

Social Capital and Sustainable Professional Development of Sociology Teachers in Boyolali and Surakarta

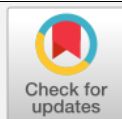
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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and analyze the forms and potential of social capital possessed by sociology teachers in Boyolali Regency and Surakarta City. It also seeks to explore the actors and institutions involved in developing teachers' social capital and examines how sociology teachers utilize and enhance their social capital for professional development. Data were collected through interviews and document studies using a descriptive qualitative approach. The findings reveal that sociology teachers in Surakarta City have diverse perspectives on sustainable professional development. However, they agree that it must be continuously nurtured and advanced. Regarding social networks, a key component of social capital, teachers have leveraged existing networks such as Subject Teacher Deliberations at city/regency and provincial levels. Additionally, some teachers have sought alternative networks, including international NGOs and writing communities, to support their professional growth. The study highlights the need for teachers to embrace alternative networks beyond traditional ones to expand their social capital and sustain their professional development effectively.

Keywords: Boyolali; Social Capital; Sociology Teachers; Surakarta; Sustainable Professional Development

1. Introduction

Teacher professional development has been a significant issue since the enactment of Law No. 14/2005 on Teachers and Lecturers in Indonesia (Republik Indonesia, 2005). Teacher professionalism is defined by four competency standards that every teacher must possess: pedagogical, personal, professional, and social competencies. These standards are mandatory for teachers in Indonesia. However, a World Bank report highlights that certified and non-certified teachers perform similarly. This conclusion was derived from a study conducted since 2009 across 240 public elementary schools and 120 junior high schools in Indonesia, involving 39,531 students. The test results of students taught by certified and non-certified Mathematics, Indonesian Language, Natural Sciences, and English teachers showed no significant differences in student outcomes (Abbas, 2019).

In other words, the teacher certification program implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture over the past few years has not significantly improved the quality of national education. Although some studies present varying results, many others also indicate that the certification program has yet to directly impact the improvement of educational quality (Ulfatin & Triwiyanto, 2016).

Based on this data and research findings, it becomes evident that efforts to enhance teacher professionalism should not cease upon completing the Teacher Professional Education (PPG) program as a requirement for certification. Instead, they must continue to be sustained. The Regulation of the Minister of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform No. 16/2009 concerning Teacher Functional Positions and Credit Scores defines sustainable professional development as the gradual and continuous improvement of teacher competencies tailored to their needs to enhance professionalism. Specifically, it mandates that all teachers engage in sustainable professional development activities, including self-development, scholarly publication, and/or innovative work (Menteri Pendayagunaan Aparatur Negara dan Reformasi Birokrasi Republik Indonesia, 2009).

Thus, improving teacher quality and professionalism is an ongoing and continuous endeavor. This effort depends on and requires the involvement of multiple parties, not only from the teachers themselves but also from institutions within their surrounding environment. Regarding sustainable professional development, various aspects will influence and shape it. One of these aspects is teachers' social capital. Social capital holds significant importance as it pertains to the networks, trust, and norms cultivated by teachers in the context of their professional development. Sociologically, social capital is not understood in terms of wealth or monetary assets but rather as critical resources in social life (F. Hanum et al., 2016; S. I. A. Hanum, 2014).

Research on the relationship between social capital and teacher professional development remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to identify the forms and potential of social capital possessed by sociology teachers in the Solo Raya region. Furthermore, it seeks to determine the actors and institutions involved in developing teachers' social capital and, ultimately, to understand how sociology teachers utilize and expand their social capital for professional growth.

2. Literature Review

The issue of social capital in education has been widely discussed by scholars both domestically and internationally. James Coleman, for instance, views social capital as a representation of resources embedded in reciprocal relationships and institutionalized trust

within social networks. These elements constitute the core components of social capital (Field, 2014).

Another prominent scholar, Nan Lin, conceptualizes social capital as an investment in social relationships through which individuals access embedded resources to enhance expected outcomes, whether expressive or instrumental. Lin identifies two perspectives on the utilization of social capital. The first emphasizes its use by individual actors, while the second focuses on empowering social capital within groups (Usman, 2018).

From the first perspective, the discussion centers on how individual actors access and leverage resources embedded in social capital to achieve economic and social benefits, including improving prospects for future actions. Key questions within this perspective involve how individuals invest in social relationships and utilize resources embedded in those relationships to gain economic and social advantages. In contrast, the second perspective explores how groups develop and maintain social capital as a collective asset and how these group assets facilitate members in achieving economic or social benefits.

Several studies have examined the relationship between social capital and education. For instance, Hanum investigated the forms of social capital developed by high school teachers in Yogyakarta. Hanum identified diverse forms of social capital developed by teachers and schools, which varied across five components: mutual trust, networking, collaboration, values and norms, and interaction/communication (F. Hanum et al., 2016). Conducted in schools with a reputation for high quality, the study revealed that social capital among teachers in such schools functioned effectively. Teachers successfully established and nurtured productive networks, fostering collaboration that boosted productivity and creativity through working groups and beneficial school programs.

Similarly, Fox and Wilson researched social capital among teachers in England, specifically regarding its role in professional development (Fox & Wilson, 2015). According to Fox and Alison, social networks are essential for teachers – particularly novice teachers- as a key element of social capital. These networks encompass various parties that can support professional development, whether through consumentary (grounded in shared values) or instrumental (strengthened through reciprocal exchanges) relationships. In contemporary times, the development of such networks is no longer limited to face-to-face interactions but can also leverage virtual platforms.

Developing social capital in the context of sustainable professional development among teachers involves fostering social networks, building mutually beneficial relationships, and institutionalizing trust at individual and broader levels (Wilson, 2012). This includes relationships between teachers and institutions such as schools, professional organizations, government bodies, and private entities. Despite its significance, the use of social capital in education, particularly among teachers, remains underexplored. However, recognizing and cultivating this potential could significantly contribute to advancing education.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, specifically descriptive qualitative research. Data collection methods included interviews and document analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Moleong, 2009). The informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The participants were sociology teachers in Surakarta City and Boyolali Regency, totaling 21 individuals. These teachers included certified and non-certified teachers to identify and compare potential similarities or differences in their perspectives and understanding of sustainable professional development.

Furthermore, the informants included heads of the Sociology Subject Teacher Association (*Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran*, MGMP), MGMP administrators, and regular members. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, which involves the stages of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This analytical method was chosen as it aligns with the study's objectives. Data obtained from interviews and document analysis were processed and codified before being presented in the research findings.

4. Results

4.1. Research Location Overview: Surakarta and Boyolali

Surakarta, commonly known as Solo, is one of the cities in Central Java Province. In the context of education, the total number of high school (SMA) teachers in Surakarta, both public and private, is 17,810 (BPS, 2020). Specifically, data from the Sociology Subject Teacher Association (*Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran*, MGMP) indicates approximately 70 sociology teachers, of whom 20 are certified (MGMP Sociology Surakarta, 2021). While sociology teachers constitute less than one-third of the total teaching staff in Surakarta, the demand for sustainable professional development applies equally to certified and non-certified teachers.

The Sociology MGMP of Surakarta has been well-established for some time. The MGMP office was located in Jalan Kyai Mojo, Semanggi Village, Pasar Kliwon Sub-district, Surakarta City, during the research period. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, MGMP meetings were held monthly. However, regular meetings were disrupted during the pandemic, leading to incidental and predominantly virtual gatherings.

Boyolali, on the other hand, is a regency in Central Java Province, with its administrative center located in Kemiri and Mojosoongo, approximately 25 km west of Surakarta. Semarang and Grobogan Regencies border the regency to the north, Sragen, Karanganyar, Sukoharjo, and Surakarta (Solo) to the east, and Klaten and Sleman Regencies (Yogyakarta Special Region) to the south. Boyolali has a total of 1,042 teachers, with 71.5% teaching in high schools (SMA) and 28.5% in Islamic high schools (*Madrasah Aliyah*, MA). During the research period, the Sociology MGMP of Boyolali was based at SMA 3 Boyolali, located on Jalan Perintis Kemerdekaan, Boyolali, Central Java. An online survey conducted as part of the research revealed that of the 37 sociology teachers who responded, 23 were certified.

The activities of the Sociology MGMP in Boyolali were significantly impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic due to various challenges. Before the pandemic, the MGMP conducted routine activities three times per semester – at the beginning, midterm, and end of the semester. These meetings typically addressed lesson planning at the start of the semester, midterm evaluations (*Penilaian Tengah Semester*, PTS), and final assessments (*Penilaian Akhir Semester*, PAS) at the end of the semester.

4.2. The Meaning of Sustainable Professional Development (SPD) for Sociology Teachers

The definition and concept of Sustainable Professional Development (SPD) are well-established in regulations, such as the Regulation of the Minister of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform No. 16 of 2009. The regulation describes SPD as the gradual and continuous improvement of teacher competencies tailored to their needs to enhance their professionalism in their respective fields. It further specifies that SPD comprises several elements, including self-development, scholarly publication, and innovative works ([Menteri Pendayagunaan Aparatur Negara dan Reformasi Birokrasi Republik Indonesia, 2009](#)). However, sociology teachers often have their practical interpretations of this concept.

Regarding the understanding of SPD, teachers exhibit varied perspectives. For instance, Budi, a sociology teacher from Boyolali Regency, believes that a teacher's competence must be improved through primary and additional responsibilities supporting professional growth. These responsibilities may include authoring scholarly works, writing, conducting research, developing teaching modules, attending training sessions, and engaging in other tasks beyond the core teaching role (interview with Budi, July 5, 2021).

Similarly, Hesti, a certified sociology teacher at a public high school in Surakarta, shared her understanding:

"Professional development, as I understand it, involves enhancing one's expertise concerning the main duties as a teacher. This includes improving teaching methods, understanding diverse student characteristics, and identifying strategies to develop students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes—particularly in character education." (interview with Hesti, July 6, 2021).

Mira, another sociology teacher with 12 years of experience, echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the practical implications of SPD:

"Sustainable Professional Development (SPD) serves as a measure to showcase teacher professionalism. The distinction between previous and current promotion systems lies in the necessity for teachers to engage in SPD activities. Previously, promotions occurred automatically every 2–2.5 years up to grade 4A. However, without writing or self-development, teachers now plateau at grade 3B. This change compels teachers to participate in SPD, such as writing, attending training, and meeting indicators outlined in promotion guidelines. Teachers are no longer simply expected to teach and educate but to develop themselves consistently." (interview with Mira, August 7, 2021).

Budi, Hesti, and Mira collectively highlight that SPD is closely tied to the competencies and skills possessed by teachers. Meanwhile, Yuli, an uncertified sociology teacher in Surakarta, adds that SPD demands adaptability, requiring teachers to align themselves with evolving situations and societal changes (interview with Yuli, June 28, 2021).

From these varied perspectives, it can be concluded that sociology teachers unanimously agree on the importance of continuous SPD efforts. The ability to adapt to societal changes is an essential aspect of a teacher's role, encompassing numerous dimensions, particularly their capacity to respond to the dynamic shifts within the community.

4.3. Social Capital Developed by Sociology Teachers: Forms and Networks

Teachers' social capital is inseparable from its components, such as networks, trust, and norms integral to their professional lives. Regarding social networks, teachers already have formal networks established over time. These networks can primarily be classified into two key environments: the schools where they work and the Sociology Subject Teacher Association (*Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran*, MGMP). The MGMP operates at school, regency, and provincial levels. Based on interviews conducted, teachers automatically join these organizations, particularly at the school or regency level, upon starting their teaching careers.

In addition to MGMP Surakarta, some teachers are also members of the MGMP at the Central Java Provincial level. Interviews reveal that not all teachers are part of this provincial

MGMP. Those serving as MGMP administrators at the regency level often represent their regions in the provincial MGMP. **Table 1** below highlights the extent of teacher involvement and their networks in associations to support sustainable professional development.

Table 1. Sociology Teachers’ Participation in Associations for Sustainable Professional Development

No	Informant	Name of Association/Organization/Community
1	A	MGMP Regency, Teacher Leader
2	B	MGMP City
3	C	MGMP City
4	D	MGMP Regency
5	E	MGMP City
6	F	MGMP City, Indonesian Teachers Association (PGRI), Indonesian Teacher Association (IGI)
7	G	MGMP Regency
8	H	MGMP, Indonesian Sociology Teachers Forum
9	I	MGMP City
10	J	MGMP Regency
11	K	MGMP Regency, Indonesian Sociology Teachers Forum, MGMP Provincial Level
12	L	MGMP City
13	M	MGMP City
14	N	MGMP City, MGMP Provincial Level
15	O	MGMP City
16	P	MGMP Regency, MGMP Provincial Level
17	Q	MGMP Regency, MGMP Provincial Level
18	S	MGMP Regency, Indonesian Teachers Association (PGRI)
19	T	MGMP Regency, Indonesian Teachers Association (PGRI)
20	U	MGMP Regency, Writing Teachers Network, Amnesty International, NGOs
21	V	MGMP City, Writing and Blogging Community

Source: Processed primary data (2021)

Notes:

- MGMP: Subject Teacher Association operating at city, regency, or provincial levels.
- PGRI: Indonesian Teachers Association (*Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia*).
- IGI: Indonesian Teacher Association (*Ikatan Guru Indonesia*), focusing on innovation.
- NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations supporting education and professional development.

Teacher involvement in MGMP (Subject Teacher Association) is highly valued, as highlighted by Dian, a senior sociology teacher in Boyolali Regency:

“I joined MGMP because it helps expand my network, and when we face tasks like preparing lesson plans (Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran, RPP) or creating tests,

we can discuss them together. It's much better when we deliberate collectively."
(interview with Dian, July 7, 2021).

The phrase "discussing together" reflects the purpose of MGMP meetings: to align teachers' perspectives and enable them to enrich each other's lesson plans and teaching materials. These activities are usually conducted at the beginning of each semester.

Dian also emphasized that participation in the provincial MGMP is equally beneficial for professional development, as it provides access to workshops and seminars on topics such as educational media development. MGMP activities are regarded as a primary channel for sociology teachers to stay updated on curricula, teaching methodologies, and education policies at various levels, influencing their teaching practices.

Beyond MGMP at the regency and provincial levels, some teachers engage in additional professional associations, such as the Indonesian Teacher Association (*Ikatan Guru Indonesia*, IGI), the Indonesian Teachers Union (*Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia*, PGRI), and even international organizations. Ani, a sociology teacher with 15 years of experience, shared her involvement in national and international communities.

At the national level, Ani participates in the *Gumun* (Writing Teachers) community, which connects teachers across Indonesia who share a passion for writing. Through this network, Ani has developed friendships with individuals who share her interest in writing, contributing to media platforms such as print, blogs, and academic journals. Internationally, Ani is actively involved with Amnesty International, motivated by her long-standing interest in discrimination and the fight for equality. Her background in sociology during her undergraduate studies has further deepened her understanding of social issues.

In addition to formal organizations, some teachers participate in informal and virtual networks, such as WhatsApp groups for the Indonesian Sociology Teachers Network or alumni networks from their universities. Alumni networks often serve as valuable sources of information and platforms for discussions related to academic and teaching practices, particularly because many members are also sociology teachers.

The increasing mediation of social interactions through technology has made virtual networks an accessible and versatile avenue for forming professional connections. These networks can be tailored to various interests and needs, providing additional support for teachers' professional development.

Beyond professional associations and organizations, the social dynamics and relationships within schools are critical in fostering the potential of social capital. Social capital is cultivated through teacher interactions, reciprocal information exchange, and mutually beneficial social relationships. Interviews reveal that the relationships between teachers and school stakeholders are generally positive. For instance, Heri, a sociology teacher, described the collaborative environment in his school:

"I think it's great (and I'm not just saying this to flatter anyone). Our current principal is very approachable, and we have no gap. I believe a good leader understands field conditions – not just someone who stays in the office and communicates with teachers only through phone calls. The new principal fosters strong communication between teachers and leadership. I'm stating this as a fact."
(interview with Heri, July 10, 2021).

Heri highlighted that school leadership supports teachers' professional development, particularly the principal. This support is provided through various activities such as seminars, in-house training, and similar initiatives aimed at sustainable professional development. Additionally, Heri emphasized that the familial atmosphere at his school contributes to a conducive environment for his growth as a teacher.

Similarly, Susi, a private school teacher in Surakarta, shared her experiences of institutional support for career development. According to her, the school provides formal permission for teachers to attend professional development events. It offers financial support for accommodation and transportation when these events occur outside the city (interview with Susi, August 8, 2021).

However, not all teachers enjoy favorable experiences in their school environments. Some face conflicts, differences of opinion, or minor disputes with colleagues or school leaders. Nevertheless, the findings of this study indicate that such conflicts are typically resolved, and teachers can find solutions to the challenges they encounter.

These positive relationships within schools underline the importance of leadership and interpersonal dynamics in fostering social capital and creating opportunities for professional growth.

5. Discussion

As noted by Nan Lin, social capital can be analyzed from two perspectives: individuals' utilization of social capital and the empowerment of social capital within groups (Usman, 2018). From the individual perspective, sociology teachers invest in their social relationships to achieve their goals, specifically for sustainable professional development. This investment ultimately results in economic and social benefits, which impact individuals and contribute to group advantages.

In this case, sociology teachers engage in social investment through the relationships they establish. These investments can be categorized into two types of associations or organizations:

1) **Mandatory Associations/Organizations**

These include groups such as MGMP (Subject Teacher Associations) at the school, regency/city, and provincial levels.

2) **Voluntary Associations/Organizations**

These encompass initiatives driven by personal awareness and interests, such as the *Gumun* (Writing Teachers) community, NGOs like Amnesty International, education advocacy groups initiated by civil society, and informal virtual networks, such as alumni WhatsApp groups formed during undergraduate studies.

Participation in mandatory and voluntary associations provides sociology teachers with greater opportunities to enhance their professional development sustainably. These associations offer access to valuable information and various activities, including training, workshops, and seminars. Moreover, these networks foster *bridging* social capital, enabling teachers to establish connections with other actors and institutions, such as universities, private entities, government agencies, and professional development organizations. Similar findings by Hanum et al. indicate a strong relationship between teachers' social networks and the quality of education in high-performing schools in Yogyakarta (F. Hanum et al., 2016).

However, as illustrated in this study, the social networks established by sociology teachers predominantly rely on mandatory or classical structures, such as MGMP. MGMP is an

organization initiated by the government (local education offices), and teachers must join. The challenge for sociology teachers lies in building alternative social networks outside these established and routine structures to further their sustainable professional development.

While MGMP plays a vital role, diversifying their networks beyond these classical associations could significantly enhance teachers' professional growth. However, this is not without challenges, as teachers often face heavy workloads related to school teaching and administrative tasks. Thus, balancing these responsibilities while pursuing additional networking opportunities remains critical.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that sociology teachers have diverse understandings of sustainable professional development. Despite these variations, there is a shared consensus that sustainable professional development is essential and must be continuously pursued through various means. Teachers' social capital, particularly their social networks, plays a significant role in this context. Sociology teachers build their networks through mandatory associations, such as MGMP (Subject Teacher Association), and voluntary organizations that align with their interests.

Teachers create opportunities to enhance their professional development by participating in these networks. However, efforts to broaden their networks beyond traditional structures, such as MGMP, are critical for fostering more comprehensive growth. In the current digital era, the availability of information through the Internet offers teachers greater opportunities to expand their networks. The key challenge is ensuring that teachers remain open to these opportunities and actively update their knowledge using the abundant resources available in the digital space.

Expanding and diversifying teachers' social networks is crucial to enhancing their sustainable professional development, enabling them to adapt and thrive in an ever-evolving educational landscape.

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8. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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