Role of social capital in education. Results of a survey on the individual social capital of school librarians

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Abstract

Schools and school libraries play a vital role in the formation of the attitudes and behaviours of young people. Adolescence is an important period of acquisition of knowledge, socialisation, development of artistic sensitivity and enculturation, which an individual will use for the rest of his or her life. The competencies and attitudes of school and school library personnel may significantly affect the development of children and youth. It seems relevant, then, to examine their social attitudes and the level of their social capital. The paper presents the results of a survey conducted among school librarians in 20 countries around the world. The survey examined the level of their individual social capital, social attitudes and civic attitudes. According to its results, school librarians have an average level of individual social capital; however, their social capital, social activity and civic engagement are among the lowest compared with the personnel of the other types of libraries.

Keywords

Social capital; School libraries; Libraries; Teacher-librarians; Cultural capital; Social activity; Civic engagement; Educational processes; School; Society.

1. Introduction

Schools and school libraries, alongside families, play a crucial role in the formation and development of the attitudes of a young person. What is important in school libraries, apart from suitable infrastructure, extensive book collections and modern equipment, are the knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes of the library personnel, and their openness to the needs and problems of others. Social capital studies determine the readiness to collaborate and help others of specific social groups –in this case of school librarians. The paper discusses the problem and presents the results of a survey conducted among school librarians from 20 different countries.

2. The social capital theory *vs.* cultural capital

Social capital has recently been a popular topic with researchers from various disciplines. The concept originates from sociology but currently, it has a much broader application –it is used in education, psychology, pedagogy, library and information science as well as in other seemingly unrelated areas (geography, economics, law, etc.). Social capital is very often analysed in the context of such values as economic capital or cultural capital. According to Alice Brémond, Jean-François Couet and Anne Davie, these capitals can be defined in the following way:

- economic capital is a collection of tangible and financial assets owned by an individual or group of individuals;
- cultural capital is a resource of knowledge, behaviour and skills that may contribute to educational and professional success in the same way as economic capital;
- social capital is a set of social relationships that may lead to social success (**Brémond**; **Couet**; **Davie**, 2006).

Despite numerous studies on and popularity of this research field, the social capital theory was developed relatively recently. It is believed that the term "social capital" was used for the first time in 1916 by the sociologist Lyda J. Hanifan –state supervisor of rural schools in West Virginia. He emphasised the importance of engaging local communities in the work of schools. Hanifan believed that social capital comprised tangible substances that counted for most in the daily lives of people. Among these substances, he included: good will, fellowship, sympathy and social intercourses, which is what makes a community. He believed that an individual was helpless socially, if left to him or herself. Only when an individual comes into contact with others (e.g. neighbours or, at school, with other pupils and with teachers), will there be an accumulation of social capital, which may satisfy his or her social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community. According to Hanifan, the community as a whole will benefit by the cooperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his or her associations the advantages of the help, the sympathy, and the fellowship of others (e.g. the family, neighbours or peers). He defined social capital as a set of intangible community values, such as, for example, camaraderie, solidarity, kindness and social contacts between members of a local community and their families who, as a result, form a separate social unit (**Hanifan**, 1916).

Hanifan's concept has since been developed and redefined by other researchers. In particular, it is worth noting Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist, anthropologist and philosopher who studied both social and cultural capital. Bourdieu believed that individuals build their social capital resources through participation in social life and, although they do that all their lives, the crucial period is childhood, when an individual learns certain norms of behaviour, habits and proper use of language from the family and significant others (many habits and reading skill are learned this way –by reading with parents or by school reading, etc.). Bourdieu noted that children may acquire certain linguistic and cultural competencies only from their families and it is not possible to compensate for their lack (e.g. in the case of children of dysfunctional parents) in any other way, not even through school education, meaning that individuals deprived of cultural and social capital resources will always be disadvantaged in achieving success in life (**Bourdieu**, 1971). Individuals from different groups acquire different levels of cultural and social capital. The development of cultural capital is affected, apart from an individual's personal motivation, by certain external factors, especially the family and school environment, where a young individual develops his or her personality, skills and knowledge.

Different communities place a different emphasis on education as a value, on learning, reading, using books, going to the theatre or museum, etc. (**Sztompka**, 2012). Thus, there exists a link between one's cultural and social capital resources and preferred lifestyle that may include regular or occasional contacts with books, libraries and other forms of culture.

One of the elements of cultural capital acquired in childhood are reading habits instilled in a child by the parents, school and local library, and by the school library, if it is sufficiently influential and manages to attract pupils. Commitment in this area may contribute to a child's further development and continued education, and the choices he or she will make later in life. It is worth noting that, in some analyses, the number of books in one's house is an indicator of cultural capital, while the reading of newspapers is one of the indicators of social capital (**Knapik**; **Kowalska**, 2011).

Some researchers identify what is called the objectified social capital consisting of cultural goods such as paintings, sculptures, instruments, books and other (**Bourdieu**, 2004). Thus, access to this particular form of capital will also determine the personal development of an individual. Libraries, especially school and public libraries, are obliged to provide objectified cultural capital to individuals who do not have sufficient resources of that capital within their private networks (i.e. family, acquaintances, etc.). Accordingly, school libraries are obliged to provide children with access to books, especially if children's families do not have adequate resources or are unwilling to encourage children to use public libraries (a child does not go to public libraries).

3. Social capital *vs.* educational processes

It seems that all types of libraries are capable of building social capital. The best prepared to do this appear to be public libraries that offer not only cultural but also social and inclusion programmes to develop the cultural and social competencies of the local community. According to Nancy Kranich, university libraries may strengthen student citizenship skills by promoting collaborative partnership between campuses and communities as well as assist with integrating public and community engagement into teaching and research. School librarians, apart from providing pupils with the books they need for school, may develop the portfolio of activities offered by the library, e.g. by participating in civic educational programmes that help pupils understand the rights and responsibilities of citizenship (**Kranich**, 2001). School libraries may do much more than just teach to read –they may also show pupils how to use cultural institutions (organise trips to other libraries and other cultural or educational institutions, such as: museums, exhibitions, theatres, cinemas) and participate in cultural and social life–; they may work with pupils individually –talk to them about the book as a cultural asset– or through group projects that focus on social needs and promote inclusion, support and acceptance as values

that are important in the life of every educated person.

It is worth noting that civic education should begin in the early years of schooling and instead of being limited to theoretical book knowledge, it should be founded on real civic engagement, i.e. practical activities performed in collaboration with members of the civil society. One of the studies on the social capital of schools used civic engagement (i.e. responsibility sharing, collaboration and education in school practice) as an indicator of student engagement (**Dudzikowa** *et al.*, 2011). Unfortunately, in some countries and communities, schools do not cooperate with non-governmental organizations, cultural centres or libraries and, consequently, young citizens only learn theoretical knowledge (**Pazderski**, 2014).

Although the development of social capital depends on many different factors, it can certainly be stimulated through educational processes. The school and school library are a part of the local community, and the form and quality of their work are to some extent influenced by the local community. Schooling may also be used as a tool to develop human capital –build competencies, skills and knowledge that will determine the educational and professional future of students. In analyses involving the educational process, social capital is defined as social resources and networks that help individual people to promote achievement and attain desirable educational ends (**Hemmings**, 2007).

Pupils' performance at school is certainly affected by a number of factors, some of which can be identified as components of the social capital of the local community and family. These include, among other things, the quality of the school, the family model, parents' engagement in their child's education, relationships within the family, the quality and nature of contacts between parents and children, the quality of contacts with relatives and the support they offer to adolescents, the level of control over a child (including social control), a network of social contacts, membership in organisations, religious practices and the quality of the neighbourhood (**Mikiewicz**, 2014). According to recent research, development of social capital in schools may be significantly influenced by the attitude of leaders –school principals who contribute to its development through innovation, attention to the quality of teaching and strong leadership (**Birasnav**; **Gantasala**; **Gantasala**, 2022; **Parlar**; **Polatcan**; **Cansoy**, 2020). Also, there is currently a tendency to explore the impact of gender on the flow of cultural and social capital in schools, due to the fact that the teacher profession is female-dominated (**Grinshtain**; **Addi-Raccah**, 2020).

Conditions are conducive to development when the local community (specifically, the parents) feel responsible for the education and cultural development of children and the school and local cultural institutions offer high-quality cultural education. There must be mutual interest in educational success for the development to proceed. Good models and thorough knowledge taught at school may be undermined by the negative influence of the family, whereas good habits learned at home may erode at school, if the school is poorly organised and unprepared for its educational and didactic role. Thus, it is important that local communities focus on education and recognise the role of cultural education, making a good use of the possibilities offered by cultural institutions, including libraries (**Wojciechowska**, 2019).

Numerous studies on social capital are based on the educational community, understood as one of the fundamental social subsystems. In general, education is identified with upbringing and means all the various processes through which an individual acquires new skills and competencies and develops his or her attitudes and values. The goal of education is to prepare a person to take a certain place in the social structure that employs social capital resources. It has been proven that school performance is affected not only by a student's intelligence and individual work but also by a number of other factors, such as: the choice of school, the school's curriculum, the values and attitudes of teachers as well as the student's social background (the higher the social class, the more engagement in the educational process), parents' assistance and other issues, such as the school's budget, location and impact of its neighbourhood. Thus, it should be assumed that successes are attributable not only to students themselves but also to their educational and social background. Students relationships with the school, family and friends constitute an important link in the process. With them, students may make a better or worse use of the potential offered by school and its neighbourhood (**Bartkowski**, 2007). In integrated communities with strong bonds children and adolescents more often receive financial and cultural support from the family and relatives, which is important for successful education and development. At the same time, young people whose communities have weaker bonds and do not provide such support have fewer chances to achieve

educational success. Thus, social capital increases students' chances to finish a school and continue learning. It should be noted that education is considered to be one of the most important factors for the development of social capital (**Mikiewicz**, 2014) and school libraries may significantly contribute to education.

Robert Putnam, the American political scholar and social capital researcher, noted that countries, regions, local communities and families with a higher educational level are more willing to trust and collaborate with others, as a result of which they participate in various forms of activity, such as local sports clubs, cultural centres, libraries and schools (**Putnam**, 2001; **Helliwell**; **Putnam**,

‘ There are two major sources of the social capital of students: the family and the school. Thus, social capital is sometimes regarded as a family resource (it may even be called the social capital of a family), and the resources that the parents/family have (their social position, information to which they have access and financial and physical resources) may be used to the advantage of children ’

2007). Thus, communities with higher educational levels more often engage in projects that support the schools or libraries of their children. These projects, which include both material aid (renovation of premises, purchasing equipment, furniture and devices for children) and help in the activities offered by the school (extracurricular activities, extra library services, etc.), engage the social capital resources of parents. These resources may be professional or private contacts, civic skills, recruitment of volunteers and sponsors, social support or establishment of cooperation with various partners, e.g. to help equip the school library or prepare more cultural activities. Thus, the educational process (involving the school and school library) is better in communities that are more active and have more social capital resources, which they can use to contribute to the school or school library, or a local public library (**Wojciechowska**, 2019). Putnam wrote (in the context of American communities) that states where residents trust each other, participate in organisation, volunteer, vote and maintain informal relationships with friends –are the same states where children flourish: where babies are born healthy, teenagers tend not to be parents, nor drop out of school nor get involved in violent crime or die prematurely due to suicide or homicide. In states that score high on social capital, children perform much better at school than in states with a lower degree of civic involvement (**Putnam**, 2001). Putnam's studies showed that social capital resources (especially informal social capital like private relationships and contacts more than formal social capital like participation in associations and organisation or performance of pro-social public functions, etc.) affect children's education more than the educational level, race, affluence or completeness of the family, which made him conclude that relationships and an atmosphere of community (that either encourages or discourages from learning) play a much more important role than individual factors, i.e. private resources or efforts (**Putnam**, 2001).

> Parents and the school teach and show how to use resources and how to build one's own social capital

Based on Putnam's research, the following four elements contributing to the quality of children's lives were identified:

1. Family social capital –the intellectual potential of parents or carers in a household;

2. Family financial capital –the total income in a household that a family can invest in the quality of life of its members;

3. Internal social capital/social capital in the family –the relationships and interactions between parents (and other adults in a household) and children; what the family thinks about the desired educational achievements of children and their overall well-being;

4. External social capital/social capital in the community –social support networks, collective standards regarding local institutions and social infrastructure, civic engagement in the community, which together enable coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits (**Mikiewicz**, 2014).

It should be noted that all the capital categories listed by Mikiewicz may involve the book and the library as a factor of social and cultural development. Family social capital, meaning the intellectual potential of parents, is to some extent determined by their past contacts with books and libraries, by their reading habits and level of cultural participation. Meanwhile, family financial capital sets an economic framework for cultural and educational activity in the broad meaning of the term, including purchasing books and buying tickets for cultural and educational events. Internal social capital is linked with relationships in the family, including the carers' expectations of school results as well as readership education and cultural development of children. This means that some parents and carers will try to stimulate the readership activity of children and engage their contacts with the book or even with the library. The last category –external social capital– means the capital of a given community, e.g. the local community, which may choose certain models of upbringing and contact with culture over others, focusing on the development of local institutions such as, for example, public and school libraries (**Wojciechowska**, 2019).

4. Nature of social capital in schools and families

There are two major sources of the social capital of students: the family and the school. Thus, social capital is sometimes regarded as a family resource (it may even be called the social capital of a family), and the resources that the parents/family have (their social position, information to which they have access and financial and physical resources) may be used to the advantage of children. Parents and the school teach and show how to use resources and how to build one's own social capital. In general, there are three types of assistance, that school libraries, engaged in the educational activity of schools, may also offer. These three types of assistance are:

- Financial assistance –money spent on the education and upbringing of a child (this may include, among other things, money spent on buying books);
- Physical assistance –time spent with a child, providing a child with his or her own space to learn (this may include time spent on learning to read, going to the library together and attending educational events organised by the library);
- Assistance in public space –collecting information on the child's future teacher, using one's contacts to enrol a child with a selected teacher, helping the teacher, helping in the classroom, at the school or school library, collecting information on the quality of the school library and ensuring child's participation in extracurricular activities offered by the library (**Nyczaj-Drąg**, 2009).

However, educated and gifted parents and access to a relevant, extensive infrastructure and physical resources are not enough for a child to develop effectively. Physical presence at home is needed as well as a strong emotional bond with a child and time spent by an adult to pass his or her knowledge and wisdom on the child and to awaken interests and passions in the child. Adults who, despite having broad knowledge and thorough education, spend little time with children have less impact on their education and professional achievements. James Coleman, the American researcher on the sociology of education and social policies, describes this phenomenon as structural deficiency in family social capital (**Coleman**, 1988). Mark Smith, Lionel Beaulieu and Glenn Israel examined school dropout rates among students from families with low social capital. They determined that in families with a high level of social capital (i.e. where children receive the care and attention of adults, have few siblings and live constantly in one place, which means a network of friends and good neighbours, etc.), the school dropout rate is 2.6%, whereas in families with low social capital, the rate grows alarmingly to 47.7% (**Smith**; **Beaulieu**; **Israel**, 1992).

Not only family social capital but also school social capital is crucial, because a student's social relations are not limited to his or her bonds with the family. Thus, a student's relations with teacher(s) and with other students and the parents' relations with the school may prove very important, and the quality of those relations may vary. It may happen, for example, that students form enclosed, hermeneutic groups in the educational space, where they propagate negative models and behaviour, e.g. aggression, disregard of school duties or substance abuse.

School social capital also includes school's relations with universities, employers offering on-the-job training, etc., which help pupils decide on the choice of university, give expert insight into the areas of interest for pupils and advise them on possible career or university paths. Some school and academic libraries offer study and career counselling.

Studies show that both capital types –school social capital and family social capital– are vital for educational success, though family capital may be more important (**Mikiewicz**, 2014). The indicators listed in Table 1 are applied to examine both types of capital. It should be noted that one of those indicators is students' participation in extracurricular activities in school libraries.

Table 1. Indicators to analyse family and school social capital

Family social capital	**School social capital**
- How much do parents trust their children? - Do parents talk to their children about school curricula? - Do parents talk to their children about school (extracurricular) activities? - Do parents talk to their children about schoolwork and homework? - Do parents check their children's homework? - Do parents attend school meetings? - Do parents attend school events?	- Do children participate in extracurricular activities (sports clubs, hobby clubs, library activities, etc.)? - How often does the school contact parents? - Is there a team spirit among teachers? - Do teachers get on well with the school's administrative authorities? - Do teachers provide for the individual needs of their students (based on information from parents)? - What is the quality of the school environment (atmosphere at school –based on information collected from students regarding a sense of safety, aggression, absenteeism, etc.)?

Source: based on **Mikiewicz** (2014). *Kapitał społeczny i edukacja*, pp. 213-214).

Researchers identify three basic categories of relations and social capital in education: relations in the family and parents' expectations, relations between parents and the school, and relations and atmosphere at school, which includes school values, norms and culture (**Mikiewicz**, 2014). School libraries, being part of educational institutions, participate mainly in the relations at school, promoting the values of readership culture, although they may also be to a limited extent responsible for the relations between parents and the school. This concerns in particular contacts with the families of the youngest pupils who need the family's and library's help learning to read and improving their reading skills. Here,
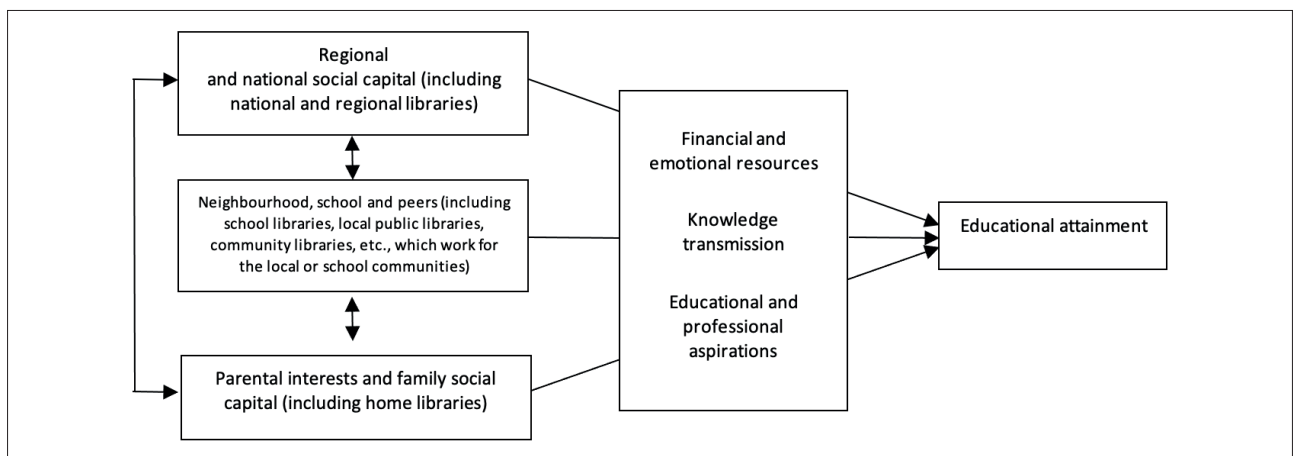

Figure 1. A model of the impact of social capital on educational attainment taking into account the role of libraries

libraries can act as active culture animators, provided they have adequate infrastructure, resources and personnel, and that the personnel have the right attitudes and knowledge (**Wojciechowska**, 2019). Also, school libraries may play an important role in the development of gifted students who wish to broaden their knowledge as well as pupils with special educational needs who require additional support.

In the context of education, social capital may be examined and analysed on a number of levels: on the micro level, which means the level of individual achievements (individuals may improve their educational performance e.g. by using library resources); the meso level –related to the achievements of the local community and respective schools (including school libraries and community libraries that offer educational programmes, e.g. school readership contests that help improve pupils' performance in reading comprehension tests); and the macro level, which reflects the achievements of the entire society (to which various library networks also contribute through their educational and training projects). David Halpern proposed a model of the impact of social capital on educational achievements in consideration of these three levels. Figure 1 presents that model, taking into account the role of school libraries in the impact process (**Halpern**, 2005).

5. Goal and methodology of the research

Many studies on social capital in education are based on Nan Lin's network theory, according to which social capital consists of various resources that an individual can access through a network of contacts (**Lin**, 2001). These studies analyse social capital quantitatively. They trace connections within a network that enable access to resources which are valuable in educational processes. Thus, what is examined is the size and density of the network rather than the processes within it. The basic question in such analyses is *how many?* (e.g. how many friends, how many acquaintances, how many family members, how many teachers, how many pupils in a group?). The survey presented in this paper is also based on the assumption that an extensive network of social contacts is a source of multiple benefits for its members. The analysis focused on the following four areas:

1) The individual social capital of school librarians;

2) The social activity of school librarians;

3) The civic engagement of school librarians;

4) The attitude to life (including the number of acquaintances in a social network) of school librarians.

In order to analyse social behaviours and attitudes in the professional group of librarians, a study on social capital in libraries was launched in 2018 (**Wojciechowska**, 2020; 2021a; 2021c; 2021d; **Wojciechowska**; **Topolska**, 2021; **Wojciechowska**, 2022). The first part of the study was conducted among the personnel of all types of libraries in 20 countries across the world. An electronic survey was sent to librarians in: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Belarus, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, New Zealand, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the UK and the USA. In the first part of the study, the total of 6,593 respondents from all types of libraries sent their feedback in 2018 and 2019. Next, a subgroup of school librarians was set apart from the rest of the respondents (university libraries were not included in this analysis). Accordingly, the analysis presented in this paper is a part of a larger study on the individual social capital (ISC) and attitudes of librarians. That study is scheduled to be completed in 2022. The main purpose of the analysis was to answer the following questions:

- What is the individual social capital level of school librarians?
- What is the social activity of school librarians like?
- What is the civic engagement of school librarians like?
- What are the life attitudes of school librarians?
- Are the attitudes and individual social capital levels in this group significantly different than those of other librarian groups?

The statistical data presented in this paper based on the study results concern a group of 447 of school librarians. Most members of this group were women –more than 97% of the study population (n=436; 97.5%). Most respondents declared to be over 50 years old (n=217; 48.6%) or 31-50 years old (n=215; 48.1%). Only 15 respondents, i.e. 3.4%, were 30 years or younger. The level of individual social capital was determined using the resource generator –the standardised *Questionnaire for the Measurement of Individual Social Capital* (*KPIKS*), developed by the Polish psychologist Rafał Styła (**Styła**, 2009), based on a tool prepared by Martin van der Gaag and Tom Snijders –the Dutch researchers of individual social capital (**Van-der-Gaag**; **Snijders**, 2004; 2005). Next, the other indicators were examined, i.e. social activity, civic engagement and attitudes to life of school librarians. These indicators are presented in descriptive statistics with dis-

criminatory power (Table 2). Discriminatory power determines the significance of responses in the construct of all the answers given by the respondents. In other words, it measures coherence of the results. This value is the factor loading used in the evaluation of variable structures in the main component analysis (**Topolski**, 2020a; 2020b). The paper also presents descriptive sta-

> Efficient school libraries and public libraries are important in a successful educational and didactic system, as they stimulate the development of children and youth

tistics with a test for two and multiple * structure indicators (Table 3). The level of significance p<0.05 means that a given answer is statistically significant and dominant compared to the other answers. The model was verified using the five-fold cross-validation method and the resulting significances are a mean value for the respective data folds.

The challenges encountered during the research were caused by major cultural, political and organizational differences in the backgrounds of respective respondents. For example, in Belarus it was impossible to discuss civic engagement and the questions asked there only involved the social capital level of local librarians. Also, the respective countries have different norms and customs regarding social activity, e.g. making donations. However, it is impossible to eliminate such difficulties from a research that is conducted in so many countries.

6. Results of the survey

The survey results are presented in descriptive statistics with discriminatory power in Table 2. As has already been noted, discriminatory power determines the significance of responses in the construct of all the answers given by the respondents. The strongest variable with the most discriminatory power was individual social capital, which reached the level of 66.54 (Table 2). In the *KPIKS* scale, it is an average level and at the same time one of the lowest scores in the professional group of librarians. Only librarians working in science libraries have lower social capital, which is not surprising given the fact that those libraries usually have a narrow group of professional users and their most important task is to provide expert information rather than engage in programmes and social relations. Meanwhile, the fact that school librarians have a low level of social capital (compared to other librarians) is alarming, because it suggests limited social activity, although it is particularly desirable for professionals working with children and youth.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics with discriminatory power of properties

	Mean	Standard deviation	Median	Discriminatory power
Individual social capital level	66.54	10.62	69.00	0.783
Are there persons actively engaged in social work in your library? Specify the number of such persons	3.38	11.05	1.00	0.677
How many times in the last year did you attend a public meeting for residents concerning practical issues in the place where you live?	1.63	2.69	1.00	0.598
How many times in the last year did you attend a public meeting not related to your work?	2.67	6.82	1.00	0.687
How many times in the last year did you sign a petition or protest, or attend a demonstration?	1.37	5.47	0.00	0.569
How many times in the last year did you inform a newspaper, radio or TV station, school management, police or other authorities about a problem (verbally or in writing)?	0.74	1.96	0.00	0.576
How many times in the last year did you help raise money or donate money to a specific purpose?	2.67	4.44	2.00	0.711
How many times in the last year did you help collect things or donate things in a charity event?	2.45	3.77	2.00	0.732

Another important factor that was analysed was the social activity and civic engagement of school librarians, which involve openness to social dialogue, collaboration and compromise. Professionals should promote social activity of pupils and help them become conscious citizens willing to contribute to their community and ready to make decisions that will
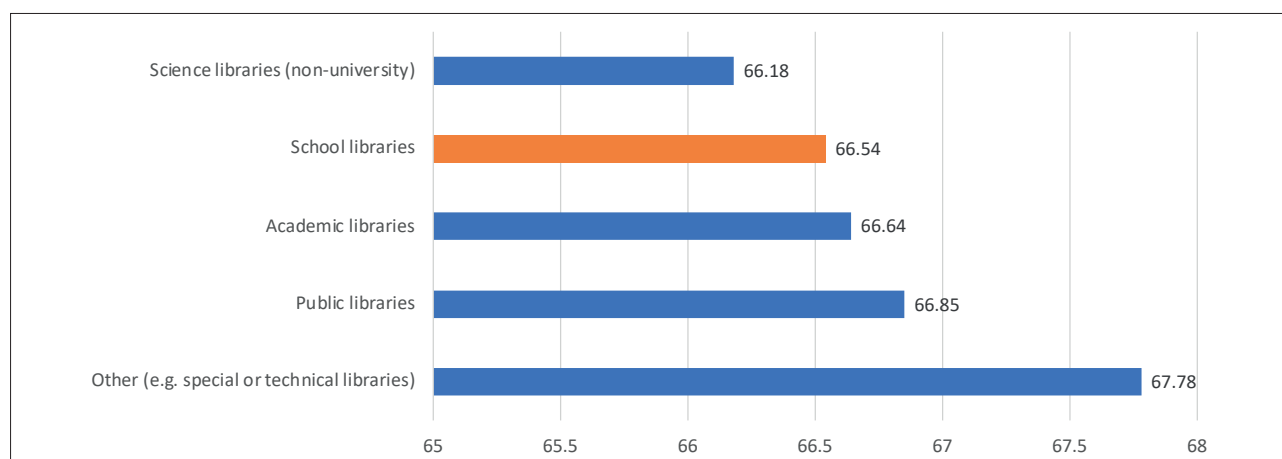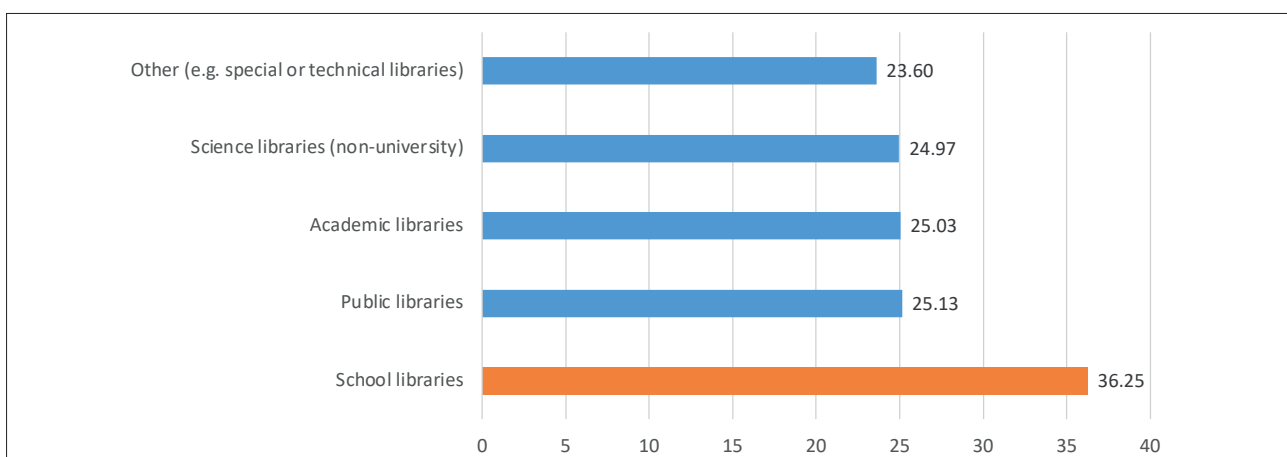

Graph 1. Individual social capital of school librarians compared to the personnel of other libraries
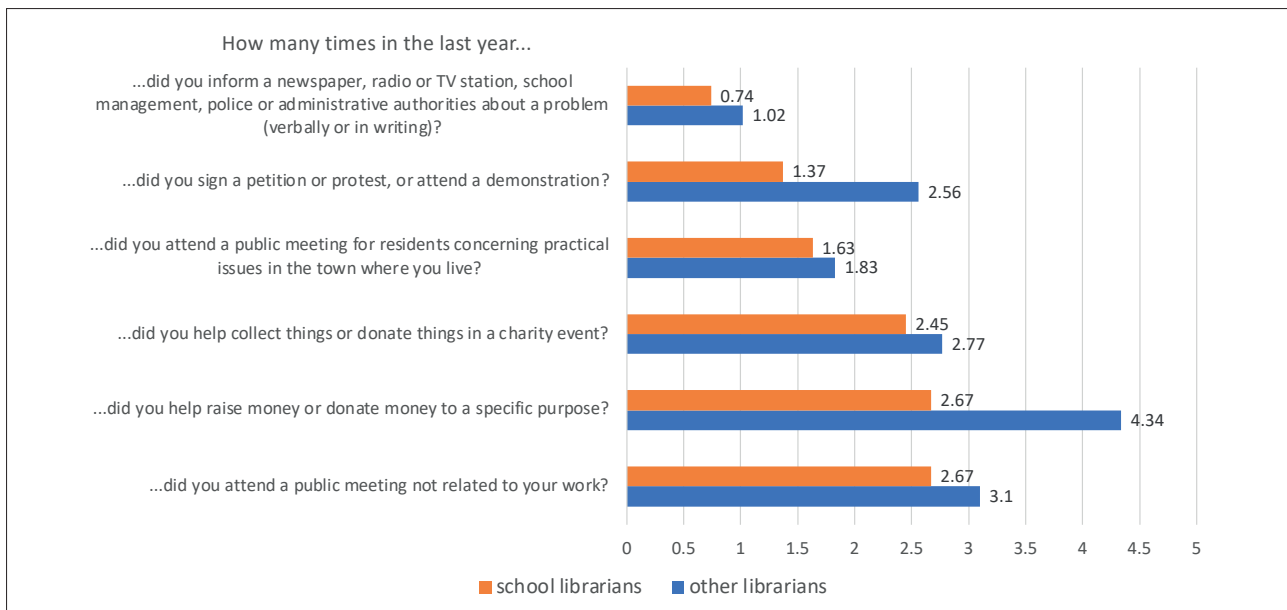
Graph 2. The social activity and civic engagement of school librarians

influence the community's future and development. Only professionals who are socially active and civically engaged and experienced in participating in and implementing social and civic programmes can pass on to their students the right values, experiences and knowledge, which the students will use as a foundation for their adult decisions. Graph 3 presents a chart of variables in a specific hierarchy based on mean values, relating to social activity and civic engagement of school librarians. According to the survey results, school librarians are less socially active and civically engaged than the other groups of librarians. This finding is alarming and should be analysed in more depth, given the fact that school librarians (alongside with the family and teachers) are responsible for developing children's interest in literature, culture and their neighbourhood at the time when their character, attitudes and interests form.

The data presented in Table 3 enable further analysis. It is very important that librarians are aware of what influence they can have on the local community. Without such awareness, people often resign from various projects or initiatives. School librarians believe their influence on the life of the local community to be average (according to 41.6% respondents), and this belief is shared by the personnel of most of the other types of libraries. Importantly, however, school librarians more often assess their influence as high (on average, by 3% more often compared to the entire population), suggesting that they are likely to get engaged in school and local community projects. By way of comparison, a vast majority of school librarians (88.8%) volunteered for their community, church, district, village or town, which is ca. 8% more than the result scored by the personnel of the other types of libraries. School librarians also had much bigger social networks, measured by the number of acquaintances. On average, school librarians had a network of 36 persons, compared to 25 persons for the personnel of public libraries and only 23 for the personnel of special libraries (Graph 3). However, this result requires explaining, because a very large number of acquaintances may mean that relationships are more superficial (Wojciechowska, 2021b). Thus, the best are medium networks that, on the one hand, ensure access to resources and, on the other hand, provide an individual with emotional support.

Graph 3. The size of the individual social network of school librarians

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for categorical variables with variance test

Question		n	%	TWS
Have you ever volunteered for your community, church, district, village or town, or have you ever done social work for the needy?	Yes	397	88.8%	p=0.0021
	No	50	11.2%	
Did you work as a volunteer over the last five years?	Yes	212	47.4%	p=0.243*
	No	235	52.6%	
What do you think is the impact of people like you on the life of the local community?	Major	117	26.2%	p=0.012
	Average/not much	186	41.6%	
	Minor	111	24.8%	
	None	33	7.4%	
Do you agree that "Most people can be trusted"?	Yes	206	46.1%	p=0.254*
	No	241	53.9%	
Is the library an institution that can be trusted?	Yes	428	95.7%	p<0.001
	No	19	4.3%	
Do you agree with the statement: "I can trust most of my colleagues at work"?	Yes	241	53.9%	p=0.254
	No	206	46.1%	
Do you agree with the statement: "I can trust my boss"?	Yes	275	61.7%	p=0.023
	No	171	38.3%	
Do you think libraries should be more active in establishing relations with their users in the Internet, second life, Internet forums, blogs, etc.?	Yes	297	66.4%	p=0.012
	No	150	33.6%	
Choose the statement that you agree with the most.	In order to develop, the library needs coordinated activity of the governing authorities, managers and employees	377	84.3%	p=0.0025
	Library development is dependent on the decisions of the managers and governing authorities	70	15.7%	
Would you agree to have your salary reduced in order to:	Save the library from decline	42	9.4%	p=0.041*
	Avoid layoffs in the library	67	15.0%	
	Give a chance for employment to a person in serious need	180	40.3%	
	I would agree under a different condition	55	12.3%	
	I would not agree under any conditions	103	23.0%	
The appearance of the library and its immediate surroundings is the responsibility of:	The management	17	3.8%	p=0.018
	The management and employees	125	28.0%	
	The management, employees and patrons	305	68.2%	
Do the mangers of your library promote pro-social activities?	Yes, they believe them to be an element of the library mission	175	39.1%	p=0.019
	Yes, provided they do not affect the basic library services and the librarians do not neglect their work	227	50.8%	
	No, they try to avoid such projects, which are time and money consuming	45	10.1%	
Do you know a librarian who volunteers for the community, church, district, village or town, or does social work for the needy?	Yes	199	44.5%	p=0.089
	No	248	55.5%	
What is important for you in your life?	Be someone or with someone who is popular and admired	5	1.1%	p=0.041*
	Be able to do only what I want to do	202	45.2%	
	Be professionally successful	151	33.8%	
	Be financially successful	136	30.4%	
	Always have friends	177	39.6%	
	Have a loving family	359	80.3%	
	Help the needy	73	16.3%	
	Look good and attractive	21	4.7%	

TWS = test for two structure indicators; * TWS = test for multiple structure indicators.

School librarians, the same as other librarians, believe that libraries can be trusted (95.7%); they also trust their bosses (61.7%; p=0.023), though somewhat less than the personnel of the other types of libraries. It should be noted that trust is indispensable for social capital to accumulate in a given community.

As regards outside collaboration, some librarians noted that libraries should intensify their relationships with patrons in the Internet, second life, Internet forums, blogs, etc. This was the opinion of 66.4% of school librarians, while the score for the entire population was 73.5%. This is an interesting issue, because school librarians have contact with adolescents who spend a lot of time in the virtual world and expect institutions and services to be available online. Perhaps school librarians are aware of the excessive use of those media by children and youth and are reluctant to digitise libraries so as not to replace traditional contacts with readers, especially the inexperienced ones, with remote contacts. This problem will certainly be subject to many studies and analyses, especially in the context of social alienation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which is particularly destructive to the social contacts and emotional health of children and youth.

Also, more than 84.3% of school librarians agreed that "in order to develop, the library needs coordinated activity of the governing authorities, managers and employees" and that the appearance of the library and its surroundings is the responsibility of the managers, employees and users (68.2%). It is an interesting area of research and worth exploring. It would be informative to ask adolescents whether they feel responsible for the interior of the library, do they take care of it and does the local community support the school and the library. Community engagement in the development of local institutions and care for their condition are a manifestation of social capital; local institutions are treated as a common good that benefits the entire community.

Another area of analysis were the attitudes of school librarians to life, which were slightly different from those of other librarians. What matters the most for school librarians in life is: to have a loving family (80.3%) and to able to do only what one wants to do (45.2%). Meanwhile, for other librarians, the most important thing in life, apart from a loving family, are friends and helping people in need. Thus, school librarians seem to be less engaged in volunteering, though more than half of them stated that their managers promote pro-social activities, provided they do not affect the basic library services and the librarians do not neglect their work.

7. Conclusion

Efficient school libraries and public libraries are certainly important in a successful educational and didactic system, as they stimulate the development of children and youth. Such libraries constitute an element of social capital and they help achieve better educational results, translating to individual well-being and the development of local communities and even entire regions. In order for libraries to be a source of such support, their role needs to be acknowledged and they need investment. Social capital must be fostered to yield good results, because, if left unattended, it quickly deteriorates.

Libraries (and other cultural institutions, such as cultural centres or day clubs) come second after schools as the main providers of informal education in many countries, meaning that they already participate in the educational process, which is substantial in the formation of social capital. Thus, their didactic impact on the local community should be examined, which includes the impact on the user's ability to broaden his or her knowledge, engage in lifelong learning and develop information skills (**Głowacka**, 2009). Even though such studies are not popular yet and pose certain methodological challenges, it should be noted that there already are some studies on the impact of social capital in education on reading comprehension. These include, for example, studies conducted by William Carbonaro (**Carbonaro**, 1998), Yongin Sun (**Sun**, 1998) or Suet-Ling Pong (**Pong**, 1998). Various libraries (school, public, academic libraries) may also significantly contribute to the development of social capital of children and youth by promoting norms and desired behaviours and attitudes that are important for group integration, cohesion and cultural capital, determining the possibilities for social advancement, professional position and personal development.

As the survey presented in this paper shows, school librarians have an average level of individual social capital and lower social activity and civic engagement than other librarians, but they are somewhat more experienced in working with the local community. Their main focus is family life, but it is also important for them to be able to do what they want to do. Close friends are less important and they have more acquaintances, which means their relationships are somewhat superficial. Unfortunately, school librarians tend to trust other people less than their counterparts in other libraries. It may be concluded that school libraries have a lover level of social capital and other related attributes (trust, social activity, civic engagement, etc.) than other types of libraries. Accordingly, future studies should focus on exploring the reasons behind this problem. Unfortunately, it is often forgotten that school libraries have a major impact on the choices and attitudes of young people. They foster reading habits in children and youth and teach them how to use knowledge bases and develop their passions throughout their education. The poor condition of school libraries in many countries, and in particular lack of funding, outdated equipment and insufficient book collections mean that their role is still disregarded. It is also forgotten that public libraries are not able to bridge the gaps and do the job of school libraries.

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