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Misalignment of Socioeconomic Parameters in Contemporary Iran; A Psychological Trap

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Abstract

This article examines the current socio-economic and cultural challenges in Iran, exploring how public engagement in foreign-led economic indicators like the dollar and gold markets inflicts broader societal issues. Social theorists believe, issues such as addiction, divorce, and unethical behaviors are symptoms of a deeper systemic crisis tied to cultural repression, economic instability, and misaligned social priorities. The analysis highlights how a focus on secondary economic symbols, particularly in a volatile economic climate, distorts public attention away from critical areas of societal health and development. Ultimately, this article argues for a reassessment of economic and social priorities in Iranian society, highlighting the importance of foundational socio-economic health over reactive attention to market volatility.

Keywords: Inflation, Psychology, Socioeconomic reforms

Introduction

In recent years, the Iranian public's focus on the foreign indicator rather than internal potentials i.e. over oil value reflects an increasingly skewed economic consciousness driven by external and internal pressures. As the economy is dealing with several limitations from external powers, such misalignment towards external parameter which stand beyond the strategic reach due to foreign policies and constitutional limitations i.e. lack of formal relationships with the United States of America (Katzmen, 2021) which has led to the state of economic war (Davoudpour, A.R., 2424a). This phenomenon points to the critical, perhaps neglected, aspects of Iran's socio-cultural landscape. Ardeshir Garavand (2024)¹ in an interview with Tabnak news agency notes that Iranian society is dealing with several issues such as addiction, divorce and imprisonment, such economic fixations are intertwined with systemic social issues, where addiction (Davoudpour, A.R., 2024b), divorce, and incarceration emerge as primary societal concerns. With rising market volatility, the question arises of how economic symbols have influenced societal health and whether these trends are indicative of larger socio-political and economic distortions. This study explores these questions by examining cultural repression, economic instability, and the Iranian public's reaction to them.

Cultural Repression and Social Fragmentation

Iranian society has long struggled with issues of cultural repression and the complex intersection of public morals and state-imposed

¹ <https://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/1271097/%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%BA%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%AE%DB%8C%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%DA%86%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%84%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%B4%D8%AF-%DB%8C%DA%A9-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%87-%D8%B4%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%B5%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%87-%D8%AF%D8%B1%DA%AF%DB%8C%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%88-%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82-%D9%88-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA>

values. As Garavand explains, society's heightened sensitivity to specific social taboos may be a product of cultural struggles, where traditional and contemporary norms conflict. The effects of such restrictions on individual autonomy and expression manifest in significant social issues such as addiction and behavioral disorders or in the particular issues of behavioral problems (Garavand, 2024). Previous studies (Khosravi, 2019; Hojjat, 2021) emphasize that societies with limited outlets for open discourse and personal freedom often see a rise in maladaptive behaviors, where suppressed emotions surface through non-normative outlets.

The accessibility of digital and social media platforms further complicates these issues, as they provide both a release for pent-up social frustrations and a means to broadcast behaviors previously contained within private spheres. Notably, studies indicate that cultural taboos only serve to increase public interest and curiosity about the prohibited subjects, thereby creating a paradoxical environment where suppressed issues receive even greater public attention (Ansari, 2018; Alamdari, 2020).

Economic Volatility and Psychological Distress

Economic pressures have contributed significantly to the Iranian public's growing fixation on dollar and gold prices, which serve as key symbols of financial security in an unstable economy. The Iranian economy's reliance on oil revenues has historically buffered it against certain economic instabilities; however, this has shifted as international sanctions, inflation, and unemployment rates have risen. This economic shift places an unusual emphasis on fluctuating foreign currency values, such as the dollar, which, while influential, do not address root economic challenges (Najafi & Shadman, 2023). Consequently, Iranian citizens are increasingly vulnerable to the psychological impacts of these economic fluctuations, particularly as inflation erodes the purchasing power and financial security of the middle and lower classes.

Economic psychology research suggests that prolonged exposure to market volatility can lead to chronic stress and anxiety, which in turn impact social behaviors (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). For instance, heightened sensitivity to dollar fluctuations can fuel a vicious cycle where individuals become more reliant on market performance as a source of stability, further compounding stress (Kamal & Bahrami,

2022). The observed societal reactions—such as heightened divorce rates, addiction, and incarceration—are thus partially attributable to a distorted economic environment where secondary indicators, rather than foundational socio-economic metrics, dominate public attention and response (Saeedi & Taghavi, 2021).

Misaligned Social and Economic Priorities

In societies marked by economic disparity, misaligned social and economic priorities emerge as significant contributors to moral and social decay. We suggest, the Iranian government's focus on peripheral matters—like stringent dress codes and property valuation—has led to a misallocation of resources that could otherwise address more pressing issues, such as mental health and poverty alleviation. This misalignment has created an economic landscape where individuals prioritize secondary issues and market indicators, such as currency and gold prices, over core economic values such as social wellbeing and natural resources, which traditionally serve as stabilizing factors in the Iranian economy (Bamdad, 2019; Farrokhzad, 2022).

Research further underscores that societies emphasizing non-essential socio-economic factors often experience a decline in overall well-being, as psychological resources are disproportionately allocated to managing these stressors (Jafari & Mohammadi, 2021). In such settings, market fluctuations become symbolic of deeper insecurities, fostering an environment of moral and social disengagement where public discourse on core issues—such as economic stability and social welfare—diminishes (Rashidi & Alizadeh, 2020).

Conclusion

The Iranian public's focus and dependence on foreign economic factors emerges as socio-economic and psychological fragilities, where attention to volatile economic indicators has overshadowed more foundational societal needs. Cultural repression, economic instability, and misaligned priorities have collectively fostered a climate where behavioral deviations like addiction and divorce are

symptomatic of deeper, unresolved issues. For Iran to address these challenges, there must be a fundamental shift toward reinforcing societal well-being and prioritizing core economic resources that ensure long-term stability. Future policy efforts should therefore emphasize alleviating economic pressures, restructuring social priorities, and fostering a more balanced economic consciousness that values stability over volatility. In this approach fixation of the price of natural consumables like the oil and fuel prices (naft) has led to less responsibilities or attention to preserve or promote the national assets which needs additional studies and research.

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