

## **The Effect of Socio-Economic Status on Authoritarianism**

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### **Introduction**

Scientific review of the authoritarian personality began in 1950 with the pioneering work of Adorno and his colleagues. Following their attempt, extensive studies were carried out in social psychology, political science, and sociology in this field. Despite the extensive amount of research on authoritarianism in Western societies, few have been conducted in developing countries. The dimensions of this phenomenon in Third World countries can be extensive. The importance of the study of Authoritarianism in Iranian society goes to the Constitutional Revolution (August 1906), when this issue has been in Iranian intellectual discourse. But since the origin of authoritarianism has always been searched in political elite, little attention has been paid to the roots of this phenomenon in the context of social and interpersonal interactions between individuals. Studies show that authoritarian attitudes have adverse social consequences for society in addition to their political consequences. Thus, the scientific study of this phenomenon and its social roots seems necessary. Authoritarian personality has European roots. These studies are influenced by Marx and Freud's theories from theoretical perspective and they are rooted in studies carried out on workers in France and Germany from empirical perspective (Roiser & Willing, 1995:77-97). A study conducted in the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt in the late 1920s included a wide set of cultural, social and political attitudes among white collar and blue collar workers in Weimar Germany. These studies reported a minority who has authoritarian attitudes. In another study carried out by Horkheimer, Fromm and Marcuse in 1936, family roots of authoritarian personality were explored.

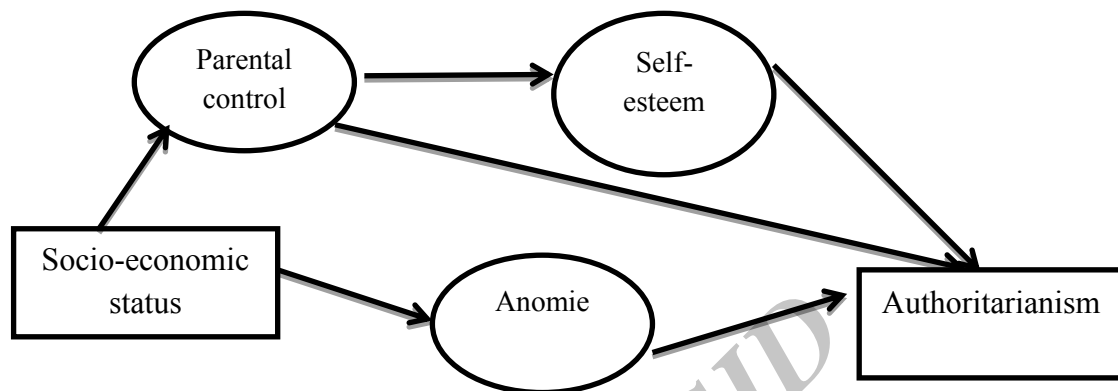
### **Material and Methods**

According to the theory proposed, in this study we intend to test the integrated model; in that based on Lipstadt's theory of authoritarianism in the

lower class, we identify the mechanisms that in the socioeconomic class lead to authoritarian character. For this purpose, we move from three paths toward authoritarianism- in the first path

which combines Lipstadt and Adorno's theory we expect that the class influences authoritarianism from parental authoritarian control. In the second path, we expect that the class influences authoritarianism from parental authoritarian and self-esteem control. This path combines Lipstadt,

Adorno and Cohen's theory. In the third path, we expect that the class influences authoritarianism through feeling of anomie. This path combines Lipstadt, Merton, Ferum and Arendt's theory. The model is depicted in the following schema. Here, we examine each of the paths.



**Figure 1: Theoretical model of the study**

The population of this study was students of Shahid Chamran University. Based on Krejcie and Morgan table, a sample of 377 individuals is representative of a population of 20000 individuals. In this study, 420 were selected through systematic random sampling. In that the list of student names was taken from each faculty and then students' names were randomly selected and they were asked to refer to a class and complete the devised questionnaire. 13 incomplete questionnaires were excluded and 407 remained for final analysis. In our sample, 191 were males and 216 females. Respondents' age was 21.84 with a standard deviation of 2.34. Ethnic composition of the sample was as follows: 33 Turks, 51 Arabs, 84 Kord, 103 Lor and 136 were Fars. Authoritarianism Scale items were composed of 9 items derived from well-known scales measuring these variables. In this study, instead of using an objective socioeconomic base approach, the mental approach was applied. In this way, instead of assessing respondent's status

based on achieved data with regard to their income and education and ranking them in three levels, the respondent self-assesses his economic status. To measure parental authoritarian control variable, we used 10 items which were derived from Daniel Shek's (2006) scale and have been used in various studies by different researchers and have a high ability to measure this variable. In addition, to assess one's anomie, we used well-known scales such as Srole's (1956), Dean's (1968) and Rashing's (1971) anomie scale- which are the most popular scales for measuring feeling of anomie. Self-esteem scale, which is the most common measure, is known as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and has been translated and validated by HamzehGanji and is available at the psychometrics publication center. In the original version and also the translated one we had "Yes/No" questions that were transformed into the Likert scale, but there was no manipulation in the questions and the calculated  $\alpha$  for this measure was 0.76.

### Discussion of Results & Conclusions

Descriptive statistics show that the mean of students' authoritarianism attitude scores was 25.55 which was higher than the mean of the scale (22.5) that means that authoritarian attitudes is common among students. The mean of authoritarian control score was 29.25, which is more than the middle of the scale (25). This means that students greatly assess their parents' behavior toward themselves as authoritarian. This score is 14.25 for the socioeconomic base which is higher than the average of the scale (12.5) in that most students assess their social status as higher than average. In addition, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test hypotheses and to test the main hypothesis we took advantage of sub-standard regression coefficients (beta) in the form of path analysis. Table 4 shows correlation coefficients between the variables investigated. In addition, the socioeconomic base has a negative and significant relationship with anomie ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $r = -0.244$ ).

To determine the direct and indirect effects of variables on each other, according to the proposed theoretical models, the regression equations model were used. Results showed that the socioeconomic base has a significant effect on the parental authoritarian control ( $\beta = -0.129$ ). In addition, the effect of the base on feeling of anomie is negative and significant.

This study on the one hand confirms the combined model and on the other hand confirms the theory used in the student population. The positive correlation found between socioeconomic base and authoritarianism directly confirms Lipstadt's theory (1965, 1959) and is in line with previous attempts (Srole's, 1956; Robert and Roukich, 1956; Mcdeal, 1961; Shiperz et al. 1992). But it is noteworthy to say that the

relationship between base and authoritarianism is not direct and leads to authoritarianism through intermediate variables. One of such variables which has been derived from Adorno and his colleagues (1950) was parental authoritarian control. Authoritarian control was positively correlated with authoritarianism; this finding was in line with other studies in this field (Crockett and Midinger, 1956; Simons 1966; Scodel and Mussen (1953); Scodel and Freedman, 1956; Douriz et al. 2008). Results showed that the lower bases have more authoritarian behavior toward their children which confirms the results of other studies in this realm (Cohen, 1977; Geecas, 1979; Himer, 1997; Heydari, 2010). Results of path analysis shows that feeling of anomie is the mediating variable between base and authoritarianism. In sum, our combined model was completely confirmed. It should be noted that this is the first experimental research on the authoritarianism problem in Iranian society and there is a need for more studies in various forms to be able to assess the generalizability of the proposed model to other samples.

**Keyword:** authoritarianism, socioeconomic, authoritarian parental control status, self-esteem, feeling of anomie

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