (The Law on the Uniformity of Dress for Iranian Citizens within the Country, 1928, p. 156). The laws concerning unveiling represent a series of events that occurred following the approval of legislation on January 7, 1936, which prohibited Iranian women and girls from wearing chadors, veils, or headscarves. This law marked the culmination of Reza Shah's policies regarding dress reform, which had begun in 1928.

In this section of the paper, we will first gather and present some data obtained from the enforcement of these laws and the behavior of officials and the government regarding the Uniform Dress Code and unveiling. Then, we will analyze the impact of such actions on the mental health of society and the level of social capital under the Pahlavi regime. It is important to note that this data is based on interviews conducted with numerous residents of Isfahan, many of whom either experienced that era firsthand or recounted their experiences to the interviewer through intermediaries. The volume of these interviews and related opinions was so substantial that it is impossible to include all of them in a single paper. Therefore, we will provide one or two examples for each issue discussed

1- Data Related to Unveiling

The long-standing tradition of hijab, deeply rooted in the history of the people of this land, has long been accepted by society, not only for religious reasons but also as a social norm. It is evident that transitioning away from such a stable and deeply entrenched tradition—regardless of the justification—can cause significant discomfort and generate public dissatisfaction when carried out through violent measures. Following the implementation of the unveiling law, government officials aggressively enforced it, resorting to harsh measures and violations of dignity.

Perhaps those with less allegiance to the regime could more easily resist these laws, but it was considerably more challenging for those connected to the government, including some ministers and civil servants, who held religious beliefs and attachments to tradition. Among the harsh measures was the compulsion for government employees to attend official ceremonies with their wives dressed in the prescribed manner. This situation led to



substantial psychological distress among the populace, particularly within government ranks.

Mohsen Sadr al-Ashraf, the then-Minister of Justice, writes in his memoirs:

"... My wife was absolutely unwilling. She even told me to divorce her and exempt her from this matter... There was an atmosphere of mourning in our home. Ultimately, that night, when a large number of members and others had gathered, my wife reluctantly attended with my daughters... After our return, my wife fell ill and never left the house again until her death a year later, when her body was carried out..." (Sadr, 1985, p. 235)

One of the interviewees, who is the child of a government employee, recounts:

"I heard my father tell my mother: 'It has been ordered from above that all administrative gentlemen must appear at the Chahar-Sutun Palace with their wives unveiled tomorrow.' That night, my father could not sleep. He was in prayer, reading supplications, and his face was wet with tears. Early in the morning, a friend of my father, who was a doctor, visited our home. When he saw my father's condition, he asked about it. He suggested that my father make an excuse to avoid attending. He said, 'I will write that your wife is unwell.' The next day, when my father entered the room, he muttered under his breath: 'You will have to pass over my dead body.' He said: 'Now we will excuse you, but later, whenever we ask, you must bring your wife with you; and that, too, without a chador. Do you see what he said? I would have to pass over my dead body to do such a thing.'" (Ghazvini, 2016, p. 38)

Excuses and justifications were not always effective, and those who defied government mandates sometimes faced disciplinary action. The severity of these measures often depended on the opinions of higher-ranking officials, and employees who transgressed were punished in various ways, including reductions in pay or even the suspension of their salaries.

One interviewee recalled:

"In Isfahan, a government employee was punished because his wife did not accompany him to social gatherings without a chador. He didn't receive his first paycheck after the unveiling, and he ultimately had to bring his wife to the office to demonstrate that she had unveiled. It was orally communicated to government employees in this city that receiving their wages depended on proving that their wives had discarded the chador. As a result, they would take their wives to the office, even briefly, to claim their unveiling compensation."

Those who lacked a systematic connection to the government had more means to resist these stringent laws, and consequently, the government's approach toward them was often harsher and more brutal. The enforcers of these laws among the populace were security personnel, known colloquially as "agents." The severity of their actions in public spaces was much greater, leading to frequent confrontations between the citizens and the agents. One interviewee recounted:

"I've seen the agents, like the day a middle-aged woman threw herself into the entrance of a house. When we reached her, there was a lot of blood around her head. Her skull was fractured. The agent had even followed her into the house. When he saw that the woman had fainted, he turned and left."

Another individual described the following incident:

"... A woman dressed in a long, loose outfit down to her ankles had a large headscarf draped over her head, pulled tightly around her face. An agent came and tried to rip the scarf off her head, but her son stepped in front of him. He was wearing a military uniform. He struck the agent and kicked him in the stomach with his military boots. The mother was standing by, screaming. The son would not back down."

The agents patrolled the alleys on foot, bicycles, or horseback, grabbing women's headscarves, tearing them off, or even confiscating them as trophies when they appeared valuable. One resident of Isfahan recounted:

"... With my own eyes, I saw three mounted policemen chasing after a few women and pulling their headscarves off. Afterward, as they were riding their horses, they stepped down into the headscarves and ripped them apart. Back then, each house had a sewage pit in front of it that would be emptied monthly. One of the policemen picked up a stone from the sewage pit and threw the torn pieces of fabric into it. The women were screaming: 'Help! Help!'"

In some cases, the extreme actions employed by law enforcement officials led to severe psychological and physical consequences for the people, making treatment difficult or even impossible. One individual recounted:

"The wife of Haj Mohammad Hossein stayed with us for three days. We knew her; she was the wife of my father's partner. My grandmother and aunt took care of her during those three days, but she didn't improve. She was still unable to move her hands, pick up food and put it in her mouth, or wash herself or get dressed. They said it was because she was afraid of Mash Ramadan, the agent, and that her hands had become paralyzed."

Another interviewee shared a similar experience: *"My grandfather, Haj Mohammad Jafar, was a respected figure in our community. When he heard about the incident, he rushed to the scene and took the Cossack away on a pretext. Later, he sent word that the alleys were safe for our family to venture out. My mother carried me on her back and ran home as fast as she could. However, a few days later, my sister came home crying hysterically. She had been chased by a Cossack who had torn her chador and left her humiliated. Her face was ashen, and she seemed to have lost all her vitality."*

Despite the extreme actions of some law enforcement officials, not all were as harsh. Some were more lenient and understanding. This rigid enforcement of the law also led some government officials and agents to question the wisdom of their actions and even refuse to carry them out. A relative of one such individual recalled:

"Hajibaba was an educated and literate man from Jarguyeh. In 1296 (1917), he came to Isfahan in search of a job and was assigned to the military band. He became a musician for the army, one of those who practiced marching in the Shah Square of Isfahan. However, an order arrived that he had to be transferred to the Gendarmerie in Tehran. We had to pack our belongings and travel to a new and unfamiliar city. The order mandated the Tehran Gendarmerie to deploy agents to forcibly remove the chador from women and girls forcibly. Hajibaba was so distraught that he wanted to resign from his position, but they refused to accept it. Instead, he sat in protest in the Harunieh shrine, refusing to budge until his con-



cerns were heard. Later, the Gendarmerie arrived with his dismissal order, and Hajibaba was finally able to return home.”

In response to such incidents, many people opted to stay home and avoid public life. Women in particular took great precautions to avoid being caught by the agents. Some would communicate with each other through the walls of their homes, while others would cross rooftops to avoid detection. A family member recalled:

“My mother would often take me with her when she went to the bath, but after that incident, she became too afraid to leave the house. She would stay hidden behind the walls, watching the agents patrol the streets, too afraid to venture out into the public space. It was as if she had lost her vitality, her courage, and her will to live.”

The need to bathe was a particular challenge for women in this era, as they were forced to visit public bathhouses. However, such visits often ended in tragedy, as agents would chase them and try to rip off their chador. One relative recounted the traumatic experience of her family member:

“After that incident, my sister became a recluse, too afraid to venture out into the public space. She would stay hidden behind the walls, watching the agents patrol the streets, too afraid to leave the safety of her home. It was as if she had lost her vitality, her courage, and her will to live.”

Sometimes, the police would lie in wait outside the bathhouses to catch veiled women. One local resident recounted an incident that happened to his sister on her way to the bath:

“... Suddenly, Ali the Agent appeared. In the blink of an eye, he yanked my sister’s scarf off. She crumpled inward, trembling with fear. She pulled out another shawl and threw it over her head. Shaking, she stood up and sat on the bench of Mirza Baqir’s bathhouse. I jumped up and grabbed the corner of her scarf, pleading with the agent to let it go. I kept saying, ‘Please, don’t do this, Agent. Don’t pull my sister’s scarf off.’ It was as if my pleas fell on deaf ears. Without even looking at me, he yanked the scarf from my hands, tore it under his boot, clenched it into a ball, and tossed it into the yard of a nearby house. Then he walked away. I was still staring at the remnants of my sister’s new scarf, scattered on the ground...” (Ahsani, 2018)

Some agents had become so audacious and disregarding of public norms that they would even enter the bathhouses in pursuit of veiled women. A witness described his experience of this situation and the reactions of the people:

“... He chased after her until she reached the entrance of Moshadi Ali Asghar’s bathhouse, which was just a few steps away from the mosque. A neighbor woman jumped inside the bathhouse. Jalaali, as if hunting for something, followed her in. Suddenly, the women in the hallway spotted Jalaali. Their screams filled the air. The women, armed with sticks, descended upon Jalaali...” (Jafari, 2018)

2- Data on Uniform Clothing Laws

The consequences of enforcing these laws were not limited to women; men who did not wear uniforms and the Pahlavi hat also faced harsh treatment. Many officials forcibly cut the hems of traditional long garments or accepted bribes to overlook non-compliance



with the law. One individual recounts: "... *Ayatollah Tabib was reciting a mourning sermon. Everyone was quietly crying. Haj Agha Ahmadi was the homeowner. He would place a couple of coins in the hands of the police chief to ensure they wouldn't interrupt the sermon. He would stand outside the house until the sermon was over, keeping an eye out for the police to make sure they wouldn't show up under the pretext of watering the street...*" (Najafi, 2018)

After the uniform clothing law was enacted, the group most targeted by government officials consisted of clerics and mourners. Due to their religious vocation and the sanctity they attached to their attire, they strongly resisted the implementation of this law. Numerous accounts of such resistance and encounters with officials were shared by interviewees. The child of one of the mourners recalls: "... *But my father wouldn't give in. The government had introduced an exam for those who wanted to wear the cloak and turban. My father was unwilling to participate in the government exam. He would go to people's houses with his cloak and turban to lead the mourning ceremonies. Mourning ceremonies and theatrical reenactments were prohibited. The government did not care if the ceremony was political or not. Wherever they suspected there was a mourning ceremony, they would come and create chaos. The mourner, the homeowner, and the tea server would be taken to the gendarmerie. People secretly held small mourning gatherings in their homes. My father had a beautiful voice and was often invited to lecture and lead the mourning ceremonies. They would open the door slightly, and one person would stand behind the door to keep watch for the police. Anyone familiar would be allowed into the house, while strangers would be discreetly turned away. Once, the village chief's son attended a mourning ceremony. He made a scene, shouting at my father: 'Pack up the mourning ceremony. Don't you know the King has banned it?' Then he grabbed my father and pulled him down from the platform. Suddenly, a ruckus broke out. Three or four of the homeowner's strong sons jumped on the village chief's son and began to hit him. In the end, my father intervened and asked them to let him go...*" (Javadi, 2018)

Another reason many groups of people resisted the uniform clothing laws was the threat posed to their livelihoods. The implementation of such laws jeopardized many jobs associated with specific clothing. One individual recalls: "... *When the law for uniform clothing was enforced, the work of cloak makers and tailors declined, and many shops went out of business. The government set up exams for clerics who had studied religious texts. Those who passed the exam would be recognized as clerics under government supervision. The Ministry of Culture would issue a permit allowing them to wear cloaks and preach. Many clerics refused to participate in an exam run by the British government. The Cossacks would tear cloaks and throw them on the ground. During this time, Fati-meh Sadat vowed to sew new cloaks for forty clerics whose cloaks had been torn by the Cossacks...*" (Ala'eddin, 2018)

The Relationship between Voluntary Dress Code and Mental Health

1- Self-Expression and Individual Identity

Studies indicate that freedom in clothing choices helps individuals better express their identity, which is positively correlated with psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When people are forced to adhere to mandatory dress codes, they may experience identity conflict and reduced life satisfaction (Vohs et al., 2008).



2- Reduced Stress and Anxiety

Research in social psychology has shown that strict dress code restrictions (e.g., rigid laws) can lead to elevated cortisol levels (the stress hormone) and increased anxiety (Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004). In contrast, environments that allow freedom of choice report lower stress levels (Baumeister, 2005).

3- Body Satisfaction and Self-Image

Studies in body image psychology demonstrate that compulsory dress codes can contribute to body dissatisfaction and eating disorders (Cash, 2012). Conversely, voluntary clothing choices are associated with higher body satisfaction and reduced social anxiety (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014).

4- Social Belonging and Isolation

Based on the “*Need to Belong*” theory (Baumeister and Leary, 1995), humans inherently seek social acceptance. If mandatory dress codes lead to feelings of social exclusion, they can harm mental health. Research confirms that clothing freedom enhances perceived social acceptance (Walton, and Carr, 2012).

5- Case Studies in Societies with Mandatory Dress Codes

A study in Iran found that women under compulsory hijab laws reported higher levels of anxiety and depression compared to those in more liberal environments. Another study in Saudi Arabia (before recent reforms) linked dress code restrictions with lower life satisfaction and increased psychological distress (Alomair et al., 2020).

Empirical evidence from social psychology, neuroscience, and cultural studies supports that voluntary clothing choices correlate with higher psychological well-being, reduced stress, and greater life satisfaction. Conversely, mandatory dress codes may lead to identity conflict, anxiety, and weakened social cohesion.

The Impact of Dress Code Laws on Mental Health Indicators and Social Capital

Although there is no universally accepted definition or set of indicators for assessing social health, specific indicators are utilized based on regional contexts (Mohammadi et al., 2013, pp. 484-491). The violent actions perpetrated under the guise of enforcing uniform dress laws by government agents left severe social repercussions, which can be summarized through changes in the following indicators:

1- Perception of Insecurity

One of the critical components of the mental and social health of a community is the feeling of security, which is essential for healthy living and societal development. Any action that leads to a perception of insecurity severely impacts the mental health of society. This feeling is particularly compromised when harm comes from representatives of the government, who are supposed to protect citizens and ensure their security and rights. When government representatives are the source of insecurity, the basic assumptions that people rely upon for a safe and healthy existence are undermined. Unfortunately, once public perceptions shift, it becomes very challenging to return to a previous state of security. Therefore, the way law enforcement officials and government agents interact with



the community serves as a primary factor in creating this perception of insecurity.

2- Distrust in Government

Another crucial element is the public's trust in the government and its decisions. "*Many consider trust to be a fundamental component of any stable social relationship. From this perspective, social order cannot solely rely on power, dominance, and coercion. These elements can only play a temporary role, and without trust, it is impossible to sustain such conditions*" (Mohseni, and Jarollahi, 2014, 51). This distrust has severe consequences in the arena of civil disobedience and law evasion. Even if it does not result in serious immediate repercussions, it typically leads to a long-term decline in social participation, rendering government programs—often dependent on community cooperation—ineffective.

3- Increased Violence and Damage to Morality

"*Being respected is one of the most important social values, and ignoring or violating this respect is considered one of the most irreparable social deviations... The significance of respect becomes even more apparent when we contemplate the intolerable nature of individuals being humiliated by others...*" (Mohseni, and Jarollahi, 2014, 58). The enforcement of laws through violence exacerbates societal violence, and this issue transcends specific topics. More specifically, the violent behavior exhibited by law enforcement becomes an implicit lesson, opening the door for similar behavior among many individuals, both socially and privately. The enforcement of violent laws that lack public acceptance and support can have irreparable consequences. Additionally, such methods escalate tensions and conflicts between opposing social groups, which can lead to a loss of social respect, national unity, and increased division within the community.

4- Perception of Injustice

One of the determining components of individual and social health is the "*perception of justice*." This implies that, apart from the abstract concept of justice and whether laws are fair or unfair in actuality, it is the perception of justice among the populace that significantly determines their mental and social well-being. It is evident that adopting harsh and sometimes discriminatory methods in enforcing laws can lead to a considerable increase in feelings of injustice within society. Such perceptions can pit people against each other, further heightening the likelihood of violence in confrontational situations.

5- Decrease in Social Capital

Social capital is understood as a set of norms present within social systems, with its sources defined as follows: institutional norms that emerge from formal institutions, spontaneous norms arising from the interactions of community members, natural norms derived from race or ethnicity, and norms stemming from religion, culture, and historical experiences (Fukuyama, 2000, p. 23). Social capital is also categorized at different levels:

The first level is the individual level, which includes personal relationships and communication networks between individuals, as well as the informal norms and values that govern these interactions.

The second level is the intermediate level, encompassing organizations, clubs, political parties, and similar entities.



The third level is the macro level, which includes social institutions (Behzad, 2002, pp. 43-53).

The extent to which a government requires social capital for its survival and the alternative methods it must rely upon when that capital declines is a separate topic that extends beyond the scope of this discussion. The consequences of such violent behaviors can harm across all levels of social capital. A decline in social capital—alongside the weakening of civic institutions and community groups—can severely undermine government effectiveness, trapping society in a cycle of underdevelopment and corruption. Consequently, the government resorts to repression and aligns with foreign supporters to ensure its continued survival (Attar, 2009, pp. 126-129). The astonishing downfall of Reza Shah in September 1941, alongside the lack of support from the public, military forces, and even foreign allies, illustrates that alternatives to social capital cannot sustain a government in the long term.

Result

A historical analysis of Reza Shah's downfall reveals that his government lacked sufficient support among the populace, the ruling administrative class, and even within the military. When the Allied forces entered Iran, there was a notable absence of social capital and national determination to defend the regime. Furthermore, alternative strategies proved ineffective in preventing the collapse of September 1941.

While the causes for the lack or severe decline of social capital are multifaceted, this analysis indicates that the violent enforcement of dress codes during Reza Shah's rule, along with actions such as insults, punishments, tearing of clothing, forced summons, and mandatory transfers to police stations, had a psychologically damaging effect on society. Coupled with a sense of injustice and lack of support, these actions left a serious and debilitating long-term impact on the mental and behavioral state of the population, exacerbating the decline of societal mental well-being. The harshness of such treatment by military and law enforcement not only failed to shift societal norms in favor of the government, but also, along with repercussions like public disrespect, the weakening of socio-psychological health, and an escalating divide between the people and the ruling powers, accelerated the rapid erosion of social capital. The adverse effects and tangible manifestation of this reduced social capital were so pronounced that they were apparent to the hostile powers engaged in World War II, solidifying their resolution to occupy Iran. By September 1941, following groundwork laid by foreign media, particularly radio broadcasts, the regime found itself isolated just when it needed strong social capital and public support to safeguard itself and national territorial integrity. Reza Shah's seemingly formidable army collapsed within a matter of hours. Moreover, not only did the people fail to offer significant sympathy, but many government officials also failed to rally behind the regime. Consequently, Reza Shah's ostensibly grand dictatorship crumbled in merely three days.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the collapse of Reza Shah's regime in September 1941 was shaped not only by Allied military intervention but also by the prior erosion of social capital and state-society relations. Coercive policies, particularly the violent enforcement of

dress codes, generated perceptions of injustice, humiliation, and alienation, weakening public trust and support for the regime. Consequently, when the Allied forces entered Iran, the government lacked sufficient popular, administrative, and military cohesion to sustain effective resistance. The rapid collapse of the regime therefore reflects the combined effects of external pressure and internal erosion of legitimacy and social capital. These findings highlight the importance of social trust, perceived justice, and state-society cohesion in maintaining political stability during periods of external crisis.

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