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Family health clinics as a source of social capital

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Social capital is a resource accumulated by individuals or groups as a consequence of their participation in social organizations or the existence of reciprocal social relations. The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which Family Health Clinic (FHC) contribute to the formation of social capital among mothers. In FHCs, social capital can be gained in three dimensions: by relationships between mothers (bonding), by relationships between mothers and the FHC team or among mothers of different origins/culture (bridging) and with local and national institutional bodies (linking). The study combined quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative part, data were collected from 673 mothers using a closed questionnaire. The qualitative part was conducted in 7 focus groups of about 10 mothers in each. The results indicated that for mothers the FHC constitutes a source of social capital in all dimensions. The Bridging social capital was most prominent and is formed by interactions between mothers and FHC nurses. The most important factors to explain the formation of social capital were: mothers' tongue being Arabic, participation in group training and lower level of education. The focus groups revealed that mothers that participated in group training reported of greater social capital via the creation of WhatsApp groups, informal meetings, etc. Mothers noted that FHC nurses supplied updated information about their children's care and that although they use Websites and applications as information sources, they prefer to receive authoritative information from FHC nurses on an updated website. Regarding linking social capital, mothers would like to receive more health services in the FHCs and perceive FHC nurses as mediators between them and local and national health services. In conclusion, the FHC clinics are a source for gaining social capital, especially for lower educated, Arabic speaking and for mothers that participated in group training.

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